



Pacific Rim National Park Reserve of Canada

Climate

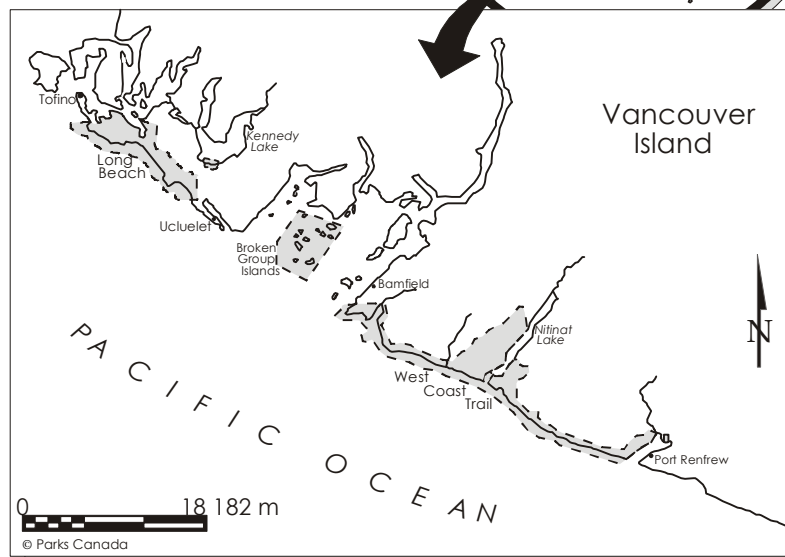
The park reserve's maritime climate ensures an abundance of heavy rains, prolonged cloudiness, and moderate temperatures. Dominated by the onshore flow of Pacific air, the climate is generally moist and mild. Winters see frequent rain storms, while large pressure areas off the coast cause lengthy spells of warm sunshine. Winter temperatures average above freezing, while summer days rarely go above 30°C.

Geology

The world's largest ocean dominates this park. The Pacific waters pound the shores of Vancouver Island, an island that was once a chain of volcanic mountains that collided with the mainland. Much later, glaciers advanced from the mountains out to sea, and their retreat left sand, gravel, and clay, to form a coastal plain on which the park is located. The rocky shoreline, with its tidal pools, sea caves, and surf-swept headlands, is rich with marine life.

Location

Pacific Rim National Park Reserve was established on the southwest coast of Vancouver Island in 1970. The park's 510 km² have three components, including the Long Beach Unit, the West Coast Trail Unit, and the Broken Group Islands Unit. This group of over 100 islands and islets accounts for most of the park's 150 km of shoreline, and includes 106 km² of marine habitat. The Long Beach area is 304 km from Victoria. The park reserve, along with South Moresby / Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, protects over 2 200 km² of the Pacific Coast Mountains Natural Region. Pacific Rim is located in the Pacific Maritime Ecozone.

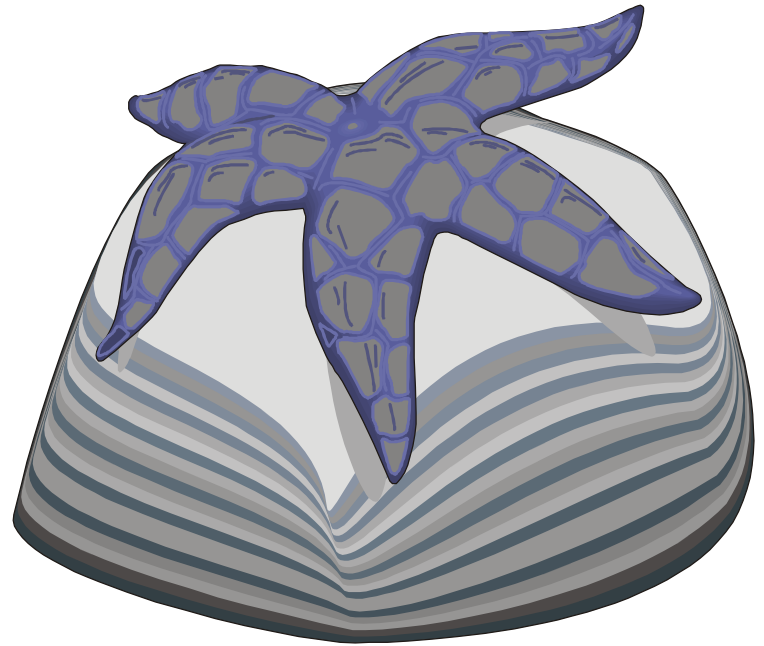


Vegetation

By far the most conspicuous plant life on Pacific Rim is the towering coastal spruces and firs that thrive in the abundant moisture and long growing season. Sitka spruce are the main coastal species, while cedar, hemlock, and amabilis fir grow further inland. Areas of bog and muskeg support shorepine, Labrador tea, and bog laurel. Thick growths of salal, salmonberry, and huckleberry can rise 2-3 m above the ground, while mosses, ferns, and bunchberries compete for sunlight on the forest floor.

Wildlife

Land mammals are abundant in the park reserve. Occasionally one will see red squirrels, mink, martens, and raccoons. Black-tailed deer frequent glades along the shore, while large predators like black bears, cougars, and wolves are more often seen during the quieter off-season months. The birdlife in the park reserve includes forest species like pileated woodpeckers and red crossbills, and shoreline species like sandpipers, gulls, diving ducks, loons, cormorants, murrets, grebes, and bald eagles. Beaches are alive with razor clams, sea worms, and beach hoppers, while the tidal pools teem with barnacles, mussels, hermit crabs, small fish, sea stars, and sponges. Offshore, halibut, sole, cod, and schools of salmon feed on shrimp, plankton, and small fish. Ocean mammals include killer, gray, sperm, hump-backed and blue whales, sea lions, and harbour seals.



Activities

Long Beach contains most of the park's recreational facilities, including one campground, short hiking trails, picnic areas, scenic roadways, the Wickaninnish Interpretive Centre and Green Point Theatre. Primitive camping is available at eight sites in the Broken Group Islands Unit. Popular activities in the park include beach-combing, sea kayaking, scuba diving, whale and bird watching, boating, and fishing. Visitors can also participate in a full range of interpretive programs.

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