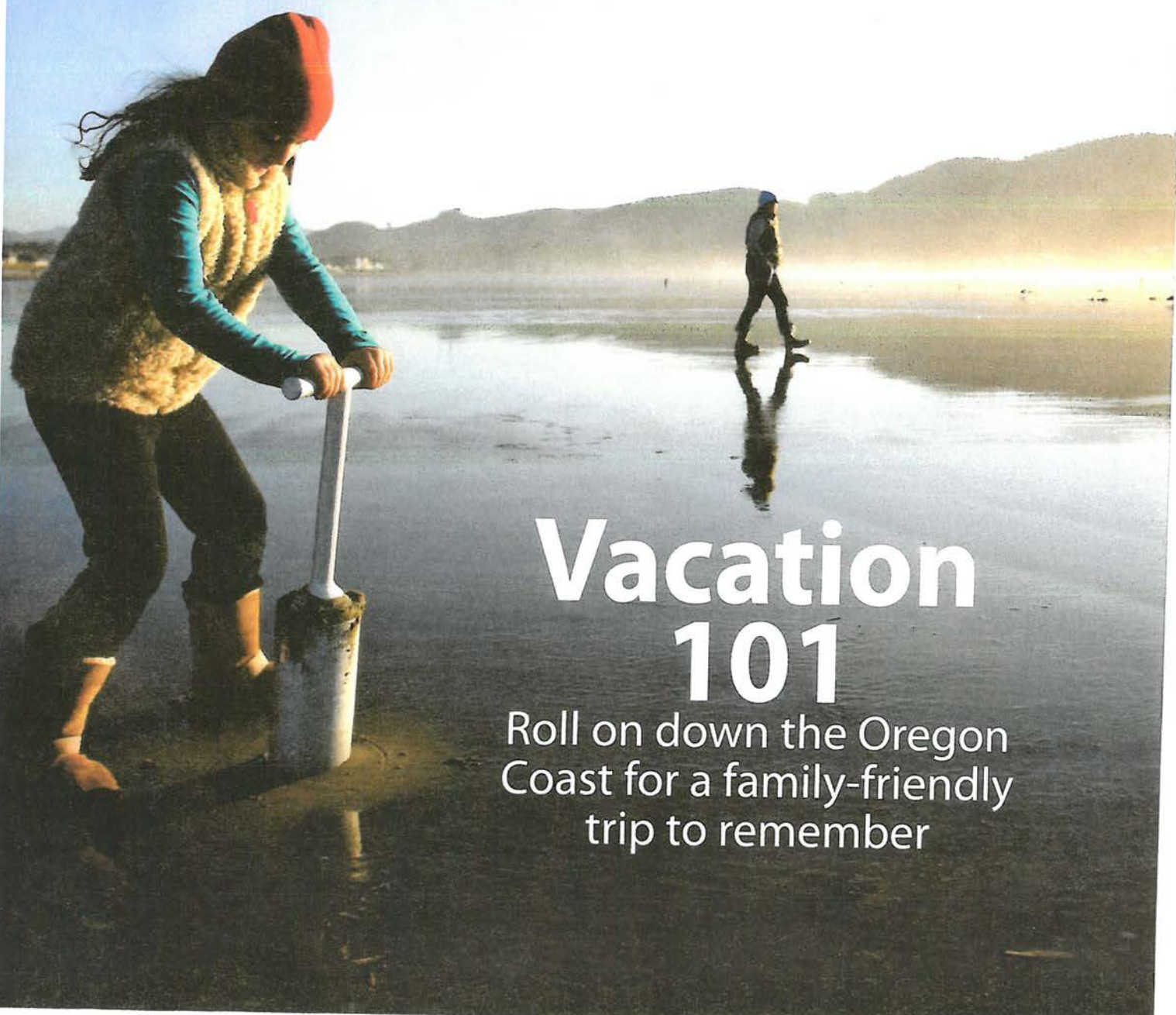


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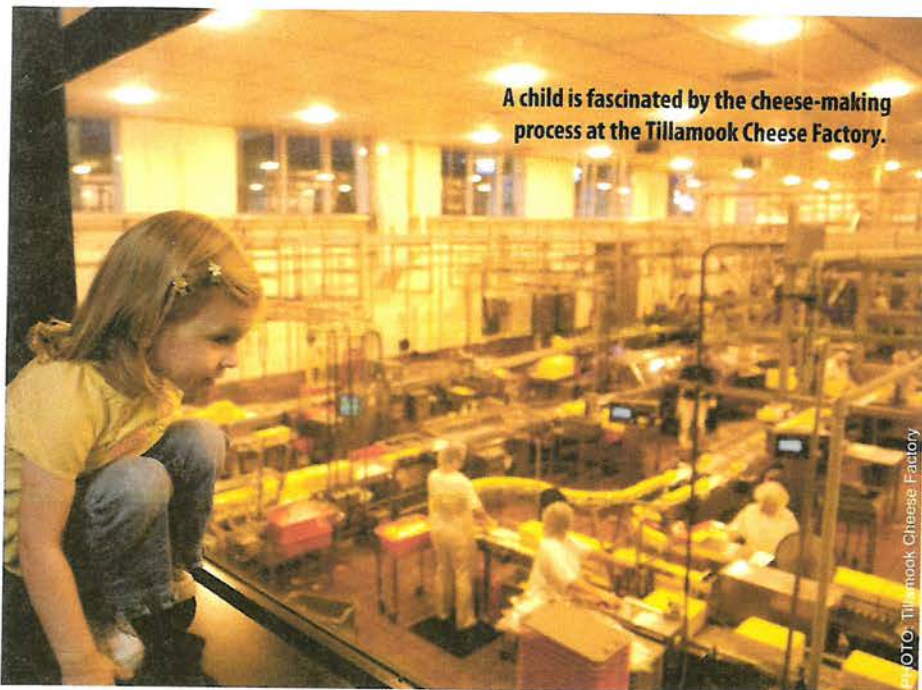
Vacation 101

Roll on down the Oregon Coast for a family-friendly trip to remember

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Roll on down the Oregon Coast for a family-friendly trip to remember

By HEATHER LARSON



A child is fascinated by the cheese-making process at the Tillamook Cheese Factory.

PHOTO: Tillamook Cheese Factory



Bumper cars in Seaside.

PHOTO: City of Seaside Visitors Bureau

Highway 101, which hugs the Oregon Coast, passes through some of the most family-centric towns. With so many different opportunities and attractions, visitors tend to return year after year. Although the coast line covers 363 miles from the northern part of the state to the California border, there's plenty to do in just the top third of the Oregon Coast. With the surf crashing, towering rock structures jutting out of the ocean and the smell of the sea,

this trip will be a sensory experience you won't soon forget.

For kids, the coast offers climbing, interactive museum exhibits, arcade games, beaches, an aquarium and tons of places to stretch their legs on the beach. Moms won't want to miss boutique shopping, art galleries, beachcombing and stellar views. Dads might savor the bounty of museums, cheese factories and clam digging. No matter what your preference, you'll find activities for every family member's taste.

ASTORIA

The oldest American settlement west of the Rockies, Astoria makes a good first stop. Filled with good restaurants, economical lodging and several attractions, this city has almost totally reinvented itself over the past few years.

Kids will delight in climbing the 164 steps of the Astoria Column located on Coxcomb Hill. Before venturing up the winding staircase, be sure to buy a balsa wood glider at the gift shop. At the top of the 600-foot structure, whoever chooses to make the climb will find an open platform where they can sail the glider off and see where it lands.

After that aerobic activity, children should be relaxed enough to tour the Columbia Maritime Museum. Admission includes a self-guided tour of the Lightship Columbia, which is moored just outside the museum building. This ship served as a floating lighthouse and provided safe navigation along our coasts for many years. Because this is a fairly new museum, it is more kid-friendly than most. Kids can experience local marine history by steering "landlocked" boats and will love the swords and scabbards on display. More than 30,000 artifacts have made their way to this museum.

SEASIDE

Just 12 miles to the south, you'll come to the resort community of Seaside. That's hardly enough time for the chorus of "are we there yet?" to even begin.

Children being children, they probably won't want to leave the arcades, Carousel Mall or the other amusements in the town, such as bumper cars. What's even more fun and quite addicting is the game of Fascination in the Funland Arcade, which the entire family can play. Invented in the 1920s, it's a game similar to Skee-ball or Rollerball. You roll a ball under a Plexiglas screen and when it falls through one of the 25 holes provided, a light lights up on the backboard. Your goal is to get a "bingo" either across, down or diagonally with the lights. An auctioneer-type emcee lets everyone know how many lights they need for a bingo to keep the competitiveness going. The Fascination Room is open seven

days a week in the summer and on Thursday, Friday and Saturday the rest of the year.

This might be a good time to visit the Carousel Mall, let the little ones ride the carousel and get an ice cream cone or malt from the Flashback Malt Shoppe, which is full of memorabilia.

At the Seaside Aquarium, you can feed the seals, touch starfish and prickly sea urchins in the "Touch Tank" and ask any questions you want of the staff.

Seaside's 1.5 mile promenade borders the beach and affords a great opportunity to watch, smell and hear the surf. Off the promenade, you can also build sandcastles, dip your toes in the ocean, fly kites or dig clams at low tide.

For panoramic ocean views, wildlife sightings and spending time on the beach, a stop at Ecola State Park is in order. Just two miles north of Cannon Beach, this park boasts the Clatsop Loop Trail, a 2.5 mile trail meandering through a lush forest of Sitka spruce. History buffs might note this trail is a segment of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. William Clark and a small exploration party walked it in 1806, searching for a beached whale and hoping to return to camp with an ample supply of whale blubber and oil.

CANNON BEACH

Drive nine more miles to the south and you'll reach the quaint town of Cannon Beach and its iconic Haystack Rock. If you can time your visit to a low tide, you'll be able to find all kinds of sea life including hermit crabs and sea stars in the tide pools at the base of the Rock and also see the birds, like tufted puffins and black oystercatchers, that find sanctuary there.

Moms can browse the boutiques and art galleries lining Cannon Beach's downtown street. The whole family might like watching the candy maker at Bruce's Candy Kitchen pull taffy. Saltwater taffy is everywhere on the Oregon Coast including in hotels, but not a bit of saltwater has been added. You might want to ask about that. Everyone seems to have a different story.

Even though Cannon Beach is small, it boasts some quality live theatre at the Coaster Theatre. The building where plays and musicals take place all year long used to serve as the local roller skating rink through the 1950s. This summer, the theater will put on a version of "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," which is suitable for the entire family.

TILLAMOOK

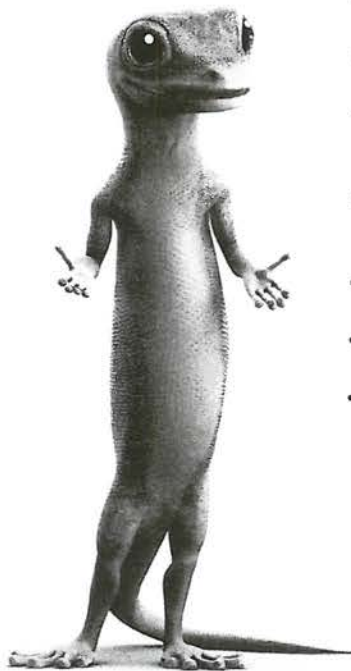
You've probably heard of Til-

lamook Cheese, but at the Tillamook Cheese Factory you can see how it's made, taste it, eat lunch, have a Tillamook ice cream cone (made from flavors you'll never see in your supermarket) and send "cheese mail." For \$1, kids can send a 20-second video from the upper level of the Cheese Factory to several of their friends and family members.

And if you love cheese, stop by the Blue Heron French Cheese Company just down the street. Set up like a gift shop, this company offers samples of almost all its food products, will whip up a box lunch for your upcoming picnic and has a petting zoo for the little ones.

Plane aficionados in your family should find the Tillamook Air Museum to their liking. Be sure to watch the video describing how this hangar made of wood and designed to house blimps was originally built in nine months and then how a second one was completed in just 29 days. Most of the airplanes in the museum are kept in flying condition and are owned by one gentleman – a man named Jack Harrison.

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