

This page: Pacific Coast, Oregon.
Milwaukee City Hall clock tower.
Columbia River Gorge
Opposite page: The Empire State
Trail – see empiretrail.ny.gov. Niagara
Falls at night, Canadian border



Boring, Oregon is 20 miles east of Portland, which is 80 miles from the Pacific Ocean. Although my Boring-to-Dull quest took me ever eastwards, I wasn't going to miss out on an American coast-to-coast. So I caught a bus west to a stunning place called Oceanside, where I dipped my feet in the sea. I rode to Boring from there, arriving late in the evening of 8 August.

The Boring and Dull Day celebrations were bigger than I expected. I was hosted by four local dignitaries over lunch and then invited to follow the bagpipers at the head of 'Oregon's second-shortest parade'. My presence caused a ripple of interest and I was introduced to – and photographed with – many people. In the early evening my new friends waved me off on my adventure.

BELOW THE 49TH PARALLEL

My plan was simple. I would ride in a straight line from Boring to the east coast, about 2,500 miles as the crow flies and perhaps 3,200 miles by road. That took me past some friends who live in Minneapolis, about halfway,

where I would get my bike serviced. I was allowing six weeks for this journey, cycling an average of 90 miles each day, six days a week.

I didn't know what exact route I would take or where I would stay, except for the first couple of days along the vast Columbia River Gorge. This was an obvious and truly scenic way to begin. I stuck mostly to the north side of the gorge, following the broad, blue expanse of water, surrounded by hills and waterfalls. I rode under the watchful presence of the glacier-capped Mount Hood, which loomed large over the southern horizon as much as 50 miles away, close to Boring. As a springboard to the American West, it was ideal.

I was relying heavily on Google Maps, because America is simply too big to map on paper with the detail of an OS map. Overall, Google Maps did well. But as early as my second day, I learned that many of America's back roads are rough, unsurfaced gravel, and Google Maps likes to send unwitting cyclists along them. I had a couple of dicey and unwelcome episodes in the first week but survived to tell the tale. At the time I

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