

# Responsible Trail Use



The beauty and diversity of natural spaces is one reason why Vancouver Island is such a special place to visit. While exploring Vancouver Island's wilderness, keep in mind we are all guests to the land, water, plants, and animals that reside here. The following steps were crafted to guide you in practicing responsible and respectful behaviors while recreating outdoors. We each have a responsibility to steward and protect these natural spaces so they can be enjoyed for generations to come.

## 1 Recreate with Mindfulness

We encourage visitors to slow down, walk gently on the land, and recreate with mindfulness. We ask that you show respect for the places and people you interact with. Be considerate of others by sharing the trails and keeping noise levels down. Leave the headphones at home to be fully present in the environment you are in. Take your time, say hello to fellow travelers, and acquaint yourself with the smells, sounds and sights of nature that surround you. Take a deep breath. Inhale the fresh, coastal air and exhale slowly with gratitude.

## 2 Honour Traditional Territories

Vancouver Island is home to 53 First Nation communities located in the traditional territories of 3 distinct groups: the Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Coast Salish Peoples. First Nations and their ancestors have occupied and stewarded their traditional lands since time immemorial. Honour Indigenous peoples by taking time to understand whose land you are visiting and respecting the guidelines set by Indigenous communities. View the [First Peoples' Map of BC](#) and the [Vancouver Island Map of First Nations](#). To learn more about Indigenous culture and history, take part in a guided tour with a local [Indigenous-owned tour operator](#). Learn more about how to travel responsibly at [Indigenous Tourism BC](#).



## 3 Leave No Trace

Leaving places better than you found them is one way to protect Vancouver Island's wilderness for generations to come.

- Always remember to pack out everything you pack in and dispose of garbage, recycling, and organics at designated facilities. Do not throw garbage in outhouses or burn in campfires. Consider picking up litter left by others.
- Reduce plastic waste by bringing reusable containers, water bottles, and cutlery.
- If there is no washroom available, deposit solid human waste in a hole 15-20 centimeters deep and at least 60 meters from water sources and campsites. Cover up the hole when finished and bring a sealable bag to pack out toilet paper.
- Do not remove any natural objects, plants or creatures from their environment and be sure to stay on designated trails to prevent damage to sensitive ecosystems.
- Clean your gear and shoes before entering and leaving trails to prevent the spread of invasive species. Visit [Play, Clean, Go](#) to learn more about stopping the spread of invasive species.

Learn more about [The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace](#).

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## 4 Come Prepared

Always plan ahead to ensure you are aware of the rules and regulations that apply to the area or trail you are visiting.

- Research relevant websites to familiarize yourself with the trail conditions, closures, weather forecasts, and tide charts.
- Make sure to acquire any required permits before venturing out and always read and adhere to posted signage.
- Bring warm layers and waterproof gear as the weather on the island can be unpredictable.
- Before embarking on your outdoor adventure, provide a detailed trip plan to a close family member or friend.
- Stay safe by learning and following the 3 T's: trip planning, training, and taking the essentials. For more information, visit [AdventureSmart's Three T's](#).

## 5 Be a Responsible Pet Owner

Pets are an important part of making memories, however if not controlled responsibly they can negatively impact trails, other visitors, and wildlife.

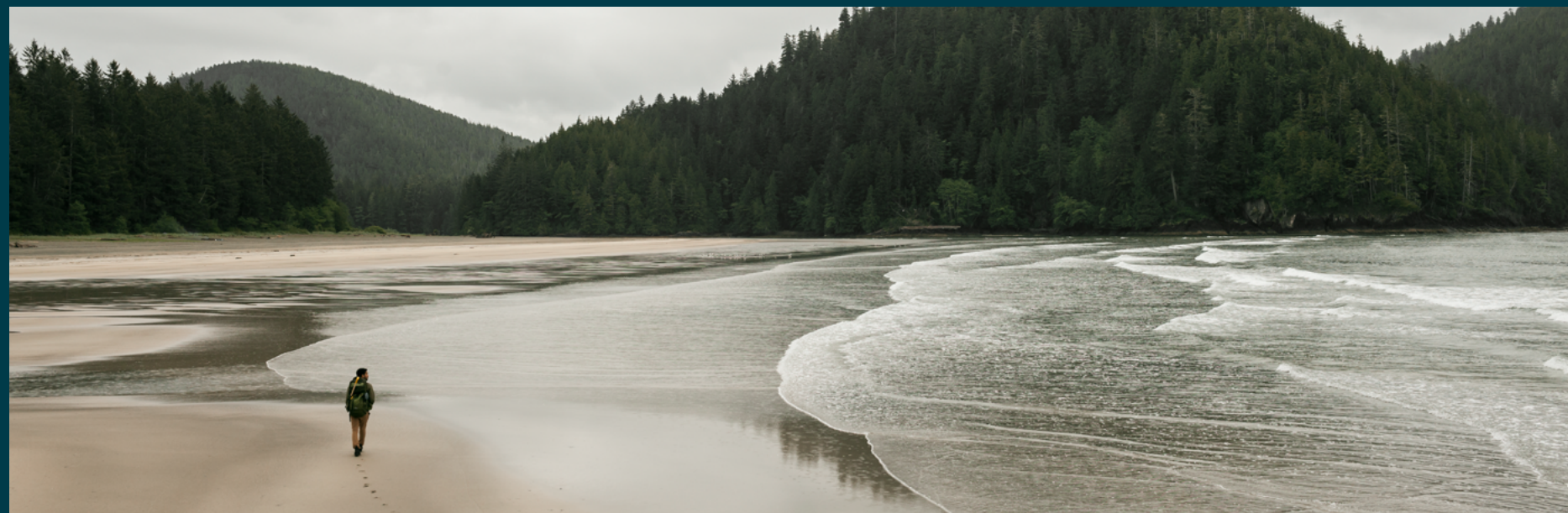
- Ensure the trail you are visiting is pet-friendly before leaving home and always keep your dog leashed in designated on-leash areas. Off-leash dogs can disrupt sensitive habitats and trigger aggressive behaviour from wildlife.
- Pet waste must be picked up and packed out or properly disposed of in a garbage bin.
- If you are not able to keep your pet under control, please leave them at home. Excessive barking can disrupt wildlife and other trail users, so be thoughtful of others.

## 6 Respect Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Remember that we are all guests to the natural habitats plants and animals call home.

- Before heading onto trails, carefully read wildlife alerts posted at trailheads.
- Never approach or feed wild animals. Keeping a safe distance helps to ensure wildlife remain wild. Stay at least 30 meters away from large animals such as deer and elk, and at least 100 meters away from bears, wolves, and cougars.
- When camping, ensure food and scented items (toiletries, dishes, pots and pans, camp stoves) are safely stored in wildlife-proof lockers or in your vehicle.
- Familiarize yourself with the proper responses in the event of a wildlife encounter.

To learn more, visit [BC Parks Wildlife Safety](#), [Parks Canada Wildlife Safety](#), and [WildSafeBC](#).



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## 7 Practice Campfire Safety

To prevent human-caused wildfires, it is very important to respect campfire bans and restrictions.

- Before having a campfire, check to see if a campfire ban is in effect. Campfires are illegal in many backcountry and alpine locations.
- Where fires are permitted, campfires should be less than 0.5 meters high by 0.5 meters wide. Only use supplied firewood.
- Never leave a fire unattended and ensure fires are completely extinguished before you depart. To know when it is safe to leave, ashes should be cool to the touch.

To check fire bans and learn more about fire safety tips, visit [BC Wildfire Service](#). To report a wildfire, call 1-800-663-5555 or \*5555.

## 8 Reduce Your Carbon Footprint

Consider ways to reduce your carbon footprint to leave a positive impact on the places you visit.

- Walk, bike, or take public transit to trailheads. Communities throughout Vancouver Island feature numerous parks and trails within close distance from town centres. When driving is required, carpool with friends.
- Phone or stop in at the local visitor centre to inquire about trails located close to where you are staying.
- Manufacturing and shipping of new products all contributes to energy use and carbon emissions. If you need hiking or camping gear that you do not own, consider renting equipment from a local company like [Take Off Adventure Rentals](#) or [West Coast Gear](#).

## 9 Camp in Designated Areas

If you are planning to camp overnight, use designated campsites or tent pads to minimize your impact and keep ecosystems in their natural state.

- When wilderness camping is allowed, set up your campsite on durable surfaces such as bare ground, rock, sand, or dry grass to avoid damaging vegetation.
- To protect waterways, camp at least 60 meters from lakes and streams. Do not use waterways for washing and dispose of greywater in designated areas or scatter at least 50 meters from your tent.
- When possible, cook meals on a camp stove instead of a campfire to reduce negative impacts on the land.

To learn more about responsible camping, check out the [Camper's Code](#), [TreadLightly!](#), and [Bare Camping](#).

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## 10 Support Trail Maintenance

Many trails across Vancouver Island are built and maintained by dedicated volunteers and community members. When visiting, consider making a donation to the local trail association, mountain bike club, or park organization to extend your thanks and support the incredible work these organizations take on. If you are staying for an extended period of time, sign up to volunteer and lend a helping hand!



### Additional Resources

- [Responsible Recreation](#) - BC Parks
- [Recreate Responsibly](#) - Outdoor Recreation Council of BC
- [Pack Lean, Leave Clean](#) - Recycle BC
- [Ride Respectfully](#) - Mountain Biking BC
- [Marine Trail Code of Conduct](#) - BC Marine Trails
- [Be Whale Wise](#) - Be Whale Wise
- [Watching Marine Wildlife](#) - Fisheries and Oceans Canada

**For more information visit [forvi.ca](https://forvi.ca)**

**4VI gratefully acknowledges that we live, work and play on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Coast Salish peoples.**