



Vista House at Crown Point

State Scenic Corridor

Comfort & Splendor on Crown Point

In 1916, construction began on a “comfort station” for motorists traveling the new 75-mile Columbia River Highway—a winding road through the perilous Columbia River Gorge that linked Portland and The Dalles.

This would be no ordinary roadside rest stop, however. In the words of *The Oregonian*, it was “intended to be the finishing achievement for the greatest highway in America” and to “grace the highest spot on that wonderway.” The spot was Crown Point, a rocky point 693 feet above the Columbia River and the site of Columbia River Highway’s dedication in 1916.

A Crowning Achievement

Architect Edgar M. Lazarus seized the opportunity to turn a functional need for facilities into a grand architectural vision. He designed the building to be “a temple to the natural beauty of the Gorge” and a memorial to the settlers who ventured westward on the Oregon Trail.

Under the direction of the Columbia River Highway’s roadmaster, John B. Yeon, the structure’s foundation was laid by the Italian artisans who built the highway’s retaining walls and bridges. When construction was completed in May 1918, a 55-foot-high structure of gray sandstone and glazed green tiles sat atop one of Oregon’s most inspiring vantage points.

The view spanned from Portland to a bend in the Columbia River 12 miles to the east.

Rare Alaskan marble formed the floors and stairs of the rotunda, and light shone in through

amber-green-colored glass onto walls of creamy limestone. In the words of highway engineer Samuel Lancaster, the structure gave “shelter and comfort to all who come to look on the splendor of the scene.”

By 1926, the Columbia River Highway joined with other regional highways to become U.S. 30, the third-longest route in the country. U.S. 30 now stretches from Astoria to Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Extensive Restoration

In honor of its significance to the history of the Columbia Gorge and American road travel, as well as its architectural distinction, Vista House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. In 2001, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and several partners began an extensive restoration of the Vista House. The building’s interior was refurbished, the tile roof and windows were replaced, and an inclined walkway and interior lift were added to increase accessibility.

Visit Historic Vista House

Vista House includes historical displays, a gift shop and an espresso bar inside that is open daily in the summer with limited hours in the winter, weather permitting. Hours and closures are posted at vistahouse.com, or by calling (503) 344-1368. The viewpoint is open 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.

Volunteers Needed

The Friends of Vista House has partnered with Oregon State Parks since 1982 to help preserve the building and share its story with the public. Volunteers greet visitors from around the world and help with interpretative exhibits. Contact the Friends of Vista House to volunteer at volunteer@vistahouse.com or by calling (503) 344-1368. Learn more online at vistahouse.com.



Vista House at Crown Point State Scenic Corridor
40700 Historic Columbia River Highway, Corbett, OR 97019
(503) 695-2261 (State Scenic Corridor info.)

Friends of Vista House
(503) 344-1368 (operating hours)
vistahouse.com
volunteer@vistahouse.com

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
725 Summer St. NE, Suite C, Salem, OR 97301
stateparks.oregon.gov
800-551-6949

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Vista House opened in 1918 as a glamorous rest stop and observatory for those traveling the new Columbia River Highway.

Historic Columbia River Highway

An engineering marvel of the early 20th Century, the Historic Columbia River Highway takes drivers on a scenic route that passes orchards, viewpoints, quaint communities and a series of scenic waterfalls.

