Exploring Your Park

Thank you for visiting Crater Lake National Park. If you’ve been here before, you might notice a few changes this year on account of COVID-19. With public health in mind, boat tours and other ranger-led activities are not being offered. Crater Lake Lodge is open to overnight Lodge guests only, and some facilities, like the park’s two visitor centers, are closed. Fortunately, the pandemic has not affected the park’s outstanding scenery, hiking trails, roads, overlooks, and other recreational opportunities—many of which are described in this visitor guide. We hope you have a safe and enjoyable visit.

Services & Facilities

The following information was accurate at the time of publication but is subject to change at any time. To find out the current status of park facilities and their hours of operation, stop at one of the twelve information boards located throughout the park.

Restrooms

Restrooms at Rim Village and Mazama Campground are open 24 hours a day. Vault toilets are open 24 hours a day at Watchman Overlook, the North Entrance, the top of the Cleetwood Cove Trail, and the Vidae Falls Picnic Area (see map on page 5).

Drinking Water

A water bottle filling station is located outside the Mazama Village Store. At Rim Village, water from the restroom sinks is safe to drink. Bottled water can be purchased at the Mazama Village Store, Annie Creek Gift Shop, Rim Village Overlook, the North Entrance, the top of the Cleetwood Cove Trail, and the Vidae Falls Picnic Area (see map on page 5).

Food & Dining

Food is available at Rim Village and Mazama Village. The Rim Village Café serves grab-and-go sandwiches, salads, and snacks. It’s open year-round. The Crater Lake Lodge Dining Room also serves meals, but to comply with CDC guidelines it is currently open to overnight Lodge guests only. At Mazama Village, the Annie Creek Restaurant serves burgers, pizza, and other entrees. This year, it’s open for lunch and dinner (dine-in or take-out), likely through September 27.

Gifts & Books

The nonprofit Crater Lake Natural History Association sells books, maps, postcards, and souvenirs. This summer, it’s operating out of the Community House at Rim Village. The park’s concessioner, Crater Lake Hospitality, also offers a range of merchandise at the Rim Village Gift Shop (open year-round), the Annie Creek Gift Shop (likely open through September 27), and the Mazama Village Store (likely open through September 28).

Visitor Centers

Following guidelines from public health authorities, both park visitors centers are currently closed. The park’s 22-minute film is not being shown, but you can purchase the DVD for half price ($7.50) at the Crater Lake Natural History Association bookstore, located in the Community House at Rim Village. The park’s passport stamp is available there as well, and at the Post Office at Park Headquarters.

Exhibits

Many pullouts in the park have roadside exhibits. Midway through Rim Village, the Sinnott Memorial Overlook has geology displays, although the adjacent exhibit room is not open this year. For overnight guests at Crater Lake Lodge, exhibits on the history of the Lodge can be found on the ground floor, west of the lobby.

Post Office

A United States Post Office window is open 9:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday, at the Steel Visitor Center at Park Headquarters.

Campgrounds

Mazama Campground (214 sites) is located 7 miles south of the lake near Highway 62. It’s operated by the park’s concessioner, Crater Lake Hospitality, and is scheduled to be open this year through September 27. Sites this year are reservable in advance (866-292-6720 or www.travelcraterlake.com), so there might not be any same-day availability. The campground offers tent sites ($21 per night) and RV sites (starting at $32). The campground has drinking water and flush toilets, but, with public health in mind, showers and laundry facilities are not operating. The park’s other campground, Lost Creek Campground (16 sites, tents only) is closed this year.

Lodges

The park has two motels, both operated by Crater Lake Lodge. Crater Lake Lodge (71 rooms) overbooks the lake at Rim Village. Rooms begin at $200. This year, it’s scheduled to be open through October 11. The Cabins at Mazama Village (40 rooms) are $164 per night and will likely be open through September 27. For both facilities, advance reservations are highly recommended. The park’s passport stamp is available there as well, and at the Post Office at Park Headquarters.

Gasoline

Self-serve, unleaded gasoline is available at the Mazama Village Store during business hours.

Park Profile

Crater Lake National Park protects the deepest lake in the United States. Fed by rain and snow (but no rivers or streams), the lake is considered to be the cleanest body of water in the world. The water is exceptional for its clarity and intense blue color.

The lake rests inside a caldera formed approximately 7,700 years ago when a 12,000-foot-tall (3,600-meter) volcano collapsed following a major eruption. The eruption may have been the largest in North America in the past 640,000 years. Later eruptions formed Wizard Island, a cinder cone near the southwest shore.

The park is central to the cultural traditions of local American Indian tribes, whose ancestors witnessed the lake’s formation.

Today, old-growth forests blanket the volcano’s outer slopes, harboring more than 700 native plant species and a wide variety of animals, including several that are rare or endangered.

- Park established: 1902
- Size: 183,224 acres (74,148 hectares)
- Number of visitors last year: 740,500
- Lake depth: 1,943 feet (592 meters)
- Lake width: 4.5 to 6 miles (7 to 10 km)
- Annual snowfall: 42 feet (13 meters)
- Last time the lake froze over: 1849

Artists Paul Rockwood’s conception of Mount Mazama, the volcano that collapsed to form Crater Lake. If you gathered up the ash from Mount Mazama’s catastrophic eruption and spread it evenly across the state of Oregon, it would form a layer 8 inches (20 cm) thick.
Emergencies

The park is open 24 hours, but in certain areas. Pets on leash are allowed on the Godfrey Glen Trail. Lady of the Woods Trail. Grayback Drive, and Pacific Crest Trail. Licenses must not exceed 6 feet (1.8 meters), and only one pet per hiker is allowed. Pets are not permitted on other trails, or off-trail. Pets on leash (or otherwise physically restrained) are also allowed in picnic areas, campgrounds, parking lots, and up to 50 feet (15 meters) away from paved roads. Popular places to walk: a dog include Rim Village and Mazama Campground. Pets are not allowed inside buildings, including Crater Lake Lodge and The Cabins at Mazama 10 feet. The above rules do not apply to service animals here to area people with disabilities. Solid waste must be picked up immediately and disposed of properly in a trash can or toilet.

Watersports

Snorkeling, scuba diving, and long-distance swimming are not allowed in Crater Lake. In 2012, after reviewing the threats posed by aquatic invasive species, the park placed a ban on the use of snorkels, wetuits, diving gear, flotation devices, and other equipment that might serve as vectors for the introduction of non-native organisms. This includes rafts, canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards. Swimming in a standard swimsuit is allowed at the bottom of the Cleetwood Cove Trail.

Accessibility

Except for the Sinnott Overlook, developed areas in the park are generally inaccessible to individuals with mobility impairments. The most accessible path for people using wheelchairs is the paved promenade at Rim Village. The Godfrey Glen, Sun Catcher, Pinacles, and Park Hill trails are accessible to all-terrain wheelchair users with assistance (see page 4). Multiple pullouts on Rim Drive have wheelchair-accessible wayside exhibits. We are working hard to improve our level of accessibility for all park visitors. We welcome your comments.

Electric Vehicle Charging Station

A 24-hour charging station is located at the Annie Creek Gift Shop. It has one standard (J1772) connector and one Tesla connector.

Emergencies

Dial 911 to report any emergency, 24 hours a day. First aid is available at the Ranger Station at Park Headquarters (8:00–4:30 pm). Phones are available at the park office, the campground, and throughout the park property. You may have luck at pullouts on the Rim Drive. A 24-hour emergency headquarters is located outside the “snow tunnel” entrance to the administration building at Park Headquarters.

Picnic Areas

Picnic areas are found throughout the park (see page 3). The Rim Village picnic area has fire grates.

Recycling

Combination trash/recycling bins can be found at more than 20 locations in the park. Recycling is currently limited to aluminum cans and newspapers.

Guns

Firearms are allowed in the park in accordance with federal and state laws. They are prohibited, however, in all park buildings.

Hiking and Climbing

Stay on trails. This prevents erosion, protects vegetation, and protects other hikers. Hiking and climbing inside the caldera are strictly prohibited. The only exception is the Cleetwood Cove Trail, the only safe and legal access to the lake shore. Serious injuries and deaths have occurred from falls inside the caldera. The walls consist of unstable rocks and soils.

Marijuana

Possession of marijuana is prohibited. Oregon state laws allowing the use of marijuana do not apply in the park, an area of federal jurisdiction.

Overnight Parking

The park is open 24 hours, but overnight parking is not allowed, except in the park’s campgrounds, on park roads, and for backcountry permits (park required).

Park Features

Leave rocks, plants, animals, and artifacts undisturbed for others to enjoy. It is prohibited to collect, deport, disturb, or destroy natural or cultural features. Do not approach, touch, feed, or disturb wildlife. Pets are welcome in the park, but only in certain areas. Pets on leash are allowed on the Godfrey Glen Trail. Lady of the Woods Trail. Grayback Drive, and Pacific Crest Trail. Licenses must not exceed 6 feet (1.8 meters), and only one pet per hiker is allowed. Pets are not permitted on other trails, or off-trail. Pets on leash (or otherwise physically restrained) are also allowed in picnic areas, campgrounds, parking lots, and up to 50 feet (15 meters) away from paved roads. Popular places to walk: a dog include Rim Village and Mazama Campground. Pets are not allowed inside buildings, including Crater Lake Lodge and The Cabins at Mazama 10 feet. The above rules do not apply to service animals here to area people with disabilities. Solid waste must be picked up immediately and disposed of properly in a trash can or toilet.

Water Sports

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Help keep wildlife wild. Please DO NOT FEED!
How deep is Crater Lake?
Crater Lake is 1,943 feet (592 meters) deep. It's the deepest lake in the USA—300 feet deeper than Lake Tahoe, which ranks 2nd and the 9th deepest lake in the world. It's also the deepest lake in the world formed by volcanic activity.

Where does the water come from?
About one-third of the water comes from rain and snow falling directly on the lake's surface. The rest is run off from precipitation landing on the slopes above the lake.

Is the water clean enough to drink?
Since there are no inlets carrying sediment, and pollution into the lake, the water is very clean: cleaner than the water that comes out of your faucet at home!

How clear is the water?
While the water appears blue because it's very clean and very deep. When sunlight enters the lake, red, orange, yellow, and green light waves are absorbed by the water but blue light waves are reflected. Blue light waves are not absorbed, they are scattered by the water molecules, which sends some of them out of the lake and into our eyes.

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How it's a Buoy!

Say Hello to the Park’s New Weather Station

Park scientists are expecting an important delivery this summer. They have ordered a brand new weather buoy (purchased with funding from park entrance fees) and are excited to announce that it will be a buoy—a very big buoy! Due to arrive in late July, it will weigh 1,100 pounds and stand 9½ feet tall. It will be transported in three pieces, by tractor, down the Cleetwood Cove Trail, where it will be assembled and moved into position directly above the lake’s deepest point. Tangled up, it will be pulled to the bottom, where it will collect data to help researchers study, among other things, how climate change is affecting Crater Lake.

Outwardly, the new buoy will resemble the old buoy. However, the new buoy will possess a handful of capabilities that its predecessor does not. It will be outfitted, for example, with a sensor that can measure the height, period, and direction of waves on the lake. In the summer, this information will help park staff determine if conditions are safe for boat tours to operate, to protect each from danger. In the winter, we’ll learn—first time ever—how big the waves can get on Crater Lake during major winter storms.

Other instruments will reveal how weather conditions above the lake are interacting with processes in the lake, such as algae formation and deep water mixing. One will measure the level of dissolved oxygen in the water, another will detect the density of particles and concentration of chlorophyll at the surface, and a third will quantify how much light is entering the lake (i.e. cloudy vs. sunny skies). Temperatures from the current buoy have shown that the surface of Crater Lake is getting warmer (see the graph above); now researchers are seeking to understand how warmer water is impacting the lake’s circulation and ecology.

If you’d like to wave hello to the park’s new buoy (or wave goodbye to the old one, which will be removed soon after the new one is up and running), stop at one of the pullouts on the northeast side of the lake and look for a dark dot just over a mile from shore.

Climate Chart

Summer at Crater Lake are short but generally warm and sunny. July, August, and September are your best bets for clear, dry weather. In May, June, and October, sunny days alternate with periods of rain and snow. Winters are long and snowy. Storms from the Pacific Ocean dump an average of 42 feet (13 meters) of snow at Park Headquarters. The park’s tremendous snowfall is a result of its position at the crest of the Cascade Mountains. Air temperatures and snowfall averages are from Park Headquarters, 1931-2019. Water temperatures are from the years 1965-2019.
Let’s Go Hiking!

Hi, I’m Ranger Madeline. We have 90 miles (145 km) of hiking trails here at Crater Lake. Our most popular day hikes are listed on this page. If you’re visiting in June or early July, be aware that some trails might still be closed by snow. Please help us protect this special place by following a few important rules:

- No hiking or climbing inside the caldera! The walls are dangerously steep and unstable.
- Leave all rocks, plants, animals, and artifacts undisturbed for the enjoyment of future hikers.
- Overnight backpacking requires a permit, available at Park Headquarters between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm. Some areas are not open to backcountry camping.
- Pets are allowed on the Godfrey Glen Trail, Lady of the Woods Trail, and Pacific Crest Trail. Pets must be leashed, only one pet per hiker (see page 2).
- To protect vegetation and prevent erosion, please stay on the trails.

### Castle Crest
- **Location:** Lady of the Woods<br>**Distance:** 4.0 miles (6.4 km) 6.5 miles (10.5 km) 17.5 miles (28 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 1,000 feet (305 meters) 2,000 feet (610 meters) 7,200 feet (2,200 meters)<br>**Time:** 1½ hours 3½ hours 9½ hours<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### Sun Notch
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 6.6 miles (10.6 km) 9.8 miles (15.8 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 2,650 feet (810 meters)<br>**Time:** 1½ hours (1-way)<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### The Pinnacles
- **Location:** <br>**Distance:** 0.8 miles (1.3 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 10 feet (3 meters)<br>**Time:** 30 minutes<br>**Highlights:** Natural views

### Godfrey Glen
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 1.1 miles (1.8 km) loop trail<br>**Elevation Gain:** 100 feet (30 meters)<br>**Time:** 1 hour<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### Plaikni Falls
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 2 miles (3.2 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 400 feet (122 meters)<br>**Time:** 3 hours<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### Discovery Point
- **Location:** Watchman Mountain<br>**Distance:** 1.6 miles (2.6 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 420 feet (128 meters)<br>**Time:** 1 hour<br>**Highlights:** Panoramic Views

### Annie Creek
- **Location:** Boundary Springs<br>**Distance:** 1.7 miles (2.7 km) loop trail<br>**Elevation Gain:** 200 feet (61 meters)<br>**Time:** 1½ hours<br>**Highlights:** Panoramic Views

### Boundary Springs
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 5.6 miles (8.9 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 489,000 feet (149,000 m)<br>**Time:** 5 to 6 hours<br>**Highlights:** Panoramic Views

### Clewtood Cove
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 2.2 miles (3.5 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 750 feet (228 meters)<br>**Time:** 3 hours<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### Garifield Peak
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 3.6 miles (5.8 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 2,650 feet (810 meters)<br>**Time:** 3 hours<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### Mount Scott
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 4.4 miles (7.1 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 1,600 feet (484 meters)<br>**Time:** 5 to 6 hours<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### Crater Peak
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 6.5 miles (10.3 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 4,890,000 feet (149,000 m)<br>**Time:** 5 to 6 hours<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### Union Peak
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 9.5 miles (15.3 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 2,650 m (8,695 ft)<br>**Time:** 5 to 6 hours<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### Pacific Crest
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 2,650 m (8,695 ft)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 489,000 feet (149,000 m)<br>**Time:** 5 months<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### Swimming, Fishing
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 2.2 miles (3.5 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 750 feet (228 meters)<br>**Time:** 3 hours<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### Adventure, Achievement
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 2.2 miles (3.5 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 750 feet (228 meters)<br>**Time:** 3 hours<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### Nature Note
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 0.5 miles (0.8 km) loop trail<br>**Elevation Gain:** 100 feet (30 meters)<br>**Time:** 20 minutes<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 0.7 miles (1.1 km) loop trail<br>**Elevation Gain:** 220 feet (67 meters)<br>**Time:** 30 minutes<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 0.8 miles (1.3 km) loop trail<br>**Elevation Gain:** 190 feet (58 meters)<br>**Time:** 30 minutes<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 0.8 miles (1.3 km)<br>**Elevation Gain:** 20 feet (6 meters)<br>**Time:** 1 hour<br>**Highlights:** Scenic views, Solitude

### Elevation Gain
- **Location:**<br>**Distance:** 0.5 miles (0.8 km) loop trail<br>**Elevation Gain:** 100 feet (30 meters)<br>**Time:** 20 minutes

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Highlights of the Rim Drive

The 33-mile (53-km) Rim Drive around Crater Lake is one of America’s most scenic byways. The full loop is typically open from early July to late October. It can be driven, without stopping, in about an hour, but plan on at least 2 to 3 hours to enjoy the varied sights. The road is narrow, so use caution and be alert for bicyclists, pedestrians, and wildlife. There are more than 30 scenic pullouts along the way, many of which have roadside vistas. The road is narrow, so use caution and plan on at least 2 to 3 hours to enjoy the varied sights. The road is narrow, so use caution and be alert for bicyclists, pedestrians, and wildlife. There are more than 30 scenic pullouts along the way, many of which have roadside vistas. Be sure not to miss these 7 “musts”:

**Discovery Point**
Imagine seeing Crater Lake by accident. It was first European-American to stumble across what he called “Deep Blue Lake.”

**Watchman Overlook**
This pullout offers an unmatched view of Wizard Island, a cinder cone that eroded out of Crater Lake approximately 7,300 years ago. To find it, drive 3.8 miles (6.1 km) west of Rim Village and look for a viewpoint lined with wooden fences.

**Cloudcap Overlook**
This overlook sits at the end of a 1-mile (1.6-km) spur road, the highest paved road in Oregon. Whitebark pines cling for survival here, dwarfed and contorted by the harsh winds.

**Pumice Castle Overlook**
Stop here to see one of the park’s most colorful features: a layer of orange pumice rock that has been eroded into the shape of a medieval castle. Watch carefully for this unmarked viewpoint, located 1.1 miles (1.8 km) west of the Cloudcap Overlook junction and 2.4 miles (3.9 km) east of the Phantom Ship Overlook.

**Phantom Ship Overlook**
Nestled against the shore, Crater Lake’s “other island” escapes detection by many park visitors. Though it resembles a small sailboat, the island is as tall as a 16-story building. It’s made of crosstongue-resistant lava, 400,000 years old—the oldest exposed rock within the caldera.

**Pinnacles Overlook**
This overlook is well worth the 6-mile (10-km) detour from Rim Drive. Colorful spires, 100 feet (30 meters) tall, are being eroded from the canyon wall. The Pinnacles are “fossil fumaroles” where volcanic gases once rose up through a layer of volcanic ash, cementing the ash into solid rock.

**Vidae Falls**
Look for this cascading waterfall between Phantom Ship Overlook and Park Headquarters.

**Unmarked viewpoint**
Located 1.1 miles (1.8 km) west of the Cloudcap Overlook junction and 2.4 miles (3.9 km) east of the Phantom Ship Overlook. It can be driven, without stopping, in about an hour, but plan on at least 2 to 3 hours to enjoy the varied sights. The road is narrow, so use caution and be alert for bicyclists, pedestrians, and wildlife. There are more than 30 scenic pullouts along the way, many of which have roadside vistas. Be sure not to miss these 7 “musts”:

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Drawing the Line: The Evolution of the Park’s Boundary and the Battle Over Diamond Lake

One hundred years ago, Crater Lake National Park nearly became much larger. On April 5, 1920, the US Senate passed a bill that would have increased the size of the park by 92,800 acres, expanding its territory northward to include Diamond Lake, Mount Thielsen, and Mount Bailey. The bill’s leading advocate, National Park Service director Stephen Mather, argued that the addition was “intended by nature.” After all, Crater Lake and Diamond Lake are fraternal twins, both created 7,700 years ago by the cataclysmic eruption of Mount Mazama. (As the mountain’s summit collapsed to form the basin now occupied by Crater Lake, a pyroclastic flow from the volcano impounded a creek to form Diamond Lake.) “This remarkable lake,” wrote Mather of Diamond Lake, “with its stately forests, its broad sandy beaches, its rugged mountains, and its unexcelled opportunities for bathing and fishing, naturally belongs to the park.”

To commemorate the centennial of the Senate’s approval of the bill, let’s revisit this largely forgotten chapter in the park’s history and examine the true position of Crater Lake relative to the township grid was essentially unchanged. John Wesley Powell, the director of the US Geological Survey, may have been the first to notice that key legislators were opposed to the creation of national parks in general, worried that they’d become a burden on the national treasury. Federal parks would need Congressional funding for administration, visitor services, and infrastructure. Second, it slowly became evident that the park’s proposed boundary, while fully embracing Diamond Lake, failed to capture the full expanse of Crater Lake. In choosing which townships to protect, William Steel had miscalculated. In choosing to preserve what he considered the park’s true boundaries, Diller argued that the addition was “intended by nature.” After all, Crater Lake and Diamond Lake are fraternal twins, both created 7,700 years ago by the cataclysmic eruption of Mount Mazama. (As the mountain’s summit collapsed to form the basin now occupied by Crater Lake, a pyroclastic flow from the volcano impounded a creek to form Diamond Lake.) “This remarkable lake,” wrote Mather of Diamond Lake, “with its stately forests, its broad sandy beaches, its rugged mountains, and its unexcelled opportunities for bathing and fishing, naturally belongs to the park.”

The task of adjusting the proposed boundary eventually fell to USGS geologist Joseph Diller, a decade later. Diller was intimately familiar with Crater Lake, having been sent by Powell to study its formation in 1883 as part of the first USGS expedition to the area. He’d made a second visit in 1886 at the invitation of Steel, becoming a champion of Steel’s national park idea and developing the now-accepted theory that Mount Mazama imploded rather than blew apart. In revising the boundary, Diller did more than just shift the eastern edge. He made changes on all sides, resulting, most notably, in the elimination of Diamond Lake from the proposed reservation (see Figure 2). Instead of defining the park in terms of uncertain townships, he opted to fit each edge to a line of latitude or longitude. This made good practical sense—but why did he reduce the park’s northern extent? To this day, the answer is unclear. It’s possible that the move was strategic, designed to increase the likelihood that Congress would consent. In those days, park proponents were often asked to prove that the lands up for protection were commercially “worthless.” Diller, for example, in a letter submitted to Congress in support of the first bill to feature his new boundary, wrote that the Crater Lake region “is well situated for a park, but is unfit for any other purpose. It contains no agricultural land, for an average altitude of nearly 7,000 feet is far above the limit of cereals. It is well timbered, but the timber is of no value for lumber. Its rocks are all fresh lavas and contain nothing whatever of value to the miner. Making the region a national park, therefore, would in no way conflict with the interests of the farmer, the miner, or the lumberman.” Was Diller worried that lawmakers might view the Diamond Lake area as potentially valuable to these constituencies? Perhaps, but they hadn’t made that claim in the past. It seems equally likely that Diller’s decision

Figure 1. In 1886, William Steel proposed a national park that included both Crater Lake and Diamond Lake. He didn’t realize that the boundary he’d specified left out some of Crater Lake’s eastern shore.

Figure 2. In 1889, Joseph Diller corrected Steel’s error, but chose to exclude Diamond Lake. His boundary (with his addition of 92,800 acres to the park’s official boundary in 1902) mirrored that of a toponographic map he’d helped to produce.

Figure 3. In the years that followed, William Steel and Stephen Mather tried to recapture Diamond Lake. In 1920, a bill to revise the park’s boundary passed the US Senate but died in the House of Representatives.

Figure 4. The park’s current shape reflects additions made in 1932 (shown in yellow) and 1968 (shown in blue). In both cases, the land added to the park was transferred from the US Forest Service.
to exclude Diamond Lake was more of a matter of personal preference and, perhaps, convenience. In 1898, Diller had been involved in publishing the first USGS topographic map centered on Crater Lake. Like many maps of the era, its scale was 1:62,500, with each inch representing about one mile. Such maps were commonly known as “15-minute maps,” because they typically had room to display about 15 minutes of latitude and 15 minutes of longitude per sheet. It can’t be a coincidence that Diller’s chosen dimensions for the park were nearly identical to those of the USGS topo map he’d helped to produce. (They were just a fraction larger, taking in 16 minutes of latitude and 16 minutes of longitude.) Diller may have decided to forgo Diamond Lake simply because it didn’t fit on the map.

Whatever his motivation, and despite his revisions, the first few maps to incorporate Diller’s borders—on in 1910, 1915, and 1900—suffered from a familiar fate. In the House, the Speaker refused to let them come to a vote, concerned about their financial implications. The following year, though, when Theodore Roosevelt assumed the US presidency after the assassination of William McKinley, Steel and other park advocates gained new clout. They revisited Diller’s proposal, convinced that conservation-minded president, who, in turn, pressured the Speaker to allow a floor vote. The bill was approved by the House and sent through the Senate, and was signed into law by President Roosevelt on May 22, 1902, at last establishing Crater Lake National Park.

As might be imagined, William Steel was delighted. Still, he was not completely satisfied with the park’s boundaries. As the editor of Portland’s Oregonian wrote in 1902, “the present park’s boundaries do not quite include the place or territory that manyCrater Lake enthusiasts would define as a resort”as the “other very big national parks.” The Secretary of the Interior eloquently expounded on Matter’s vision in the report that accompanied the bill. “It is also expected that Crater Lake National Park, while containing one of the most striking scenic attractions of the whole world, is known as the park with only the one attraction. For no reason does it not include some of the other parks with diversified scenery. . . . By enlarging the park northwestward as contemplated, it is expected that new attractions will be added. Diamond Lake, flanked by the snowy crest of Mount Thielsen on the east and the rugged outline of Mount Bailey on the west, will be a fit complement to the great crater to the south and fulfill the ultimate destiny of the park as a gathering ground for the people. The country about Diamond Lake is the most beautiful potential wilderness land in the entire Cascade range. There is excellent fishing in the lake. The broad open grass-covered tracts and the numerous small lakes provide ideal camping grounds for the park sites. The lake itself is so shallow at places that the bather can walk for hundreds of feet into the water without danger. . . . and at a distance of 1,000 to 1,500 feet, the water is deep and cool enough for comfortable bathing.” In addition to broadening the park’s recreational appeal, the bill’s supporters claimed that it would also help protect park resources. The park’s wildlife, for example, would now have access to a protected, lower-elevation retreat, where they could spend the winter safer from hunting. And if the park located most of its facilities at Diamond Lake, the rim of Crater Lake could be spared from overdevelopment. Proponents also predicted that expanding the park would boost Oregon’s economy. “Tourists would stay much longer in the state,” wrote the editors of Portland’s Oregonian, “and more of them would come here. . . . The more interesting statements in support of the bill was made by George Goodwin, the chief civil engineer of the National Park Service. He believed that, for tourists, Diamond Lake was the park’s second superintendent, and in 1917, when Stephen Mather was appointed the first director of the fledgling National Park Service. Mather persuaded an Oregon senator to advance a bill expanding the park’s northern reach by 9 miles (see Figure 3), and, in 1920, the Senate voted to approve.

A variety of arguments were put forth to justify the expansion. Mather believed that it was necessary to make the park an “ideal vacation resort” for “the average American.” Once the Senate gave the bill its blessing, many observers expected that the House of Representatives would follow suit. The Medford Mail Tribune reported that “the outlook . . . seems rosy.” The bill stalled, however, in the House Committee on Public Lands, in the face of opposition from Oregon’s Speaker and the state’s new landlord—the US Forest Service. The bureau had been founded 15 years earlier, in 1905, when control of the country’s forest reserves was transferred from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture. When asked for his opinion on Diamond Lake, the Secretary of Agriculture asserted “It has no particular scenic value. Forest Service managers insisted that the area was more valuable for commercial use than for recreation. Among the uses they envisioned were logging, sheep and cattle grazing, and damming the lake for water storage and power generation. (Years later, NPS officials would allege that the USFS had intentionally overstated the area’s commercial potential and downplayed its recreational value, citing Forest Service plans to develop it as resort themselves.) Local opinion, for the most part, was aligned with the Forest Service. The Klamath County Wool Growers Association, for example, warned that the “annexation” would create “a breeding ground for wolves and other predatory animals.” Local recreationists favored the status quo because they appreciated the Forest Service’s permissive stance on hunting and pets. The Klamath County News reported in 1916 that “...
to lease land along the shore of Diamond Lake for summer homes. They were anxious about the restrictions (and entrance fees) that NPS policy might bring. In the end, they lost to a combination of developers, who proposed to dot the shores and construct new roads, and tourists, who wanted access to the park. In the end, the park was formed with an initial boundary of 7,800 acres. By 1936, the park's boundaries had expanded to cover 21,324 acres, with the NPS taking over management of the land. The park's boundaries have since been adjusted several times, most recently in 2006, to reflect changes in the park's boundaries and to accommodate changes in land ownership and use.

The park is known for its isolation and pristine natural beauty. It is home to a variety of plants and animals, including a number of species that are found nowhere else in the world. The park is also home to a number of geological features, including pumice cones, spatter cones, and cinder cones. It is a popular destination for hikers, climbers, and other outdoor enthusiasts.

Support Your Park

Volunteer Your Time

Looking for a hands-on way to help the park? Consider sharing your time and talents as a Crater Lake VIP (Volunteer In-Park). Full-time volunteers are needed in the summer and winter to help staff visitor centers and present interpretive programs. Opportunities are advertised several times each year at www.volunteer.craterlake.gov. To volunteer, you must be at least 16 years old, pass a background check, and complete required training. Full-time volunteers are provided housing free in exchange for 3 months of service.

Report Your Wildlife Sightings

Scientists need your help! If you spot any interesting animals during your visit or witness any unusual behavior, please let us know! Your observations will help us learn about the animals in the park and how they use it. In 2019, visitors and employees submitted 98 reports of 49 different species, including the northern pygmy owl, black-backed woodpecker, white-tailed jay, mountain lion, and gray wolf. If you have a sighting, email craterrlake@nps.gov. In the future, you may be able to help us confirm the identity of some species. Just remember that approaching, feeding, or disturbing wildlife is strictly prohibited—so please keep your distance. Thanks for your participation!

Buy Crater Lake License Plates

If you live in Oregon, consider choosing Crater Lake license plates for your vehicle. For a one-time charge of $30, you can outfit your car with these beautiful wildlife license plates that support parks. You can purchase them at any time, not just when buying a new vehicle or renewing your registration. Visit the DMV office or www.oregon.gov/odot/dmv for details. Proceeds go into an endowment that funds the operation of the park's Science and Learning Center—a two-structure complex near Park Headquarters (the original Superintendent’s Residence and Chief Naturalist’s Residence) that provides living and working space for visiting scientists, teachers, and artists. The Science and Learning Center draws researchers and hands-on science and learn about wildlife, old-growth forests, and winter ecology. Learn more at www.craterlake.org. Share your love of the park by making a tax-deductible gift.

Share Your Comments

Whether you have a compliment, concern, or suggestion, we’d like to hear from you! This is your park, and we value your input on how best to manage it. To provide feedback, complete a comment form at the visitor center or send an email (or letter) to the park’s Superintendent (see addresses on page 2).

Drawing the Line (continued from page 7)

The park’s “fingerprint” was added in 1932 to showcase and protect a stand of old-growth ponderosa pines. They can best be enjoyed at the Ponderosa Picnic Area, near the park entrance. Press your nose to the orange bark and compare your vote in the up or down direction. Does it smell more like butterscotch or vanilla? Inevitable about its present size or shape. If not for a mapping error in 1886—and the creation of a 15-minute topographic map in 1896—the park would likely be much larger than it is today. It’s interesting to ponder what a “Greater Crater Lake National Park” (“as Stephen Mather once called it) would have looked like, with Crater Lake and Diamond Lake developing under the umbrella of the same agency. On the other hand, there was also nothing inevitable about the park’s very existence. Had a tourist from Oregon senator Mark Hatfield suggested that the park’s very existence. Had a tourist from Oregon senator Mark Hatfield suggested that