

# WEST COAST TRAIL

## 2023 HIKER PREPARATION GUIDE

Effective December 1, 2022

### COVID-19 and the West Coast Trail for 2023

Hiking the West Coast Trail may be different than in previous years.

Some of the items in this Hikers Preparation Guide have changed for the 2023 season due to our efforts to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Please ensure to review this summary for changes specific to the 2023 season.

Remember to follow [public health authority guidance and advice for your area](#), including travel advisories.

The entire national park reserve falls within the traditional territory of Nuu-chah-nulth peoples who have inhabited Vancouver Island's west coast for countless generations. The West Coast Trail lies within the traditional territory of the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht First Nations. Please respect their values and interests for the duration of the time you are in their territories.

### 2023 updates and requirements:

- **West Coast Trail Orientations:** In 2023, the mandatory West Coast Trail Orientations MUST be viewed electronically by all West Coast Trail hikers (every single member of your hiking party including yourself) BEFORE you arrive at the West Coast Trail Orientation Centres. As the primary permit holder, it is your responsibility to ensure that all members of your hiking party watch the WCT orientation video before they arrive. During the registration process at the WCT trailheads, each member of the hiking party will be tested to ensure comprehension before a WCT permit will be granted. Parks Canada staff will be offering in-person WCT orientation updates on tides, weather conditions, human-wildlife coexistence, trail maintenance/construction and any other items of importance. These pre-hike briefings will be held at Gordon River and Pachena Bay at 10 AM and 2 PM only; you must attend one of these pre-hike briefings to receive your WCT permits. You have the option to attend a briefing the day before your hike. **For Nitinaht Village**, briefings occur at the Nitinaht WCT Orientation Centre at 7:30 AM on the day of your hike (the water-taxi leaves at 8:30 AM) or before 3:30 PM the day before your hike. For those hikers starting the West Coast Trail at Nitinaht Village, the contact information for WCT staff at Nitinaht is 1-250-745-3203.
- **COVID-19 Precautions:** The boardwalks are very narrow in most locations, so please be considerate as you pass other hikers. Be respectful at pinch points like the camping areas, composting toilets, ladders, platforms, cable cars, ferries, and Carl's Crab Shack. Please be respectful of First Nation partners, the West Coast Trail Guardians, residents of local communities, business owners and staff, Lighthouse Keepers, Parks Canada staff, and all other hikers

by following all protocols. Please do your best to follow distancing guidelines and give others two meters of space. When fires are allowed - it is suggested that your group avoid joining other groups for campfires and to maintain distance at all camping areas.

- **Lighthouses may be closed to public access:** Please check the [website](#) for the most up to date information. If lighthouse grounds are closed, please do not access the grounds or approach the lighthouse keepers unless you are reporting an emergency or injury.

The West Coast Trail is an iconic backcountry, multi-day backpacking trail that is a challenge for even the most experienced hikers. Hikers climb more than 100 ladder systems with a heavy pack, trudge through deep mud, wade through fast-flowing rivers, and endure rough West Coast weather - often heavy wind and rain.





## THIS HIKE IS NOT FOR EVERYONE

Before you decide whether to make a West Coast Trail reservation, make sure you and the rest of your party have a good understanding of what is involved.

This is a remote Type 3 trail and hikers should expect missing or rotten boardwalks, missing planks, missing ladders or consecutive ladder rungs, non-functioning cable cars, downed trees, and unpassable creeks and rivers.

### The West Coast Trail **IS** for hikers who are:

- proficient in multi-day overnight backpacking. Experienced group leaders cannot compensate for inexperienced hikers.
- able to hike long distances through rough terrain carrying a heavy backpack containing everything needed to be prepared for a wilderness experience.
- flexible with their hiking plans to adjust if conditions warrant delays. Injuries, weather patterns, or other factors could mean a longer hike than anticipated. Hikers may have to wait several days during heavy rain to cross rivers safely.

If you checked off **ALL** of these boxes, then the West Coast Trail may be for you!

### The West Coast Trail **SHOULD NOT** be considered if:

- you have no prior multi-day backpacking experience.
- you have a serious heart condition, breathing difficulties, or other complications associated with a medical condition.
- you experience re-occurring knee, back, or ankle injuries and/or pain. Or have had previous knee, hip or leg injuries.
- you have had recent surgery or a concussion and are at risk of reinjury.
- you are under 12 years of age. The West Coast Trail is not recommended for children under 12. All party members must be at least 6 years of age; Parks Canada will not issue a West Coast Trail Overnight Permit to children under 6 years old.

If you checked off **ANY** of these boxes then the West Coast Trail is not for you.

Some alternative options may be:

- Juan de Fuca Provincial Park and Marine Trail - Vancouver Island, BC
- Strathcona Provincial Park - Vancouver Island, BC
- Wild Pacific Trail – Ucluelet, BC
- Wild Side Trail – Flores Island, Ahousaht, BC
- Jasper National Park - Alberta
- Banff National Park - Alberta
- Bruce Peninsula National Park – Southern Ontario

Make sure to watch our [Preparation Guide Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyk_yOwlShE) (www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyk\_yOwlShE)

## ARE YOU PREPARED FOR A MULTI-DAY BACKCOUNTRY HIKE?

All hikers in your group **MUST** be prepared for:

- **6-8 days in the back country.** This may vary depending on experience, weather and trail conditions, and if you enter/exit at Nitinaht Village.
- **rugged, uneven ground:** on average it takes approximately 2-3 days to travel the southern 22km of the trail between Gordon River and Walbran Creek.
- **slippery conditions** on muddy trails, thousands of slippery roots, uneven wooden surfaces, boulders and rocky shorelines.
- **difficult travel:** wading rivers, climbing long and steep ladders, using cable cars, following an irregular trail, negotiating steep slopes and earth slumps.
- **damaged structures:** trail maintenance is ongoing. Boardwalks will be broken, will have exposed nails, will be uneven, or may be completely missing. Ladders may be completely missing or may be missing consecutive ladder rungs. Cable cars may be out of commission, making river crossings dangerous and impossible in areas. Hikers may have to wait several days during heavy rain to cross rivers safely.



- **a temperate rainforest climate.** Rainfall averages 330 cm (130 in.) per year with heavy rainfall possible at any time. Floodwaters can delay hikers for days. Fog is common, especially in July and August. The average summer temperature is 14° Celsius (57° F.). Incidents of hypothermia and physical injury increase significantly during prolonged wet periods. Be prepared for cold wet conditions even during the warmest summer months.
- **aches, pains and injuries.** Muscle soreness, pain and injuries happen: it is important to understand that it may take more than 24 hours for help to be notified. Weather/ sea conditions may also cause delays for the rescue team.





## HISTORY OF THE WEST COAST TRAIL

Backed by the Insular Mountain Range of Vancouver Island and facing the open Pacific Ocean, Pacific Rim National Park Reserve (PRNPR) represents and protects both the near shore waters and the coastal lowland forests of Canada's west coast. PRNPR is composed of three distinct areas; Long Beach, the Broken Group Islands, and the West Coast Trail (WCT).

The 75 kilometer (47 mile) WCT is part of the ancient paths and paddling routes used for trade and travel by first nations. Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht villages and camps were well established before the foreign sailing ships started to arrive off this coast over 200 years ago.

As the years passed and the number of ships sailing the Juan de Fuca Strait increased, so too did the number of shipwrecks and drownings along the coast. In time, the coastline became known as, "the Graveyard of the Pacific."

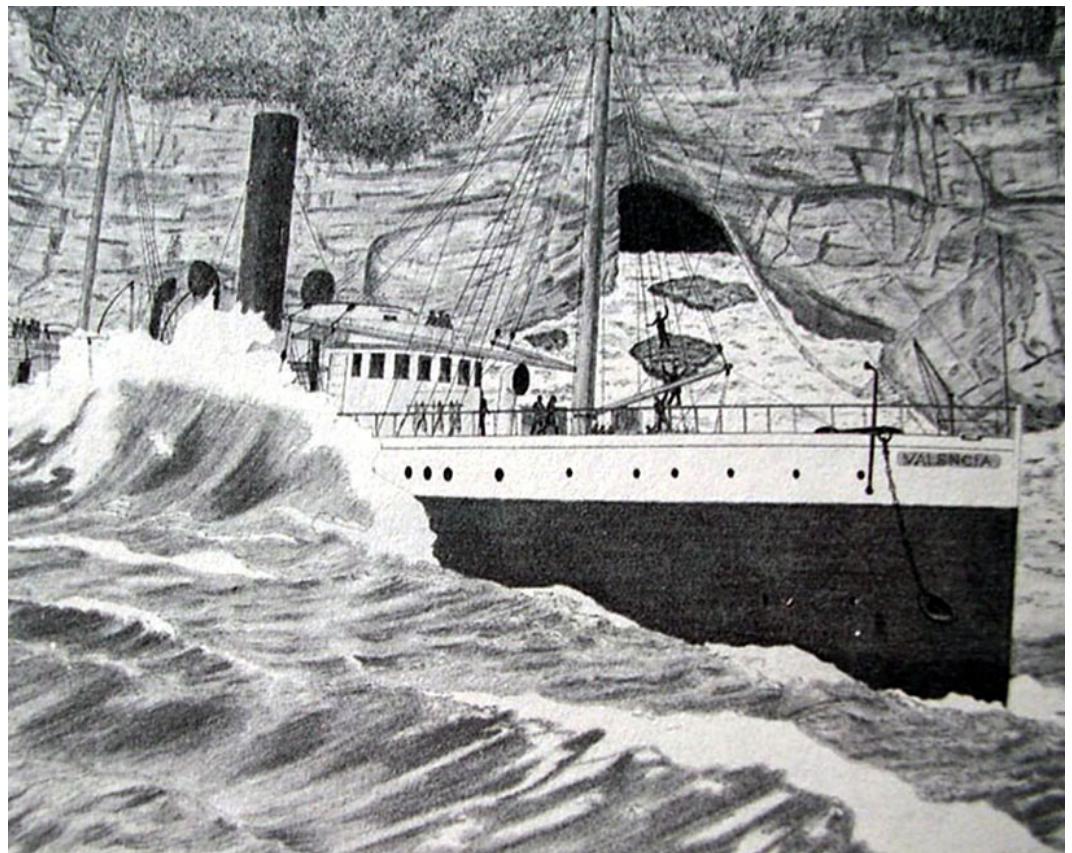
To aid sailors navigating the shoals, currents, thick fogs, and winter storms of the west coast, the government of Canada established the Cape Beale Lighthouse in 1873 and the Carmanah Lighthouse in 1891. By the time the Carmanah Lighthouse was operational, a telegraph line had been strung through the trails and traditional territories of the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht First Nations to establish communications between the lighthouses and Victoria.

While the lights and lines helped, they were not enough to stop the

number of shipwrecks from growing. In 1906, when the steamship Valencia went down with the horrific loss of more than 125 lives, the public outcry prompted the Canadian government into further action: Pachena Lighthouse was constructed in 1907; lifesaving stations were established at Cloo-ose and Bamfield; the telegraph route was upgraded to become the Dominion Life Saving Trail, complete with six shelters stocked with provisions for both shipwreck victims and their rescuers.

As navigation technology improved, many of these measures became obsolete and were abandoned. In 1970, PRNPR was established and in 1973, the lifesaving trail was included in the national park reserve as a recreational hiking trail, beginning a new chapter in its history.

Today, over 7,500 backpackers hike the WCT every year. They come to see the beauty, experience the challenges, and walk the path of those that came before them.



## PLANNING YOUR TRIP

The WCT is open and reservable from May 1st to September 30th each year.

Prolonged periods of heavy rain, strong winds, high tides, large waves and short days necessitate closing the trail from October 7th to April 30th annually.

**Maximum group size is 10.** The only exceptions are school groups starting the trail between May 1 - June 14, and September 20 - 26. Up to 18 hikers may be in these school groups.

**Entry and exit points:** Pachena Bay (north), Nitinaht Village (mid-point), and Gordon River (south).

Entry or exit at any other point is not permitted unless an evacuation is required.

Hikers should plan for a minimum of 2-3 nights between Nitinaht Narrows and Pachena Bay.

Hikers should plan for a minimum of 4-5 nights between Nitinaht Narrows and Gordon River.

**Potential Fire Bans:** It is vital that all hikers check on the status of fire bans before the hike, and adhere to any prohibitions or restrictions. When permitted, fires must be kept small, and located below the high tide line.

## NATIONAL PARK ENTRY PASS

All visitors to Pacific Rim NPR are required to have a valid National Park Entry Pass at all times while they are visiting the national park reserve. Youth (17 years of age and younger) receive free entry into all of Parks Canada's places but still require a National Park Entry Pass. This means that in addition to requiring a valid WCT Overnight Use Permit, all visitors 18 years of age and older are also required to purchase a valid National Park Entry Pass.

While on the WCT all hikers must have their National Park Entry Pass on their person at all times. **Do not leave the pass in your vehicle.**

The revenue from national park entry fees remains within the Coastal BC Field Unit to support the services and facilities that all visitors enjoy (including WCT boardwalk, the Guardian program, trail, ladders, cable cars, campgrounds, outhouses, visitor safety, programs, etc.).

Pacific Rim National Park daily entry passes can be purchased at any Pacific Rim NPR facility

(including the WCT Orientation Centres) or from Secret Beach Campground and Kayak Launch, Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Ucluelet, Tourism Tofino or the Wickaninnish Inn.

Pacific Rim National Park annual entry passes can be purchased at any Pacific Rim NPR facility (including the WCT Orientation Centres), they can be purchased online or from Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce, Secret Beach Campground and Kayak Launch, Tourism Ucluelet, or Tourism Tofino.

Parks Canada annual Discovery Passes can be purchased at any Pacific Rim NPR facility (including the WCT Orientation Centres) or they can be purchased online at <http://www.commandesparcs-parksorders.ca/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/en/parksb2c/discovery-pass>.

Commercial Groups/Tours must purchase their national park entry passes through the Parks Canada Commercial Sales Office (see your business license application for more details).



## WCT RESERVATION SERVICE & PERMITS

**Reservations for Gordon River, Nitinaht Village and Pachena Bay entries are available online and through the Parks Canada Call Centre up to 2 days prior to departure.**

Reservation Service	Online	Call Centre
Reservation Service is available March 25 - September 30, 2023 - 7 days a week.	24 hours a day <a href="https://reservation.pc.gc.ca">reservation.pc.gc.ca</a>	8 a.m. to 6 p.m. PDT 1-877-737-3783 (Canada & USA) 1-519-826-5391 (International)



When making a reservation, have the following ready:

- preferred start and end dates - first choice and alternate dates;
- the access point you plan to start from - Pachena Bay, Nitinaht Village or Gordon River;
- the exit point - Pachena Bay, Nitinaht Village or Gordon River;
- the number of hikers and age range in your group;
- hiker names and emergency contacts for each hiker;
- method of payment: Visa, MasterCard or American Express;
- an email address to send confirmation and orientation information.

To avoid overcrowding and reduce environmental damage, Parks Canada limits the number of overnight hikers each day.

### **Standby List:**

Standby spaces are no longer available, all spaces are 100% reservable.

Reservations for overnight backcountry camping at Keeha Beach are available online or through the call centre. Register your group at the West Coast Trail Visitor Centre at Pachena Bay prior to overnight hiking to Keeha Beach or Tapaltos Bay.

**The Nitinaht Triangle is closed to all guests.**

## FEES

In addition to a National Park Entry pass, a WCT Overnight Use Permit is required for all overnight users of the WCT. These fees help support the cost of operating the WCT (e.g. rescue services, information services, construction of ladders, cable cars, boardwalks and bridges).

Additional ferry fees pay for passage across Gordon River and Nitinaht Narrows, a service provided by the Ditidaht and Pacheedaht First Nations throughout the hiking season. If entering or exiting the trail from Nitinaht Narrows the Nitinaht Village Water Taxi fee is \$65 per person one way for travel up or down the lake. Hikers planning to enter or exit the trail at Nitinaht Village can pay this fee directly to the water taxi operator or at the Nitinaht Orientation Centre.

The water taxi leaves only once per day:

- approximately 8:30 am from Nitinaht Village to Nitinaht Narrows
- approximately 5 pm from Nitinaht Narrows to Nitinaht Village.

A reservation fee of \$25.75 per person is applicable when making a reservation through the Parks Canada Reservation Service.

## CANCELLATION POLICY

- Reservation Fee: non-refundable.
- When cancelling a reservation 21 days or more prior to the departure date, the WCT Overnight Use Permit and the ferry fees are fully refundable. The reservation fee of \$25.75 per hiker is non-refundable and an \$11.50 on-line (or \$13.50 through the call centre) cancellation fee will apply per booking.
- When cancelling a reservation 20 days or less prior to the departure date, the WCT Overnight Use fees are **not refundable**, only the ferry fees are eligible for a refund if cancellations are made within 20 days of the departure date. The non-refundable cancellation fee of \$11.50 online (or \$13.50 through call centre) also applies.

All fees are subject to change.





Example of Hiker Fees			
	A hiker travelling from Pachena Bay to Gordon River (or vice versa)	A hiker travelling from Nitinaht Village to Gordon River (or vice versa)	A hiker travelling from Nitinaht Village to Pachena Bay (or vice versa)
Reservation Fee	\$25.75	\$25.75	\$25.75
WCT Overnight Use PERMIT	\$160.00	\$160.00	\$160.00
Ferry Fee Gordon River	\$28.00	\$28.00	N/A
Ferry Fee Niti-naht Narrows	\$28.00	N/A	N/A
Water Taxi Fee Nitinaht Village - Nitinaht Narrows (one way)	N/A	\$65	\$65
National Park Entry Fee (not paid at time of reservation)	\$10.50 per adult/per day \$9.00 per senior/per day \$21.00 per family/group/per day or a Pacific Rim Annual Pass or a National Discovery Pass	\$10.50 per adult/per day \$9.00 per senior/per day \$21.00 per family/group/per day or a Pacific Rim Annual Pass or a National Discovery Pass	\$10.50 per adult/per day \$9.00 per senior/per day \$21.00 per family/group/per day or a Pacific Rim Annual Pass or a National Discovery Pass

- All fees are per person, include all taxes, and are listed in Canadian funds.
- Hikers making a reservation through the Parks Canada Reservation System pay all of the applicable fees at the time of their reservation, except for any Nitinaht Water Taxi fees and National Park Entry passes. **National Park Entry passes can be purchased in person at the WCT Orientation Centres prior to starting your hike.**

Visit our website or contact the national park reserve for an up-to-date fee schedule prior to your departure. Fees may change at any time.

## TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM THE WEST COAST TRAIL

Parks Canada provides this listing for the convenience of hikers. It is not intended as a testimonial for the services. Hikers make their own arrangements for transportation services. Refer to the map and telephone numbers provided on pages 18 - 19. Reservations for transportation are recommended.

Vehicles can be left at a number of locations near the access points. Ask for details once you arrive at the WCT Orientation Centres.

### **To Pachena Bay WCT Orientation Centre, 5 km south of Bamfield:**

- Drive on gravel logging roads from Port Alberni (2 hrs) or Duncan (3 hrs).
- Bus from Victoria (5.5 hrs), Nanaimo (3.5 hrs), with the West Coast Trail Express.
- Bamfield Taxi is available to transport hikers from Bamfield to the trailhead.
- In 2018, Huu-ay-aht First Nations put in a 4.5 km walking trail, Tiičmis Tašii, that provides a safe walking connection between Anacla and Bamfield. Please use this trail when accessing Bamfield and do not walk on the road.

### **To Nitinaht Orientation Centre in Nitinaht Village, 80 km southeast of Port Alberni:**

- Drive on gravel logging roads from Port Alberni (2 hrs) or Duncan (2.5 hrs).
- See the Ditidaht First Nation website for detailed directions to Nitinaht Village (refer to the contact information section on page 18).

### **Between Nitinaht Village and Nitinaht Narrows:**

The Nitinaht Water Taxi makes only one scheduled trip each way per day between Nitinaht Village, at the head of Nitinaht Lake, and Nitinaht Narrows on the WCT:

- 8:15 am departure from the Nitinaht Village Dock to Nitinaht Narrows on the West Coast Trail.
- 5:00 pm departure from Nitinaht Narrows on the West Coast Trail to Nitinaht Village Dock.

Nitinaht Village is a small, remote community; an overnight stay may be required. The campground is the only option for accommodation. There is no cell phone service.

### **To Gordon River WCT Orientation Centre, 5 km north of Port Renfrew:**

- Drive from Victoria via Highway 14 (2 hrs), or Duncan (1.5 hrs) via logging road.
- Bus from Victoria (2 hrs) with West Coast Trail Express.

### **Between Port Renfrew, Nitinaht Village and Bamfield by logging road:**

- Bus (3 hrs) with West Coast Trail Express on gravel logging roads.

When travelling by West Coast Trail Express to Nitinaht Village, the West Coast Trail Express will stop at the Junction (7 km from Nitinaht Village) and you will be transferred to the Nitinaht Village by another vehicle.



## MAKE A TRIP PLAN

Before you leave for the trail, write a trip plan: leave it with a responsible person who is not hiking with you (e.g. friend or family member). Detail where you are going, with whom, when you plan to return, and what to do if you do not return as planned, if possible include an expected

nightly trip itinerary and any known medical issues within the group. A WCT Overnight Use Permit does not fulfil this role.

(For an example of a trip plan see: <https://adventuresmart.ca/tripplanning/tripplan.htm>)

## AT THE ACCESS POINTS

There are some basic tourism services at, or near, all access points. These include accommodations, campgrounds, phones, fuel, some groceries, and food services. There is an ATM at Huu-ay-aht First Nation's Market and Cafe. There are no banking services in the villages of Bamfield, Port

Renfrew, or Nitinaht Village.

Cell phone service is limited in Bamfield. There is no cell service at the Pachena Bay Trailhead, in Port Renfrew or Nitinaht Village.

## ORIENTATION SESSION AND PRE-HIKE BRIEFINGS

**All overnight users of the West Coast Trail MUST participate in a WCT orientation session.**

Orientations are offered online; links are sent out 1 - 2 weeks before arrival.

The purpose of the orientation process is to:

- provide information about safety issues in order to reduce the number of hiker injuries and wildlife encounters.
- reduce environmental impacts by providing back country etiquette information.
- provide information on how to be CoastSmart.
- provide information on how to read tide charts.

### WCT Pre-Hike Briefings:

Before your hike, you must attend a briefing at Gordon River, Pachena Bay, or Nitinaht Village. Parks Canada staff will provide information about current issues and trail conditions, as well as issue WCT Overnight Use permits or WCT Day

Use permits. National Park Entry Fees and any other additional fees will be collected.

Please bring your reservation confirmation information to the briefing.

Hikers will be issued a waterproof Pacific Rim National Park Reserve West Coast Trail map and Tofino references tide table when they register at the briefing.

- WCT pre-hike briefings are only offered at 10:00 am and 2:00 pm daily between May 1st and September 30th at Gordon River and Pachena Bay.
- Reservations are not necessary for the WCT pre-hike briefings.
- Hikers may check in and participate in a pre-hike briefing session as early as the day before their hike starts.
- We strongly recommend hikers start the trail a minimum of 5 hours before sunset to ensure a camping area is reached before nightfall.

- Hiking from Gordon River to Camper Bay in one day is not advisable. Plan to camp at Thrasher Cove. Statistics show that most accidents occur later in the day in this area.

### Pre-Hike Briefings at Nitinaht Village:

- Hikers accessing the trail at Nitinaht Village will go through the pre-hike briefing process at the Nitinaht Orientation Centre in Nitinaht Village.
- Pre-hike briefings are offered at the Nitinaht Orientation Centre at 7:30 am (subject to

change). Hikers are able to register their party at 3:30 pm the day before but must meet the following morning for pre-hike briefing.

- Plan accordingly, an overnight stay at Nitinaht Village may be necessary prior to departing on the 8:30 am water taxi. A water taxi fee of \$65 will be collected at the Nitinaht Orientation Centre. **(note: there is only one water-taxi down the lake per day, at 8:30 am, leaving from Nitinaht Village to Nitinaht Narrows. A return water taxi to Nitinaht Village is at 4:30 pm daily).**

## FERRY CROSSINGS

The Gordon River Ferry operates daily from May 1st to October 7th. The first crossing is at 8:45 am and then 10:30 am, 11:30 am, 12:30 pm, 1:30 pm, 2:30 pm and 3:30 pm.

The Nitinaht Narrows Ferry operates daily from May 1st to October 7th between the hours of 9:30 am and 4:30 pm on an as needed basis.

## PROTECTING, PRESENTING AND PRESERVING

Parks Canada is responsible for ensuring the sustainability and integrity of the natural and cultural resources in its care. Everyone can help to protect the ecological integrity and cultural heritage of the West Coast Trail. Working with others, we strive to provide Canadians and international visitors with the opportunity to learn about Canada's heritage.

Parks Canada, the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht First Nations work collaboratively to ensure protection, preservation and presentation of these lands. Respectful behaviour from all hikers will lead to a safe and rewarding experience and contribute to a healthy, functioning ecosystem.





## BACK COUNTRY ETIQUETTE: LOW IMPACT CAMPING

**It is an offence under the Canada National Parks Act to collect, remove, destroy or deface any natural or cultural heritage resource within national park reserve boundaries.** This includes defacing artifacts, cutting trees for firewood or makeshift shelters and collecting or removing marine life, shellfish, fossils, artifacts, plants, etc. Leave Pacific Rim National Park Reserve in as good or better condition than you found it.

**Use a stove and minimize fires.** Do not rely on fires for cooking, staying warm or drying out. Small driftwood fires are permitted below the high tide line on beaches only: fires are not permitted in the forest. Use only driftwood (no thicker than your wrist): do not cut vegetation, trees or other plants, and keep fires away from beach logs. Make sure fires have burned out, or are extinguished with water, and dismantled. No trace of the fire should be left. Conserve firewood for other hikers later on in the season.

**Support safe water:** use outhouses. Outhouses are available at all designated camping areas. If you are stuck between outhouses, dig a hole 20 centimetres (7 inch) deep, at least 30 metres (100 feet or three bus lengths) away from water sources and well off the trail. Bury the human waste. Dispose of toilet paper in outhouses or pack it out. Use composting outhouses for bodily waste and toilet paper only. They are not compost piles for food scraps, garbage, feminine hygiene products or disposable wipes

**If possible, camp on the beach above the high-tide line to reduce the impact and soil compaction in vegetated areas.**

**Ensure all washing (bodies, clothes, and dishes) is carried out in the ocean or at the mouth of rivers.** Do not contaminate any water upstream. Dispose of any dirty water at least 30 metres from drinking water sources. Use only biodegradable soap.

**Your actions can kill wildlife and endanger hikers.** Use metal food lockers or bear poles to

store wildlife attractants if they are available, and if they are not available hang your food, garbage and toiletries out of reach of animals and away from tents. Items should be a minimum of 4 metres (12 feet) off the ground, 3 metres (9 feet) from the trunk of the tree and 3 metres (9 feet) down from the limb.



**Pack it in, pack it out.** There are no garbage cans on the WCT: everything you pack in you must pack out, including orange peels, extra food (do not think you are doing anyone a favour by leaving extra food or supplies in the food lockers), feminine hygiene products, tarps, ropes, and wet clothes. Before arriving at the trail, minimize packaging to reduce garbage and weight. When you depart a campsite, do not leave any items in the metal food lockers. **You are not helping other hikers by leaving food or other items behind. The food lockers will become full and unusable, will eventually smell, and still be an attractant to wildlife. Pack out all of your garbage and food.**

**First Nation reserves and treaty settlement lands located along the WCT are private property.** The First Nations welcome you and ask that you stay on the main trail/beach and obey all signs. Patrol and Guardian cabins are not for hikers.

**Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.**

## A SAFE AND ENJOYABLE TRIP

Travel in the backcountry requires special attention to safety due to the numerous hazards one may encounter. Every season a number of hikers sustain minor injuries but are able to safely make their way off the trail without assistance. Additionally, 60-80 hikers suffer more serious injuries requiring evacuation by Parks Canada's Visitor Safety team. The most significant contributing factors leading to injuries are previous health issues or a combination of the weather, rough terrain, fatigue, and the level of physical preparation of hikers however unavoidable accidents do happen.

Based on these factors, we encourage hikers to:

- prepare themselves physically for the hike;
- keep packs as light as possible and be prepared to carry your pack for 6-8 days;
- travel slowly and cautiously over slippery terrain (stay focused);
- stay hydrated;
- set reasonable travel expectations each day for your abilities; and
- use hiking pole(s).

**Ensure that your party takes time to enjoy the experience.** Many accidents and injuries occur when hikers are rushing, not paying attention to terrain, tired, or hiking too late in the day. Do not cross rivers when water level is above your knees. **Respect the capabilities of the slowest group member.** Take adequate rest breaks, and **keep the group together.** Never split up the group.

**During wet, rainy weather, occurrences of physical injury and hypothermia increase**

**significantly.** Hypothermia is the lowering of the core body temperature; if not stopped, symptoms can progress from slurred speech and lack of co-ordination to uncontrolled shivering to loss of consciousness and finally heart failure. **Ensure everyone in your party is warm, dry, hydrated and well fed.**

**Assume all walking surfaces are slippery at all times, not only during damp or rainy periods.** Slippery conditions on muddy trails, roots, wooden surfaces, boulders and rocky shorelines are a major hazard. Hiking too fast, fatigue, poor light conditions, improperly balanced or heavy packs and inadequate footwear all contribute to injuries and accidents.

**Bridges and Ladders:** Special care should be taken on all built structures. No more than one person should be on a section of ladder at one time, and no more than two people on a bridge at one time. Large groups should allow extra time to progress past ladder sections.

**Cable Cars: Keep your fingers, hands and hair away from the pulleys.** Only two people (and their gear) per cable car and platform. Platforms can be very slippery; use caution.





**Trail Maintenance is continually ongoing.**

Boardwalks may be broken for several kilometres; ladders may be missing rungs. Cable cars may be out of commission, making river crossings dangerous and impossible in areas.

**Hikers must wade across some creeks and rivers. Be prepared to wait for flood waters to subside;** this may take one or more days. Wait for safe water levels and low tides, undo all straps including chest and hip (if you fall, you can slip out of your pack more easily) and wear running shoes or sandals (for river crossings only).

**High tides can make beach walking very difficult and sometimes impossible.**

Carefully follow both the tide charts (Tofino) and WCT map to avoid being trapped or cut off. Consider the overnight high tide when pitching your tent on the beach. Watch also for large ocean waves and swells when hiking near the water's edge. For more information on being CoastSmart and to Know Before You Go Near the Water refer to CoastSmart.ca

**Tsunamis:** If the ground shakes under your feet, or you see the waterline quickly recede from the shore, a tsunami may be coming. **Move to higher ground and/or follow tsunami evacuation routes. Attempt to gain 20 metres in elevation in 20 minutes.**

**Drinking water is available from most rivers and creeks.** Collect water upstream, then purify, boil or filter it. Do not contaminate water for others.

**Do not consume bivalve shellfish** (clams, mussels, & oysters) due to regular occurrences of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP). PSP can result in serious illness or death.

**Fresh water fishing is not permitted on the WCT.**

**Salt water fishing is permitted on the WCT.** Carry the appropriate licenses (BC Tidal Waters Sports Fishing License) and follow the regulations and closures.

## HOW TO CONTACT HELP IN AN EMERGENCY

In an emergency follow the safety advice given to you by Parks Canada staff, lighthouse keepers, First Nation Trail Guardians or ferry operators; they will notify authorities and assist you until more help arrives.

Cell phone coverage is inconsistent on the WCT. Do not expect cell phone service, however, roaming connection to US carriers may be possible at some shoreline locations.

Devices such as "SPOT", "inReach", satellite phones, and VHF radios are often the only devices that will work on the WCT. Be familiar with your device and how it operates. Make sure to let your contact person know how to contact Parks Canada Emergency Response in case of an emergency.

**Each hiking party is responsible for assisting injured members of their party.**

**If you are injured,**

- but can hike and don't need medical attention, try to get off the trail at the nearest exit with assistance of your party or other hikers and report your injury to Parks Canada staff; you should not continue hiking in the hope that your condition will improve.
- and cannot hike to the nearest exit or you need medical attention, follow the instructions in the West Coast Trail Safety Information sheet that is issued to all parties with their WCT Overnight Use Permit. Parks Canada staff are responsible for assisting injured hikers. The majority of evacuations are done by the Parks Canada Visitor Safety Team by boat, though a serious or complex evacuation may require assistance from other agencies.



Parks Canada staff will evacuate injured hikers to the nearest exit point, ambulance, or medical facility. This is not necessarily the most convenient location for the injured hiker.

**Minor complaints such as blisters, sore feet, fatigue and lack of food do not**

**warrant evacuation. The Visitor Safety team works very hard and often gets multiple call-outs on the same day. Please only contact them for serious situations or questions.**

## LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

Black bears, wolves and cougars use the beaches and trails. All wild animals are potentially dangerous. To avoid a dangerous encounter with wildlife stay alert and keep these points in mind:

- Keep food and garbage inaccessible to wildlife; they are attractants.
- Keep children (6 years and older) close to you.
- If you encounter a predator, group together, face the animal and retreat slowly. Give them an avenue of escape; do not run or play dead.
- In the unlikely event of an attack, try to appear big and aggressive: shout, wave a stick or throw rocks.
- Knowledge, alertness and a clean campsite can help avoid a dangerous encounter. Never approach a predator. Always give them an avenue of escape.
- If you encounter a predator, do not run - it may trigger an attack. Follow the recommendations in *You are in Black Bear Country* and *You are in Wolf and Cougar Country*.
- Read the West Coast Trail bulletin and talk to the Parks Canada staff at the WCT Orientation Centres if you have questions.
- Report any wildlife sightings (with location and details) to the WCT orientation centre staff when you exit the trail.



## EQUIPMENT

To enjoy your WCT experience you must be comfortable; use quality, lightweight equipment. Your pack should weigh no more than 25%-30% of your body weight. Reassess the content of your pack if it is heavier than this.

- **Sturdy boots:** High quality hiking boots with good ankle and arch support are required. Soft rubber soles provide better traction on slippery surfaces than hard soles. Do not break in new boots on this hike. An additional pair of sandals or running shoes are good for wearing around camp and for river crossings.
- **Rainwear and warm clothing:** Bring a durable waterproof jacket and pants; under-layers that keep you warm when wet and are quick to dry, as well as a warm hat and gloves.
- **Lightweight backpacking stove and fuel.**
- **High energy, lightweight, quick-cooking food.** To reduce excess pack weight, pre-plan and pack daily meals and snacks before your trip.
- **Backpacks** require a well fitted, padded hip belt and should be lined with a heavy duty garbage bag or waterproof liner. All of your equipment should fit inside your backpack.
- **A tent with a waterproof fly is absolutely necessary.**
- **Sleeping bag:** Synthetic fills are preferable, as down bags lose warmth when wet. Pack sleeping bags in waterproof bags and carry them inside the backpack.
- **Closed-cell foam sleeping pad.**
- The current **Pacific Rim National Park Reserve West Coast Trail Map**, which will be obtained at the trailheads along with a copy of the current tide charts (Tofino).
- **a watch** for use with tide charts.

- **First aid kit** that includes personal medications and treatments for injuries.
- **15 meters (50 ft) of synthetic rope** per group to hang food, use as clothes-line, etc.
- **Cell phones** have limited use but can be useful in some locations. Do not rely on cell coverage but they can be used in conjunction with other signalling methods. Ensure phones are fully charged.
- **Gaiters and hiking poles.**

### Also consider:

- an emergency signaling device
- cash for unexpected emergencies (up to \$100 per person is recommended)
- water container, water purification equipment
- toilet paper
- zip-lock type plastic bags for keeping permits and other small items dry
- waterproof lighter and/or matches
- fire starter
- garbage bags to pack out all your refuse
- sun screen
- lip screen
- sunglasses
- hand sanitizer
- toiletries
- flashlight
- weather radio
- repair kits for equipment
- lightweight shoes for camp and river crossings
- cooking and eating utensils
- walking stick or retractable hiking poles
- bear spray and/or air-horn

**Do not bring an axe, firearms, bear bangers, or pets!**

## WEST COAST TRAIL INFORMATION

<b>Parks Canada Emergency Dispatch (24 hours)</b>	1-877-852-3100 (toll-free) or 250-726-3604  *Please note that the toll-free number only works in North America and is not available on satellite phones
Parks Canada Reservation Services (West Coast Trail)	1-877-737-3783 (toll free Canada and the US) 1-519-826-5391 (outside the toll free area) <a href="http://reservation.pc.gc.ca">reservation.pc.gc.ca</a>
West Coast Trail Orientation Centre Pachena Bay (Bamfield)	Phone: 250-728-3234 Open daily 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., (May 1 to Oct. 5)
West Coast Trail Orientation Centre Gordon River (Port Renfrew)	Phone: 250-647-5434 Open daily 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., (May 1 to Oct. 5)
West Coast Trail Orientation Centre (Nitinaht Village)	wct.nitinaht@gmail.com 250-745-3203
Pacific Rim National Park Reserve Administration Office	2040 Pacific Rim Highway P.O. Box 280, Ucluelet, BC VoR 3A0 250-726-3500 (year-round)
Parks Canada Email:	pacrim.info@pc.gc.ca
Parks Canada Website:	<a href="http://www.pc.gc.ca/pacificrim">www.pc.gc.ca/pacificrim</a>

## TRANSPORTATION (subject to change)

<b>BC Ferries</b> (Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo)	1-888-223-3779 or 250-386-3431 (international) *BCF on cell <a href="http://www.bcferries.com">www.bcferries.com</a>
<b>Nitinaht Lake Water Taxi</b> (across Nitinaht Narrows and to Nitinaht Village)	250-745-3509 <a href="http://www.nitinatwildernesscharters.com">www.nitinatwildernesscharters.com</a>
<b>Pachena Bay Taxi</b> Transport services between Bamfield and the trailhead.	250-918-8294
<b>Tofino Air</b> Servicing all of Vancouver Island	1-866-486-3247 or 250-725-4454 <a href="http://www.tofinoair.ca">www.tofinoair.ca</a>
<b>Pacific Seaplanes Inc.</b> (Bamfield, Barclay Sound, Ucluelet, Tofino, Port Alberni, Port Renfrew, Nanaimo, Victoria, Vancouver)	1-855-933-5922 or text 250-616-5858 <a href="http://www.pacificseaplanes.ca">www.pacificseaplanes.ca</a>
<b>Victoria Clipper</b> (Seattle to Victoria - Passenger Ferry)	1-800-888-2535 or 250-382-8100 <a href="http://www.victoriaclipper.com">www.victoriaclipper.com</a>
<b>West Coast Trail Express Bus</b> (Victoria, Nanaimo, Bamfield, Nitinat Vil- lage, Port Renfrew)	1-888-999-2288 or 250-477-8700 <a href="http://www.trailbus.com">www.trailbus.com</a>



### ACCOMMODATION (subject to change)

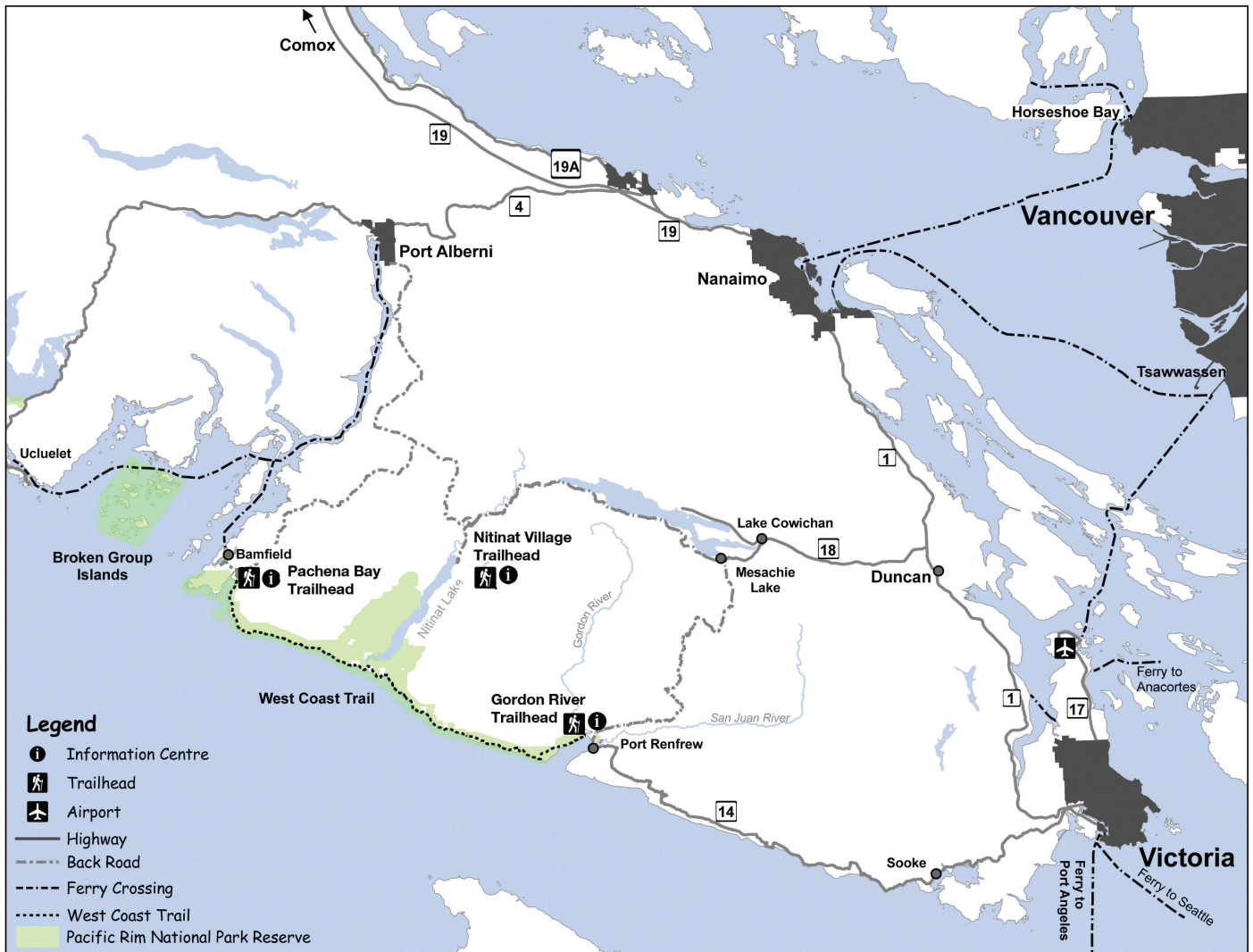
Nitinaht Campground	1-250-745-3844 <a href="http://nitinahtcampground.com">nitinahtcampground.com</a>
Pacheedaht Campground (beside the Gordon River WCT Orientation Centre in Gordon River, Port Renfrew)	1-250-647-0090
Pachena Bay Campground (beside the Pachena Bay WCT Orientation Centre in Pachena Bay, Bamfield)	1-250-728-1287 <a href="http://pachenabaycampground.ca">pachenabaycampground.ca</a>
Awis Guesthouse, Hacas Inn and Upnit Lodge (Bamfield)	Huu-ay-aht First Nations <a href="http://hfnigroup.ca/our-businesses">hfnigroup.ca/our-businesses</a> 250-728-3231
Nitinat Wilderness Charters (Cabin and camping on the WCT at the Nitinaht Narrows and a Bed and Breakfast in Nitinaht Village)	250-745-3509 <a href="http://nitinatwildernesscharters.com">nitinatwildernesscharters.com</a>

### OTHER USEFUL REFERENCES (subject to change)

Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce	2533 Port Alberni Hwy. Port Alberni, BC V9Y 8P2 250-724-6535 <a href="http://www.albernichamber.ca">www.albernichamber.ca</a>
Port Renfrew Chamber of Commerce	P.O. Box 39, Port Renfrew, BC VoS 1Ko 250-858-7665 <a href="http://www.portrenfrew.com">www.portrenfrew.com</a>
Bamfield Chamber of Commerce	250-728-3006 info@bamfieldchamber.com <a href="http://www.bamfieldchamber.com">www.bamfieldchamber.com</a>
Fisheries and Oceans Canada Pacific Region	Port Alberni Office - 250-720-4440 Fishing and Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning Information 24 hour line [sub area 23 (8)] 604-666-2828 or 1-866-431-3474 <a href="http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca">www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca</a>
Tide Charts (Tofino)	<a href="http://www.waterlevels.gc.ca">www.waterlevels.gc.ca</a>
Weather Forecasts	VHF Channel 21 B Continuous automated forecast: 250-726-3415 <a href="http://www.weather.gc.ca">www.weather.gc.ca</a>
CoastSmart	<a href="http://www.coastsmart.ca/">www.coastsmart.ca/</a>
Adventure Smart	<a href="http://www.adventuresmart.ca/">www.adventuresmart.ca/</a>

## SOUTHERN VANCOUVER ISLAND AND THE WEST COAST TRAIL UNIT OF PACIFIC RIM NATIONAL PARK RESERVE OF CANADA

(This map is not intended for hiking purposes)



## REFERENCES

Available from the WCT Information Centre:

- *The Pacific Rim National Park Reserve West Coast Trail Map*. Parks Canada 2023