

Vancouver Island Nature Viewing Region

North Island Area

San Josef Bay, Cape Scott Provincial Park



Second Beach at San Josef Bay: photo by Krista Kaptein



Sea Stacks at San Josef Bay: photo by Krista Kaptein

San Josef Bay is the most accessible beach in Cape Scott Provincial Park, with fine sand beaches and dramatic sea stacks & sea caves at low tide. A rough trail to nearby Mount St. Patrick features stunted bonsai-like pines & bog plants with views from the top of the Pacific Ocean.

Photo Gallery

Geographical Description	Bay & estuary of the San Josef River, in the southwest portion of the park which encompasses the northwestern tip of Vancouver Island.
Area/ Trail Length	Park size 22,294 ha. Trail to San Josef Bay is a flat gravel trail, 2.5 km one-way. Trail to Mt. St. Patrick is more difficult, allow several hours one-way.
Seasons to Visit	Summer for beaches & low tide life.
Habitat	San Josef Bay: Sand beach, estuary, riparian, mature forest, rocky headlands. Mt. St. Patrick: stunted pine, bog.

Viewing Highlights	<p>Sea stacks & sea caves accessible at low tide.</p> <p>Intertidal life including anemones, sea stars.</p> <p>Sea birds including scoters. Forest birds including woodpeckers, wrens, chickadees, siskins. Migratory birds pass through, Trumpeter Swans have been seen in the bay in winter.</p> <p>Some giant Sitka Spruce and Western Red Cedar . On Mt. St. Patrick: stunted pine, bog plants.</p> <p>Wolves & bears have been seen in the Park (see caution notes below). Deer, elk, cougar, are possible. Marine animals may be seen including seals, sea lions, sea otter, whales.</p>
Other Features	Historical remnants of settlements, farms & equipment.
Main Access	64 km from Port Hardy on a mostly gravel road (see caution notes). Map
Secondary Accesses	
Cautions	<p>There have been recent confrontations between wolves and domestic dogs in this park. Pets are not allowed in the park at this time to prevent further habituation (loss of fear) of the wolves and wildlife conflicts.</p> <p>Logging trucks are present on the gravel access road from Port Hardy to the Cape Scott Trail Head. Drive with caution and lights on at all times. Always yield to logging trucks and be mindful of pull outs. It is best to pull to the side of the road and let trucks pass.</p> <p>Knowledge of tide tables is essential.</p>
Jurisdiction	BC Parks. Two First Nations reserves are within the park boundaries.
Regulations	No dogs (see caution notes), no cycling.
Facilities	Bear cache, pit toilets. Parking area. Fresh water is available at San Josef Bay. Wilderness camping within the park, Two private tent & vehicle campgrounds near the trailhead .
Other Recreational Activities	Paddling, fishing, swimming.
Other Connections	The majority of Cape Scott Park is to the north, accessed by trails to the beaches, campsites & lighthouse.

History

Cape Scott has a fascinating & dramatic history. In the 1890s the British Columbia government was anxious to encourage settlement in the more remote areas of Vancouver Island. Danish settlers, encouraged with promise of land leases and support from the government located in the area by 1899, but the government did not live up to its promise to construct roads or to grant land leases. With the discontinuation of vessel services with supplies, and the opening up of free land to the south in the San Josef/Holdberg areas in 1907, many left the colony. Another wave of settlers arrived in 1913 but the same hardships as well as WW1 conscription brought an end to the community by 1917.

The Park was established in 1973 and named after the site of a lighthouse that has guided mariners since 1960.

**FMI
Links**

"Coastal Hikes" by Philip Stone, published 2007.

[BC Parks](#)

[BC Parks iNaturalist Project](#)

[Wolf Safety Guidelines](#)

[Wildlife Viewing on Vancouver Island](#)

[Tide Tables](#)