

One Place Across Time

Explore Southwest Washington with Elderhostel and Clark College

By ANNETTE STANHOPE for The Columbian



Many of us want to pursue “lifelong learning” well into our senior years. However, we also want to treat ourselves to more leisure time – how do we find the time and budget for both? To meet both interests, Elderhostel International (EI) has created thousands of programs that combine relaxing vacations with engaging, university-worthy classes. One of these successful programs is now starting its second year this July 16-21, hosted by Vancouver’s Clark College.

One might assume this program would cover Lewis & Clark history, considering its importance around here. But according to Tracy Reilly Kelly, Program Manager of Travel Studies and Mature Learning at Clark College, because Lewis & Clark has already been featured in other EI programs, they wanted something different. “We

created a curriculum around what’s perfectly unique about our region,” says Kelly. “Our program covers the experience of westward-bound pioneers coming to Fort Vancouver in the 1800s and traveling down the gorge.”

Life in the Columbia Gorge during the 19th century is a large subject, but Clark College does it justice by looking at it from many angles. Start your educational journey with a coach bus trip along the dramatically scenic Gorge. Stopping at both the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and Columbia River Interpretive Center, you get your fill of Native American legends, natural history, and pioneer logging history. Two days are devoted to Fort Vancouver, where you learn about the fur trade, daily life at the fort, watch reenactments, and even watch an ongoing

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archaeological dig, all from the staff of the National Park Service.

The archaeological dig at Fort Vancouver continues to provide interesting surprises. For example, archaeologists have uncovered the largest diversity of Spode-brand china at the fort. Apparently, the reason for this, says Kelly, is due to the traders from the Hudson's Bay Company marrying Native American women. To these women, variety was more important than having identical patterns in one set – hence the myriad of china patterns found at the site.

A separate day is devoted to in-depth Native American history and culture of

southwest Washington. This special tour is guided by a representative of the Chinook tribe and includes a trip to an authentically recreated Native American Plankhouse and a delicious salmon dinner.

Quality accommodations at the Red Lion Inn are coupled with this rich itinerary. Vancouver has several options for lodging, but the Red Lion suits the program's purposes best. "Red Lion has good prices and is on the Columbia River," says Kelly. "It's perfect for the educational experience. [The river's presence] allows you to think of where things are historically."

A month later, August 6-11 and again on 13-18, Clark College will be featuring an Elderhostel program at Washington's Long Beach

Peninsula. Taking advantage of the gorgeous weather on the coast in August, this program will focus on studying local ecology. Retired professor Edmund Bedecarrax from San Francisco City College will explain the fascinating intricacies of the unique coastal ecosystems. Students will be able to explore the dunes and beaches firsthand and identify wildlife and geological features they learned in class. Also included in the ecology study are classes explaining the roles that oysters and salmon had in settler and Native American communities.

The program adds trips to peninsula lighthouses and Long Beach's World Kite Museum, the only museum devoted to kites in the United States. The lighthouse tour includes a tantalizing mix of

history and myth—are there ghosts from past shipwrecks lurking around these old beacons? The kite visit offers a history of the cultural importance of kites and gives you a chance to fly one.

Like many Elderhostel programs, Clark College's offerings are kind on personal preferences and budget. Although these programs are planned packages, there is some flexibility. Educational material is scheduled before lunch, and the afternoons feature more "field trip"-like activities, so you can opt out of those if you wish. Evenings

feature social activities, such as dances and live music. And you can have all of this, including 5 nights of lodging and meals, for \$668 per person for the Vancouver program and \$663 per person for Long Beach. (Local residents can stay at home and pay under \$400 for just participating in the program.)

"People get hooked," observes Kelly. "In addition to this high quality experience, you meet many interesting people whose lives center on education and culture. Elderhostel is truly a beloved experience."

Clark College

The Next Step

Additional Resources:

CLARK COLLEGE

web.clark.edu/conted/mature_learning/elderhostel.html

ELDERHOSTEL INTERNATIONAL

1-877-426-8056

www.elderhostel.org

You can browse the Elderhostel International website to discover programs not only in the Northwest but also all over the world.

