Welcome to Fort Stevens
The Fort Stevens Military Reservation guarded the mouth of the Columbia River from the Civil War through World War II. The park has more than five miles of hiking trails and seven miles of bike paths. The Oregon Coast Trail begins at the South Jetty and continues along the beach.

Hiking Trails
Scenic views of the water abound on the two-mile trail around Coffenbury Lake. A mile-long trail runs between the north end of the lake and Battery Russell along a ridge created by eroding action many years ago, then connects with a nature trail east of the campground. This trail can also be accessed from the dump station.

If you look carefully at the forest, you can see how it is layered, with the tall trees on top, small trees and shrubs next, and small flowering plants on the ground. Each type of plant has found the level where the amount of sun is just right for its growth.

Trees & Flora
The park is full of Sitka Spruce, Shore Pine, Western Hemlock, Red Alder and Cascara Buckthorn. Small trees and shrubs include Pacific Red Elder, Oregon Crabapple, Coast Rhododendron, Red Huckleberry, Salal, Saltman and Salal. The ground cover is patched with Horsetail, Skunk Cabbage, and a variety of ferns such as hico, rice, sword, bracken, deer and wood. Watch for uprooted trees exposing bread, shallow root systems. This is caused by high water levels in the ground, which prevent the roots from going very deep.

Because of shallow roots, large trees are toppled by storms. These decaying trees return to the soil and supply nutrients for other plants.

You are not walking alone on this trail; deer like to walk here, too. Other wild animals that inhabit the park, include waterfowl, ravens, squirrels, possum, beaver and raccoons. Look for mounds of earth and burrow holes made by gophers, moles, and mice.

Things to Know
Day-use fees are charged at Coffenbury Lake and the historic area of this park year-round. All vehicles in those areas must display a daily or a seasonal pass. Daily passes are available in these locations. Annual or 24-month day-use passes may be purchased at the park office or from other vendors.

The annual or 24-month day-use pass is valid at all state parks charging the fee. Your camping receipt or check-in card serves as a pass for those days registered. Display the receipt on the driver’s side of your dashboard, or put your check-in card on your rear-view mirror.

Vehicles on the Beach
Motor vehicle travel on the beach is prohibited north of the Peter Iredale beach access to the South Jetty from noon to midnight May 1—September 15. Travel is permitted in this area at all other times. Be aware of posted signs for other rules and regulations.

Guide to Historic Military Site & Recreation Trails
Experience Civil War History with a Self-Guided Tour
Fort Stevens, named for Territorial Governor General Isaac Ingalls Stevens, who was killed at Chantilly, Virginia, in 1862, was constructed during the Civil War and remained active until shortly after World War II. From 1897 to 1904, the fort experienced significant development, including the construction of eight concrete gun batteries. Although the guns have been removed, nearly all the batteries remain and are the primary features of this tour.

After the heavy coast artillery abandoned Fort Stevens, many of the buildings in the fort area were demolished. To get a sense of what the fort looked like when it was an active military post, visit the scale model and other exhibits in the Visitor Center.

A walking tour takes about an hour for the first half (steps 1–14 on the map) and an hour for the second half (steps 15–39).

Local Sightseeing
Astoria is historically important as the first permanent American settlement west of the Mississippi. The Columbia River Maritime Museum, Fort Astoria, the Clatsop County Historical Museum, and the Astoria Column all offer information on the area’s history. Call the Astoria Chamber of Commerce (503) 225-6541 for more information.

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Battery Pratt (1900)

Named for 1st Lt. James P. Pratt, who was killed in action during the Civil War, this battery remained active until 1943. It was armed with four 6-inch rifles on disappearing carriages, which were designed to protect the submarine mines in the river, and to stop enemy ships from going up the Columbia River.

The West Battery, Guns 1-4 (1906)
The first concrete emplacement built at Fort Stevens, it was one of many built along U.S. coastslines after 1886 federal analysis found coastal fortifications severely lacking. The main feature of this emplacement was the 10-inch "disappearing guns". By 1909 the West Battery was divided up, and Guns 1-2 were renamed Battery Lewis (for Meriwether Lewis), and Guns 3-4 were named Battery Walker, for Col. Leverett H. Walker, the commanding officer of Fort Stevens in 1907. The West Battery was deactivated in 1918. The gun tubes for emplacements 1-4 were quickly removed for possible use in Europe during World War I. The guns likely never made it, because the war ended shortly thereafter.

West Battery, Guns 5-6 (1898)
Guns 5-6 were also part of the West Battery. Known as the "Regimental Battery" since 1906, this emplacement has a unique place in coast artillery design. Both its 10-inch disappearing guns were capable of 300° movement, called "all around". Only one other in the U.S. was so designed (in Galveston, Texas), and it no longer exists. Battery Mishler's guns were also deactivated in 1918, although the gun in Gun 6 was left in place for spare parts. For much of World War II, Battery Mishler was the site of the Harbor Defense Command Posts for both the Army and Navy. After the war, the guns were removed, but the pits were covered over. During the Cold War, an early warning radar and bomb site were installed, and remained until 1962. Check the Visitor Center for a schedule of guided tours during the summer.

Battery 245 (1944)

During World War II, the 208 series batteries were built to supplement harbor defenses. Battery 247, located across the river at Fort Canby, was the main battery of this type for the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia. Its guns, and those of Battery 245, were fired during training exercises.

Rifle Range (C. 1942)
The rifle range steel here was used during the early years of Fort Stevens. It was updated in 1942, but in doing so, a portion of the old range fell on several civilan workers, killing them. It fell into disuse, likely after Battery 245 came on line. After the mid-1940s, a rifle range to the west was used.

Battery Command Station and Base End Station (1900); Mine Base End Station (1911)
The Battery Commander Station was one of the first built. It served the West Battery, and later, Battery Mishler. A Depresssion Position Finder instrument was installed there. By using the height of the tide and by determining the angle of the target, triangulation was used to find the range of the target. This information was passed to the gun(s). The submarine mine base end station also used a Depression Position Finder to develop range readings for the Fort Mine Command.

Parados (1896)
The Parados was a concept developed by the brilliant French military designer, Vauban. It consists of two embankments of earth on the back edge of an emplacement that protects it from rear attack. This parados also protected the West Battery. From the area of fire from the Columbia River. If attacked, the gun crews could effectively operate in the area without fear of flying fragments from enemy ship bombardments.

Steam Plant (C. 1900)
The plant produced electrical power for the West Battery. It was converted to a reserve power unit in 1920.

155MM Gun

Although the 155MM gun was never installed at Fort Stevens, two of them were mounted at North Cove, Washington. As a harbor defense weapon, this gun was mounted on a concrete emplacement called a Panama mount. The gun's projectiles weighed 95 pounds each and had a range of nearly 11 miles.

Halfway Point of Tour

Battery Clark Base End Station (1899)

As this station provided range information for Battery Clark's plotting room.

Non-Commissioned Officers' Quarters (1907-08)

These are the oldest remains of buildings within the fort area. Each building was a two-story duplex, built on a foundation of brick, and with brick cements behind each.

World War II Barracks (1941) and Automotive School (1941)

None of these buildings remain, but the area once hummed with activity. The foundation remnants you see were for the buildings on the river's edge. The rest of the building was wooden and set on concrete piers. The barracks housed up to 65 men.

Battery Clark (1899)

Named for Captain William Clark of the Corps of Discovery, this battery protected the fort at the mouth of the Columbia River. Originally it was armed with eight 12-inch mortars; four of them were moved in 1917 across the river to Fort Canby. This equalized mortar fire at the mouth of the Columbia River, and made the Battery safer for gun operators.

Central Power Plant (1910)

This plant was oil-fired, producing steam for electrical generators. It powered most of the complex, with an auxiliary plant at the east end of the Parados. A separate tank produced power for Battery Russell and a small plant powered the searchlights.

Bakery Post, Service Club (C. 1900)

Bread for the fort's residents and workers was baked at this site. The building was later remodeled as a service club center, and was essentially demolished.

Artillery Engineer's Building

The Artillery Engineer and staff developed fields of fire, or grids, for various guns, which enabled quicker firing solutions for a given target. This information was then posted on large maps in the various plotting rooms. They were also responsible for monitoring weather data, because factors such as atmospheric pressure can affect the speed and range of artillery shells.

Guards House (1911)

Occasionally (especially on payday), men stationed at the fort would get disorderly. When this happened, they spent time in this building. The guardhouse is open to the public on a limited schedule during the summer months.

Hospital (C. 1910)

A two-story building here served the medical needs of the men. During World War I, a swine flu devastated Fort Stevens and an estimated 50 men died in this building from the epidemic.

Communications Bunker (1922) and Test Tanks

This bomb-proof and gas-proof building was the center of all communications. A large map inside showed everything. The structures in front of this building were tanks used to test cable for the sea mines.

Mine Cable Storeroom (1910)

Everything needed to operate sea mines, except the explosives, was kept here.

Commissary (1900)

This is where the fort's personnel bought supplies.

Post Chapel (1941) and Fire Station (1941)

The religious and emergency needs of the fort were met in these buildings. The church was appropriately painted white and the fire station red.

Chief of Engineers' House Site (1889) and Bunker

The house once located here was built for the Chief Engineer during fort and jetty construction. The wood paneled concrete bunker was built as a private bomb shelter after the Japanese shelled Fort Stevens in 1942.

Laundrey (1941)

The post laundry was privately constructed, owned, and operated until 1945, when it was transferred to the U.S. Army.

Searchlight Generator and Searchlight sites S & T (1918)

A small power-generating plant was located in this building, providing power for the two minefield searchlights. To the north, over the small round, are two searchlight stands.

Torpedo Loading Room (1900)

When this facility was used, a metal structure covered the concrete base and tank. Torpedoes were tested in the water tank, loaded onto railroad cars and transported to a nearby loading dock.