

# Oregon's Willowa Mountains

## with Naturalist Journeys



**July 18 – 25, 2022**

866-900-1146 | 520-558-1146 | [www.naturalistjourneys.com](http://www.naturalistjourneys.com)

Explore one of Oregon's most spectacular regions with Naturalist Journeys: the Willowa Mountains of northeastern Oregon. Discover stunning mountain scenery and carpets of native wildflowers in the Willowas, often referred to as the Oregon Alps. Also travel through areas swept by the Missoula Floods at the end of the last Ice Age.

Stand beside wild rivers as you seek riparian birds. Search for Williamson's Sapsucker in mixed-conifer forest, and watch American Dipper on bubbling streams.

Relax in a comfortable boutique hotel and enjoy modern-day wineries and wine-tasting rooms in quaint, art-filled Walla Walla, Washington. Discover the quiet beauty of a little-known but much enjoyed part of America.

### **Tour Highlights**

- From our base at the historic Willowa Lake Lodge, enjoy daily hikes and strolls in mixed-conifer forest
- Explore Forest Service roads to the edge of the Eagle Cap Wilderness
- Ride the aerial tram to the top of Mount Howard for some of the thirty+ subalpine wildflower species and high elevation birds, such as Clark's Nutcracker and Red Crossbill
- Seek out all three western chickadee species and three different nuthatches
- See American Dipper bobbing in the Willowa River with resident Bald Eagle on the lakeshore
- Watch for seven different woodpecker species, including possible American Three-toed Woodpecker
- Learn about unique American history at the Chief Joseph memorial and the Nez Perce Indian lands
- Explore the tiny scenic town of Joseph at the base of the 'Oregon Alps'

### **Tour Summary**

8-Day / 7-Night Oregon Birding & Nature Tour

\$3490, from Pasco

Airport is Tri-Cities Airport in Pasco (PSC)

### **Day-to-Day Itinerary**

#### **Mon., July 18 Arrivals**

Welcome to Oregon! Please plan to arrive today at the Pasco Airport (PSC) by 2:00 PM. Once the group is assembled, we work our way to Walla Walla, driving east an hour. Please make sure your binoculars are easily accessible and you wear walking shoes. We settle into our hotel and enjoy a celebratory welcome dinner.

*Accommodations at the Finch, Walla Walla (D)*

## **Tues., July 19 Walla Walla to Wallowa Lake**

With a two-and-a-half hour drive ahead of us, we head straight into the mountains after breakfast, making a couple of birding stops in the ponderosa pine forest of the northern Blue Mountains. We search for Lazuli Bunting, Western Wood-Pewee, Mountain Chickadee, Steller's Jay, Cassin's Finch, and Pygmy Nuthatch.

After a casual lunch in Elgin, we explore the quiet Grand Ronde River at Rinehart Canyon, where we hope to find Gray Catbird, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Canyon Wren. After a quick stop at the confluence of the Minam and Wallowa Rivers, we head upstream along the Wallowa, through canyon and into the beautiful Wallowa Valley. We arrive at the lodge with plenty of time to check-in and relax before dinner.

We stay five nights at the historic Wallowa Lake Lodge, overlooking one of the most beautiful lakes in the Pacific Northwest. Originally built in 1923, the lodge resembles the great national park lodges—but without the crowds. *Accommodations at Wallowa Lake Lodge (B,L,D)*

## **Wed., July 20 – Sat., July 23 Time to Explore! Mountains, Canyons & Rivers**

Wallowa Lake makes the perfect base for great birding and botanizing, and spend each day exploring different parts of this scenic region. We have a casual breakfast each morning at the lodge, followed by a day in the field; most afternoons are spent around the lodge and Wallowa Lake State Park.

Several montane Forest Service roads go to the edge of the Eagle Cap Wilderness. One day, we plan to ride the aerial tram to the top of 8,200-foot Mount Howard for endemic subalpine wildflowers, high elevation birds, and stunning views of the Wallowas. Another day we take up the Lostine River Canyon, where we search for montane bird species in the riparian and mixed-conifer habitats. We will drive a loop above Little Sheep Creek to about 6,000 feet at Salt Creek Summit. We may even head out to The Nature Conservancy's Zumwalt Prairie. Our daily itinerary is flexible.

### **Flora & Fauna**

The Rocky Mountain influence on the flora of northeastern Oregon is especially on display on the cooler north-facing slopes of the Wallowas, where the Wallowa River and Hurricane and Lostine Creeks drain the watersheds of the Eagle Cap Wilderness. We plan several short hikes and strolls to bird and botanize in these areas.

Many plant species occur here in the meadows and forests, some of which are found nowhere else in Oregon. Conifers include western larch, Engelmann spruce, mountain hemlock, Rocky Mountain juniper, Douglas-fir, and subalpine fir, plus ponderosa, lodgepole, and whitebark pines. We also look for aspens, willows, and cottonwoods along the various riparian habitats. Wildflowers of the region are abundant and diverse, and what we see depends on the weather of the spring and early summer. Just a tiny sampling of the forbs we may encounter include: Gentians (*Gentianella* and *Gentianopsis*); Valerians (*Valeriana*); Louseworts (*Pedicularis*); Gooseberries (*Ribes*); Monkeyflowers (*Erythranthe*); Pussytoes (*Antennaria*); Columbines (*Aquilegia*); wild Heliotrope (*Phacelia*); Balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza*); Camas (*Camassia*), Mariposa Lilies (*Calochortus*); Stonecrop (*Sedum*); Bog Orchids; and several shrubby Penstemon species. Fifty or more alpine wildflower species can be found blooming on Mount Howard's summit during mid-summer, and we look carefully for one of the rarest plant species in North America, Greenman's Desert Parsley (*Lomatium greenmanii*).

Birds are not quite as diverse as wildflowers, but we can still expect many western specialties. A few of these may include Vaux's Swift, Hammond's Flycatcher, Townsend's Solitaire, Western Tanager, and Black-headed Grosbeak. Birds we search for on Mt. Howard include Golden Eagle, Williamson's Sapsucker, Mountain Bluebird,

and Clark's Nutcracker. We might find Spotted Sandpiper and American Dipper near the lakeshore and maybe even Lewis's Woodpecker near the mouth of the Wallowa River. Riparian areas also host Red-naped Sapsucker, Cedar Waxwing, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, and Belted Kingfisher. Breeding montane specialties also include American Three-toed Woodpecker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, MacGillivray's Warbler, and possible Calliope Hummingbird.

The aerial tram ride to the summit of Mount Howard is exhilarating, with fantastic views in all directions. As we exit the tram station, we have the choice of several (mostly level) trails that wind their way through a stunted subalpine fir and whitebark pine forest, liberally interspersed with fescue meadows supporting a diverse montane flora. High elevation species (both plants and birds) thrive here, and on a clear day you can look far into Washington State to the north and Idaho to the east. Below us we can see all of Wallowa Lake (3½ miles in length), with clear views of its stunning glacial moraines. From this vantage point, it's easy to understand how the craggy Wallowas—with many peaks visible from Mount Howard—have been nicknamed the 'Oregon Alps'.

Most of our dinners are held at the lodge, with at least one night in Joseph or Enterprise. The Old West feel of Joseph is evident, featuring galleries, bronze foundries, distillery, cafes, shops, and restaurants. Enterprise hosts still more cafes, restaurants, and a brewery/pub known statewide.

*Accommodations at Wallowa Lake Lodge (B,L,D)*

## **Sun., July 24 Return to Pasco**

After breakfast, we have plenty of time to pack our bags and depart for the leisurely drive to Pasco, Washington, heading for the airport. The route takes us back through the northern Blue Mountains of the Umatilla National Forest, through the Tollgate area adjacent to Langdon Lake, and down the mountains into alluvial-floored river valleys supporting ranches and irrigated fields near the confluence of the Walla Walla and Columbia Rivers. If time allows, we make a couple of casual birding stops along the route. We enjoy an early lunch at Anthony's at Columbia Point, on the bank of the mighty Columbia River.

Our final dinner is at Anthony's at Columbia Point, on the bank of the mighty Columbia River. We celebrate a fun tour and go over our final birding list.

*Accommodations at Red Lion Hotel (B,L,D)*

## **Mon., July 25 Departures**

You may depart at your leisure today as our hotel has a convenient airport shuttle. (B)

# **Tour Details**

## **Plan Ahead!**

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Their website will show a grid of tour cost and your age category for you to make selections. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

## **Cost of the Journey**

Cost of the Journey is \$3490 DBL / \$4260 SGL, based on double occupancy, per person. The tour price includes airport transfers, 7 nights' accommodations, all meals from as noted in the itinerary, professional guide services, park and preserve entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses.

Cost of the journey does not include airfare from your home to Pasco, Oregon, or items of a personal nature, such as drinks from the bar, telephone, and local guide gratuities (at your discretion).

## **Travel Information**

Please plan to arrive at Tri-Cities Airport in Pasco (PSC) by 2:00 PM on July 18. Please plan departures at your convenience on July 25.

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