



Recreation Sites and Trails BC

Ripple Rock Trail



Difficulty: Easy to moderate

Hiking Length: 8.0 km (round trip)

Time: 2.5 - 3.0 hours (round trip)

Access: The Ripple Rock Trail head is located just off highway 19 approximately 16 km north of Campbell River. There is a turn off from the highway to a parking lot, which is visible from the highway. Please lock vehicles and store valuables out of site.

Picnic Areas: There are three picnic areas located on the trail, one at the beach, one at the first lookout and one near the last viewpoint.



Menzies Bay as seen from second viewpoint

Ripple Rock Trail

This trail was designed for hikers and is not suitable for those on horseback, mountain bike, motorcycle, ATV or four wheel drive.

Please help make this hiking experience enjoyable for everyone.

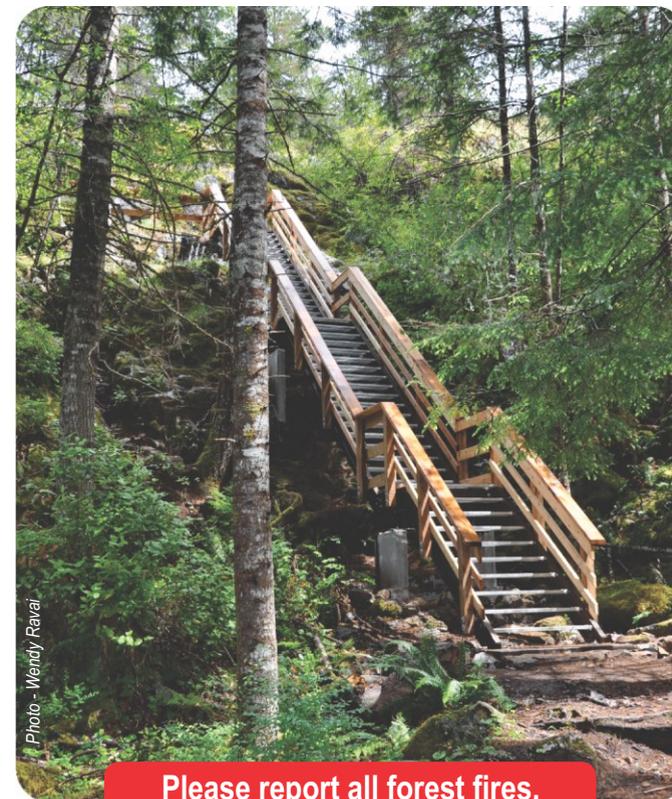


Photo - Wendy Ravai

Please report all forest fires.
Phone toll-free: 1 800 663 5555

For More Information

Recreation Sites and Trails Branch
Email: recinfo@gov.bc.ca
Ph: 250 286-9300
www.sitesandtrailsBC.ca



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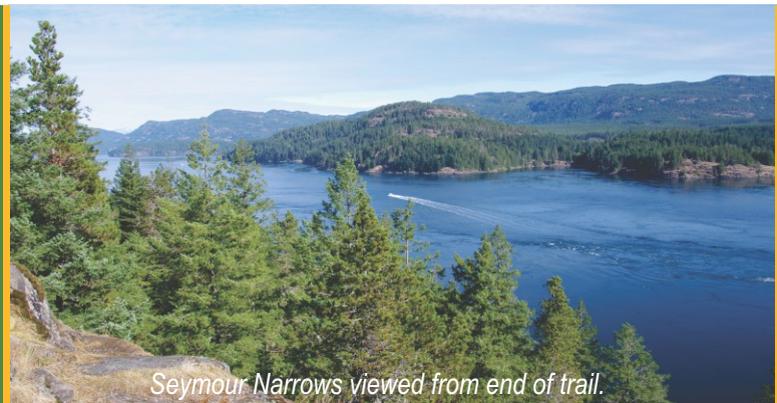
Visitors Map and Guide



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The Ripple Rock Trail, which leads to the Seymour Narrows lookout, is located approximately 16 km north of Campbell River, on highway 19. The trail was named after two pinnacle stone masses in the middle of Seymour Narrows.



Seymour Narrows viewed from end of trail.



Third picnic site.

History: Until 1958 Seymour Narrows contained one of the most notorious marine hazards in North America. Located in the narrow pass between Vancouver Island and Maud Island, Ripple Rock consisted of two menacing rock pinnacles whose summits lay only 1.8 meters (6ft.) and 2.7 meters (9 ft.) under water at low tide. The pinnacles restricted the flow of water through the passage, which produced water velocities of 15 to 20 knots and caused the formation of large whirlpools.

The first recorded loss of a vessel was the US Navy steamer "Saranac" in 1875. In the years following, Ripple Rock caused damage to dozens more ships and claimed 114 lives. The first petition to remove the hazard was drawn up in 1904, but it wasn't until 1921 that the federal government initiated a formal investigation.

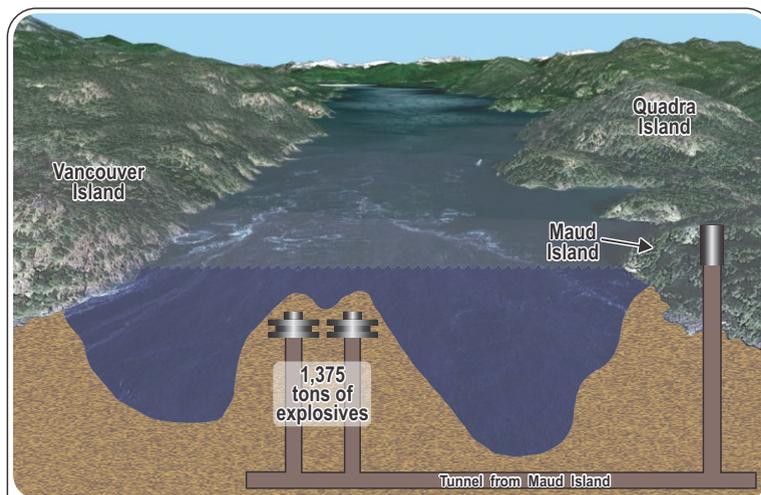
The government's proposal to remove "Old Rip" met with a great deal of opposition. Residents of Vancouver Island had hoped for a direct link to the mainland via a transcontinental railway, so the rock was protected to provide a pier-foot for the future bridge across the narrows. The railway was never built. With the outbreak of World War II, the government decided the rock had to be removed to allow free passage along the inside waters.

In 1942, \$500,000 was allotted for the project. The plan was to drill into the rock from a barge anchored in the narrows, load the drilled holes with explosives and blast the rock away bit by bit. The barge was anchored with huge concrete blocks and mooring lines, but was tossed around in the rough waters. The project was abandoned in September of 1943, with only 11 holes drilled. Another \$125,000 was committed to resume operations in May of 1945. Two months later an attempt was made to anchor a barge to steel spars erected on the cliffs of Maud and Vancouver Islands. But after 4 months of operations only 139 holes had been drilled of a planned total of 15,000. The project was abandoned again.

Eight years later, the National Research Council conducted a study to assess the feasibility of tunnelling beneath the seabed and up into the twin pinnacles of Ripple Rock and then blasting off the tops. The plan was approved and the final assault began in February, 1956. A construction camp was established on Quadra Island to extend a causeway from Quadra to Maud Island.

The \$3,000,000 project took 27 months to complete. Over a kilometer of fuse laid. 1,250,000 kg (2,750,000 lbs) of explosives were set under the pinnacles. The firing bunker was constructed on Quadra Island. Several viewing bunkers were built on Vancouver Island to shelter the anticipated horde of nearly 200 photographers and dignitaries.

At 9:31 a.m., April 5, 1958, the blast was triggered which created the largest man-made, non nuclear explosion in history (see picture - bottom right). The explosion broke up an estimated 370,000 tonnes of rock and moved 220,000 tonnes of water. Although repercussions from the blast were anticipated and precautions taken, the explosion did not produce a single tidal wave or earth tremor. The clearance now at low tide is approximately 13 meters (43 ft.) over the north summit and 14 meters (46 ft.) over the south summit, but still considered a navigational hazard.



In 1953, the National Research Council did a study on the feasibility of tunnelling under Seymour Narrows and up into the twin peaks of Ripple Rock through Maud Island. The idea of performing a root canal so to speak, on "Old Rip's" jagged canines got the go-ahead, thus beginning the biggest project ever undertaken by the Department of Public Works.

The most recent recorded damage to a vessel in Seymour Narrows involved the "MS Sundancer" in 1984. On its third trip to Alaska, the cruiseship struck rock off Maud Island and tore a huge gash in the starboard side of the hull. The captain managed to pilot the vessel into Duncan Bay, where the ship partially sank. Declared a total constructive loss, the ship was eventually refloated and towed to the Burrard shipyard, and later sold to a Greek cruise line. The "Sundancer" was then towed to Greece and rebuilt as the "MS Pegasus".

In addition to being chartered for cruises on the east coast of South America, the "Pegasus" spent five months back in the Vancouver area as a floating hotel during Expo 86.

The Trail: The Ripple Rock Trail was constructed in 1983 through a grant sponsored by the Campbell River Rotary Club. Numerous changes and improvements have been made over the years, mainly to the bridge crossings over Menzies Creek.

In April of 1995, the old wooden towers supporting the power lines across Seymour Narrows were replaced by taller, steel towers. The cost of the project was shared equally by BC Hydro and the cruise ship industry, who had requested the raising of the cables to enable the new line of mega cruise ships clear passage underneath the lines.

The most recent trail upgrades were completed in 2010, thanks to funding provided through the Job Opportunities Program and the Island Coastal Economic Trust.

Trail Safety: There are several natural hazards associated with this trail – notably, high winds, slippery rocks and steep cliffs. Children should be supervised at all times. Wild animals may also be encountered, as you are hiking through bear and cougar country. Hike in a group and make loud noises to alert wildlife of your presence.

Ticks: Ticks are often found in tall grass and in rocky, brushy areas – mainly through the months of April to September. A tick is a spider, about the size of a sesame seed, that may carry Lyme disease. Take precautions and check yourself (and your dog) for ticks at the end of your hike.

Trail Etiquette: The trail passes through private property and BC Hydro right-of-ways. Please respect private and public land.

- Keep to established trails; short-cutting damages plants and increases risk of erosion.
- Keep your pet on a leash or otherwise under control.
- Pack out everything you packed in.



Photo by R. E. Olsen (April 5, 1958) courtesy of Museum at Campbell River.