



Squawk

New England Section 99s

International Organization of Women Pilots

Member News

This article is too long to include in a regular edition of Squawk, but too good not to share with all our Section members!



Oregon Ho! Story & Photos by Margot Cheel

This summer on an Alaska Air flight to Seattle, I stood up to put something overhead and the young woman in the aisle across asked “Is that a sectional chart on your jacket?” She had to be a pilot! It was Cassie Tatro, a 99, in our very Eastern New England Chapter. She was traveling with a student pilot friend. Their original plans had been Oshgosh, but now they were on their way to Alaska to fly there.

That was the delightful beginning of my trip with travel doubts calmed, middle seats empty, good air flow and precautions all around. Even the transfer in SEA to a prop jet to Medford, Oregon went well as everyone respected space in the tighter quarters.



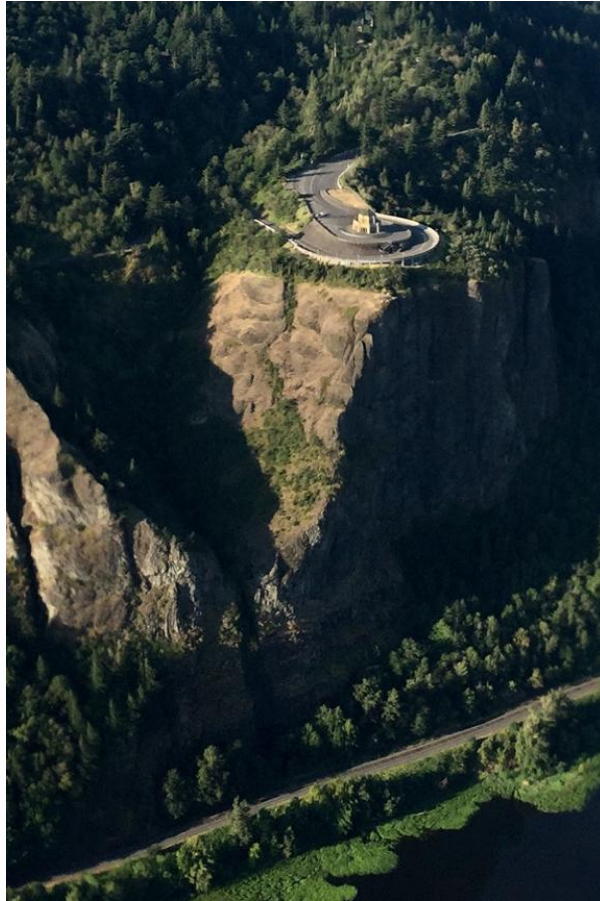
My purpose for the trip was to meet my kids and grandkids for a week of camping, near MDF, close to the spectacular Crater Lake.



I spent a night in Sisters, Oregon and discovered, like many places throughout Oregon, that it had an airport – with a helicopter pad, single runway and one lone plane on the ramp. The sunset background was stunning.



Best of all - when my flight home was postponed a day, I had the chance to fly out of Aurora, OR and photograph aerials over the Columbia Gorge.



One striking landmark rising 700 Ft is Crown Point, built 1916-1918 as a rest stop for the original highway, which predates the interstate that now runs at river level through the Gorge.



Another towering rock formation on the river's edge is Beacon Rock, named by Lewis & Clark who camped here on their way to the Pacific Ocean. There is a spiral path to climb to the top (if you dare!)



The Columbia River is home to the very impressive Bonneville Dam: its first powerhouse built in mid 1930s as works project during The Depression; second built 1974-1981. It became National Historic Landmark in 1987.



Just up the river, looking west toward Portland is the town of Cascade Locks, named for locks that operated for steamboats up & down the river before the Bonneville Dam was built. (Dam in distance.) Note bridge.



This is the famous “Bridge of the Gods”. Charles Lindberg was here in 1927 (same year he flew the Atlantic) to dedicate the new (and now gone) Portland Swan Island Airport. River was lower then and it is known that Lindberg flew under this bridge. The bridge was also the site for the closing scene in the movie “Wild” where Cheryl Strayed (played by Reece Witherspoon) finishes her long arduous hike on the Pacific Crest Trail.



I was intrigued by these western themed wagon buildings. Discovered they are

the End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Oregon City (the destination for the migrants traveling the Oregon Trail to the fertile Willamette Valley). Originally when first built, there were canvas coverings on the wagon roofs. Very unfortunately, this area was hard hit by the recent wildfires of 2020.



On returning to Aurora, I learned that this GA airport was non towered until just recently. There was enough increase in aviation traffic to warrant a new tower, with its own airport name inscribed.

My thanks goes to very helpful pilot, Brian Burk, who having flown scenic flights out of Portland's Troutdale airport, could inform me of the history & fascinating details of Oregon's Columbia River area. (And who agreed to fly very early the next morning when plane & weather did cooperate the day before.) Our flight over the Gorge was accomplished just in time for me to return to PDX for my flight home at noon that day!

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