

THINGS TO DO

WITHIN 15 MINUTES

KINSOL TRESTLE

15 minute drive. The historic [Kinsol Trestle](#) is open to the public for cyclists and hikers. The trestle is one of the tallest free-standing and most spectacular timber rail bridges in the world. At 187 metres in length and standing 44 metres above the Koksilah River. You can walk it from both ends, see links for details (centre photo).

COWICHAN BAY

10 minute drive. [Cowichan Bay](#) is a lovely little seaside town (photo on right) featuring local artisan shops, kayak rentals and amazing restaurants, including specialties like ice cream and a west coast bakery.

SHAWNIGAN LAKE

[Shawnigan Lake](#) is a long, narrow lake that offers recreational opportunities and different access [points along the lake](#). The spots that we frequent are a 10-15 minute drive from here; two public swimming and picnic areas, [Old Mill Park](#) and Mason's Beach. Both offer lovely views and sandy beaches.

MILL BAY

15 minute drive. [Mill Bay](#) is a small beach and a lovely large wharf that you can walk along. Depending on the time of year, we've seen loads of starfish clinging to the docks, jellyfish, seals, and plenty of sea birds. There is a seaside restaurant at the wharf (Bridgeman's) and exquisite sunsets (pictured below).



NO, SERIOUSLY: STILL WITHIN 15 MINUTES

TAKE YOUR TIME

LOCAL ICE CREAM

There are TWO amazing, ice cream shops within ten minutes that make all their own ice cream. The market, [Sweet Meadows](#), in Mill Bay makes dairy free sorbetto (oh, try the rich chocolate) and their ice creams feature locally grown seasonal flavours. AND there's an ice cream shop in Cowichan Bay, [Udder Guys](#), a Cowichan Valley classic. Both are an extravagant experience.

WALKS

Gosh. So many options. We recommend perusing our local guidebooks on the bookshelf to see what suits your taste. Our rural road has a couple of nice hikes down to the river, and just walking alongside the neighbouring farmland is lovely.

The closest hike is [Cobble Hill Mountain](#) at the bottom of the Thain Rd., just five minutes drive away. It's steep in some places, but many small children have climbed it! Allow a couple of hours to go up and down, there are a few spectacular viewpoints at the top.



IT'S SO CLOSE BUT YOU WON'T HAVE TIME TO DO IT ALL

YOU'LL HAVE TO COME BACK

BRIGHT ANGEL PARK

Located in a small neighbouring village, Cowichan Station...[this park](#) is a lovely place to walk or take a picnic. There are swimming and wading spots on the river that runs through the park.

BEACHES

[Cherry Point](#), [Mill Bay](#), [Cowichan Bay](#) and [Bamberton](#) are all oceanfront beaches within a few minutes drive; great for exploring and beach combing. Mason's Beach and [Old Mill Park](#) are on [Shawnigan Lake](#). The lake beaches are lovely picnic and swim spots. Mill Park has a playground as well as picnic and swimming area. We have picnic and beach supplies on hand.



FURTHER AFIELD: SOUTH ISLAND

VICTORIA

45 minute drive. Victoria is as "big city" as the Island gets. It's a charming, upscale, historic city, surrounded by water. The old streets and beautiful inner harbour showcase buskers and artisans. Well worth the effort, but plan an entire day. Some of our favourite things to do in Victoria are: Chinatown, Ogden Pt., Beacon Hill Park, Dallas Road, Inner Harbour, Parliament Buildings.

BUTCHART GARDENS

One hour drive. The Butchart family opened their fantastic gardens up more than 100 years ago. It's beautiful in every season, in summer there are fireworks and music. (Photo on left)

GOLDSTREAM PARK

30 minute drive. Goldstream park is hiking area and campground at an estuary where the river meets the ocean. Along the hiking trail and in the forested area are massive trees, waterfalls and wildlife. Allow a couple of hours, there's also a picnic area. (Photo on right)

MALAHAT LOOKOUT

A lovely place to stop on your way back from Victoria or Goldstream Park. There are lookout points that come off of the highway heading north for easy access. (Centre photo)



FURTHER AFIELD: HEADING NORTH

SEASIDE DRIVE

On the way up island, there is an old highway much of the way to Nanaimo that runs along the seaside. Although this route takes longer by about 15-20 minutes, the windy ocean road is scenic and quiet, mostly with farms on one side and ocean on the other.

PARKSVILLE AND QUALICUM

1.5 hour drive. Two seaside towns next to each other, on miles of sandy beach. So many places to visit, the most noteworthy is Rathrevor Beach, a provincial park with tide pools and seal life, a beautiful forested area and picnic spots. Plan to spend an entire day if the weather is good.

CHEMAINUS AND LADYSMITH

30 minutes drive. Two small towns with lots of character, about 10 minutes apart just north of Duncan. Chemainus became known as "the little town that did" when they rose from the ashes of economic problems to become one of the cutest little towns on the Island, featuring historical murals, artsy boutiques and great food. Spend a half day exploring these two towns. If you go to the Transfer Beach park in Ladysmith, allow a full day.

NANAIMO

One hour drive. The old town in Nanaimo is cute, with lots of good food and a huge sea wall and park, Swy A Lana. Other noteworthy nature spots are Piper's Lagoon and Westwood Lake, great for walks and picnics. Nanaimo has a lot of shopping as well, big malls and chain stores.



GROCERY, MARKET, BAKERY, DELI AND MORE

LARGE GROCERY STORES

There are two main shopping areas in South Cowichan. The closest, Valleyview Center (10 minute drive), has a large supermarket, pharmacy and liquor store as well as other services. [Valleyview link](#). Mill Bay Centre is a larger shopping centre (15 minute drive) also has a large grocery, pharmacy, liquor store, dollar store and many other services.

[Mill Bay Centre link](#).

LIQUOR STORES

There are two liquor stores near by, Liquor Plus in Valleyview Center (they carry several very local wines as well as wines from around the globe). The government run liquor store is located in Mill Bay Centre.

DUNCAN MARKET

20 minute drive. Every Saturday, year round, several blocks of downtown Duncan is pedestrian traffic only, to accommodate the [Duncan Market](#) from 10 am -2 pm. Local artisans, local farmers and food trucks, bakery stalls, as well as flowers, local craft spirits and wineries all feature their wares. A delightful market!

CURE ARTISAN MEAT AND CHEESE

7-8 minute drive, in Valleyview Center. [Cure](#) is a deli to write home about. Seriously, just go in for the small. A small, upscale Italian inspired deli, they smoke their own meat and cheeses, create take home packs and have a cheese fondue service, including all ingredients and the fondue pot for a quick and elegant dinner in.

BAKERIES

There is an exceptional west coast bakery in Cowichan Bay called [True Grain](#). Another bakery, [Oma's](#), is in Shawnigan Village. Both of these have wholesome breads as well as take out options for a quick meal. Our local grocery, Country Grocer, also has a good on site bakery and deli with lots of takeout options.



SEASONAL EVENTS

SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

We have a local outdoor summer Shakespeare festival hosted by The Shawnigan Players. The Cowichan Shakespeare Festival takes place at Gem O' the Isle in Cowichan Station around the first two weeks of August. Check The Shawnigan Players [website](#) or [FB page](#) for details!

DINE AND SIP COWICHAN

[Dine and Sip](#) Cowichan is a festival held in March to showcase the local fare, from farm to table in this region.

DAMALI LAVENDER FARM

Around July, the various varieties of lavender are in full bloom...[this farm and vineyard](#) are like a little slice of Provence. Lavender ice cream and lavender infused wines and other local lavender items are for sale in the little gift shop. This is one of our favourite stops with guests from late June until the end of July.

39 DAYS OF JULY

A celebration of music, theatre and local talent at outdoor venues in Duncan. [This event](#) showcases what the Valley offers and brings the community together.

COBBLE HILL FAIR

[This little country fair](#) is held just five minutes away on the last Saturday of August. It's an old time fair, with lots of animals and local competition in baking, growing, canning and artistic endeavours. So much going on for the whole family!

COBBLE HILL EVENTS SOCIETY

[This](#) is a place where you can find out any very local events that are happening right here in Cobble Hill throughout the summer months.



DRINK UP

THE COBBLESTONE PUB

A local pub and eatery, right beside the Agricultural Hall in downtown Cobble Hill.

RED ARROW BREWERY

Right off the highway in Duncan, this local [brewery](#) has tastings of their beer, and a charming environment. There's usually a food truck parked outside for a quick lunch and a cold beer.

LOCALLY CRAFTED SPIRITS

Craft distilleries are popping up all over the Island. The two to note locally produce outstanding gins, [Ampersand](#) and [Stillhead](#). Small companies with a lot of personality. Both offer tours and tastings.

UNSWORTH WINERY

7-8 minute drive. [Unsworth](#) is the closest winery to us. It's a beautiful setting, amongst rolling farmland. There is a tasting room with lots of outdoor seating around a pond. The fantastic restaurant, set in the old farm house, is one of our personal favourites featuring locally grown food and the vineyard's best.

MERRIDALE CIDERY

Right next door to Unsworth Winery, [this cidery](#) is a lovely place just to wander around the paths and orchards, perusing the history of cider with their signage. There's a cafeteria style restaurant, and tastings of their selection of ciders and spirits produced on site.



PUBS &
WINERIES

DRINK UP

EMANDARE VINEYARD

Located in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island BC, Emandare Vineyard sits on a unique south sloping hillside in the rain shadow of Mount Prevost overlooking Somenos Lake. Naturally crafted terroir-driven wines made with old world, low intervention techniques.

ZANATTA WINERY

20 minute drive. Committed to tradition, their roots run deep: The owners have lived and worked on this land for over half a century. Zanatta is a small estate farm winery. They have 25 acres of land dedicated to growing grapes and use 100% of their own fruit in the making of their unique wines.

CHERRY POINT ESTATE WINES

8-10 minute drive. Right here in Cobble Hill, with ocean views on the other side of the highway, a remarkably beautiful winery with a little bistro. The vineyard sits on a hill overlooking the ocean. Tastings available.

BLUEGROUSE ESTATE WINERY

7-8 minute drive. This is a large winery, really close by. The tasting room is a huge modern west coast style building overlooking the vineyards. Staff is knowledgeable and wine tastings (for a fee) are generous. Walk the grounds, order charcuterie, spend an hour or two here.



PUBS &
WINERIES



LOCAL RESTAURANTS

UNSWORTH

This is the restaurant at the vineyard at Unsworth. Fresh, local, upscale. One of our favourites, to be sure.

THE MASTHEAD

An upscale seaside restaurant with views of the marina at Cowichan Bay and Saltspring Island. Another classic favourite.

ROCK COD CAFE

Simply the best fish and chips in the valley. Eat in or take out, sit on the wharf...then walk next door for dessert at Udder Guy's local ice creamery.



TAKE OUT

The restaurants listed here are ones we enjoy for a nice evening out. Most offer take out, but there are some specific take out restaurants as well:

- The Little Corner Sandwich Shop (very popular food truck in Cobble Hill)
- The Dragon Yuan Chinese food in Cobble Hill
- Montra Thai eatery in Shawnigan Lake
- Compass Mexican Bistro in Shawnigan Lake
- Spicecraft in Mill Bay

S O H A R D T O C H O O S E

MORE LOCAL FARE

BRIDGEMAN'S

12-15 minute drive. [Bridgeman's Bistro](#) is a wharf restaurant, extending out into the bay amongst the sailboats and yachts. For spectacular views, great food and an ocean breeze, this is a remarkable spot. Stroll along the wharves or the Mill Bay beach after dinner and watch the sunset.

THE COOK AND BUTCHER

[Another restaurant](#) at Cowichan Bay, with plenty of window tables overlooking the exquisite view. The restaurant is in the Oceanfront Suites hotel.

PRIMA STRADA

7-8 minute drive. [Prima Strada](#) is a little authentic Italian experience, right here in Cobble Hill! Indoor and outdoor seating, lovely wine selection, killer traditional wood fired pizza and house made gelato.

RESTAURANTS

There are so many amazing restaurants in the area. Fresh, locally grown food is the feature in the Valley. The restaurants listed here are a few of our own favourites, and all within a 7-15 minute drive.



COFFEE SHOPS

DRUMROASTER

Less than ten minutes drive, in Valleyview Center. A great, local roastery, on site baked treats, cool vibe.

SERIOUS COFFEE

Fifteen minutes drive, in Mill Bay. Another awesome local roastery chain, featuring sandwiches, wraps and baked good as well as some of the best coffee on the Island.

BRUGO'S

Cool, modern vibe, some local items for sale, in Mill Bay Center. In the summer, an ice cream kiosk is opposite...something for everyone!

RUSTICANA

Best. Coffee. EVER. Other than my own French Press. A little indoor seating, but a great seating area outside if the weather is good. Close to Mill Bay (near Mill Bay Centre), it's a great place to get your coffee before you go sit on the wharf and look for seals or count starfish.



WHERE TO WORSHIP

CHURCHES

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CATHOLIC CHURCH

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

COBBLE HILL CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SHAWNIGAN ALLIANCE CHURCH

SYLVAN UNITED

