

CRATER LAKE

WHERE DID THE MOUNTAIN TOP GO?

SUMMER 2023

Crater Lake is the most scenic place we have visited. The lake has a very deep blue color. At a depth of 1,943 feet, Crater Lake is the deepest Lake in America and the seventh deepest lake on Earth. The natural beauty around the lake is stunning. If you are visiting the Pacific Northwest, we highly recommend a visit to Crater Lake.



Wizard Island in Crater Lake

DISTANCES AND WEATHER

Distances - Crater Lake is located in the Cascades Mountains in southern Oregon. Crater Lake is:

- 417 miles southeast of Seattle.
- 246 miles southeast of Portland.
- 102 miles south of Bend
- 424 miles northeast of San Francisco

If you visit in the winter months, check to see if the roads going into Crater Lake are open.



Source: <https://www.craterlakeinstitute.com/online-library/wp-content/uploads/CRLAmap2.pdf>

Weather – We have visited Crater Lake during summer, and it gets hot. We recommend wearing a cap or wide brim hat and sturdy hiking shoes and bringing water, sunscreen, and bug repellent. The

sun is very intense at this altitude – the altitude at Rim Village is 7,100 feet. You can swim in the Lake (we have not), but keep in mind the water is very cold. It is not unusual to encounter snow in summer as you drive around Crater Lake. During our last visit, we ran into snow (picture on the right). It snows a lot at Crater Lake during the winter: Locals like to point out that it is one of the snowiest place in the lower 48.



HISTORY

Crater Lake has an interesting history. It was formed approximately 7,640 years ago when the Mount Mazama volcano exploded. Mount Mazama's elevation was 12,000 feet; after the eruption, the highest elevation is approximately 8,100 feet. The Lake was formed in the hollowed-out volcano's caldera by rain and snow. No river flows in or out of the Lake.



Archaeologists have determined that the Fort Rock area, 50 miles north of Crater Lake, is the oldest settlement in America for the Paleo-Indians that crossed the Bering Strait into America from North Asia. The Fort Rock Lake area has had human habitation for 13,000 years. (We describe Fort Rock in our write up "Central Oregon" in case you want more background or information about a visit to Fort Rock.) These inhabitants would have witnessed the Mount Mazama explosion.

According to National Park Service – Crater Lake History:

Accounts of the eruption can be found in stories told by the Klamath Indians, who are the descendants of the Makalak people. The Makalaks lived in an area southeast of the present park. Because information was passed down orally, there are many different versions. The Umpqua people have a similar story, featuring different spirits. The Makalak legend told in the park film, *The Crater Lake Story*, is as follows:

The spirit of the mountain was called *Chief of the Below World* (Llao). The spirit of the sky was called *Chief of the Above World* (Skell). Sometimes Llao came up from his home inside the earth and stood on top of Mount Mazama, one of the highest mountains in the region. During one of these visits, he saw the Makalak chief's beautiful daughter and fell in love with her. He promised her eternal life if she would return with him to his lodge below the mountain. When she refused, he became angry and declared that he would destroy her people with fire. In his rage, he rushed up through the opening of his mountain and stood on top of it and began to hurl fire down upon them.

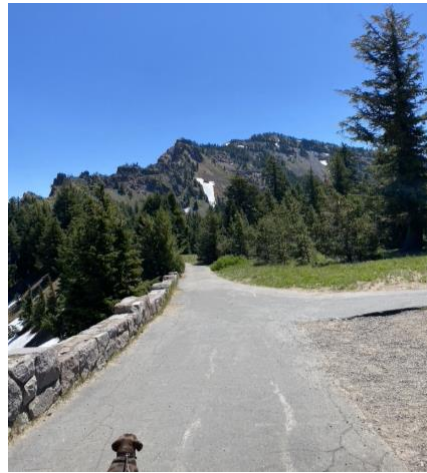
The mighty Skell took pity on the people and stood atop Mount Shasta to defend them. From their mountaintops, the two chiefs waged a furious battle. They hurled red hot rocks as large as hills. They made the earth tremble and caused great landslides of fire. The people fled in terror to the waters of Klamath Lake.

Two holy men offered to sacrifice themselves by jumping into the pit of fire on top of Llao's mountain. Skell was moved by

their bravery and drove Llao back into Mount Mazama. When the sun rose next, the great mountain was gone. It had fallen in on Llao. All that remained was a large hole. Rain fell in torrents, filling the hole with water. This is now called Crater Lake

Out of respect to this legend and the religious connotation, Crater Lake is viewed as a scared place by American Indians, and some choose not to visit it.

Crater Lake was designated a National Park on May 22, 1902, when President Theodore Roosevelt signed the bill creating Crater Lake as the sixth National Park. William Gladstone Steel is credited for working tirelessly for 17 years in obtaining the National Park designation for Crater Lake.



Rim Road, which is 33 miles long, circles the lake. Points of the interest are clearly marked.



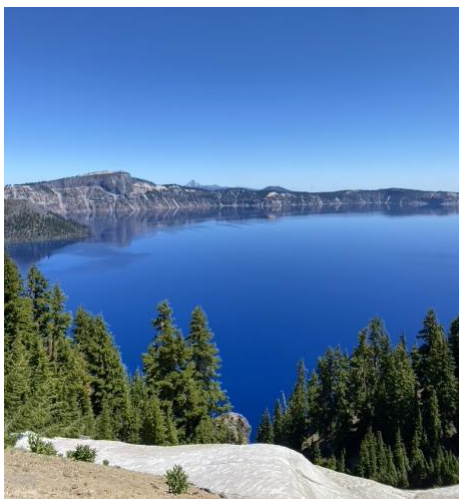
National Park Service Publication Map

Here are three spots on the road that are a must stop.

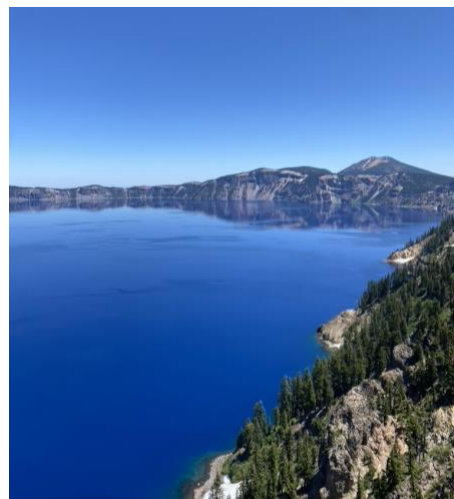
RIM VILLAGE

Rim Village has the only commercial activity on Rim Road in Crater Lake. The village has a lodge, gift shops. If you don't want to drive the Rim Road, trolley tours of the Lake are offered here. The views are stunning, and a must is to walk down to the Sinnott Overlook.

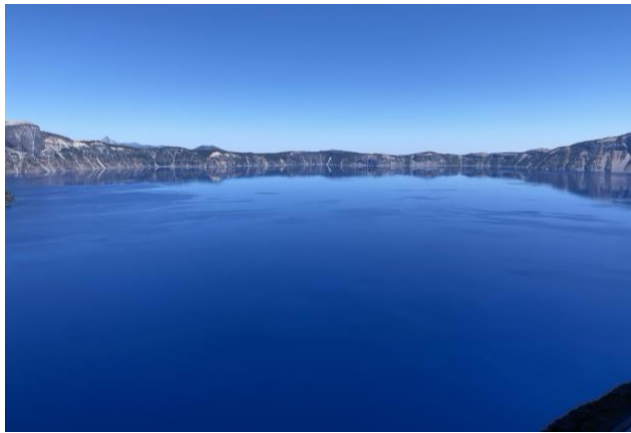
The overlook provides great views. A relief map within the outlook provides an overview of the lake (shown at right). We recommend starting your visit in the Rim Village and Sinnott Overlook. The gift shop also has maps for Crater Lake that are helpful, as cell service can be spotty in the park. Throughout the lake there are great photo opportunities, and the Rim Village provides opportunities to take great pictures with the lake as a backdrop.



Left side view of Lake



Right side view of Lake



Center view

MERRIAM POINT

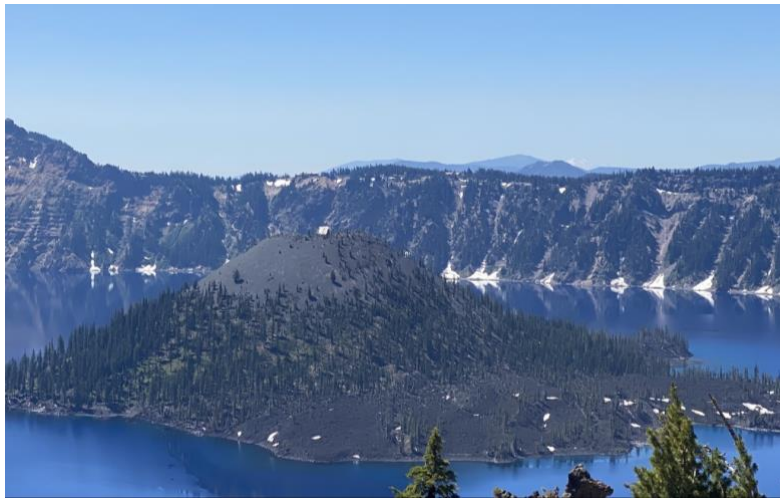
Merriam Point is another good spot for pictures and panoramic view of the Lake. This is the first place you will come upon when you come in through North entrance.



Looking towards Rim Village



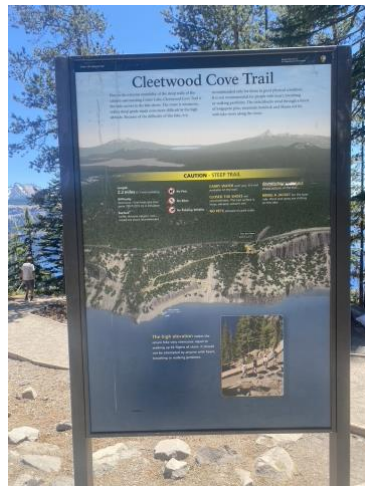
Wizard Island from North

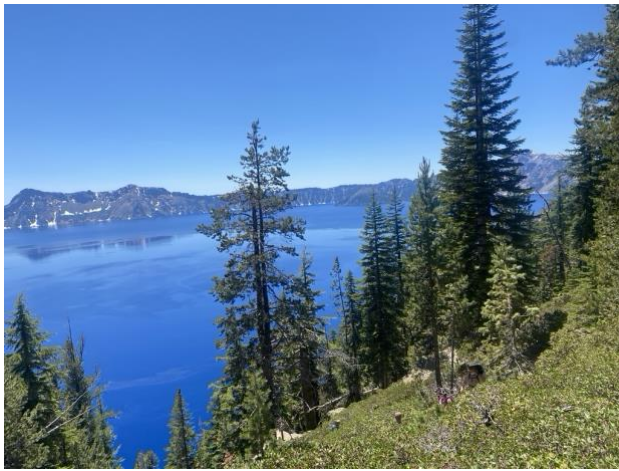


Wizard Island

CLEETWOOD COVE

Cleetwood Cove is on the north side of the Rim Road. From Cleetwood Cove, you can hike down to the Lake. The 2.2-mile roundtrip hike is strenuous, as you descend 700 feet to the lakeshore and then climb back up 700 feet at high altitude. From Cleetwood Cove, you can take boat tours of the Lake and Wizard Island. Keep in mind you have to hike down to the dock and hike back. Cleetwood Cove is one of the few spots you can go into the lake and swim. As mentioned before the water is really, really cold, and yes, there is that 700-foot hike back to the top. There are restrooms in the parking lot and a couple of restrooms at the bottom. Be advised that dogs are not allowed on the trail.





View of Lake from Cleetwood Cove

LODGING AND RESTURANTS

Lodging:

- [Crater Lake Lodge](#) in Rim Village is open from May to October. Please check the link provided above to see if there is a change to the dates as you are planning your visit.
- [Cabins at Mazama Village](#). There are 10 cabins available. Mazama Village is 7 miles south of Rim Village.



Restaurants:

Rim Village

- [Crater Lake Lodge Dining Room](#)
- [Rim Village Café](#) - The main gift shop has Rim Village Café food options for “grab and go”.

Mazama Village

- [Annie Creek Restaurant and Gift Shop](#)



Our walking guide (not on a trail)