

Turtle Rocks Oceanfront Inn 2-Day Itinerary

If you have two days, suggested things to do:

With a second full day to explore, **Fern Canyon** and the **Tall Trees Grove** are “must see” .

Exit left from the Turtle Rocks Oceanfront Inn parking area and go north on Patrick’s Point Drive two miles where you intersect Highway 101. Then head north on Highway 101 and go to the **Redwood National Park visitor center** just north and west of **Freshwater Lagoon** and the ocean just south of the town of Orick. This a left turn off the highway. To hike the Tall Trees you need a permit from the park rangers. There is no charge for this and the rangers will give you either a key or combination to the locked gate access to the last road into the grove.

For this writing, I have arbitrarily chosen **Fern Canyon** as the first destination. Go north on Highway 101 and through the town of Orick and then another three miles to the Davison Road left turn exit to Fern Canyon (see “one-day itinerary). Eight mile drive on Davison Road ending at Fern Canyon. At the halfway point the hilly road comes out on the **Gold Bluffs beach** area of the **Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park**. There is a small ranger pay station and a day use fee is required to complete the journey to Fern Canyon. You will encounter two shallow creek crossings just before reaching the parking area for the canyon. No worries as the creek bottom is smooth rock and you only need to go slow in any type of vehicle as you cross.

After parking, a short hike finds you in a truly special small canyon just off the beach with water seemingly oozing and percolating from everywhere on the vertical densely- ferned canyon walls. Steven Spielberg chose this location to film most of his sequel to Jurassic Park titled “Lost World” and there is a primeval feel to this uniquely beautiful jewel of a place.



Fern Canyon

Another way to access Fern Canyon is to hike in. The **James Irvine Trail** leaves the Prairie Creek State redwoods parking area (see “One day” itinerary) and is a 4.5 mile hike through the redwoods to Fern Canyon. You can have someone in your party meet you at Fern Canyon or hike back. Some hikers hike back on the **Miner’s Ridge Trail** and then connect back to the James Irvine Trail. A parks map is recommended.

After leaving Fern Canyon , head back to Highway 101 and head south 2 miles and then go east on **Bald Hills Road**. This is the only main road that accesses the eastern lands of the Redwood National Park. You will pass the **Lady Bird Johnson Grove** (see “One day” itinerary) after a windy three miles stretch up the wooded hill. Then the road mellows out along a beautiful ridgetop as you travel another four miles to the turnoff to the **Tall Trees Grove**. You drive in a few hundred feet and then have to unlock the gate, drive through, and lock the gate, and then proceed on a very well-maintained gravel stretch of road for a mile or so to the Tall Trees Grove parking area. The hike is 1.8 miles all downhill down a moderately steep trail that levels out at the bottom to an alluvial plain next to the large **Redwood Creek**. Here you find the reward for your journey: the awesome tall trees grove and the beautiful flowing creek.

Many people also miss the added bonus of the “hidden” **old growth maple forest**. Find it by walking along the creek bank upriver for a few hundred yards and then look for a pathway off the creek bank and into the maple grove where huge lateral branches form an incredible canopy above. This entire area (the tall trees, creek, and maples) is so amazing that you will barely notice the 1.8 miles all uphill hike back to your vehicle.

After visiting the redwoods, head back to the town of Trinidad. Highly recommended is the spectacular **Trinidad Head loop trail**. Exit right from the Turtle Rocks Oceanfront Inn parking lot and head south down Patrick’s Point Drive four miles. Then turn right into the village of Trinidad and turn right on Edwards Street at the Memorial Lighthouse and follow the signs to the pier and harbor. Edwards Street dead-ends at the pier. Just before reaching the pier is a parking area for Trinidad State Beach and the Trinidad Head loop trail. The first part of the trail is an uphill asphalt-paved road that affords beautiful vistas of the village and Trinidad State beach to the north. You reach a fork in the trail where the paved road trail goes left and the other part of the trail heads straight ahead and uphill.. Go either way to do the loop and you will be rewarded with amazing ocean and mountain views and lush coastal vegetation all along the hike. Allow a minimum of one hour to complete the hike. There are benches in strategic view locations along the loop to sit and enjoy the incredible scenery.



Cross on Trinidad Head



Lighthouse on Trinidad Head

Driving out of the parking area and heading back up Edwards Street, the second roadway on the left as you ascend the hill accesses the **Humboldt State Marine Laboratory**. Open to the public, the marine laboratory is worth a stop with its interesting exhibits, small aquariums, and in the back its “petting tank” where you can reach into the water and touch starfish, urchins, and other marine life. Children especially enjoy this.

Just west of the marine laboratory parking lot is a wonderful view overlooking Trinidad State Beach. A trail here heads north and connects to the Mill Creek trail that heads down along the beautiful lush Mill Creek canyon and on into the north end of Trinidad State Beach. Another recommended hike if time permits.