

Remains of mining machine
(Gold Mine Trail)

4 South Beach Trail

Length: 1.52 km (return)
Location: starts from the Wickaninnish Centre.

At first the trail winds through a forest of wind-pruned Sitka spruce fringing the shoreline. Short side trails lead to coves of sand or cobble enclosed by headlands. Please do not remove the living creatures found on these shores and please refrain from collecting driftwood or seashells. One of these coves, lined with a cobble beach, is named Lismer Beach. Group of Seven painter Arthur Lismer was a regular summer visitor here.

At the far end of Lismer Beach, the boardwalk ascends over the headland towards South Beach. The path is lined with walls of salal and salmonberry and affords a spectacular vista of Lismer Beach and Long Beach to the north.

At the top of this hill, the Wickaninnish Trail (5) to Florencia (Wreck) Bay, leads to the left. Continue to the right along the boardwalk sections, where moss gardens cling tenaciously overhead to aging Sitka spruce snags and western hemlock.

At the end of the boardwalk the natural music of gravel tumbling in the surf will greet your arrival on South Beach. Characterized by huge swells and polished pebbles, this beach is an excellent location from which to witness the fury of winter storms. At such times, use discretion in deciding where to venture onto the beach because storm waves may sweep up to the edge of the forest.

To the right, waves crash through a double sea-arch and huge surge channels in the rocky bluffs, which local residents have dubbed "The Edge of the Silver Thunder".

In the opposite direction, a stroll along South Beach leads to a more protected cove. Here, two fingers of ocean reach inland towards a necklace of rounded cobbles which edge the shoreline.



5 Wickaninnish Trail

Length: 5.0 km (return)
Location: spans Quisitis Point and links Long Beach to Florencia (Wreck) Bay. There are two access points. On the Long Beach side, this trail branches left from the South Beach Trail (4) at the crest of the first hill. On the Florencia Bay side, the trail begins near the Florencia Bay parking lot.

Wickaninnish was a Nootka chief and leader of the Clayoquot Band in the 1800s. His power and influence are reflected in the bay which bears his name.

This trail is another segment of the early Tofino-Ucluellet land route, a route that used beaches, forest trails and sheltered inlets to link the two towns and homesteads in the area. About halfway along the trail, the old corduroy surface is visible between a colourful mat of red, green and brown sphagnum (peat) moss. Look closely at this carpet and you may see clusters of tiny green leaves covered with minuscule red droplets. This plant, the sundew, attracts insects to its sticky leaves and then digests its entangled victim. Elsewhere, contorted shorepine, sometimes hundreds of years old and yet only a few metres high, fringe the sphagnum bog.



South Beach



6 Rain Forest Trail

Length: Loop A 1.01 km
Loop B 1.04 km

Location: begins adjacent to Highway 4, 6.4 km northwest of the park information centre. At the parking lot, directional signs will indicate the two trailheads.

Here you enter a coastal rain forest untouched by man, and discover a whole new world. The dense vegetation is mute testimony to the dynamic living force of the rain forest. Statuesque western red cedar, western hemlock and amabilis fir reach upward to the sunlight, their mammoth proportions commanding humility. Spreading boughs are thickly carpeted with hanging gardens of moss, from which spring ferns, shrubs and even young tree seedlings. Aged trunks, which crashed earthward hundred of years ago, criss-cross the forest floor. To pass through the cuts made in these fallen giants is to walk through past centuries, for some of these trees were well established seedlings before the first white man saw the coast of North America. Overhead, tiny chickadees and kinglets explore the upper levels of their swaying tenements. Below, salmon spawn in the shaded reaches of Sandhill Creek.

The Rain Forest Trail consists of two separate loops. Although both pass through the same type of forest, each trail has its own distinctive character. A self-guiding trail brochure, "Exploring the Rain Forest Trail", is available at the trailheads.



7 Schooner Trail

Length: 2.08 km (return)
Location: starts at a parking area 4.8 km north of Green Point Campground on Highway 4. The trail is the access route for the walk-in campground on Long Beach.

Winding through a cedar-hemlock forest, the trail bridges a small salmon-spawning stream. As you approach the beach, you may notice that the cedar-hemlock forest gradually gives way to Sitka spruce. While passing through this Sitka forest, consider the special adaptations a tree needs to withstand the briny spray of the ocean. Howling winter gales drive salty mist and beach sand shoreward. Exposure to this wind, salt and sand kills most young trees, but not the spruce seedlings. Thriving on the magnesium-rich soil, many of them survive, forming what is called the Sitka spruce fringe. This fringe skirts the entire outer coast of Vancouver Island, the Queen Charlotte Islands and the exposed coastal sections of the British Columbia mainland. Notice the Sitka's scaly bark - press your palm gently against the tips of the needle-like leaves. The sharply-pointed needles are characteristic of spruce and make it easy to tell them from cedar, hemlock and fir.

8 Spruce Fringe Trail

Length: 1.5 km loop
Location: Starts at the westernmost parking lot of the Combers Beach day-use area.

This loop trail winds through the forest community at the ocean's edge - the Sitka spruce fringe.

Along the uppermost stretches of Pacific Rim's beaches, piles of drift logs mark the winter storm boundary between ocean and land. However, the ocean's influence does not stop here, for high winds loft salty mists and abrasive sand particles inland. One of the few species of trees capable of gaining a foothold in these conditions is the Sitka spruce; in the salty, magnesium-rich environment its seedlings seem to thrive.

Here, the spruce fringe is about 200 metres deep. At its edge, behind the drift logs, young spruce and impenetrable thickets of salal grow upon ancient logs buried under sand. Streamlined by the force of the wind, pruned by driven sand and spray, they are compact and bushy.

Behind this natural windbreak, the trees grow tall and straight. Aerial gardens of moss and licorice fern grow in small pockets of dust and needles trapped in bark crevices. Along the trail, low sand ridges and old logs trap fresh water seepage. In these swamps tangled groves of moss-draped crabapple and willow flourish.

Behind the crabapple swamps, the trail ascends a glacial terrace, the boundary of sea and land just a few thousand years ago. Here at the inner edge of the fringe, the oldest and largest spruce compete for nutrients and space with western red cedar and hemlock, trees less tolerant of the ocean's influence.

9 Shorepine Bog Trail

Length: .8 km loop
Location: On the Wickaninnish Beach Road, .3 km south of the Florencia Bay turnout.

This boardwalk trail crosses the wettest forest community in the park. Pacific storms dump about 300 cm of rain on Long Beach each year; some of this water collects in depressions and is unable to run off because of poor drainage. As the water levels gradually rise, multicolored sphagnum or peat moss grows upward. Decay is so retarded in these acidic conditions that the mat of sphagnum may become several meters deep. Yellow cedar, hemlock and red cedar grow where hummocks of peat rise above the water level. On other hummocks tiny sundews with sticky leaves entrap insects and then digest them for supplementary nutrition. The clump-topped shorepine is the dominant tree; however because of nutrient deficiency a tree several centuries old may be only five metres tall.



Published by authority of
The Minister of the Environment
Minister of Supply and
Services Canada 1987
QS-W156-000-EE-A4

Canada

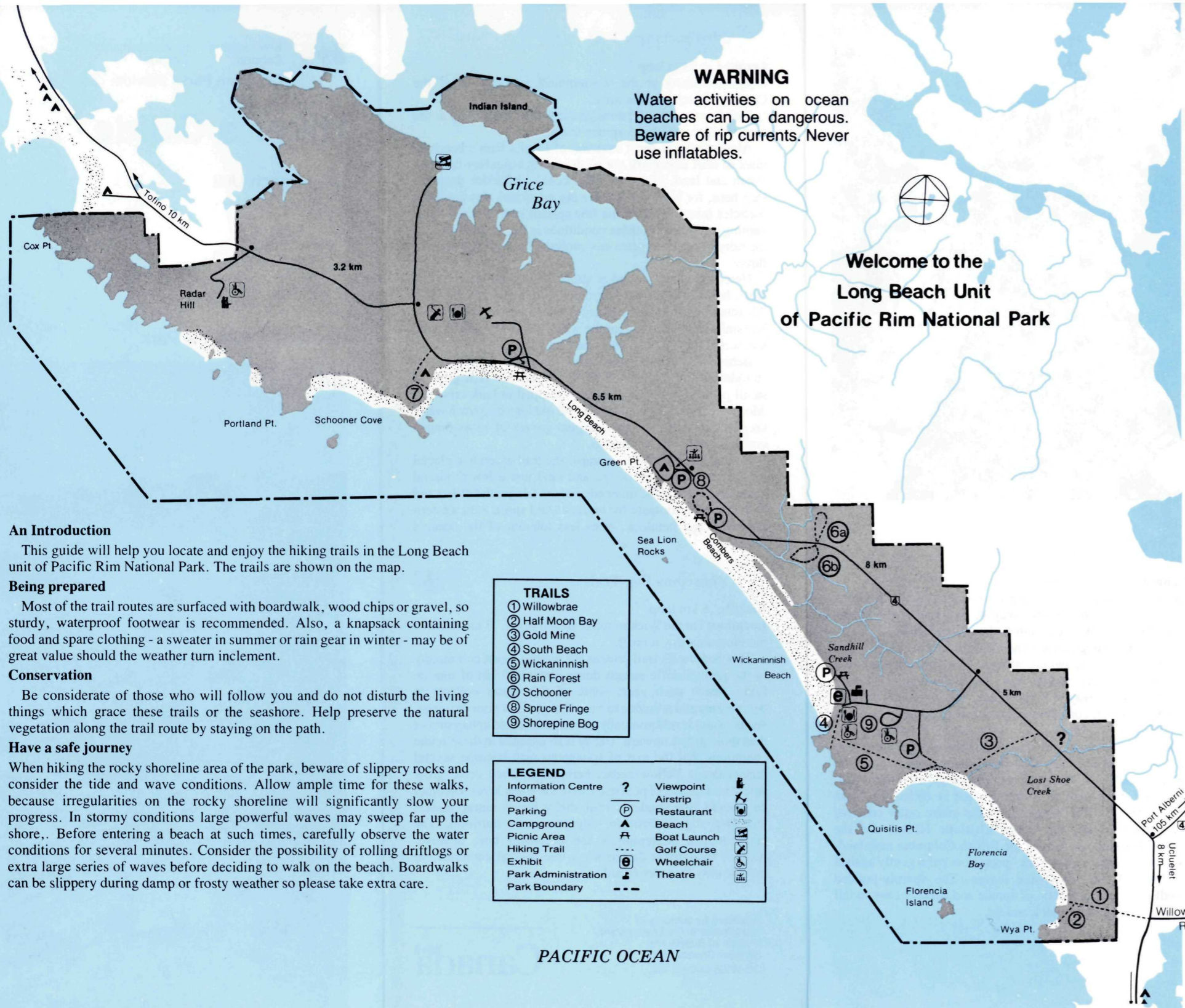
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Hiker's Guide

Long Beach Unit

Pacific Rim National Park





An Introduction

This guide will help you locate and enjoy the hiking trails in the Long Beach unit of Pacific Rim National Park. The trails are shown on the map.

Being prepared

Most of the trail routes are surfaced with boardwalk, wood chips or gravel, so sturdy, waterproof footwear is recommended. Also, a knapsack containing food and spare clothing - a sweater in summer or rain gear in winter - may be of great value should the weather turn inclement.

Conservation

Be considerate of those who will follow you and do not disturb the living things which grace these trails or the seashore. Help preserve the natural vegetation along the trail route by staying on the path.

Have a safe journey

When hiking the rocky shoreline area of the park, beware of slippery rocks and consider the tide and wave conditions. Allow ample time for these walks, because irregularities on the rocky shoreline will significantly slow your progress. In stormy conditions large powerful waves may sweep far up the shore. Before entering a beach at such times, carefully observe the water conditions for several minutes. Consider the possibility of rolling driftlogs or extra large series of waves before deciding to walk on the beach. Boardwalks can be slippery during damp or frosty weather so please take extra care.



1 Willowbrae Trail

Length: 2.8 km (return)
Location: starts from the junction of Willowbrae Road and Highway 4 and leads to the seacoast at the south end of Florencia (Wreck) Bay.

Willowbrae Road intersects Highway 4, 2 km south of the Ucluelet-Tofino-Port Alberni highway junction. The first portion of this trail is outside the park boundary so please respect private property.

To strike out on the Willowbrae Trail is to retrace the steps of countless men, women and children who used this trail as an overland link between the villages of Tofino and Ucluelet. Imagine packing all your groceries and supplies from here to Tofino, in one day, over difficult terrain including a 16 km stretch of beach sand! This was common practice until 1942 when the road between the villages was completed.

The trail was originally surfaced with slabs of cedar - hand-cut nearby and laid across the pathway in a corduroy pattern. If you look to the left side of the trail as you ascend the first knoll, you will see the stump of a huge tree whose trunk was probably used for part of the trail surface. After cutting notches and inserting "springboards" to stand on, two men climbed up and laboriously cut the tree with a huge crosscut saw; next followed the tedious tasks of cutting the trunk into 2 m lengths and splitting these lengths into slabs with a wedge and mallet.

Although the trail was originally wide enough for a horse-drawn wagon, bracken and deer fern have narrowed its width, and most of the remaining corduroy is overgrown with sphagnum moss.

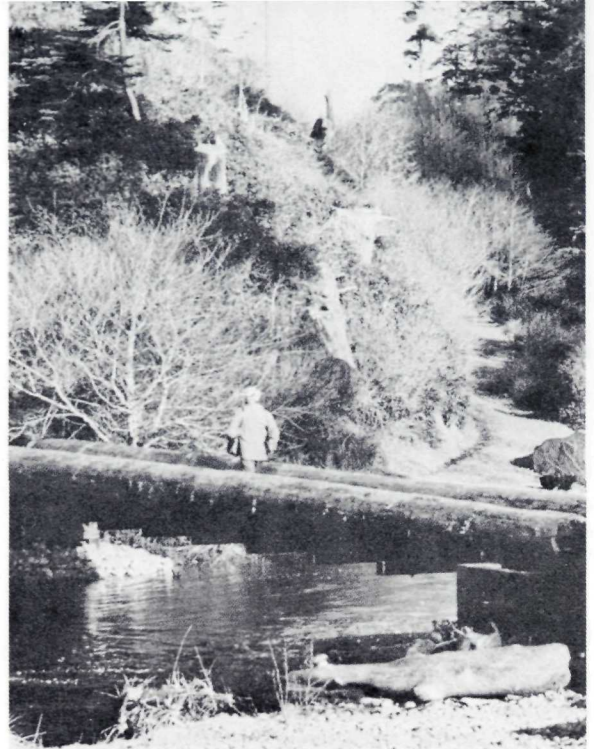
As you approach the shore, the sound of the surf can be heard some distance below. Here the trail crosses a small bridge when a left turn leads along the Half Moon Bay Trail (2). To reach Florencia Bay, continue straight along Willowbrae Trail, descend a steep hill, and you will emerge from the forest at the southeast end of Florencia Bay.



2 Half Moon Bay Trail

Length: .10 km (return)
Location: begins at the west end of the Willowbrae Trail. Refer to the Willowbrae Trail description (1) for directions.

From the west end of Willowbrae Trail, follow the marked path to the left and you will find Half Moon Bay. At first the trail winds through a forest of cedars and hemlocks twisted by years of exposure to wind and salt spray. Fallen trees criss-cross on the forest floor providing an elevated platform for seedlings while skunk cabbage flourishes in watery depressions. Eventually the trail leads to the crest of a 50 m thick gravel terrace carpeted with metre-long fronds of sword fern. As you descend the wooden ramp, glimpses of the beach through the giant Sitka spruce beckon you to the sands of Half Moon Bay. Nestled in the southeast corner of the park's Long Beach unit, the beach offers serenity and an unparalleled view of Florencia Bay.



3 Gold Mine Trail

Length: 3.04 km (return)
Location: begins 1 km west of the park information centre on Highway 4.

Man's presence is obvious along this route. Placer mining was done on the beach at the mouth of Lost Shoe Creek in the early 1900s. During this brief "gold rush", fortune seekers followed portions of this trail to the sands of Florencia Bay at the mouth of Lost Shoe Creek. After a few years of activity the gold-bearing sands were depleted and the miners departed. Thirty years later, a few miners returned seeking enough gold to eke out a living during the depression years. At the beach, the remains of mining machinery can still be found, including the rusting hulk of an old dredge.

One generation later, the trail was widened for logging and the native amabilis fir, red cedar and hemlock were cut and replaced by Douglas-fir seedlings. Despite this, the original species have re-established themselves in the plantation, and red alder has sprung up to form a dense green arch over the lower end of the trail.

Since 1970 when the park was created, nature has been allowed to continue her slow, steady process of regeneration.