

Cowichan Valley 100-km Cycle Loop (Vancouver Island) And Sub-loops

[Composite Google Map](#)

Sub-loops options:

- **Around Shawnigan Lake Alternate** – add 15 km – cycle
- **Shawnigan Lake Loop** – 26.8 km cycle or walk
- **Lake Cowichan-Mayo Loop** – 21.5 km cycle or walk
- **Lake Cowichan-Deerholme Loop** – 62 km cycle
- **Deerholme-Cowichan Bay Loop** – 49 km cycle
- **Koksilah Provincial Park Loop** – 12 km (some of the single track is a bit technical for bikes more suitable for walking)

[View photo collection here](#) depicting the 67-kmTCT/Cowichan trail section

Distance: up to 100 km.

Suggested starting and end point: At the Somenos Ball Park Fields (Evans Park) on Somenos Road, North Cowichan. Off the Island Highway North of Duncan and North of a new major Shopping Mall take Drinkwater Road going west and turn west on Somenos Road. You will soon see the ball fields on your left.

On Roads - 28 km

Trails and Pathways - 72 km - the Trans Canada Trail's Cowichan Valley Trail

Mode of travel: Well maintained Mountain Bike. Pay particular attention to brakes, chain, and derailleur.

Lowest elevation - 0 ft –

Highest - 780 ft - Quite hilly on pavement

Time allowed: about 7.5-10 hrs. including lunch

Fitness level: Should be in good physical condition and have experienced cycling over 60k and be able to cycle up hills.

Food breaks: Lunch Lake Cowichan.




Cowichan Tribes is made up of seven traditional villages in their Traditional Territory in this area:




- Quamichan (Kwa'mutsun)
- Comiaken (Qw'umiyiqun)
- Koksilah (Xwulqw'selu)
- Somena (S'amuna')
- Clemclemluts (Lhumlhumuluts')
- Khenipsen (Xinupsum)
- Cowichan Bay (T'l'ulpalus)



Photos by Harold Sellers and Brigitte Furlonger


References: Rails to Trails Historical Map and Guide, T.W. Paterson; Historic Hikes, Sites & Sights of the Cowichan Valley, T.W Patterson. To get an informative description of this trail system it is worthwhile purchasing these publications.




Location	Dist. km	Elev. metres/ft	Description
Somenos Rd. Ball Fields	k0	60/197	Start and Finish (Note: no toilets for the next 27 km)
Holmes Creek Bridge 1	k1.2		Bridge Crossing to connect with the CPR rail trail



Location	Dist. km	Elev. metres/ft	Description
<p>Start of CPR/E&N rail trail. Head west. (Head north if coming from the west.)</p> 	k1.3		<p>Going east the rail trail ends on Sherman Rd. (0.75 km), a route can be taken to go downtown Duncan. Note that this rail trail has been recently been rebuilt and surfaced all the way to Lake Cowichan. Built in 1886 and saw its last train in 1982.</p>
<p>Holmes Creek Bridge 2</p> 	K2.2		<p>This new bridge is taking the place of a former trestle</p>
<p>Chinese Cemetery</p> 	K6.4	122/400	



Location	Dist. km	Elev. metres/ft	Description
<p>Paldi and Sikh Temple</p> 	k11.2	184/600	<p>Paldi is name after Mayo Singh Manhas birthplace in India. He started a lumber operation here around which a town sprung up. The Sikh Temple was officially opened in 1919. He was a benefactor of charities and the communities around him.</p>
<p>Paldi to Mayo</p> 			<p>Prominent are a few large marshes, the first one due to a dam built for Mayo Lumber Co. Good views over the marshes of the surrounding Mts.</p>
<p>Summit (vicinity of Sathlam)</p> 	k15	240/780	<p>This was a change of 180m/580ft in elevation. Its now mainly downhill to Lake Cowichan, a drop of 70m/230ft.</p>
<p>Mayo Rd.</p>	k18.9	202/663	

Location	Dist. km	Elev. metres/ft	Description
<p data-bbox="147 195 521 226">Lake Cowichan River Bridge</p> 	K26.9		Popular swimming and river rafting
<p data-bbox="147 747 716 814">Kaatza Station Museum, places to stay and eat and Lake Cowichan Trailhead.</p> 	K28	169/554	A very worthwhile museum to learn more of the past industry of the area. Also, the best place to buy T.W. Paterson's publications regarding the rail trail(s) and local history to its present status

Location	Dist. km	Elev. metres/ft	Description
 <p>Lake Cowichan Trailhead</p>			
Start of the Great Northern/CNR rail trail	K29	185/607	This rail grade hasn't had the super treatment given to the CPR line. Hence, expect the surface to be varied requiring having to stop more often to appreciate the surroundings. It saw its first trains in 1920-24 (reached Lake Cowichan in 1924) and the last in 1983 via Deerholme and Cowichan Bay and closure in 1988.
Fairservice Creek Trestle	K31		
70 Mile Trestle	K32.9		

Location	Dist. km	Elev. metres/ft	Description
<p>Cowichan River Provincial Park</p> 	K35		<p>This park stretches along the Cowichan River all the way to Glenora.</p> <p>Note: Walkers have the option of following the footpath from Skutz Falls to Glenora or Holt Creek with sections on the rail grade. The approximate location of this path is shown in yellow on the map and is 17.5 km in length including the sections on the rail grade.</p>
<p>Skutz Falls (toilets)</p> 	K37	135/443	<p>Get off the trail to see the falls and the fish ladders.</p>
<p>Marie Trestle and Canyon (toilets)</p> 	K39.5	123/403	<p>Stop here and be dazzled at this 90m/295ft long and 35m/115ft high structure above the Cowichan River.</p>

Location	Dist. km	Elev. metres/ft	Description
<p>Marie Canyon to Holt Trestle</p> 			<p>Much of the time you are traveling through an eerie forest of moss laden trees. The maples are stunning.</p>
<p>River Footpath access from the south side of Marie Trestle.</p>	K39.7		<p>If on foot this is a second chance to access the river and take the Cowichan River Footpath described below* instead of walking the rail trail all the way to the Holt Creek Trestle. The first chance was at the Skultz Falls road crossing of the Cowichan River.</p>
<p>Trestle</p>	K42.8		<p>Take the time to appreciate the surroundings</p>
<p>Holt Creek Trestle</p> 	K49.8	90/295	<p>An amazing gorge over Holt Creek – 73m/240ft long trestle</p>

Location	Dist. km	Elev. metres/ft	Description
<p>Glenora Park (washrooms and water)</p> 	50.4		Great facilities at this halfway point
Glenora Trestle	K53.6		Small trestle. Between here and Glenora Park is the Deerholme 'Y', a branch in the railway to Cowichan Bay. This could become a great connecting trail.
<p>Kinsol Trestle over the Koksilah River (toilets on west side)</p> 	K64	135/442	The highlight of the trips. It is worthwhile to take the trail down to the bottom of the trestle to appreciate its full stature. It is 38m/145ft high and 187m/614ft long and was first completed in 1920. The last train was in 1979.
<p>End of rail trail. Turn left on Renfrew Road Note that the continuation of the rail trail above Shawnigan Lake is not part of this loop. Proceed on the road.</p>	K65.8	140/460	Be prepared for some hill riding up to Shawnigan Lake Road for 5.5 km. You will see glimpses of the Lake and the Shawnigan Lake School Campus.

Location	Dist. km	Elev. metres/ft	Description
Shawnigan Lake Road becomes Cobble Hill Road through Cobble Hill. Stay on Cobble Hill Road until you hit the Island Hwy.	K75.8	100/328	Restaurant at the old school house with the actual Cobble Hill Mt. across from it
Island Hwy intersection. Cross it and continue on Cowichan Bay Rd.	K78.4	70/230	From here it is a quite a climb and after 3 km it is a steep downhill to Cowichan Bay Village
Continue on Cowichan Bay Road	K82.5	3/10	Starts at tourist fishers village
Cowichan Bay Rd. becomes Tzouhalem Rd.	K86.5		First Nation Reserve along this stretch. Great views of Tzouhalem peak
Before Lakes Rd – turn right on a dike trail and take it all the way the Island Highway passing the Somenos waterfowl sanctuary.	K92.3		
Cross Island Hwy and continue over a set of live E&N tracks an immediately turn right on a pathway along Canada Ave.	K94.9		
At the Sherman Rd. roundabout look for a trail that begins on the west side of the tracks	K95.7		This trail connects downtown Duncan with Cowichan Commons Shopping Centre.
The trail ends within view of Rona at a shopping centre	K96.8		
To get passes the Shopping Centre turn left on the road paralleling the rail track all the way to Drinkwater Rd.	K97.3		
Follow Dinkwater Rd. past Somenos Rd. for a very short distance and watch for a trail on your left.	K98.6		
Follow the trail to the next road and turn left. Follow the road to Somenos Ball Fields.	100k	60/197	

***Cowichan River Footpath (from Provincial Parks Brochure):** This historic trail winds its way along the Cowichan River for approximately 20 km from Skutz Falls to Glenora. This is an easy to moderate level of hiking and you should allow approximately 6.5 hours to hike its length. The main trail is well marked but several older secondary routes still exist and these are not signed or maintained. Notices will be placed at each trailhead (Glenora and Skutz Falls) explaining any current situations of interest to trail users. Parts of the trail are through private property - please respect these areas and any potential restrictions that may be in place. Suggestion: If you decide on this alternative start on the trail once you have crossed the Marie Canyon Trestle (look for a trail on your left as you are heading for the Kinsol). The trail will take you along the river and on the rail grade from time to time. From here to Holt Creek will add about 2 km. to your walk.