

PROTECTING, PRESENTING AND PRESERVING
 Vancouver Island's west coast has provided abundant resources to the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht First Nations, which supports and sustains their social, cultural and economic livelihood. For these three First Nations the West Coast Trail is home, an area they have occupied since time immemorial and will continue to do so for all time.



Despite differences in culture, history and language, an historic alliance between the West Coast Trail First Nations was formed to protect and share their land. Quu'as West Coast Trail Society, Quu'as meaning "one people", works with Parks Canada collaboratively to illustrate the philosophy of "Hish uk ts'a wak" meaning "all is one" along with "Iisaak" meaning "respect". The Quu'as guardians help visitors to feel this philosophy by sharing the culture and history of the three First Nations, allowing visitors to see it through the eyes and hearts of the people who have always been here.

Together we work towards a common goal of protecting and presenting the natural and cultural history of the region. We need Canadians, and their visitors, to help us achieve this goal. Respectful behavior by hikers will lead to a safe and rewarding experience and contribute to a healthy ecosystem for present and future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

BACKCOUNTRY ETIQUETTE

- Respect other hikers and protect the quality of their experience.
- Use outhouses when possible: human wastes outside outhouses must be buried in a 20 cm (7inch) hole a minimum of 30 m (100 feet) from waterways and trails. Deposit toilet paper in the next outhouse or burn it. Pack out hygiene products.
- Use a stove: minimize fires.
- Small drift-wood fires are permitted below the high tide-line on beaches: fires are not permitted in the forest.
- Camp on the beach at designated campsites: the forest environment is sensitive to damage.
- Wash dishes and bathe in the ocean: never contaminate fresh water sources.
- Pack it in: pack it out (orange peels, food packaging, tarp ropes, wet clothes etc).
- Indian Reserves are private property: stay on the main trail and obey signs.

Under the Canada National Park Act, it is illegal to collect, remove, or damage, any natural and cultural resource within the national park (e.g. marine life, shells, fossils, artifacts, and plants).

SAFETY

- The West Coast Trail is for hikers who are:
- able to walk long distances through rough terrain with a heavy pack;
 - prepared to have an isolated wilderness experience and adhere to low impact back country camping policies.

The West Coast Trail should not be considered by:

- children under twelve.
- backpackers with little experience in multi-day backpacking trips.
- those with little stamina or recurring knee, back or ankle injuries.

More than 100 seriously injured hikers are evacuated every season. Prolonged wet periods increase the incidents of hypothermia and injury. Hypothermia lowers the core body temperature and, if not stopped, can lead to death. Symptoms include slurred speech, lack of coordination, uncontrolled shivering, loss of consciousness and heart failure. Ensure your party is warm, dry, and well fed.

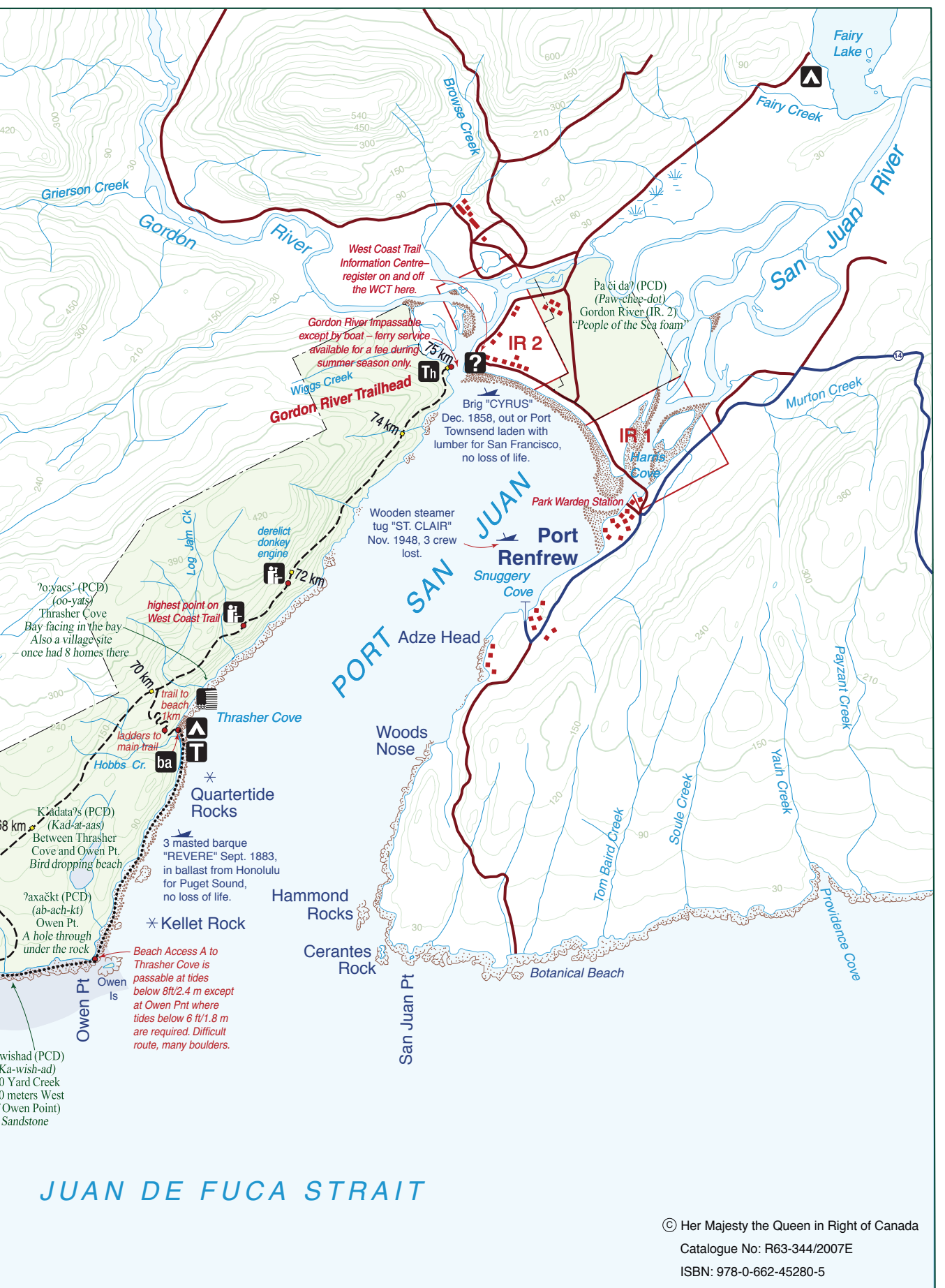
Many sprains, fractures, and dislocations happen because of a slip or trip. Progressive ankle and knee injuries are also common and, over a period of days, may become so sore that hikers cannot carry their pack. **Factors that contribute to injuries: inadequate gear or footwear, excessively heavy packs, poor physical condition, inexperience, poor judgement, and bad weather.**

If an injury occurs, follow the Evacuation Information Form issued with the WCT Overnight Use Permit. Call 250-726-3604 (monitored 24 hours/day) or send written message for help. Detail location, name, age, date, time, and specifics of accident and injury. Evacuation points are Thrasher Cove, Camper Bay, Cullite Cove, Logan Creek, Carmanah Light Station, Nitinat Narrows, Tsocowis Creek, or Pachena Light Station. Wait in a visible location. Park wardens patrol the trail by boat. Be prepared to signal. Never leave an injured party member on by themselves. It may take more than 24 hours for assistance to arrive.

From May to October, the WCT is closed to harvesting and consumption of all bivalves (clams, mussels, oysters) due to regular occurrences of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP). PSP can result in serious illness or death.

TIPS FOR A SAFE AND ENJOYABLE HIKE

- Leave a written trip plan with a responsible person (e.g. family or friend). Detail who you are going with, where, and expected date of return. A WCT Overnight Use Permit does not fulfill this role.
- Use good quality, lightweight equipment and be familiar with it before your hike.
- Take your time: 6-7 days is the average duration on the trail.
- Hike at the speed of your slowest hiker.
- Do not hike when you are tired, it is late, or dark.
- Hike with a partner: avoid hiking alone.
- Assume all surfaces are slippery.
- Maximum two people on a bridge, ladder, or cable car at one time.
- When crossing creeks, always undo pack hip-belt: wait for swollen rivers to diminish.
- Study the map, tides, waves and weather before choosing a route.
- In a wildlife encounter, stay calm: follow guidelines outlined during park orientation.
- Use bears caches or hang your food, garbage and toiletries away from tents: never cook or eat food in or near your tent.
- Keep, and leave, your campsite and the trail clean: bears, cougars, wolves, and other wildlife are attracted to food scraps and packaging.
- Collect drinking water upstream then purify, boil, or filter it.
- Consider exiting the trail if forecast calls for prolonged periods of rain.
- Tsunamis: rare but dangerous. If you feel the ground shake immediately move to higher ground. Follow marked tsunami evacuation routes.



Please note, park boundaries are approximate.

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