

The Goonies (Film)

By Jim Schepcke

For four weeks in the fall of 1984, the Uppertown neighborhood of Astoria became the Goondocks, the location for one of the most beloved films ever made in Oregon. *The Goonies* tells the story of seven misfit kids who search for the treasure of One-Eyed Willie, a legendary pirate, in order to get their families out of debt and keep them from being evicted by developers. Steven Spielberg, who had just started a production company, Amblin Entertainment, came up with the story and recruited Chris Columbus to write the screenplay and Richard Donner to direct the film. Donner and Columbus spent many days on the critical task of casting the child actors, who are called the Goonies in the film: Mikey (Sean Astin), his brother Brandon (Josh Brolin), Data (Ke Huy Quan), Mouth (Corey Feldman), Chunk (Jeff Cohen), Andy (Kerri Green), and Stef (Martha Plimpton). For most of the young actors, it was their first work in a feature film.

In 2010, Richard Donner recalled how they selected the location for the film: “We all jumped into a van and started driving up the West Coast. We got all the way up to Astoria. It was just one look and that was it—fall in love—Astoria was it.” The production company booked the entire Thunderbird Motel (now the Astoria Riverwalk Inn) for a month, and filming began on October 22, 1984. The primary Astoria location was a house on 38th Street, where the characters Mikey and Brandon lived. Other Astoria scenes were shot at the old Clatsop County Jail, the Flavel House Museum, and the Lower Columbia Bowl bowling alley.

For some of the early scenes of the movie, when the Goonies set off to find the treasure, the location moved to Cannon Beach, a town twenty-five miles south of Astoria. A replica of an abandoned restaurant (since demolished) was built at nearby Ecola State Park, and some scenes were filmed at Haystack Rock.

After the filming was completed in Oregon on November 14, *Goonies* production moved to the largest Warner Brothers soundstage in Burbank, California, where a model of a pirate ship, *The Inferno*, had been built. The final scene was shot at Bodega Bay, California, where the Goonies are reunited with their parents with enough of the pirate’s treasure in hand to avoid the foreclosures.

The Goonies opened on June 7, 1985. Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* called it “fast, funny, ingenious, entertaining...there isn’t a child in America who will not want to see *The Goonies* this summer.” The film cost \$19 million to make and earned over \$64 million worldwide as of 2021. In 2017, the Library of Congress selected it for preservation in the National Film Registry.

Generations of *Goonies* fans helped make Astoria a destination for film lovers. The Oregon Film Museum is located in the county jail where the opening scene was shot, and the annual Goonies Day celebration brings hundreds of tourists to Astoria every June 7. Since 1984, Astoria has been the location for many more film and television productions, including *Kindergarten Cop* (1990) and *Free Willy* (1993). In 2023, the 1896 *Goonies* house on 38th Street sold for \$1,650,777 to a Kansas entrepreneur and *Goonies* fan.

Near the end of his life, Richard Donner summed up his *Goonies* experience this way: “That’s been the most extraordinary thing that’s ever happened to me in my life. I can go anywhere...and they’ll say, but didn’t you do *Goonies*? And I say yeah, yeah I did that.”

Sources

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