

Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Trail

(Part of The Great Trail)

Frequently Asked Questions



How challenging is the trail?

The Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail is not an all ages and abilities route. There are steep grades up to 16%, narrow sections and rocky, gravel surfaces along the route. Hike and ride within your limits and on sections of the trail suitable to your skill level. The park map includes an elevation profile. Steep slopes exist:

- in areas between Kapoor Main Road and the suspension bridge, particularly near the E&N railway section.
- on Niagara Main Road, north west of the suspension bridge, for a continuous 6 km incline, with a 1 km section that is very steep (16% grade).
- between the specialized access gate located mid-trail and Trail Way Road.
- in areas between Goldstream Heights Drive and the Capital Regional District (CRD) and Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) boundary.

Where are the viewing platform and suspension bridge? How long does it take to get there?

2.5 km from the Humpback Road south trail head, rest at the viewing platform to take in the sights and sounds of Waugh Creek Falls, which flows strong in the winter and spring. From there it is 0.5 km to the 41-metre suspension bridge across the Goldstream River. For hikers, allow approximately 1/2 hour to reach the suspension bridge.

Where are the best views?

At the southern trail sections: Waugh Creek Falls, Goldstream River suspension bridge. At the northern trail sections: views of mountains, Finlayson Arm and Greater Victoria near Goldstream Heights Drive.

What amenities are in the park?

This is a wilderness park with very few amenities. There is a toilet in the parking lot and another 4.7 km up the trail. Plan your excursion by having enough time to get back during daylight hours. There is no drinking water. Have plenty of water, proper clothing, and an emergency kit. Be prepared for possible hazards and always exercise caution - safety is your personal responsibility. Cell phone coverage is limited. Remember that if you have an emergency, it could take several hours for help to come. The website has information on Being Prepared.

Why are some areas restricted to the public?

The park conserves biodiversity and provides a natural buffer to protect the water supply lands for Greater Victoria. Please respect the no public access areas within the park to help safeguard this vital resource.

Why are dogs required to be on leash?

Visitors with dogs share regional parks and trails with bears, wolves, cougars, deer, elk, small mammals, and ground nesting birds. Having your pet on leash reduces human-wildlife conflicts, it protect the plants and animals that rely on this natural area for survival and respects other users. Dogs are required to be on a leash for the safety of all users on the trail, including hikers, cyclists and horse riders.

What uses are permitted on the trail? Are equestrians permitted on the trail?

The trail is for cycling and hiking, and in sections horse riding. Equestrians are permitted on the north end of the trail at the CVRD-CRD boundary southwards for 4 km. Expect to share the trail with a variety of users. Cyclists must yield to others. Motorized vehicles, camping, open fires, smoking and alcohol are prohibited.

Why are there gates on the trail?

In 3 locations, specialized barriers have been installed to help keep motorized vehicles, particularly motorcycles, off the trail. These have been installed for protection of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area. One barrier is approximately 0.7 km north of the Humpback Road trail head; one is at the boundary of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and adjacent private lands; and one is on the south side of Trail Way road. At the first two, cyclists will need to dismount, turn their handlebars, and push their bikes through. The Trail Way barrier uses a different design which precludes motorized vehicles but allows for horses, bicycles and pedestrian access. In this case, horses and hikers can step over the barrier and bicycles will need to be lifted over.

Are there bears and cougars in the park? What do I do if I encounter one?

Yes. You are sharing this natural area with large carnivores such as bears, cougars and wolves. Before using this trail, be prepared for being in a wilderness area. A map and information are on the website.

- Stay alert. Wildlife may be in the area. Watch for signs such as tracks, claw marks on trees and scat.
- Make noise to avoid surprise encounters, especially around blind corners and areas with dense vegetation.
- Do not feed wildlife. Do not approach wildlife and keep at a safe viewing distance (30 to 100 metres).
- Dogs must be kept on leash at all times to reduce the risk of encounters with large carnivores.
- Do not leave children or pets unattended.
- Pack out any dog waste and garbage.

Please report wildlife-human interactions where the public may be at risk to the BC Conservation Officer Service at 1.877.952.7277. Visit Province of BC and WildSafeBC website for more information.

What do I do if I see a wildfire?

Report a wildfire to 1.800.663.5555 or *5555 from a mobile phone.

Is there cell phone coverage along the trail?

Cell phone coverage is limited throughout the park. Turn off your phone when not in use to conserve the battery. Safety is your personal responsibility. Be prepared for possible hazards and always exercise caution. Remember that if you have an emergency, it could take several hours for help to come.

Where is The Great Trail on Vancouver Island and in the Capital Regional District?

The Great Trail (TGT) is a network of multi-use trails that stretches 24,000 km across Canada. On Vancouver Island, it runs between Nanaimo and Victoria. To the north, at the CRD and CVRD boundary, The Great Trail route continues along the Cowichan Valley Trail. To the south it runs along Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail, winds through the street and trails in the City of Langford, follows the Galloping Goose Regional Trail and meanders along the waterfront in the City of Victoria to Clover Point. 40 km of the route is within the Capital Regional District. Different sections of the route have been developed and are managed by the CRD, the City of Langford, and the City of Victoria. The CRD provides two sections of the route. One section is along a portion of the Galloping Goose Regional Trail (15 km) from the Selkirk Trestle in Victoria to Veterans Memorial Way/Kelly Road in Langford. Much of this section is relatively flat with only a few hills along the route. The second section, the Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail (13 km), runs from Humpback Reservoir in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park to the CRD-CVRD boundary. This section is within a wilderness area and the trail route includes significant hills (10%-16% grades).

For general inquiries about Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park, contact the Regional Parks office at 250.478.3344 or visit the CRD website at www.crd.bc.ca/parks-recreation-culture/parks-trails/find-park-trail/sookehills-wilderness