



Adventure Checklist Malheur Refuge & Southeast Oregon Desert Country

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in southeast Oregon is a special place, for so many reasons and for so many people. It seems to have an indelible effect on visitors, as evidenced by the small but dedicated group of birders, naturalists and solitude seekers that for decades have made annual or semi-annual pilgrimages to the place. First-time visitors to the area tend to come away awed, even reverent, and eager to return.

Located in remote Harney County, Malheur is a high-desert oasis for wildlife, an ecological jewel along the Pacific Flyway when such refuges for migratory birds are few and far between. It is a place that, though subtle charms and hard-won acquaintance, speaks volumes to people, and stays with them wherever they go.

Here are some common-sense tips on how to make the most of your visit, whether you are a Malheur neophyte or a dust-bitten, sun-wizened high desert devotee.

Outside of the well-marked Center Patrol Road (CPR) and various others found within the Refuge, there are a great deal of side-routes in the general Malheur vicinity that may be of interest to visitors. Most of these roads are unpaved and vary in surface conditions. It therefore behooves visitors to know which roads are which, how to find them and where they lead to. Here are some navigation suggestions:

- **Don't necessarily trust your vehicle navigation system**
- **Paper maps are good. Bring several different maps.**
- **A Hand-held GPS navigation device can be useful.**

Distances between points of interest in the high desert country of southeast Oregon can be formidable. Be aware of where you can reliably find fuel, food, and water. It isn't uncommon to encounter signs stating, "Next Services: Forget about it" or something to that effect. (Just kidding...mostly). Here are some travel tips:

- **Always carry ample drinking water and food.**
- **Gas up your vehicle when you can.**
- **Make sure your tires are in good to excellent condition and carry a full-size spare.**

Weather in the northwest Great Basin is mercurial: desiccating heat during summer days, chilly temperatures at night. Some Areas see an almost 40-degree swing in temperatures from day to night in the summer. The sun may shine mercilessly through thin, dry air; thunderstorms may roll through dropping the mercury in a matter of hours and turning dirt roads to slick mud. The desert wind, when it's really blowing, can be

downright oppressive. Compared for all seasons, and if you happen to visit from late May through early August prepare yourself for mosquitoes. Here are some survival items to consider:

- Pack multiple clothing layers.
- Wearing sunscreen and lip balm is a good idea.
- Insect repellent to deter those pesky summer mosquitoes.
- Don't forget those designer sunglasses.
- Good hats are a must have.
- Plenty of water or other beverages to stay hydrated.
- And of course, ample food and snacks. (No pizza delivered here!)

You're going to see some amazing things at Malheur and in the surrounding areas like Steens Mountain so the better equip you are to espy these wonders with clarity and proper magnification/field of view, the better off you'll be.

- Binoculars are a must have.
- A spotting scope you if want to get up close and personal.
- Camera, lenes and tripod for the photography buffs.
- Cellphones have great cameras too.

Welcome to the High Desert - Prepare to be Amazed