

The Albany Tour

From Albany, take Highway 20 (Santiam Highway) east towards Lebanon.

Highway 20 is a well traveled 2 lane highway crossing the flat and fertile Willamette Valley farmlands. In the distance can be seen the Cascade Mountain Range. On a clear day one might spy the snow capped peaks of the Three Sisters some 70 miles to the southeast.

Travel approximately 5.5 miles and turn Left (north) on Highway 226.

Follow Highway 226 approximately 4.3 miles and turn Right (east) on Fish Hatchery Drive.

Follow Fish Hatchery Drive east, across the varied farmland, towards the Cascade Mountain Range for approximately 6.8 miles, until crossing Crabtree Creek on the Larwood Bridge.

This is the first covered bridge on the tour. Turn Left (north) on Larwood Dr. and pull into the wayside, which offers picnic areas, and scenic views of the bridge, Crabtree Creek and Roaring River.

Leaving the Larwood Wayside, turn left (north) onto Larwood Dr.

Follow Larwood for approximately 4.8 miles until the intersection with Richardson Gap Road.

Turn Right (north) on Richardson Gap Road, and then in about 2/10's mile turn Left (west) on Montgomery Drive.

Stay on Montgomery Dr. for approximately 2.1 miles, until it intersects Highway 226.

Turn Left (south) on Highway 226, and appriximately 4/10'smile later turn Right (west) on Hungry Hill Road.

Follow Hungry Hill Road for approximately 2.2 miles and cross Crabtree Creek on the Hoffman Bridge.

Continue on Hungry Hill Road towards Crabtree for approximately 1.5 miles.

Turn Right (west) on Crabtree Road and travel approximately 9/10's mile before turning Right (north) on Gilkey Road.

Follow Gilkey Road for approximately 4.2 miles as it snakes across Crabtree Creek and through the countryside before crossing Thomas Creek on Gilkey Bridge.

Although long ago dismantled, this spot once had two covered bridges - one for the highway and one for the railroad - as can be seen in the 1939 photograph here. (Look closely and see the steam locomotive entering the railway bridge.)

Approximatley 1/10th mile south of Gilkey Bridge there is a sign commemorating Gilkey Station. This was a flag stop on the railway - a shipping point for local farm produce.

After passing over Thomas Creek through Gilkey Bridge, continue north for approximately 1 mile until intersecting Robinson Drive. (Gilkey Road will become Goar Road.)

Turn Right (east) on Robinson Drive and travel approximately 1.8 miles to find Thomas Creek Alpacas on the left side of the road at 38517 Robinson Drive.

The farm is committed to improving the alpaca breed. Visitors will have the opportunity to discuss alpacas with the owners and to learn about this magical breed and their role in establishing a small acreage agricultural enterprise.

Visitors are always welcome, but please call ahead. (503-690-2522)

Leaving Thomas Creek Alpacas , turn Left (east) onto Robinson Road towards the town of Scio.

Proceed approximately 9/10's mile to N. Main St. (Robinson Drive will become N. 1st Ave.).

Turn Right (south) on N. Main St. cross Thomas Creek and turn Left (east) onto Highway 226 towards Lyons.

Travel approximately 2.2 miles and turn Right (south) onto Richardsons Gap Road.

Proceed south on Richardson Gap Road approximately 4/10's mile, crossing Highway 226, to Rodgers Mountain Loop.

The sight of Richardson Gap Road, and the perfectly flat valley floor bisecting the expanse between Franklin Butte on the right and Rogers Mountain on the left is unique.

Turn left on Rodgers Mountain Loop and travel approximately 1.8 miles up the winding road, keeping left at the 'Y', to where Sylvan Skies Alpacas is on the right at 40980 Rodgers Mountain Loop.

Established upon principals guiding sustainable agriculture, the farm focuses on producing high quality alpaca breeding stock in an earth friendly manner. Visitors will have the opportunity to view hand made apparel and accessories made from alpaca fiber, as well as commercially produced alpaca products.

Visitors are always welcome, but please call ahead. (503-551-0069)

Leaving Sylvan Skies Alpacas , turn left and return back down Rodgers Mountain Loop to turn Right (north) on Richardson Gap Road.

(DETOUR SEPT/OCT 2008)

Proceed north on Richardson Gap Road approximately 1.1 mile, crossing Highway 226, to cross Thomas creek on Shimanek Bridge.

Turn Right (east) onto Shimanek Bridge Road.

This is at least the fifth bridge spanning Thomas Creek at this location. The previous bridge (see photo) which was built in 1927 was unrepairably damaged in the great Columbus Day Storm of 1962 when trees were blown against the structure.

Perhaps the best place to park to examine the structure on foot is at the intersection of Shimanek Bridge Road and Richardson Gap Road. Be advised that locals can get a little grumpy with "flat landers" clogging up the local roads though.

From Shimanek Bridge, proceed approximately 2 miles on Shimanek Bridge Road until it ends at Highway 226.

Turn Left (east) onto Highway 226 and proceed approximately 4/10s mile.

Gateway Farm is located on the right (south) side of the highway at 41390 Hwy. 226. (The entrance is just before the old red barn.)

This area of the valley was once a fair sized dairy farm. Some of the old outbuildings, including the large barn sitting next to the farm's entrance, are still visible.

Gateway Farm is establishing a diversified operation utilizing sustainable agricultural practices. Alpacas, a relative newcomer to Oregon's agriculture, are the centerpiece of the operation, but visitors will also see heritage breed laying hens, and have the opportunity to purchase seasonal produce and fruits.

Gateway farm always welcomes visitors, but please call ahead (503-394-3790).

Leaving Gateway Farm , turn Right (east) onto Highway 226 and travel 1.9 miles to Camp Morrison Road, where Hannah Bridge crosses Thomas Creek.

Turn right (south) on Camp Morrison Road, crossing the bridge, and there is a pullout for parking.

Hannah Bridge has been used in numerous. The photo shows a picture of the bridge taken in the early 1960's, along with "Thomas' Y Store and service station.

Closed now, the store and service station's buildings can still be seen at the intersection of Camp Morrison Road and Highway 226.

From Hannah Bridge, head up the hill (east) on Camp Morrison Road for approximately 1.4 miles to the intersection with Jordan Road.

The summit of the hill is dominated by Our Lady of Lourdes Church .

The top of this plateau marks the spot where exiled French Trappist Monks established a 400 acre colony and monastery at the beginning of the 20th Century. (See photo of the old trappist school.)

Though ultimately unsuccessful, the remaining Church and parish remain as a testament to their efforts.

Sitting behind the old church is a cemetery, which some history buffs, might find interesting to explore.

Turn Left (north) on Jordan Road and head down the hill approximately one mile to where Jordan Road crosses Thomas Creek.

This is where the Jordan Bridge, seen in Stayton, originally spanned Thomas Creek, before it was dismantled and moved to make room for the new concrete and steel structure.

To the east are the remains of Broken Dam , and the site of the old, unincorporated community of Jordan. Jordan was once the home of a general store and several mills, and Broken Dam supplied electricity to the nearby town of Scio.

Turning right on Highway 226, travel approximately 5/10's along the curves bordered by Thomas Creek, and turn left onto Kingston-Jordan Rd.

After approximately 4/10's mile, turn left on Valley View Drive and proceed 1.6 miles to a sharp right bend in the road.

This is perhaps the most panoramic view on the tour route.

The majesty of the Cascade Range looms in the near distance, and the hilltop slopes away across farmland and forest to the beautiful Jordan Valley below.

To the southeast is a clear view of the cleft in the summit of Snow Peak, where it is not unusual to see traces of snow late into June.

The Jordan area has a fascinating history, including an early religious community, and a Trappist Monastery.

Follow the bend in Valley View Drive and descend 9/10's mile to turn Left (west) on Kingston-Jordan Road.

Follow Kingston-Jordan Road for approximately 5.3 miles as it meanders through the rolling hills and farmland. In addition to beef, goat and sheep, there are large tracts of land dedicated to growing grass seed and Christmas trees, two staples of Oregon agriculture. Old, and sometimes deteriorating farm houses, barns and other structures are mingled with the newer buildings that mark Oregon's love of rural living and agricultural pursuits.

Kingston-Jordan Road will end where it intersects with Stayton-Scio Road.

Turn Right (north) on Stayton-Scio Road and follow it across the North Santiam River into Stayton. (The road will change into North 1st Ave) for 7/10's mile to North Marion St.

Crossing the new bridge over the Santiam River, it is easy to imagine the old structure, which included a covered bridge spanning the overflow channel, and a steel arch span over the river itself (photo).

Turn Right (east) on Marion St.

Driving through Stayton, keep an open eye for examples of Victorian architecture, dating back to its heyday as a hub of agricultural production.

Marion St. skirts the northern end of the old Stayton downtown district. There are a number of interesting shops and architectural features for those wanting to spend some time wander the streets.

Marion St. and the Alpaca Tour ends at Pioneer Park, the location of Jordan Bridge .

In addition to Jordan Bridge, Pioneer park offers picnic facilities and hiking trails that wind themselves through woodlands and marshes all the way to the North Santiam river banks. The observant visitor may spot signs of beaver and other

wildlife on the walking trail. Occasionally one can even spot a western pond turtle basking in the sun amongst the trees and marshes.