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The Sunshine Coast Trail

Pack lightly and bring a GPS unit to fully explore this offbeat trail.

AUGUST 8, 2011 - BY JANE MUNDY



Move over West Coast Trail, the Sunshine Coast Trail (SCT) has way more to offer to hikers. For starters, it's twice as long (188 km, compared to 77 km) so you won't be jockeying for trail space. And unlike Vancouver Island's West Coast Trail (which was established in 1907 to help rescue shipwrecked sailors whose vessels sank off the coastline) you don't have to apply and pay for a permit to hike it—you can go whenever and wherever you want.

Powell River is the stepping-off point to the SCT. With the exception of downhill skiing, "Powell Riviera" (as it's fondly called by residents) seems to have it all, and the town is drenched in history—from the Patricia Theatre that opened its doors in 1913 to the nearly 400 heritage buildings neighboring the paper mill.

The Trinket Trail



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One of the most popular family activities is hiking the Trinket Trail, essentially a free outdoor treasure hunt for kids of all ages. It's mined with small toys left by residents and visitors alike, and has quickly become a popular geocaching hunt.

All you need is a GPS unit and go to geocaching.com, and look up different sites by region, area or city. It will give you the coordinates and a clue, such as "look under a rock that has a painted circle."

"My family sees the Trinket Trail as one giant geo-cache where trinkets hang in trees and hide in woody stumps," said resident Darren Robinson. "For my kids, it's as exciting as Disneyland. My four-year-old daughter Sadie spotted Big Bird right away, then we came upon a treasure trove of trinkets—they're everywhere."

About 2.5 km along the trinket trail you can't miss Troll Alley; there are literally dozens of the funky hairy toys hanging from branches and wedged into trees and moss. The entire Trinket Trail is a 5.5 km round trip and begins just off Southview Road, all the way up to the Bunster Bluffs and back again. Give yourself three to four hours for this hike.

Where To Stay

If you're camping on the SCT, don't worry about critters sniffing around your tent—all you need is a sleeping bag and provisions. You can sleep in one of the eight open shelters or two cabins along the trail, free of charge.

There are also several good campsites around Powell River, and Sunland-by-the-sea campgrounds in nearby Lund. Or rent a float cabin to experience off-the-grid life on Powell Lake.

Desolation Sound Resort offers a wilderness experience combined with luxury, 20 minutes north of Powell River. Spread over seven wooded acres, its spacious chalets have full kitchens and some have private hot tubs, sleeping six to eight people. It's a great spot for first-time kayakers.

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