

The Road Trip Report

San Jose, California to Seattle, Washington

24-28 August 2026

Lost in the Pacific Northwest



Second act

Long after Oregon's Mount Mazama volcano exploded about 7,700 years ago and its peak collapsed into this crater, a second volcano — Wizard Island — fed by the same subterranean pressure, emerged from the lake that had filled Mazama's hollowed core. This is Crater Lake National Park.



Glaciers on Shasta

Seven glaciers flow down the flanks of California's Mount Shasta, the nation's second-tallest volcano outside Alaska at 14,179 ft / 4,322 m, and the fifth tallest mountain in the state.



Hooded Hood

Fifty miles east of this viewpoint overlooking downtown Portland, Oregon, the top of Mount Hood, a 11,249-ft /3,429-m volcano emerges from a clouded cloak.

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SOURCES AND MORE INFORMATION: Underlined words link to them.

My cousin Mary Wood (she and her husband Hank traveled with us to Scotland in 2024) was stoked for our visit to Crater Lake National Park after the initial day of our Pacific Northwest road trip to Vancouver, British Columbia, which was driving from San Jose, California, to Klamath Falls, Oregon.

That first day got us into volcano country, the Cascade Range, which is the defining natural feature of the PNW region. On the way to Klamath Falls, we saw snow-capped Lassen Peak in the eastern distance from our route up the center of California's Sacramento Valley. Then we passed barely to the left of massive Mount Shasta — towering more than 14,000 feet / 4,300 meters tall — completely filling the windows on the right side of the car.

Entering the national park on our second morning, we stopped at the park's entrance museum for a brief preview of the collapsed volcano we were about to see. Mount Mazama, estimated to have been about 12,000 ft / 3,700 m tall, exploded about 7,700 years ago, blowing out the magma and gases inside. The sides of the upper 4,000 to 5,000 feet of the mountain fell into the empty hole. Over the centuries, that hole, which is about 33 miles / 53 kilometers around, filled with rain and snowmelt. No rivers or streams flow in or out. That created the USA's deepest lake (1,949 ft / 594 m) filled with some of Earth's purest water.

"Is it really that blue?" Mary Wood asked after we watched the museum's brief historical film.

Ten minutes later when we parked up on the rim, she looked at the water 2,000 feet below and said: "Look at that blue!"

It was blue enough for me to see, and I have defective color vision, so it made for a spectacular second day that ended in Portland, Oregon, where we planned to spend the next day exploring. That was to include a taste of the Columbia River Gorge, waterfalls and the locks and fish ladder that allow barge traffic and salmon to get through the Bonneville Dam.

Day 3, a Wednesday, is when things went haywire.

After 15 minutes shooting pictures of the entrance to the gorge from Vista House at Crown Point, a strange feeling came over me as we returned to our car parked at the curb. A park ranger was standing nearby sweeping the pavement with a broom. Our right rear passenger window was rolled down, which seemed odd.

And it was.

The window hadn't been rolled down. The pavement was littered with shards of tinted green glass. So was the back seat where Emily and Mary Wood had been riding.

Someone had busted into our car and robbed us. To our collective anger was quickly added despair as we discovered what was missing and what this might mean for the remaining nine days of our two-week drive.

— *Continued in two pages*

Scene of the crime

One picture is worth all my words.



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— *Continued*

Mary Wood was missing her credit card, mobile phone and important prescriptions among other items. Emily's and my passports were missing as were her glasses plus less critical stuff.

The cousins' return flight to North Carolina was from Vancouver, so at least they could get into Canada to get home. But they had no car, and a one-way rental was prohibitively expensive because of extra charges imposed by rental car companies for leaving a vehicle across the border. Without passports, Emily and I would have to cancel our Alaska cruise, which also left from Vancouver.

As angry and upset as we all were, we forced ourselves to work with our three remaining phones to see what we could salvage of our plans. Over the next two hours at our parking spot, Hank canceled the credit card and managed to get prescriptions sent to a Portland pharmacy. Emily made an appointment at a car window replacement company with our car insurance info. Emily also began searching for a place to replace her glasses with the prescription she had in her phone. And after reporting the theft to the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office and getting instructions to file a crime report online, Emily passed me contact info with nearest U.S. Passport Office, which fortunately was located in Seattle, our next stop three hours north.

After explaining that we were scheduled to enter Canada on Monday, the woman I spoke to said, "I have some appointment openings Friday morning."

"Does that mean we'll get new passports?"

"No promises," she said. "But I'll email you a [link so you can download the forms](#) you need to fill out before you come. You'll also have to bring new passport photos with you.

The park ranger gave us some plastic sheeting to cover the open window area after we got the broken glass out, and we headed back to our Portland hotel. After dinner, Emily got online to fill out the crime report, which took most of the rest of the evening. My instructions and forms for new passports ran about 50 pages, and the reason for no assurance of new ones became obvious: We had no birth certificates or other means of proving we were born in the USA.

Thursday morning, we walked around the block to a passport photo agency. Emily finally found a place on the University of Washington campus in Seattle that could produce glasses to meet her odd right-eye prescription in 24 hours. Hank and Mary Wood walked to a nearby store and replaced her phone. It took an hour for a new car window to be installed. We skipped our visit to Mount Rainier National Park (more volcanoes) on the way to Seattle so I could finish filling out forms. I hoped that our old passport numbers, which were in my laptop, would help, even though they weren't included as a way to prove citizenship.

We made it to our appointment Friday, turned in our forms and were told to return at 1 p.m. But no promises. We got Emily's new glasses. Then came a call from Washington, D.C., where there were only two hours left in the workday, to say we needed to sign some forms at the Seattle office quickly. But no promises.

We returned. We signed and swore in front of a witness. The woman behind the bulletproof glass was hopeful. Wait in the chairs in front of Window 12, she said. But no promises.

Our hopes were fulfilled at 2 p.m. (5 p.m. in Washington). All was not lost in the PNW. The journey continues.



3 blues at blue lake

Emily, Mary Wood and Hank (L-R)
overlooking Crater Lake with Wizard Island
behind Emily.