

## **Koksilah loop**

ride by JS, June 2008

The trip is almost without hills as it winds through the incredible natural beauty of the Cowichan-Koksilah estuary. It is worth stopping along the way and enjoying the plants, views of the water, birds, and other wildlife. The trip enters the busy and charming village of Cowichan Bay with the Maritime Centre and shops, eateries, kayaking companies, and whale watching trips. After Cowichan Bay the trip climbs a steep hill. The remainder of the trip is on a rolling road through beautiful agricultural land. Add about 3 km at the beginning and 1 km at the end to the distances for the Duncan exit and entry.

- 0.0 (22.3) km Tzouhalem Road roundabout. This is about 3 km from downtown Duncan. See the Duncan Access map for alternative routes and directions to the roundabout. Go straight east on Tzouhalem Road. To the left is the beginning of the Quamichan Lake loop.
- 0.4 (21.9) km St. Peter's Church Yard. Stop to view wildflowers in the spring and the very old and rare Oregon Ash trees.
- 1.5 (20.8) km Providence Farm. Amazing gardens, therapeutic riding, greenhouses, and other wonders at this community resource. Pedal up the drive, have a look around, and buy something at the farm store. Just beyond Providence Farm is St. Ann's Church
- 3.0 (19.3) km A glimpse of the stone butter church on the hill to the right. Built by Cowichan people and Catholic missionary Fr. Peter Rondeault, it was only used for 10 years before being abandoned in 1880 in favour of St. Ann's. It is on the Cowichan Reserve.
- 3.4 (18.9) km Just past the bridge is the dike trail into the Ducks Unlimited Blakely Farm Conservation Project. Excellent birding and a chance to compare wild land to farm land.
- 4.3 (18.0) km Turn left on Samuel Road for the Affinity Guesthouse and Gumboot Guiding canoe trips.
- 4.5 (17.8) km Clem Clem Big House. Winter dances and other community events are held here. Do not visit unless you are invited.
- 5.0 (17.0) km **Spur.** The old haul road goes 1.3 km to an interpretive sign and another 0.3 km to the entrance to the private terminal. This is a fabulous place for birding and wildlife viewing the estuary. Bicycle along the road or walk on the rough trail on the former railroad tracks just north of the road.
- 5.2 (16.8) km Intersection with Cowichan Bay Road. Right to return to Duncan via the Trans Canada Highway, straight ahead for Cowichan Bay and the rest of the loop.
- 5.3 (16.7) km The Cowichan Lawn Tennis Club is on the left. Built in 1888, it has the second-oldest (after Wimbledon) grass tennis courts in the world. On the right is Maple Grove Park and picnic area. Walk north from the park to Lochmanetz Road for a walk through the Nature Trust Conservation Area to a bird blind.
- 5.9 (16.1) km Small park and picnic area dedicated to the arrival of the first pioneers/invaders on HMS Hecate in 1862, to the pioneer women of the Cowichan region, and to Robert Service, the Bard of the North. Service lived and worked in Cowichan Bay for a number of years prior to going to the Yukon and becoming a famous versifier.
- 7.1 (15.2) km Old Farm B & B
- 8.3 (14.0) km Hecate Park and boat launch
- 8.5 (13.8) km Anchor Guest House
- 8.9 (13.4) km Cowichan Bay Village. View the interesting displays at the Cowichan Bay Maritime Centre and explore the waterfront community of Cowichan Bay. A great place to browse

around, stop to eat, or buy food for a picnic. Numerous guiding companies are located here.

- 9.3 (13.0) km This is the steepest hill on the trip. Near the bottom is the Dreamweaver B & B and the Oceanfront Resort.
- 10.6(11.7) km 4-way store at the top of the hill. The loop goes right on Koksilah Road. Go straight for Cobble Hill and Mill Bay, left for the hilly ride on Cherry Point Road to Cherry Point Beach and Mill Bay.
- 13.1(9.2) km Cross the Trans Canada Highway and continue on Koksilah Road
- 15.1(7.2) km Historic village of Cowichan Station and Gem 'O the Isle sculpture garden and heritage cabin/B&B. Continue under the railroad tracks and across the narrow bridge over the Koksilah River.
- 16.1(6.2) km Right for Bright Angel Park. The park includes a suspension bridge, swimming hole, and walks through an ancient forest beside the river. You might see signs of beaver.
- 20.5(1.8) km Left on Miller Road. Going straight returns to Duncan via the Koksilah industrial area.
- 20.8(1.5) km Historic Keating Farm Estate, owned by TLC The Land Conservancy. Stop and visit if there is a sign saying it is open. They sometimes have teas, tours, and other events.
- 20.9(1.4) km Glenora Road. Go straight on Miller Road. To the left is the Glenora connector to the Trans Canada Trail.
- 22.3(0.0) km White Bridge (which isn't white). Cross the bridge for the 1 km ride to the Duncan train station. See the Duncan access map. Left for the Glenora Connector to the Trans Canada Trail, right for the Koksilah industrial area.