

Galiano: The Gem of the Gulf Islands

The Galiano Oceanfront Inn and Spa is the only resort in the Southern Gulf Island where guests can leave their cars behind....and walk to many of the best parts of the island.

Starting from the Inn, guests can access a wonderful trail system and enjoy quiet country roads parks, and beaches. With a little more time and effort (a bicycle or moped may assist), guests can also explore a little further: the beaches of Montague Provincial Park, Dionisio and Pebble Beach, among many.

Galiano is the second largest of the Southern Gulf Islands, 26 kilometers long and just 6 kilometers wide and certainly the most scenic and natural of the islands. With just 1200 residents, the lifestyle is quiet and rural, with visitors and residents alike on "island time", with a sense of community and an appreciation of Nature that is shared by all.

Short hikes from the Inn

Bellhouse Park

Depending on the tides, you may want to start your exploration of Bellhouse Park from the Inn, via the shoreline. It is about 2 kilometers roundtrip from the Inn. Wearing sturdy shoes and watching your step (shoreline rocks and driftwood can be treacherous), walk right along the shore in front of the Galiano Oceanfront Inn and Spa, past the houses on the shore until you reach the point and continue walking to your right.

The park is home to acres of wildflowers in the spring, to many migrating birds and to an eagle's nest. Rest for awhile, perhaps have a picnic, and watch the boat traffic, and maybe you will be lucky and see a pod of killer whales. This family of orcas, called "J pod" makes its home in Active Pass and frequently pass the Inn and Bellhouse Park, following the salmon. To return, walk through the park to Jack Road, and turn right when it meets Burrill Road, leading you back to Sturdies Bay Road. Another right and you will walk through the Village until you read Madrona Drive, turning right until you walk through the gates of the Inn.

Bluffs Park

Bluffs Park -130 ha – Elevation 155 m –At the end of Madrona Drive, turn left onto Sturdies Bay Road, walk past the little village shops (you may want to pick up a lunch at the bakery or one of the cafes) then turn left at the second road: Burrill Road. A quiet country road, you will walk past St. Margaret's of Scotland heritage church, the Lions Community Hall (where the community celebrates everything from Fiesta Day to the Wine Festival), and some of the island's original homes and gardens. Burrill road gradually curves and moves uphill to become Bluffs Road.

You will walk through the gates of Bluffs Park, a heavily wooded road, until you see a large wood sign on your left that says "Bluffs Park, given to the People of Galiano" where a road leads you up to the top of the Bluffs. A beautiful view greets you almost the most you summit: the ferries plying their way through the distant islands and the boat traffic in Active Pass

below you. Take time to explore the trails. When you depart, return down the same road until you reach Bluffs Road again, and the choice is yours to return the way you came, or turn left, where you will meet Georgeson Bay Road. Turn right, and follow the road along, past horse farms (you may also see donkeys and llamas), a flower stand on the side of the road, markets and stores and the Hummingbird Pub: you are now at the junction of Sturdies Bay Road. Continue down the road, until you eventually reach the village, then turn right on Madrona Drive until you arrive at the gates of the Inn.

Matthew Point Beach

Follow the directions to Bluffs Park, but follow the signs to Matthew Point before you walk through the gates of the park. The trail to the beach starts at the Beach Access sign, and travels through open fields and stands of young trees. When you come upon a picnic table, you may want to take a rest, as the more difficult part of the trail lies ahead. A series of switchbacks leads you down to the beach. It is not an easy trail, it is steep in places (hence the rope provided for you). Loose rock and dirt demand your close attention, and as the trail straightens, it steepens. Be thankful for the rope assist that is provided. A short trail, it is nonetheless challenging as during its 6 kilometers, it descends 50 meters during the last part. It is worth the effort: sandy beach stretching 300 meters along the shore of Active Pass.

Sturdies Bay Trail

This is a "local" trail, that residents use to enjoy the quiet of the forested trail and avoid the traffic along Sturdies Bay Road.. To reach the trailhead, just turn left at the end of Madrona Drive, walk just past Burrill road, where you see Whaler Bay on your right, and the trailhead on your left. It is an easy 2 kilometers, and leads you to the Hummingbird Pub and the shops on the corner. It is a forested trail, not particularly scenic, but it is safer and more peaceful than the road.

Longer Hikes from the Inn

Mount Galiano

Mount Galiano is the highest point on Galiano, located in 81 hectare park. You can follow the directions to Bluffs Road Park, but instead of turning right on Georgeson Bay Road, turn left. You will walk along country roads, until you see the signs to Mount Galiano. There is a trailhead just off Georgeson Bay Road, and another near the end of Active Pass Drive (turning right from Georgeson Bay Road). It is about one hour to the top, and if you want to try the most strenuous of the 3 routes, take the Active Pass Drive trailhead; it is also the better marked of all of the options. The view from the top is the best part, with unobstructed views east, south and west including the Gulf Islands with Mount Baker as a backdrop.

Another option is to continue from the Bluffs Park trail, following it.6 kilometers west to a gravel turnaround along rugged Bluff Road. The trail then turns southwest and gradually downhill until it comes out at the end of Highland Road. Turn left, and follow Active Pass Road to the Mt. Galiano trailhead, adding another 1.5 km to each end of your original hike, and about another hour to your hike.

Gray Peninsula Trail

The Gray Peninsula Trail is located at Montague Harbour Marine Provincial Park. (See the directions under Bicycle Trails: it is walkable on a beautiful day or you may wish to bicycle there or rent a moped). A beautiful and easy hike, it is just over 2 kilometers or one hour loop trail, following the shoreline around Gray Peninsula and past the beautiful white shell beaches. The beach has evidence of First Nations in this area for more than 3,000 years. The forest has beautiful stand of Arbutus trees, Cedar and Douglas fir.

Bodega Ridge

Bodega Ridge, near the north end of the Island, offers incredible views with a relatively easy trail, hiking is just one hour and 4 kilometers each way. You can reach the start of the trail by traveling down Porlier Pass Road to Cottage way, the trail begins at the end of Cottage Way. Beautiful views of the Secretary Islands and, beyond, Salt Spring and Vancouver Island. The trail then descends to Cook Road via the Bodega Ridge Resort driveway. A must see in that area is Stoneworld, where a stoncarver's studio reveals the beauty hidden in the rocks you will pass. Large stone markers are dotted throughout the property. Take care with gates as there are horses and sheep in the fields.

Pebble Beach Trail

An easy trail that can be confusing as Pebble Beach and Cable Bay trails are not well-marked. Just 3 kilometers, and one hour round trip. Follow Porlier Pass Road to McCloskey Road, where there is some limited parking along the cement barricade. Follow the old logging road east for less than a kilometer, until you see a cut-out on the left. A flat, embedded rock marks the start of a pretty trail that winds through stands of fir and cedar. The trail eventually rejoins the old logging road at a clearing just before reaching an incredibly beautiful beach. While some may want to venture along the beach to the Cable Bay route back, be warned that the rocks are extremely slippery and treacherous. Alternatively, there is a poorly marked trail that starts on the left just as you reach the clearing, and follows the shoreline for 10 min to a clearing with enormous views of the mountains. The trail ends just past this spot, so you must backtrack to the original trail.

Best Bicycle Routes from the Inn

Guests can easily walk to Galiano Bicycle (539-9906) to rent bicycles and venture further afield on Galiano. At the end of Madrona Drive, turn left and walk about 10 minutes to Burrill Road: the Rental shop is just to the left. It is best to call ahead and determine availability of the type of bicycle you are looking for: they have everything from mountain bikes to tandem bicycles.

All routes begin and end at the Inn

Bluffs Park Loop

Moderate -11 km round trip – At the end of Madrona Drive, turn left onto Sturdies Bay Road, travel past the little village shops and take your second left at Burrill Road. A quiet country road, you will travel past St. Margaret's of Scotland heritage church, the Lions Community Hall (where the community celebrates everything from Fiesta Day to the Wine Festival), and some of the island's original homes and gardens. Burrill road gradually curves and moves uphill to become Bluffs Road. You will travel through the gates of Bluffs Park, a heavily wooded road, until you meet Georgeson Bay Road. Turn right, and follow the road along, past horse farms (you may also see donkeys and llamas), a flower stand on the side of the road, markets and stores and the Hummingbird Pub: you are now at the junction of Sturdies Bay Road. Continue down the road, until you eventually reach the village, then turn right on Madrona Drive until you arrive at the gates of the Inn.

Montague Park

Moderate – 25 km round trip. Follow the Bluffs Park Loop Ride (above) through the park, again turning left onto Georgeson Bay Road. At the top of the hill, where there is a yield sign, turn left onto Montague road, continuing through some strenuous hills until you “almost” reach the Marina. Here you can choose to take a break at the Harbour café (open seasonally) or perhaps park your bicycles for awhile and rent a kayak or go on a kayak tour. If, instead, you want to explore Montague Provincial Park, turn left on Montague Park Road before reaching the Marina. The road will eventually take you through the gates of the Park. Continue on through the park, through the campsites, until you reach the boat ramp and parking lot. Leave your bicycle for awhile and take some time to explore the beach and the park...it is just to your left, follow the shoreline in two minutes you will turn the corner and come upon a beautiful shell beach, a 3,000 year old Indian midden. Relax. You will need it for the ride back to the Inn: which is just the reverse to your ride to the Park.

Dionisio Park

Strenuous – 30 kilometers each way –. Follow the Montague Park routes (above), but, instead of proceeding to the Marina or the Park, just before then is the junction of Montague Park Road and Clanton Road. Turn right, and follow Clanton road until you hit Porlier Pass Road. For the next 19 kilometers you are on a long, narrow country road that has its challenges in terms of hills and curves. There are also lots of rewards: beautiful glimpses of the ocean along the way – at Lover's Leap and Spotlight Cove –until the view opens up for several kilometers to the spectacular shoreline. Plan to stop and visit with the fabulous artists who display work in their forested studios. Look for Bill Boyd, Marcie DeVicque, Cedar Grove: all within a few minutes of one another at the mid-point of the island. (They can always arrange for delivery of your purchases to the Inn or to your home). Beautiful Dionisio Park, referred to by residents as Coon Bay, is located at the far north end of the island, and visiting it is a must: spectacular sandstone formations, sand and pebble beaches set on the waters of Porlier Pass. Be sure to take time to walk along the shoreline or take one of the forested trails: either the Raymond Smith Interpretive Trail or the Porlier Pass Trail (maps are displayed in the Park). Fast flowing tidal currents ensure an abundance of tidal life in Coon Bay. The perfect place for a break and a picnic lunch. You must obtain permission to access the park via the Indian reserve at the most northerly tip of the island; it is a MUST to call the Penelakut Band office at 250 246 2321. To return to the Inn, continue down Porlier Pass Road all the way until it stops at the junction of Sturdies Bay Road. Turn left (at the Hummingbird Pub), and in another 3 kilometers, you will be back at the Inn.