

Columbia River Cruise  
May 3-11, 2026  
American Cruise Line

Sunday, May 3 - Fly to Portland, Oregon

Up at 5:45 and leave the house at 7:30. Get to the airport in plenty of time. Get a breakfast sandwich at Wendy's. Plane leaves for Chicago on schedule and get to O'Hare ahead of schedule. Get a wrap there to be eaten on the plane. Boy, the airport is crowded! Get on the plane for Portland and push back ahead of schedule. Smooth ride. See Mt. Hood on our approach into Portland. The flight attendant announces which carousel our luggage will be coming out on. It actually comes out on the one next door. Randy spots his bag and calls everyone over. Meet the representative from American Cruise Lines at the luggage carousel and she calls the bus for us.

Get to the hotel and check in. Very nice hotel and very nice room. Go down for a glass of wine. Then to a cruise reception for hor d'oeuvres. Back to the bar for dinner and then to an early bedtime.

Monday, May 4

Breakfast at the hotel. A very nice omelet and more. Get on the bus and head out of town. Since we are right by the airport, traffic is not bad. Go through part of the Columbia River Gorge with its sheer basalt cliffs. Drive to Multnomah Falls. It is cloudy as we leave Portland but is sunny as we arrive at the falls. Parking lot is in the middle of the freeway. We must go under the freeway bridge and over the railroad tracks to get to the lower viewpoint. Take pictures and walk up to the second viewpoint, a bridge over the river. Take some more pictures. Walk back to the visitors' center, taste some bourbon, and hit the gift shop. Back on the bus and drive twenty minutes to the ship. Find our room (boy, is it small), find our suitcases, and have lunch. Cast off. Go up to the sundeck, but it is too windy to stay there long. Jan goes back to the room, but Randy stays there longer. We are heading down river through the last lock on the Columbia. It's reservoir covers the last waterfall on the river. Stop in the paddle wheel lounge for cookies, snacks and a glass of wine (wine and hard liquor is free on this cruise). Then down to the main lounge for another glass of wine and a lecture on Lewis and Clark. Dinner plus more wine. Back to the lounge for a port talk and singer/piano show. Finally, back to the room to prepare for tomorrow and to bed.

Tuesday, May 5 - Mount St. Helens

A quick breakfast in the paddle wheel lounge. Morning lecture on the geology of the Columbia River valley. Off the boat for pictures of totem poles and the boat. Shop at a small shopping center next to the dock. Pick up candy, pecans, huckleberry tea, and a necklace. Back on board for lunch. Board a bus for a trip to Mt. St. Helens. Stop at the

visitors' center. Go through the small museum and take a short walk through the woods behind the center. Bus to the Crystal Lake Overlook and get a beautiful, sunny view of Mt. St. Helens. Have cookies there. Back on the bus and go to the ship with a pit stop along the way. Cinco de Maio cocktails and wine in the lounge along with guitar music. Slow dinner and the port talk. Country music for entertainment.

Wednesday, May 6

Get to early breakfast late. Almost everything is taken. Randy grabbed a couple of wraps and Jan got some fruit, pastry, and a yogurt. Finally get some eggs and hot water for Jan.

Morning trip is to Fort Clatsop, part of the Lewis and Clark National Historical Monument, the Lewis and Clark wintering place while on the Pacific. See trillium and wild lilies of the valley.

Back to the boat for lunch and then to Disappointment Point, the campsite from which Lewis and Clark hiked to the Pacific. Back to the boat late (guide error), a glass of wine and piano music, slow diner again, port talk, and western piano music. Then finally to bed.

Thursday, May 7

Have breakfast in the main dining room. Cruising in the morning. Sales pitch for other American Cruise Line cruises and then a lecture on the Oregon Trail. Have lunch followed by a bus trip to a Washington winery. Basalt cliffs are interesting. Basalt is very hard and yet there are small fragments of the cliffs scattered below the cliffs. Tour through the winery is interesting and is followed by a wine tasting. Every wine is enjoyable. Order a very expensive case.

Back to the boat for happy hour and dinner. Port talk and a comedian guitarist is the evening entertainment.

Friday, May 8

Spent the day cruising. Breakfast and lecture (confused about the topic). Transverse the John Jay Dam. Its lock which has the largest vertical lift of any lock in the nation, 110 ft. Lunch. Bingo (Jan wins a card, she and Randy must do the chicken dance because of incorrect Bingo calls). Second lecture on Lewis and Clark's journey. Happy hour, dinner, and port talk. Chuck, the resident lecturer, sings Broadway tunes (two sessions). Bed.

Saturday, May 9

Dock in Clarkston, Washington, the town where Hanford housing area for the Manhattan Project is located. The Hanford Project is the area where the plutonium for the nuclear bomb was produced. Across the river is Lewiston, ID. (Lewis and Clark - Get it? Randy didn't at first.) Take a bus trip to Sacajawea State Park where the Snake and Columbia Rivers converge. See the stone circles, which commemorate various aspects of

the region. Listen to a lecture about the construction of the railroad bridge over the Snake River and the subsequent town the built up there because of the construction. The town catered to the desired of the large number of railroad bridge builders that camped out next to the town and was pretty bawdy. When the bridge was done, the construction workers moved on to work on the bridge over the Columbia River and the town disappeared. The park had an intense museum which we didn't have time to look at and a very small gift/book shop. Bus back to the ship for lunch. After lunch, we bus to the Kiona Vineyard and Winery. Get out and look at the vines with very small clusters of grapes on them. Then go into the tasting room and sample some very good, very expensive wines. Disaster - we leave Jan's hiking pole in the tasting room and leave without it only discovering our mistake when we get back to the boat. (Postscript - we contact the winery and get it back.) Dinner, port talk, and music round out the day.

Sunday, May 10 - Mother's Day; Snake River jetboat ride

Up for breakfast, disenbarkment instructions (learn that we don't have to leave until 6:30 am rather than the 4:30 that was originally advertised) and a lecture about Nativ Americans emphasizing how their help enabled Lewis and Clark to succeed. Eat an early lunch and bus to a jet boat ride through Hell's Canyon on the Snake River. Boat flies through/over the rapids. Not steep canyon walls like the Grand Canyon but very impressive and very beautiful. Canyon is actually deeper than the Grand Canyon. A great way to end the trip. Stop at the Garden Creek Preserve owned by the Nature Conservancy on the way back for cookies.

Back to the boat for a glass of wine and dinner. Pack and go down for a dance and story telling by members of the Nez Perce Tribe. Bags out by midnight, but they start collecting them at 10:00 pm. We get ours out and head for a short night's sleep.

Monday, May 11 - Going home

Up at 4:30; leave at 6:30. Not much out for breakfast, but we find something. Airport waiting room is very small. Flight is smooth. Arrive at Seattle a bit early and take the train to the "S" gates. Get a sandwich and board the plane. Arrive in Cincinnati 45 minutes early - thank you tail winds. Luggage was out when we get there. Bus to the parking lot and drive home. Becky has left Jan a pot of planted basil for Mother's Day.