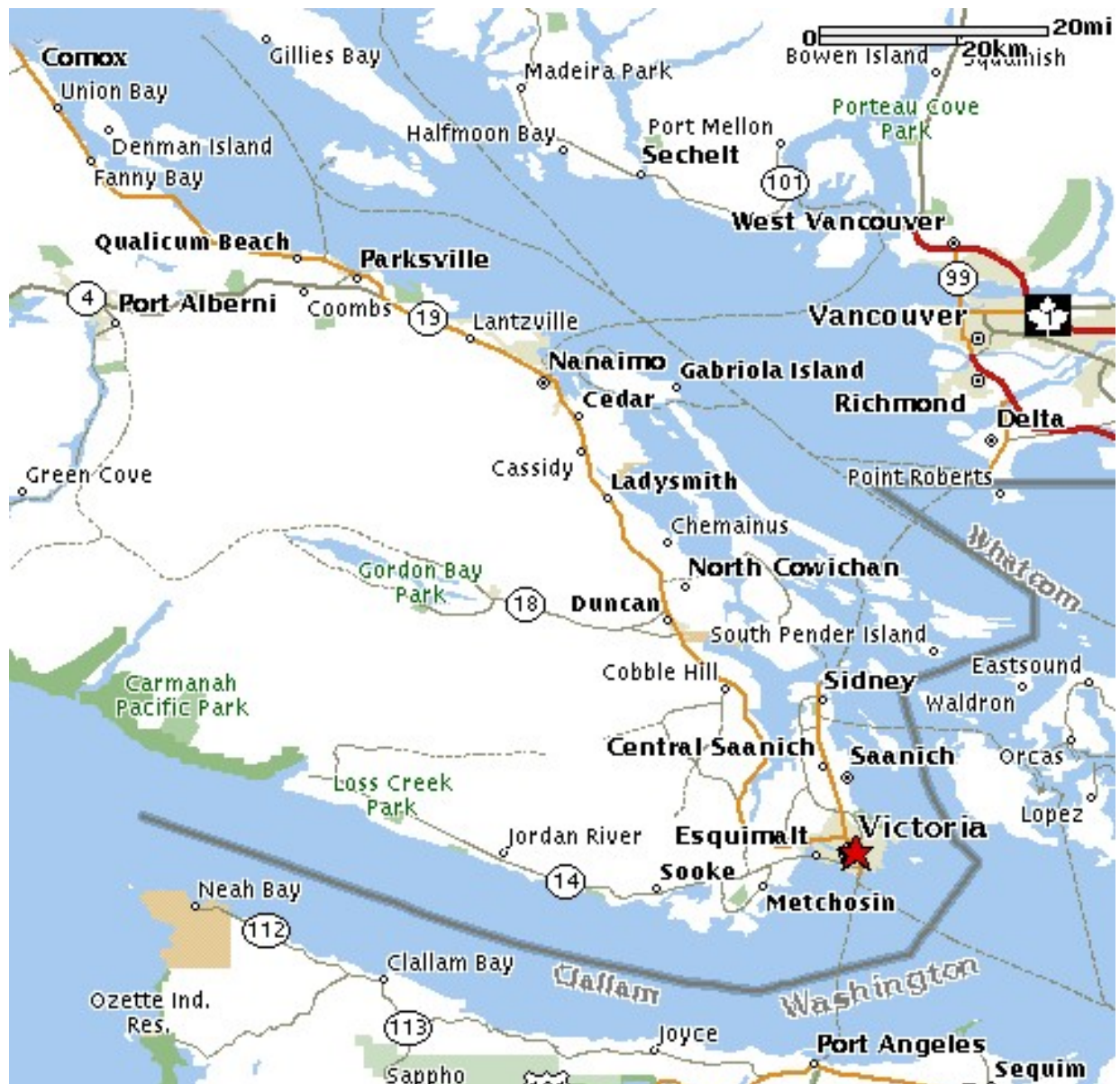


## Cowichan Bay-Duncan-Chemainus-Coombs-Cathedral Grove-Parksville-Qualicum Beach

This itinerary - in part, or in whole depending on how much traveling you wish to do - is ideal to see some of the best attractions and sights up the east side of Vancouver Island along Highway #1 from Victoria to the Cathedral Grove just before Port Alberni and back again through Qualicum Beach and Parksville. This trip is designed to start at Birds of a Feather Bed and Breakfast located approximately 15 minutes north of downtown Victoria. Highway #1 is easily accessible within about 5 minutes of our B&B.



**The Malahat Drive** is about 12 minutes north of our location in Colwood. It is actually a section of highway #1. Watch for the overhead yellow flashing lights just after the sign that says, "Start of the Malahat." Named after the Malahat First Nation, this rugged region of heavy forest and steep cliffs is traversed by one of the most beautiful roadways in the world. First cut as a cattle trail in 1861, it was upgraded to wagon-road standards in 1884, and became a paved road in 1911. The Malahat Drive climbs to a summit of 356 metres (1,156 ft).

**Goldstream Park** is just after the start of the Malahat Drive. Picnic grounds besides the Goldstream River provides a welcome. A lot of lunches get consumed here during the fall salmon migration - a few days after the rains start in late October or early November and the rivers rise - when hundreds of nature-loving onlookers come to the park. Shortly after the start of the salmon spawning hundreds of Bald Eagles begin to arrive and feed on the salmon carcasses through to the middle of March. You'll find interconnecting nature walks and trails between the day-use parking lot, the picnic grounds, the Freeman King Visitor Centre, and the south shore of Finlayson Arm. The natural beauty of the environment makes this a special place to explore at a leisurely pace. You can easily spend an hour strolling through the impressive old-growth rain forest that thrives here. Another highlight of Goldstream is Niagara Falls, a 47.5-metre cascade down a rock cliff to a crystal-clear canyon pool. A five minute walk along the south bank of Niagara Creek on the Lower Falls trail provides access to the base of the falls.

**Malahat SkyWalk** Spiral wooden ramp leading up to a 32-meter viewing deck for panoramas over sea inlets & mountains located on a steep, forested mountain, high above the Salish Sea. Previously, only agile explorers could enjoy such experiences of the wild. Now, the TreeWalk and Spiral Tower make this environment easily accessible, including strollers and wheelchairs.

**Scenic Lookout** is just after the summit of the Malahat Drive and is well marked. To the east across the inlet is the Saanich Peninsula, with the Gulf Islands and Mount Baker beyond. Rising sharply to the west are the mountains of south Vancouver Island. All along the way you will see Arbutus trees, identified by its thick, leathery green leaves, reddish trunk and peeling bark. The Arbutus is Canada's only broad leaf evergreen and is found only on Vancouver Island, the southern Gulf Islands and the lower coast of the mainland of British Columbia.

**Cowichan Bay** is a village about 15 minutes north the scenic lookout and it and the surrounding area is home to a host of artists, craftspeople, and cottage industries - including some fine local wineries. The Cowichan Bay Maritime Centre is by Pier 66 and the Wooden Boat Society displays hands-

on exhibits. Watch for the houses that rest partially on land and partially on piers. You can drive in from the south exit off of Hwy. #1, go through the village and rejoin Hwy. #1 from the north section of the village. Our favourite Old World German bakery is True Grain Bakery.

**Duncan** is located immediately on Hwy #1. Since 1985, Duncan has transformed itself into the "City of Totems" - a unique urban forest with over 41 distinctive hand-carved cedar poles from local native artisans on public display in parks and downtown streets. There are nearly eighty totem poles in Duncan, both downtown and along a half-kilometre section of the Trans-Canada Highway. There are 41 totems on the self-guided tour - follow the yellow foot prints. Duncan is the traditional home of the Coast Salish Indians. In summer you can watch the creation of the famous Cowichan sweaters as they are hand-knit in one piece, their unique patterns reflecting the knitter's family design (some even spin their own wool). The Native Crafts Village is immediately to the left as you cross the bridge into Duncan.

**BC Forest Discovery Centre** just north of Duncan right along Hwy #1 portrays the history of British Columbia's forest industry through indoor and outdoor exhibits. Board the steam locomotive that travels through a lush forest, see one of the first pre fabricated school houses, and ride a trestle out over Somenos Lake. This unforgettable train ride is a great experience for the young and the young at heart.

**Chemainus** City of Murals is "The Little Town That Did" and earned its nickname after Chemainus residents decided to expand their forest industry past into a vibrant tourism-driven future. Through the dreams, imagination and energy of the community, the little town of Chemainus found a new life by putting on a new face. The town transformed itself - capturing and expressing its history, its people and its future. Artists from around the globe were invited to paint huge heritage murals on the sides of buildings, transforming a small coastal mill town into the world's largest outdoor art gallery. Chemainus is also home to the renowned Chemainus Theatre. Located 2 miles east of Hwy #1 towards the ocean.

**Coombs** village is well known for the family of goats nimbly grazing on the grass rooftop of the Coombs Old Country Market. Coombs is also dotted with several heritage buildings, small gift and craft shops and antique stores. Coombs is located on the Port Alberni / Tofino Highway #4, 5.5 miles (9 km) west of Parksville.



**MacMillan Provincial Park** is famous for Cathedral Grove, one of the most accessible stands of giant Douglas-fir trees in British Columbia. Some of these trees are 800 years old, and walking the trails through this virgin coastal forest can be quite an inspirational experience. Loop trails on either side of the highway lead awe-struck visitors through the mighty forest stands. The south loop showcases the largest Douglas-fir trees, with the biggest one measuring over 9 metres in circumference and 76 metres high. The trail on the northern side of the road winds through groves of ancient Western Red Cedar to the shores of Cameron Lake. The 136-hectare park is located on Highway 4 on the shores of Cameron Lake, 7.5 miles (20 km) west of Coombs.

**Qualicum Beach** when returning from Cathedral Grove exit off of Highway #4 at Memorial Road towards the seaside village of Qualicum Beach. Pause here at any of the numerous beachside pullouts and smell the salt air intermingled with the perfume from the many private and public floral displays. Steeped in quaint British heritage and famous for its local arts, crafts and beautiful English gardens, modern day Qualicum Beach offers visitors the same gentle countryside and golden, seemingly endless, sandy beaches. Six provincial parks are located within thirty minutes drive from Qualicum Beach.

**Parksville** continue south from Qualicum Beach along the Oceanside Route (Hwy 19A) for 7.5 miles (12 km) south to Parksville. The Oceanside Route is an especially scenic section of the Island Highway System that runs parallel

to the Inland Island Highway (Hwy 19). Parksville boasts one of the finest climates in Canada and is favoured as one of the most popular summer family vacations destinations of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. Mild winters allow the leisurely exploration of tidal sand flats, coastal wildlife viewing and invigorating golf year-round. Continue south along the Oceanside route where approximately 5 miles later Highway 19A joins up again with Highway 19 south towards Victoria.