



DEEP BLUE VOLCANO

Exploring CRATER LAKE

JAY AND SUE NEWMAN

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PREFACE



IT'S 93 MILES BY CAR from our driveway in Ashland to the first view of Crater Lake at Rim Village. We first made the trek up here together to photograph the lake on a moody April day in 2007, the year we got married. The weather was lousy. Strong winds and a cold, sideways rain made photography nearly impossible. But it didn't matter. It didn't matter that the famous blue water was flat gray. Even on a day like that, Crater Lake's grandeur and beauty were both on full display.

We've returned dozens of times over the years, and we've seen that water take on countless hues. Every time we visit, we discover a new nook, a new cranny, and if we're really fortunate, a new trick of the light. We learned long ago that even on the most gorgeous of days, it's impossible to capture in a photograph the feeling of seeing Crater Lake for oneself. "Getting the perfect shot" doesn't matter. Every voyage we've taken to this wilderness—whether we took our cameras out or not—has been well worth it. And we'll keep coming back here as long as we're able, in our ongoing quest to record even an essence of what it feels like to witness this place in person. In the meantime, we're honored to share our discoveries with you.

—JAY AND SUE NEWMAN



INTRODUCTION

DISCOVERY POINT

THE VIEW FROM DISCOVERY POINT is the spot where William Gladstone Steel first laid eyes on Crater Lake in 1885. Like it is with most visitors to this alpine paradise, it was love at first sight. “All the ingenuity of nature,” Steel later wrote, “seems to have been exerted to the fullest capacity to build one grand awe-inspiring temple the likes of which the world has never seen before.” Steel made it his life’s mission to turn the lake into a national park, which he finally achieved in 1902.

But Steel didn’t discover the lake. Settlers had known of this spot since the 1850s. The story goes that some lost gold prospectors climbed to high ground to get their bearings and then became the first white men to see this deep blue wonder for themselves.

The Klamath and Modoc Indians had known of this lake for countless generations. Although they never set up any permanent settlements on the rim, Wizard Island was a popular spot for vision quests. To the Native Americans, this entire area was sacred. Their early ancestors had witnessed the spectacular eruption that created this caldera.

Steel named the volcano that once stood here Mount Mazama, after a Portland mountaineering club. The ancient Klamaths called it Moy-Yaina, “Big Mountain.”

And that's an understatement. Though not the highest volcano in the Cascade Range, Mount Yaina was the largest by volume. It rose more than 12,000 feet above sea level (only Mount Shasta and Mount Rainier were higher), and it was nearly nine miles in diameter. When the volcano erupted 7,700 years ago (at a force more than 42 times stronger than Mount St. Helens), most of the cone fell into the emptying magma chamber below. Over the next few hundred years, rain and snow partially filled the caldera to a depth that averages about 1,946 feet, making it the deepest lake in the United States, and the ninth deepest in the world.

The Klamath Indians renamed the lake Tum-sum-ne, "Mountain with the Top Cut Off." In their creation stories, Crater Lake was the site of an epic battle between Llao, the spirit chief of the underworld, who ruled from beneath Tum-sum-ne, and Skell, the spirit chief of the sky, whose domain was Mount Shasta one hundred miles to the south in California. Though Skell was victorious, the battle had destroyed the mountain. He then filled the giant hole with water, imprisoning Llao below it for eternity.

The deep, blue water of Crater Lake is still casting its spell today. More than 750,000 people from all over the world visit the national park each year. Now, settle in for a photographic tour of the "mountain with the top cut off." You'll travel around the rim, below the rim, and then beyond it to the outskirts of the park. And later in the book you'll explore some of the other natural wonders that surround Crater Lake.

We begin here, at Discovery Point, about a mile west of Rim Village near the South Entrance. This is the spot where most park visitors first see the awe-inspiring temple for themselves. And Crater Lake still looks much the same as it did when William Gladstone Steel first looked out on it nearly a century and a half ago.

