

Code of Conservation

It's up to you!

- **Keep all vehicles (including mountain bikes) on designated roads**
Vehicles off roads can destroy vegetation.
- **Keep to marked trails**
Using trails protects plant life and assists animals in adapting to human movement.
- **Be considerate of wildlife**
Stress is harmful to animals. Use binoculars to view them from a distance rather than approach them closely. Never chase or flush animals from cover. Respect their nests and dens.
- **Be considerate of others**
Respect the space of others who are viewing wildlife in the same area as you.
- **Control pets**
Pets may chase, injure, or kill wild animals. Leave pets at home or keep them under control.
- **Keep British Columbia clean**
Leave the environment unchanged by your visit. Place garbage in receptacles or take it with you.
- **Take only the right souvenirs**
Take home memories and photographs. Leave flowers, plants, rocks, fossils, artifacts, shells and wood as you find them. Never touch or feed wild animals. Baby animals are seldom abandoned or orphaned, and it's illegal to take them away.
- **Report environmental abuse**
If you see others abusing the environment or bothering animals, report their vehicle license number to local authorities or the nearest conservation officer.

Exploring Victoria's Natural Places

British Columbia Parks, British Columbia Wildlife Watch, Capital Regional District Parks and Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary have joined together to promote natural history programs and wildlife viewing opportunities throughout Greater Victoria. These six outings are just a few of the many parks and preserves in the region that you and your family can explore.

For further information, please contact:



BC Parks

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Victoria, BC V9B 5T9

Phone 391-2300 Fax: 478-9211



BC Wildlife Watch

Ministry of Environment,
Lands & Parks
Wildlife Branch
780 Blanshard Street
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Phone 387-9767 Fax: 356-9145



Capital Regional District Parks

490 Atkins Avenue
Victoria, BC V9B 2Z8

Phone 478-3344 Fax: 478-5416



Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

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Victoria, B.C. V8X 3W1

Phone 479-0211 Fax: 479-0132



Nature at your Doorstep

Six of Greater Victoria's
best family outings



a joint publication of BC Parks,
BC Wildlife Watch, CRD Parks, and
Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

Welcome to a world of discovery - *nature at your doorstep*

Located on the edge of the Pacific Ocean, Greater Victoria is a spectacular mix of urban and rural landscapes. The Olympic Mountains, the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Strait of Georgia provide a beautiful backdrop for nature tours around the area.

This brochure offers something for every kind of nature explorer. Whether you have an entire day or just a few hours, you don't have to go far to discover the natural world. Take a scenic drive along the coast or climb to a windblown summit. Wander a quiet island or hike deep into a rain forest. Find sanctuary by the edge of a lake. Visit a nature house for indoor exploration.



Discover the natural world around you. Southern Vancouver Island contains unique ecosystems, plants and animals that have lived together, in harmony, since before recorded time.

Take a closer look at the region and the creatures that inhabit it. It's up to you, and it's out there waiting—nature at your doorstep.





Wildlife Watch

Although it's great to hike into the hills to discover nature, it's not always possible. So here are a couple of road tours to introduce you to the wildlife and the habitat of Greater Victoria.

Close to downtown, follow Dallas Road to the University of Victoria. This shoreline forms the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary, and there's lots to view. Stop at Clover Point and see how many gulls, shorebirds and ducks you can identify. Then head to Uplands Park and stand under twisted Garry oaks, unique to southwestern BC. In spring, carpets of brilliant wildflowers grow between these trees, creating a lush, colourful meadow.

For a longer excursion, head out of town along Gorge Road (Highway #1A). The Gorge Waterway opens into Portage Inlet; kayakers and canoeists find this protected estuary a birder's paradise. When you turn left on Admirals Road and cross the bridge, look for herons and other waterfowl feeding in the shallow waters. Turn right just past historic Craigflower School. Follow Highway #1A to Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Park, and then on to Esquimalt Lagoon. This bird sanctuary is home to many water birds, including geese, grebes, mergansers, scoters and widgeons. Follow Lagoon Road up to Metchosin Road. Turn right, then left on Sooke Road to visit East Sooke Regional Park, a wilderness area where each September, soaring hawks and other raptors pass by on their migratory route.

Island View Beach Regional Park

On the eastern shore of the Saanich Peninsula, north of Victoria, lies Island View Beach. Exposed to storms and currents from the Pacific Ocean, this park is in constant transition. Wind and waves reshape the beach and berm, replacing the flat sand of summer with a gravel bed in winter. The sand dunes have been stabilized over the years by driftwood washed up from the beach. Plants like beach pea and yellow sand verbena survive because they have shallow, branching roots to hold onto the sand, and waxy leaves that don't dry out in this changing environment.

Island View Beach is an easy park to explore. Visitors of all ages will find the terrain flat, whether you follow the path around the sand dunes, walk along the berm, or wander the beach at low tide.

Island View Beach Regional Park is located on Island View Road, off the Pat Bay Highway (#17) in Central Saanich.

Lone Tree Hill Regional Park

For a more challenging hike, head to the Highlands, northwest of Victoria, and discover Lone Tree Hill. A switchback trail climbs through arbutus woodland to the summit, a perfect place to birdwatch. Bring your binoculars for a view that sweeps across the Malahat and the Highlands, to Victoria and the Olympic Mountains. See if you can spot eagles, hawks and turkey vultures riding the thermals overhead. How about a close-up view of the world at your feet? It's hard to believe this dry, rocky outcrop can support vegetation, but here you'll find rare mosses and lichens, wildflowers, scraggly shrubs and a lone tree. This 31-hectare hilltop park is living proof that small is beautiful.

To reach Lone Tree Hill, take the Trans Canada Highway (#1) to Millstream Road. Turn right, and follow Millstream to the park entrance.



Goldstream Provincial Park



Massive trees, majestic waterfalls, a river that meanders to the sea, flowers, birds and fascinating fish are just some of the attractions of Goldstream Provincial Park.

Located only 19 kilometres from downtown Victoria, this is a world far removed from the hustle of the city. Each spring, countless wildflowers explode in colourful profusion at higher elevations. In summer, forest trails lead you deep into a towering green world. Autumn brings changing colours, and the annual salmon run in the Goldstream River. And don't forget winter: have you ever seen a frozen waterfall? The trails in this park range from fully accessible to rugged and challenging. Choose a route that suits your schedule and your ability, and start your discovery. Begin at the Goldstream Visitor Centre, a great place to learn about the natural history of the area. Check out the interpretive displays, watch a film, or take in a program with the park naturalist.

To reach Goldstream Provincial Park, follow the TransCanada Highway (#1) and turn on Finlayson Arm Road.

Sidney Spit Provincial Marine Park

Sandy beaches, extensive tidal flats, salt marshes and rolling meadows are yours to explore at Sidney Spit. Accessible by foot passenger ferry, this park offers many choices in an island setting. An easy walk takes you to a lagoon where herons watch patiently for their prey, and past an abandoned brick factory. Or perhaps you'll be lured by the beaches. Tide pool exploration, beachcombing or swimming in the warm waters all have their appeal. When you head back to Sidney, watch for porpoises, seals and coastal birds who call these waters home.

Catch the ferry to Sidney Spit at the end of Beacon Avenue in Sidney. The ferry runs from May 15 to Thanksgiving, 9 am to 5 pm weekdays, and 9 am to 7 pm on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

This urban nature sanctuary, located in Saanich, just a few minutes from downtown Victoria, consists of two distinct ecological areas. Explore 47 hectares of fields and hedgerows surrounding Swan Lake, or 11 hectares of rocky hilltop with a Garry oak forest on Christmas Hill. A 2.5 kilometre loop trail, featuring two wharves and a floating walkway, provides ample access to the lake environment. Watch for river otter, muskrat and basking turtles in the summer months. Birdwatching opportunities are excellent year-round. A connecting trail corridor from Swan Lake provides access to Christmas Hill, 2.5 kilometres round trip. Spring is the best time of year to enjoy the spectacular show of Garry oak meadow wildflowers. The view from the hilltop is always exciting.

Before you head out to explore lakeshore and hilltop, stop by the Swan Lake Nature House, the focus for information on the nature sanctuary and its activities. Stimulate your senses with interpretive displays, discover nature hands-on and up-close, and browse in the library. Local and regional bird checklists and trail guides can be purchased at the nature house. Community programs are offered year round.

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary is located on Swan Lake Road, off Ralph Street, near McKenzie Avenue and the Pat Bay Highway (#17).

