

Westport Light State Park shines as day-trip destination

| The Olympian

- What:** Outing to Westport Light State Park, on the Washington coast in Westport.
- Where:** Westport Light is about 70 miles from downtown Olympia.
- To do:** Late summer and early fall are sensational times on Washington's coast. The weather is usually stable and mild — and there is a better chance of a warm, sunny afternoon than any other time of year. One of the best places to visit is Westport Light State Park. You can walk around the outside of the lighthouse, which is on U.S. Coast Guard property on the border of the 212-acre park.
- Shining light:** But this park is much more than a lighthouse. A 1.3-mile paved concrete trail leads from the park picnic area near the beach through grassy dunes covered with waving beach grass all the way to Westhaven State Park. There are trails from the main trail that lead to the public beach, which stretches 18 miles from Westhaven State Park south to Grayland. The trail is an easy walk for just about anyone, and people who use wheelchairs will have no problems. The views of the Pacific Ocean, the Westport Jetty and the gorgeous beach are terrific.
- Birders' paradise:** Birdwatchers love the variety of shorebirds, anglers love the excellent surf perch fishing along the beach, surfers love the waves, and beachcombers love the beach. There are few places in Washington more attractive or beautiful than the trail and nearby beach on a sunny day.
- Natural splendor:** There are benches along the trail, and a free telescope is available near the trailhead at Westport Light State Park. On a calm evening, the sunset over the Pacific Ocean is beautiful. There are sheltered picnic tables, restrooms and grills at the picnic area near the beach. This is an wonderful place for a family cookout.
- Safety:** Don't go into the water unless you are an experienced ocean swimmer or surfer wearing a high-quality wetsuit. There are rip currents that can take swimmers out past the breaking waves. The water is also very cold — 55 degrees is about as warm as it ever gets. At high tide, watch for logs in the surf — especially right after a big storm.
- Rip Tide? Relax:** If you are caught in a rip tide, don't panic or fight the current. Just relax and let the current pull you away from the shore. Swim parallel to the beach, and you'll soon be out of the rip. Then let the waves carry you in. You often can stand on the bottom and wade in once you get out of the rip. Don't let kids play in water deeper than their ankles.
- Equipment:** Good walking shoes, raingear, sunscreen, snacks, water, binoculars, cameras and beach gear if you want to linger on the sand. If you are casting for

surfperch, consider wearing a wetsuit and life preserver — just in case a sneaker wave decides to swamp you.

•**Directions:** Drive to Westport and take a left turn from state Route 105 onto Ocean Avenue to get to the park.

•**Camping:** There is no camping at this park, but nearby Twin Harbors State Park has lots of campsites.

•**Hours:** The park is open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. during summer and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. during winter.

•**More information:** Check www.parks.wa.gov.

