

THE OFFICIAL GUIDE

The *Lochside Regional Trail*

SWITCH BRIDGE
INFORMATION KIOSK



Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

This 58-hectare nature sanctuary protects the marshy lowlands around Swan Lake and the rocky hilltops and Garry oak ecosystems of nearby Christmas Hill. Explore the trails, visit the Nature House or watch for birds, mink and river otters around the lake. The Sanctuary also offers guided nature walks and special events. Sorry — no bicycles or dogs allowed. Phone (250) 479-0211 or visit www.swanlake.bc.ca for more information.

Welcome to the Lochside Regional Trail. This 29-kilometre multi-use trail stretches from Swartz Bay to Victoria, past beaches, farmland and wetlands, down country lanes and beside suburban backyards. The trail has a more civilized personality than its more rural cousin, the Galloping Goose Regional Trail. While some parts of the Lochside are off-road and others downright pastoral, in some places trail visitors must share paved or gravel public roads with motor vehicles and farm equipment. The trail surface is wide (3 to 6 metres) and mostly flat.

So cycle, stroll, wheelchair, ride a horse, run, walk your dog or push a stroller. Whether you're commuting to work, meandering on a weekend afternoon or pacing yourself from the Switch Bridge to the ferry terminal, the trail is yours to enjoy and yours to protect.

Heading North from Downtown Victoria

Switch Bridge to Quadra Street



The starting point of the Lochside Regional Trail is the Switch Bridge, a 100-metre span across the Trans-Canada Highway near Carey Road. Kilometre markers begin at '4' here. From the Switch Bridge information kiosk, you can also journey west on the Galloping Goose Trail to Sooke or south to downtown Victoria, the '0' point of the regional trails.

To follow the Lochside Trail, take the right fork to the northeast under two major bridges at Blanshard Street and Vernon Avenue. You're now in the heart of Saanich, the largest municipality in the Capital Region. The trail skirts the perimeter of **Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary** before crossing the Brett Avenue trestle and Saanich Road. Look for the information sign on your right about the history of the Canadian National Railway (CNR). Cross the Swan Lake Trestle over boggy Blenkinsop Creek before emerging to the traffic hum of Quadra Street.

CORDOVA BAY STATION ON THE CANADIAN NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY ROUTE



Riding the Rails

The Lochside Trail travels over a picturesque former rail bed. Beginning in 1917, this Canadian Northern Pacific Railway (CNPR) route hosted a daily 74-passenger General Electric gas car that transported passengers and freight between Victoria and a steamship dock at Patricia Bay, with connecting service to the Lower Mainland. The fare was 3 cents per mile one way, or 5 cents return.

Passenger service continued until the 1920s, when stiff competition from motor cars, buses and other railways forced the CNPR into bankruptcy. The Canadian National Railway took over, operating freight trains on the line until the 1930s. Freight continued to rumble along a spur line past Swan Lake until 1990.

Quadra Street to Royal Oak Drive



Cross Quadra Street, then McKenzie Avenue, at controlled traffic lights. Follow the signs to skirt the small shopping centre and pick up Lochside Drive. Travel down this paved street a short distance to the beginning of the gravel trail, where parking is available.

Here, the Lochside Trail sheds its urban edge to become a tree-lined country lane with views of Blenkinsop Valley farmland. Inhale the smell of freshly plowed earth in the spring. Be surprised by bright splashes of orange during pumpkin season. **Watch for horse riders on the trail** for the next several kilometres. Travel slowly and pass horses with care.

The **Blenkinsop Trestle** soon appears, hovering over the marshy wetlands of Blenkinsop Lake, then opening up as the lake reaches out on both sides. Water lilies and cat tails poke from the edges, while families of ducks glide placidly past. Try scanning the lake with binoculars from one of the bird blinds. Watch for waterfowl, marsh birds, raptors, swallows and migratory birds, as well as bats, fish, otters, butterflies and moths.

Just north of Blenkinsop Lake, horse paddocks and cultivated fields studded with weathered barns stretch to the east toward **Mount Douglas Park**. If you fancy a detour, hiking trails lead to spectacular views from the 213-metre summit. Enjoy the colour of roadside flower stalls and the deep shade of the last forested section before the trail emerges into the neighbourhoods of Broadmead and Cordova Bay.

WATCH FOR HORSES ON RURAL SECTIONS OF THE TRAIL



BLENKINSOP TRESTLE



The Missing Link

The curving 288-metre Blenkinsop Trestle, completed in 2000, filled in the last major gap in the Lochside Trail. The trestle is built over top of the remnants of a trestle bridge constructed in 1915 by the Canadian Northern Pacific Railway.

Royal Oak Drive to Sayward Road



Cross Royal Oak Drive into the community of Broadmead. Formerly a 405-hectare farm belonging to the Rithet family, the area is now a subdivision lush with immaculate lawns and gardens. Pass **McMinn Park** with its trails, ponds and streams through cedar forests, and enjoy the eastern views of James Island and the American San Juan islands. A short detour east will take you to Cordova Bay Beach, once a popular summer destination for picnicking Victorians. Try Walema Avenue for the least steep descent.

Continue past **Doris Page** and **Doumac** municipal parks or take a break at the Doris Page rest area, which features a picnic shelter with a scenic ocean view. At Sayward Hill Road, cross Cordova Bay Road at the traffic light, and follow the continuation of the trail to the left along Lochside Drive. At **Lochside Park**, parking and seasonal toilet facilities are available. The gravel surface here hints at the rural scenery to come, and farmers' fields soon roll away on both sides. Watch for native shrubs such as mock orange, oceanspray and Nootka rose.

If you're tempted by a side trip, follow Cordova Bay Road/Sayward Road approximately one kilometre west across the Pat Bay Highway to **Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park**. This popular recreation area features a large freshwater lake, forested walking and bridle trails, beaches, picnic areas and an accessible float for fishing and wildlife observation.

LEARNING TO RIDE NEAR THE SWITCH BRIDGE



Sayward Road to Island View Road



Cross Sayward and Dooley roads into the agricultural heartland of the Martindale Valley, in Central Saanich. Here, silos and greenhouses



Be Alert!

The Lochside Trail traverses urban landscapes and working agricultural areas. Some sections follow or cross public roadways. Use caution and obey traffic rules on roads and at road crossings. Give way to farm vehicles using the trails.

Birds of a Feather

The Lochside Trail winds its way through a birdwatcher's paradise. Island View Beach and the Martindale Flats are just two renowned birding locations near the trail — watch for hawks, owls, sparrows, sea ducks, loons and more. Other nearby birding hotspots include Landsend Road, Horth Hill Regional Park, McDonald Provincial Park, Victoria International Airport, Bazan Bay and Saanichton Bay/ Cordova Spit.

NEAR TULISTA PARK IN
SIDNEY



Photo: Annie Weeks

proliferate, lines of poplar trees stand guard at farm boundaries and birds feast in the fields.

The diversity of crops in the Martindale Valley is truly astounding. Corn, beets, pumpkins, cauliflower and other vegetables, horse stables, dairy farms and even magnificently jumbo-sized pigs coexist in a patchwork of yellow, green and brown fields.

Be particularly careful of horses, farm vehicles and equipment that share the road with you here, as farmers use this section of the trail to access their fields. Carry plenty of water too, as the trail offers little shade for the next several kilometres.

The hum of the Pat Bay Highway is more noticeable as you approach Island View Road. From here to Swartz Bay, the Lochside Trail parallels this major route linking Victoria with Sidney and beyond.

At the corner of Island View Road, consider a side trip to **Island View Beach Regional Park**, approximately three kilometres to the east. Nestled along the shore of the Saanich Peninsula, this park features a long, sandy beach for picnicking and swimming, a fragile sand dune area and a boat launch for access to Cordova Channel and Haro Strait.

Island View Road to Sidney



Between Island View Road and Mount Newton Cross Road, the Lochside Trail passes through Tsawout First Nation lands. Consider a stop at **Heritage Acres**, run by the Saanich Historical Artifacts Society. This museum, devoted to preserving the region's agricultural and industrial heritage, maintains many artifacts in running order, including a sawmill and miniature steam train.

The trail emerges at Mount Newton Cross Road at a busy intersection. Turn right, then left to continue on Lochside Drive. Between waterfront estates, you'll catch glimpses of Cordova Channel, James Island and perhaps even the snowy peaks of Mount Baker in Washington State. Across the highway, daffodil fields burst into a

Living off the Land

The First Peoples of what is now Saanich (from a Coast Salish word meaning “fertile soil”) and the Peninsula were intimately connected to the land, harvesting fish, plants and animals for food, basketry and other needs. When Governor James Douglas claimed the land and signed the Douglas Treaties in 1852, he carved this area into farm-sized blocks. The new British and European settlers continued to depend on the land for their daily needs, growing vegetables, grains, flowers and bulbs, making jams and wines, breeding horses and even mink.

Although subdivisions and shopping areas have gradually replaced the immense land holdings and acres of greenhouses, names such as Blenkinsop, Rendle and Borden evoke the long agricultural history of this area.

yellow blaze in spring. **Cy Hampson Park**, on Bazan Bay in North Saanich, is a picturesque oceanside picnic or rest stop. Parking and toilet facilities are available here.

As you approach the seaside community of Sidney, the wind freshens with salt air. After passing waterfront **Tulista Park** and the terminal for the Washington State Ferries to Anacortes, watch for signs and a marked crosswalk at Ocean Boulevard. Turn left and travel to the end of this short street, where the paved trail resumes. Or ride straight ahead to detour through downtown Sidney, full of shopping, dining, boating and fishing opportunities. The **Sidney Information Centre** is located at the corner of Ocean Boulevard and Lochside Drive. Toilets are open seasonally.

Sidney to Swartz Bay



Cross busy Beacon Avenue at the traffic light, and follow the trail as it hugs the highway, then dips into the residential area of McDonald Park Road. The placid waters of Tsehum (Shoal) Harbour suddenly punctuate the suburban scenery, as the green lagoon reflects stands of white sailboat masts.

A little further on, **McDonald Provincial Park** is a convenient camping base for Victoria and the Saanich Peninsula, with 49 seasonal drive-in campsites, hiking trails and opportunities for birdwatching.

At the Pat Bay Highway junction, follow the paved trail to the right and you're on the home stretch. If a side trip appeals, take the highway overpass to Tatlow Road and **Horth Hill Regional Park**, approximately 1.5 kilometres northwest. From the summit trail of this hilltop park, you can enjoy panoramic views of the Saanich Peninsula, Satellite Channel and the Gulf Islands. Horth Hill also offers trails for hikers and horse riders, and birdwatching opportunities.

Enjoy the harbour views on your final approach to the BC Ferries terminal. The trail's only hill of any consequence leads to the overpass at Landsend Road. Follow the signs to the ferry toll booths or head to the Foot Passenger entry for public transit service to Victoria.

Congratulations — you've completed the Lochside Regional Trail!

How To Get There

North from downtown Victoria. Start at the corner of Wharf Street and Pandora Avenue. Cross the Johnson Street bridge, then turn right on the paved path that connects to Harbour Road and the Galloping Goose Trail. Follow the Galloping Goose Trail for four kilometres to the Switch Bridge. At the trail junction, follow the right fork under the overpass to begin your journey north on the Lochside Regional Trail.

South from the BC Ferries Terminal at Swartz Bay. Follow the signs for the Lochside Regional Trail. Cyclists: after passing under the Landsend Road overpass, turn right at the bicycle lane, right at the overpass, then right onto the trail. Foot passengers: turn left at the Landsend Road overpass, then right onto the trail.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BEGINNING OF
PASSENGER SERVICE ON CNPR ROUTE
(DAILY COLONIST, APRIL 26, 1917)

Canadian Northern Pacific Ry.

**PATRICIA BAY
LINE**

**Gas-Electric Motor Car
Service**

EFFECTIVE APRIL 30

Lv. Victoria (Alpha Street)	8:30 a.m.	5:15 p.m.
Ar. Patricia Bay	9:30 a.m.	6:15 p.m.
Daily Except Sunday		
Lv. Patricia Bay	9:45 a.m.	6:30 p.m.
Ar. Victoria	10:45 a.m.	7:30 p.m.
Daily Except Sunday		

For information and Time Schedules, apply
K. E. McLEOD
City Passenger and Ticket Agent,
(Office with Green & Burdick Bros., Ltd.)
Corner Broughton and Langley Sts.

A Shared Vision

The Lochside Trail is brought to you by your municipal partners:

District of Saanich

District of Central Saanich

District of North Saanich

Town of Sidney

Ministry of Transportation

CRD Parks

**The Heritage of the Past
The Trails of the Future**

From **Victoria International Airport**. Follow the signs to Victoria. Turn left on McTavish Road, cross the Patricia Bay Highway, then turn right onto the trail, which follows Lochside Drive.

Parking

Designated parking areas for the Lochside Trail are located on Lochside Drive north of McKenzie Avenue in Saanich, Lochside Park in Saanich, Cy Hampson Park in Central Saanich and Tulista Park in Sidney. These parks also provide seasonal toilet facilities. Street parking is available near the trail in many locations.

Trail Etiquette

- Share the trail and keep right except to pass.
- When passing, alert other trail visitors and use caution, particularly around horses.
- Respect the trail environment and neighbouring lands.
- Yield to farm equipment.
- Cyclists, control your speed and yield to pedestrians and horse riders.
- Dog handlers, keep your dog on a leash at all times and pick up your dog's droppings.

Transit and Travel Times

BC Transit buses can carry you to or from the Lochside Trail along route 70 (from Victoria to Swartz Bay and Central Saanich). Low floor buses on this route are equipped with bike racks and wheelchair lifts. For details and schedules, phone BC Transit at (250) 382-6161 or visit www.bctransit.com.

The easiest way to estimate travel time is to record your own rate of travel for one kilometre, and multiply by the number of kilometres you plan to travel. Allow for rest stops, lunch breaks and sightseeing.

Need more info?

CRD Parks coordinates the management and operations of your regional trails. To find out more about CRD Parks, and for information about trail closures or detours, visit www.crd.bc.ca/parks.

Dial 9-1-1 in case of emergency or fire, or if you observe unlawful activities.





LEGEND

- Galloping Goose Regional Trail
- Lochside Regional Trail
- Equestrian Use
- Information Kiosk
- Parking
- Toilets
- Distance from Johnson Street Bridge (km)

Lochside Trail South



