



DESTINATION FOCUS

AAA Washington Travel Services

Whidbey Island

Whidbey Island lies at the northern reaches of Puget Sound, measuring fifty miles in length on a north-south axis. Its width varies from one to nine miles across. With an area of 170 square miles, Whidbey is the largest island in Puget Sound and third-largest in the contiguous 48 states, after Long Island, New York and Isle Royale in Lake Superior.

Rolling terrain characterizes Whidbey's topography. Steep bluffs fringe much of its shoreline. Wide, protected bays scallop its eastern shore, separated from the mainland by Possession Sound, Saratoga Passage and Skagit Bay. Admiralty Inlet and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, which opens to the Pacific, bathe its western flanks. In the far north the narrow channel of Deception Pass separates Whidbey from Fidalgo Island. The contemporary island landscape is a mix of second- and third-growth forest, alternating with tracts of pasture and farmland.



Visitors are welcomed to the island at the Clinton ferry terminal [Photo: Wikipedia]

British Captain George Vancouver named the island in 1792, for his sailing master George Whidbey. Salish-speaking Native Americans lived on the island and fished its surrounding waters virtually unmolested until the advent of European settlement in the mid-19th century. Coupeville, founded in 1853, is one of Washington's oldest towns.

Whidbey Island contains a variety of scenic, recreational and historic attractions. Its beaches, parks and pleasant towns attract both daytrippers and travelers seeking a getaway destination. Accommodations range from B&Bs and lodges to motels and motor inns. Camping is available at four state parks, one county park, a municipal park and several private resorts.

THE INFORMED TRAVELER

TRANSPORTATION

Getting to the Island

By Car

The picturesque Deception Pass Bridge (SR-20) spans its namesake channel at the north end of the island, providing the sole fixed link. Highway 20 connects with I-5 at Burlington, 17 miles east of the bridge.

Whidbey-SeaTac Shuttle offers daily van service between island communities and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. For information and reservations, call (360) 679-4003 or (877) 679-4003 – Web www.seatacshuttle.com

By Ferry

In the south, **Washington State Ferries** (www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries) cross Possession Sound between Clinton and Mukilteo. On the mainland side, Highway 525 (Mukilteo Speedway) winds five miles from its shared junction with I-405 and I-5 in Lynnwood down to the ferry terminal. The ferry can also be reached from Everett via SR-526 (Boeing Freeway), a distance of seven miles. Departures occur every 30 minutes during daylight hours most of the year (every 45-60 minutes after dark) and reservations are not accepted on this route.

During the busy summer season and especially on holiday weekends, wait times can reach two to three hours on either end. *It can actually be faster to drive around – the average Mukilteo-Clinton drive time via Deception Pass is 2½ hours.* Outside those peak times, expect to wait no more than 30 minutes for a sailing.

Midway along Whidbey’s west shore, a second State Ferries route crosses Admiralty Inlet, connecting Coupeville Terminal (formerly Keystone) with Port Townsend on the Olympic Peninsula. The route features WSF’s two newest ships, the *MV Chetzemoka* and the *MV Salish*. Advance reservations are often required for summer and weekend sailings of this route – phone (888) 808-7977 or 511 (in-state), or 206-464-6400 for ferry information.

Getting Around the Island

One major highway runs the 51-mile length of the island from Clinton to Deception Pass. The southern portion of this route is designated SR-525, while the northern section is SR-20. South of Coupeville, SR-20 branches west to the ferry terminal at Keystone. Nearly all island roads are paved. Some county roads are narrow and lack paved shoulders. Bicycling is popular on Whidbey, so watch out for cyclists on roads.

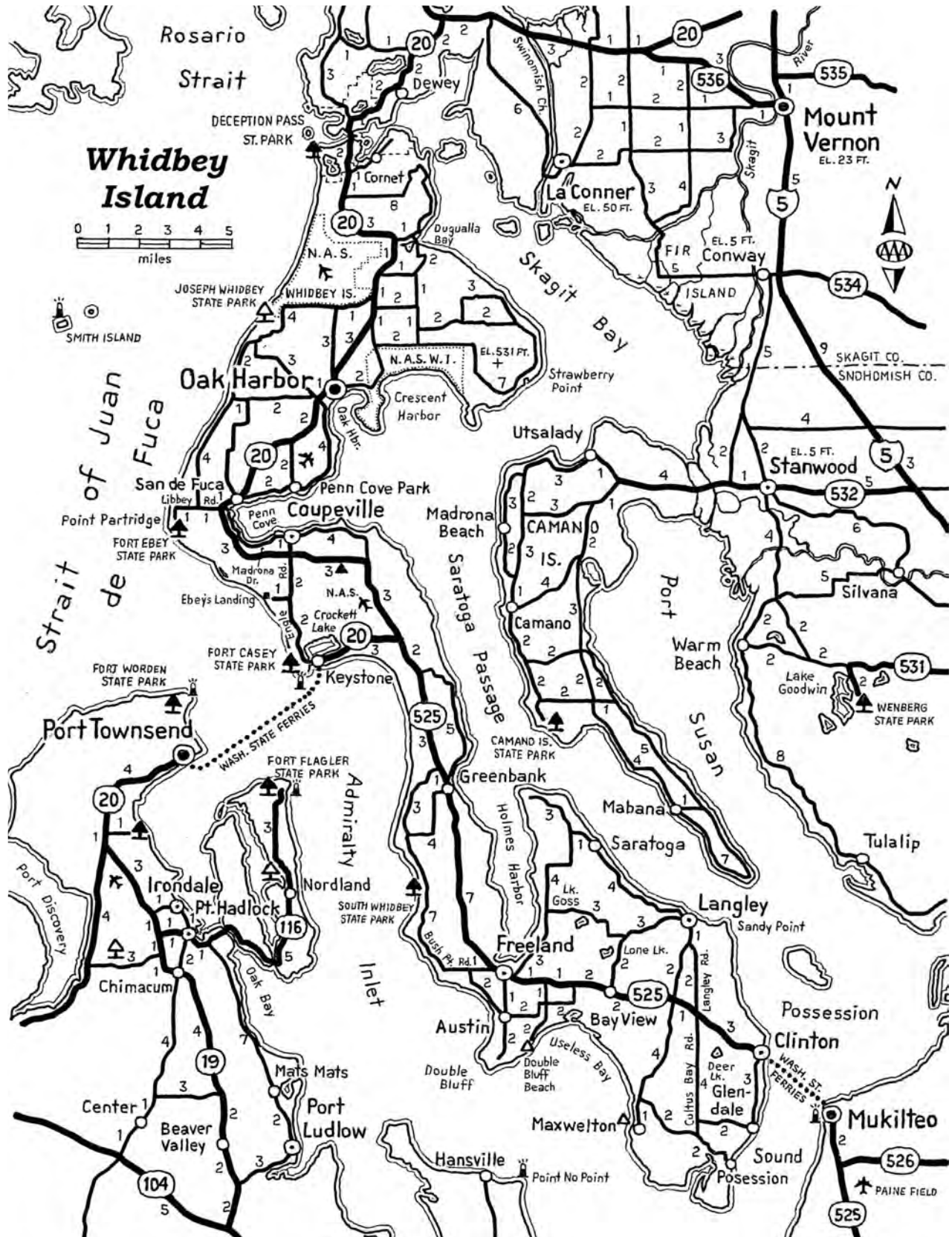
Island Transit provides free public transit service Monday through Saturday. The trunk routes along SR-525 and SR-20 operate hourly during daylight hours. For more information, call (360) 678-7771 or (800) 240-8747 – Web www.islandtransit.org

CLIMATE

The island has a Marine West Coast climate, largely free of weather extremes. Because it lies in the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains, annual precipitation is relatively light. Summer months are the driest and sunniest, although fog is common. The following table gives monthly maximum/minimum temperatures (in degrees Fahrenheit) and precipitation (in inches) for Coupeville.

COUPEVILLE (elev. 2 ft.)

Averages	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Max. Temp. (°F)	44.7	48.4	52.1	57.2	63.0	67.4	71.6	72.1	67.7	58.4	50.1	45.4	58.2
Min. Temp. (°F)	34.3	35.2	37.0	39.9	44.4	48.2	50.5	50.7	47.0	42.4	38.0	35.4	41.9
Precip. (inches)	2.46	1.76	1.82	1.62	1.82	1.26	0.83	0.89	1.25	1.81	2.65	2.74	20.66
Snowfall (inches)	2.5	1.2	0.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.6	1.3	6.2



SOUTH WHIDBEY

The mainland city of **MUKILTEO** (pop. 20,938, alt. 12 ft.) is the southern gateway to Whidbey Island. The city climbs a hilly bluff overlooking Possession Sound, the 2½-mile-wide saltwater channel separating the mainland from the southern part of the island. Here in 1855, leaders of 22 Native American tribes signed the Point Elliott Treaty, thereby relinquishing their land claims to white settlers. The **Mukilteo Lighthouse**, built in 1905, stands on the point, just south of the ferry terminal. The lighthouse is open to visitors weekend afternoons from April through September.

Washington State Ferries provides frequent daily car ferry service between Mukilteo and Clinton. Highway 525 leads to the terminal, where vehicles wait in a large paved lot for the next departure. The crossing takes 20 minutes. To the north, Possession Sound widens into Port Gardner on whose eastern shore rises the city of Everett. In clear weather Mount Baker (elev. 10,778 ft.) dominates the northern horizon. Ahead, dark green woods cloak the bluffs forming the coast of Whidbey Island.

The ferry lands at **CLINTON** (pop. 868, alt. 105 ft.). The community was settled in the 1870s and was first called Phinney. In the 1880s it was renamed for a county in Iowa by a pioneer lumberman who established a steamer landing and hotel on the shore. Boats stopped here to take on wood for fuel. **Clinton Beach Park**, just south of the ferry dock, offers shore access. The district south along the shore is called Columbia Beach. Most of Clinton lies along SR-525 as it climbs the bluff. **Deer Lake Park**, south of the highway 1½ miles from the ferry landing on Deer Lake Road, offers boating, fishing and a popular swimming beach.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Golf

- **Island Greens Golf Course** (www.whidbey.com/islandgreens), is 2 ½ miles south of SR-525 via Cultus Bay Road. The 9-hole, 27-par public short course has a driving range. Phone (360) 579-6042.

There are several areas south and west of Clinton of interest. Humphrey Road leads 3 miles south from SR-525 at Clinton to **GLENDALE** (pop. 120, alt. 10 ft.), a small shoreside residential community at the foot of steep, 300-foot forested bluffs. Settlement dates back to the early 1900s and it was named for the pleasing setting at the mouth of a wooded glen. Glendale Road leads west, following ascending a narrow wooded canyon carved by Glendale Creek. Two miles west, turn left on Cultus Bay Road, which leads south to its namesake inlet. Its name, derived from a Chinook Jargon word, means *worthless*. The bay's shallows are flooded only at high tide. A residential community known as **POSSESSION SHORES** (pop. 200) faces its eastern shore.

At the eastern edge of Possession Point, the island's southernmost spot, is the hamlet of **POSSESSION** (pop. 100, alt. 15 ft.). The bluff behind the town is over 400 feet high. In the waters off the point Captain Vancouver claimed the region for England on June 4th, 1792. **Possession Beach Waterfront Park** has 700 feet of shoreline with a boat ramp, floating dock, fishing and picnicking.

MAXWELTON (pop. 195, alt. 10 ft.), 4 miles south of SR-525, was named by Scottish settlers for the Maxwellton hill country of their homeland. The seaside village's main attraction is **Dave Mackie County Park**, offering beach access, a boat ramp, picnic sites and a playground. The meadow east of the highway just north of town lies a couple feet below mean sea level – a gate keeps the tide out.



One of Whidbey Island's most popular tourist destinations is **LANGLEY** (pop. 1,086, alt. 80 ft.), three miles north of SR-525 via Langley Road. The picturesque town perches on a bluff overlooking Saratoga Passage.

German immigrant Jacob Anthes founded the town and named for Seattle judge and fellow developer J.W. Langley in 1890. Quaint shops, galleries, cafes and lodgings make it a popular getaway and the small harbor caters to pleasure craft.

← Langley street scene [Photo: Langley Chamber of Commerce]

Langley has more than 60 bed & breakfast accommodations, the state's largest concentration.

Its small size makes everything within walking distance. The life-size bronze sculpture **Boy and Dog**, downtown on First Street overlooking the shore, is a favored photo stop. Steps lead down the bluff to **Seawall Park**. **Simon Park** at the marina has a picnic area and fishing pier.

Langley is a popular stop for pleasure craft →
[Photo: Langley Chamber of Commerce]



The **SOUTH WHIDBEY HISTORICAL MUSEUM**, at 312 Second Street, features historical photographs and exhibits. One documents that Langley was the first town in the nation to elect an all-woman city council and mayor who quickly turned their attention to cleaning up the ne'er-do-well aspects of the community. Open Fri.-Sun. 1-4pm, June-Aug.; Sat.-Sun. 1-4, rest of year; closed holidays and Dec.-Jan. Donations. Phone (360) 221-2101 – Web www.southwhidbeyhistory.org

Popular area events include late February's **Langley Mystery Weekend** (www.langleymystery.com); **Choochokam: Langley Festival of the Arts** (www.choochokamarts.org) in early July; and the **Island County Fair** (www.islandcountyfair.com) in mid-August. The fairground is on the south side of town on Camano Avenue (Langley Road).

Visitor Information: Langley Chamber of Commerce, 208 Anthes Avenue, P.O. Box 403, Langley, WA 98260. Phone (360) 221-6765 - Web www.visitlangley.com

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Kayaking

- **Whidbey Island Kayaking** offers guided sea kayak trips daily March through October, weather permitting. Trips depart from Langley Marina and Possession Beach State Park. Phone (800) 233-4319 or (360) 661-5183 – Web www.whidbeyislandkayaking.com

WINERIES

- **Whidbey Island Winery** is one mile south of town on Langley Road. Grapes for its wines come from island vineyards and also from eastern Washington. A picnic area overlooks the vineyard and apple orchard. Their tasting room is open daily (except Tuesdays) 11am to 5pm Jul.-Sept., and Wed.-Sun. 11am-5pm the rest of the year. Phone (360) 221-2040 – Web www.whidbeyislandwinery.com

Second Street leads west from Langley to Saratoga Road, which runs along the bluffs four miles to **SARATOGA** (pop. 70, alt. 150 ft.). The channel separating Whidbey from Camano Island was named Port Gardner by Captain Vancouver in 1792. In 1841 the American explorer Charles Wilkes re-christened the channel Saratoga Passage, honoring the U.S. flagship in the Battle of Lake Champlain during the War of 1812.

BAYVIEW (pop. 150, alt. 50 ft.) is a crossroads community at the junction of SR-525 and Bayview Road. Its name comes from the panorama of Useless Bay, off to the south. The town's oldest building is the restored **Cash Store**, a mercantile established in the early 1900s. Bayview hosts a **Farmer's Market** Saturdays from March through December. **Lone Lake**, two miles north on Bayview Road, has a county park on its north shore with a boat ramp, picnic tables and swimming beach.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Bicycling

- **Half Link Bicycle Shop** offers bicycle rentals, repairs and sales. 5603 Bayview Road (at Hwy 525) – Phone (360) 331-7980 – Web www.halflinkbikes.com

Golf

- **Useless Bay Golf & Country Club**, 1 mile west on SR-525, then south on Useless Bay Road, is an 18-hole, par 72 private course. Phone (360) 321-5958 – Web www.uselessbaygolf.com

FREELAND (pop. 1,313, alt. 150 ft.) is three miles west of Bayview on SR-525 at the head of Holmes Harbor. The town grew up around a cooperative sawmill established at the turn of the 20th century. Its name honors the Free Land Association, the cooperative organization that founded the town in 1900. The oldest structure is the 1902 **Stanford House**, at 548 S. Freeland Avenue. Freeland Hall, the local community center, was built in 1914. Nicholas Brothers Boat Builders has a waterfront plant manufacturing tugs, river cruise boats and catamarans. The sheltered waters of Holmes Harbor, the island's longest inlet (5½ miles long) is popular for sailing. **Freeland Park** has beach access, a boat ramp, playground and picnic sites.

Many consider **Double Bluff Beach**, 2 miles south of SR-525, to be the island's finest. Its three-mile long sandy strand offers excellent beachcombing and clamming at the base of tall bluffs. Note: The bluffs are unstable and unsafe to climb. Sweeping views extend south across Puget Sound to the downtown Seattle skyline, more than a dozen miles distant, with the snowy dome of Mount Rainier as backdrop.

Just west of Freeland the island tapers to its narrowest point – barely a mile across between Mutiny Bay to the south and Holmes Harbor to the north. Bush Point Road, ¾ mile west of Freeland on SR-525, continues west. It turns north and runs atop the bluffs along Admiralty Inlet and shortly becomes Smugglers Cove Road.

After 4½ miles the road reaches **SOUTH WHIDBEY STATE PARK** (www.parks.wa.gov, Discover Pass required), a 347-acre tract preserving some of the island's finest old growth forest. Four trails loop through ancient stands of Douglas fir, Western red cedar and Western hemlock. Quiet hikers may get a glimpse of wildlife such as black tailed deer, raccoon and fox, especially on the Wilbert Trail, east of the road. Two of the trails lead down the bluff to the cobble beach where there are fine views across Admiralty Inlet to Marrowstone Island with the Olympics on the western horizon. Besides hiking, activities include beachcombing, clamming, crabbing, fishing and swimming. The park's campground consists of over 40 tent sites and a handful of spots for RV's. From May 15-Sept. 15, reservations can be made online via the parks website or at (888) 226-7688.

Note: As of July 2011, a **Washington Discover Pass** is required for admission to day-use areas of state parks, as well as areas administered by the state Department of Fish & Wildlife and the Department of Natural Resources.

The fee is \$10/car for a one-day pass, or \$30 for an annual pass. Purchase the pass from any State Parks regional office or at the park itself when staff is available. Click www.discoverpass.wa.gov for details on other methods of purchase, including over 600 locations where hunting and fishing licenses are sold (transaction fees apply). A \$99 fine can be levied against drivers of street-legal vehicles caught without a Pass.

Overnight campers in state parks need not purchase the Discover Pass for the nights they're camping.



CENTRAL WHIDBEY

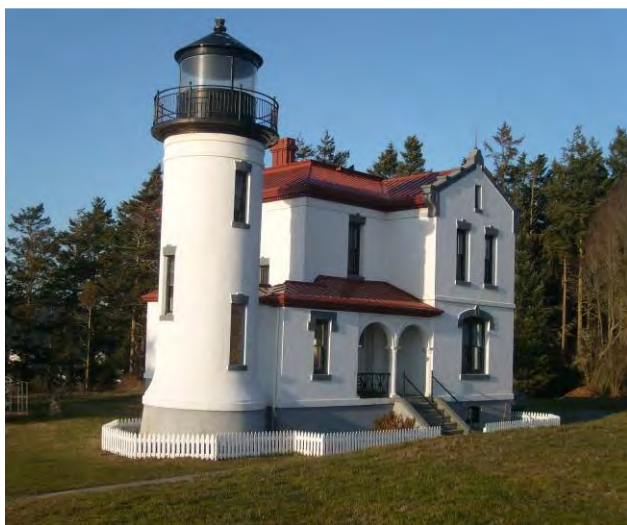
GREENBANK (pop. 600, alt. 58 ft.) marks the beginning of the central part of the island. At the turn of the 20th century, homesteaders were clearing the forest and starting dairies and berry farms. By 1906 a town had grown up, overlooking the entrance to Holmes Harbor. Greenbank, named for a town in Delaware, remains a quiet place. Coupe's Greenbank Store has been the town's general store since 1904.

MEERKERK GARDENS, 1½ miles south of Greenbank on SR-525, then east on Resort Road, is the island's major botanical attraction. The site includes ten acres of gardens showcasing more than 2,000 rhodies and 43 acres of woodland preserve. Nature trails loop through the gardens and woods and dogs are welcome on the grounds. Peak rhododendron bloom is in late April and early May. Meerkerk is open daily 9am to 4pm. Admission. Phone (360) 678-1912 – Web www.meerkerkgardens.org

GREENBANK FARM, north of town at SR-525 and North Bluff Road, was established in 1904 as a dairy. During the early 1930s it was converted to a loganberry farm and by the 1970s boasted the world's largest loganberry vineyard. Its small winery specialized in loganberry wine. In the mid-1990s new owners announced plans for a large real estate development, but local residents rallied to save the historic farm. Its 522 acres include rolling hills and fields with panoramic views extending from the Olympics to the Cascades. The farm has interpretive displays showcasing its history, an art gallery, wine shop, antique shop and a farmer's market (Sundays May through September). Walking trails loop through the site. Phone (360) 678-7700 – Web www.greenbankfarm.com

Highway 525 continues north along the spine of the island. Five miles north of Greenbank, SR-20 branches three miles west to **KEYSTONE** (alt. 9 ft.). This scattered settlement of weathered houses extends along Keystone Spit, a gravel and sand bar separating Crockett Lake from Admiralty Inlet. The seaward side offers good beachcombing. At the tip of the spit is the terminal for Washington State Ferries' car ferry service between Whidbey Island and Port Townsend (note that WSF calls this terminal Coupeville, not Keystone). There are 10-16 sailings per day and the crossing time is 30 minutes. Reservations are highly recommended (see *The Informed Traveler* on page 2 for details).

The hill west of the terminal is **Admiralty Head**. The 82-foot high headland overlooks the entrance to Puget Sound. In the late 1890s the Army built Fort Casey on this strategic spot. The fort, with its disappearing cannons, was designed to protect the shipping channel and ultimately the naval shipyard at Bremerton. Casey, together with Fort Worden near Port Townsend and Fort Flagler at the northern tip of Marrowstone Island, formed a defense strategy known as the *Triangle of Fire*. By 1920 the technology was obsolete and the fort was closed. It briefly served as an Army training center during World War II, and was transferred to Washington State Parks in 1955.



FORT CASEY STATE PARK (www.parks.wa.gov, Discover Pass required) features ten gun batteries positioned along the crest of the bluff. The cannons were removed long ago, but two have been restored so visitors can see what they looked like. The guns were brought from an American fort in the Philippines in 1968. Tours of the gun batteries (45 minutes long) are offered Fri.-Sun. at 2pm, late May to mid-Sept. Free. Phone (360) 678-4519

The **Admiralty Head Lighthouse** is open as an historic landmark and interpretive center. The original light was commissioned in 1861 but was dismantled to make way for Fort Casey in 1890. The present lighthouse was erected in 1901-03 and was decommissioned in 1922. It's open daily 11am-5pm from June through August, then most weekends the rest of the year (closed in January and February). Phone (360) 240-5584 – Web www.admiraltyhead.wsu.edu

The park includes a campground (35 tent sites, no RV services, first-come, first-served all year) and two miles of saltwater shoreline that form an underwater park, popular with scuba divers. Open fields with designated space for kite-flying and radio-controlled gliders are also available.

Camp Casey, the fort's former buildings located north of the state park, was acquired by Seattle Pacific University when the post was sold in the mid 1950s. The university has restored many of the historic structures and operates it as a camp for school groups, churches, youth soccer players, nonprofit organizations and outdoor education classes.

Engle Road leads north from Fort Casey to Coupeville. It traverses **Ebey's Prairie**, the island's largest tract of farmland. Settlement began here in 1850, making this one of the oldest agricultural landscapes in Washington. The Salish people, who had lived here for thousands of years, created the prairies by burning the woodlands. This facilitated harvesting the plentiful root crops of camas and bracken. Spanish explorers introduced the potato in 1790, and this became a favored food. In 1850 Congress passed the Oregon Donation Land Act, granting free land (320 acres to a single man, 640 to a married couple) to anyone who homesteaded before December 1st, 1850. White settlers displaced the Indians and turned the prairies into a patchwork of small farms. Remains of early blockhouses recall the conflicts of this period.



[Photo: National Park Service]

EBEY'S LANDING NATIONAL HISTORICAL RESERVE (www.nps.gov/ebla), established in 1978 as a National Park Service unit and the only Historical Reserve in the country, embraces 17,500 acres of central Whidbey Island from Fort Casey and Keystone Spit north through Coupeville to Fort Ebey and the north shore of Penn Cove. The park's mission is to preserve and interpret this historic landscape, to maintain open space for farming, to guide development and to facilitate non-intrusive public access. A series of roads links the reserve's eight major sites – Fort Casey, Crockett Lake and Crockett Uplands, Ebey's Landing, Fort Ebey, Grasser's Hill and Lagoon, Monroe Landing and the town of Coupeville.

Crockett Lake, east of Admiralty Head provides habitat for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. It was named for pioneer settlers S.B. and Walter Crockett, who homesteaded on the prairie in 1854. The historic **Crockett Blockhouse**, is ½ mile east of Engle Road on Fort Casey Road. One of four remaining settler-built fortifications from this period, it was restored and relocated closer to the road in 1938. The blockhouse is open and interpretive markers describe the site.

Ebey's Landing, just over a miles west of Engle Road, is one of Whidbey's most spectacular landscapes. The green pastures of Ebey Prairie edge down to the shore. A gravel beach extends north to a line of steep bluffs. Here Isaac Ebey, one of the island's first European settlers, stepped ashore in 1850. He filed a donation land claim and started farming. His praise of the land's fecundity led to further immigration and the start of an agricultural colony. The house belonging to Isaac's father Jacob (*pictured above left*), a historic site a quarter mile inland, was a hotel and tavern. It has recently re-opened as a seasonal visitor center – May-Sept. open Thursday through Sunday, 10am-4pm.

A 3-mile trail leads along the beach, passing the waterfowl habitat of Parego Lagoon, to Fort Ebey State Park (described later). Look for semi-precious stones on the beach. Small clumps of prickly pear cactus dot the bluff's slopes, indicative of the relatively scant rainfall.

COUPEVILLE (pop. 1,869, alt. 80 ft.) overlooks the bay of Penn Cove and is the seat of Island County, which includes both Whidbey and Camano islands. Its name honors Captain Thomas Coupe (1818-1875), who together with several other captains engaged in the Puget Sound lumber trade, settled on the south shore of the protected anchorage of Penn Cove in 1852. These "gentleman traders" founded a prosperous community today affectionately known as the *Port of Sea Captains*. Many of its original structures survive and more than 50 buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places.

Coupeville is a popular getaway destination. Antique and specialty shops, boutiques, art galleries and cafés occupy the historic false front buildings lining Front Street. Beautifully restored Victorian homes and gardens fill the surrounding residential district. **Captain Coupe's House** (1854) is at Ninth and Gould streets. It was moved uphill from its original location because of shoreline erosion. Many others date from the 1860s and several now function as bed and breakfast inns.



Coupeville's historic waterfront along tranquil Penn Cove

The 1901 **Coupeville Wharf**, where coastwise sailing ships once loaded and discharged their cargos, is the oldest surviving structure of its kind on Puget Sound. The wharf extends into Penn Cove from the foot of Alexander Street. On Front Street just west of the wharf, you'll find the Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve's orientation display. The local **Farmers' Market** is held Saturdays April to mid-October, adjacent to the Library on Alexander Street.

ISLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM, just up Alexander from the wharf, houses changing exhibits from its wide ranging permanent collections. The upper floor houses the headquarters of Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve. An interesting garden showcases herbs and drought-tolerant plants. **Alexander Blockhouse**, just behind the museum, was built in 1855. The museum is open every day except Tuesday. Phone (360) 678-3310 – Web www.islandhistory.org

Sunnyside Cemetery, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile west of Coupeville on SR-20, then $\frac{1}{4}$ mile south on Sherman Road, contains graves of the early settlers, including Isaac Ebey, killed by coastal Indians in 1857. **Davis Blockhouse**, just north of the cemetery, one of the pioneer fortifications, was relocated here in 1915. The bluffs here offer sweeping views across Ebey's Prairie to distant mounts Rainier and Baker.

Coupeville's biggest annual event is the Arts and Crafts Festival (www.coupevilleartsandcraftsfestival.org), held the second weekend in August. The event hosts art students of all ages to celebrate the summer. Food booths and entertainment stages round out the festival. Another popular annual event is the Penn Cove Mussel Festival, which celebrates a particularly tasty variety of local shellfish during the first weekend in March (www.thepenncovemusselfestival.com).

Visitor Information: Central Whidbey Chamber of Commerce Visitor Information Center is just south of SR-20 at 107 S. Main St. Bldg. E., Coupeville, WA 98239. Phone (360) 678-5434 or (360) 678-5664 – Web www.centralwhidbeychamber.com

Highway 20 offers a fast route westward from Coupeville, but **Madrona Drive**, which clings to the Penn Cove shoreline for three miles, is a more scenic option. Access the drive from Coveland Street in downtown Coupeville. A lush woodland of Pacific madrone frames the roadway. The madrone (*Arbutus, menziesii*, also popularly called madrona), with its dark evergreen leaves and shaggy cinnamon colored bark, is one of the Northwest's most beautiful native trees. The **Captain Whidbey Inn**, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of Coupeville, is a landmark accommodation. Its picturesque madrona log lodge nestles in trees at the edge of Penn Cove. The pens in the cove belong to Penn Cove Shellfish, which grows and harvests mussels, clams and oysters. Phone (360) 678-4097 or (800) 366-4097 – Web www.captainwhidbey.com

Madrona Drive ends at SR-20 near the site of **COVELAND** (alt. 15 ft.), on Grasser's Lagoon at the head of Penn Cove. Established by Captain P. Barstow, who filed a donation land claim in 1850, this was the first town on Whidbey Island. By 1852 it boasted a mercantile with goods from San Francisco and became the island's major commercial center. In 1853 the Oregon Territorial Legislature created Island County, which also included present-day Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom and San Juan counties, and designated Coveland its county seat. The county seat relocated to Coupeville in 1881 and Coveland faded. Today there is no recognizable settlement, but the two-story 1855 courthouse, now serving as a private residence, still stands on Madrona Drive, just south of SR-20.

Libbey Road leads $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles west to **FORT EBEEY STATE PARK** (www.parks.wa.gov, Discover Pass required), located on the island's western extremity. During World War II the Harbor Defense Command built a fort on the bluffs atop Point Partridge to help guard the area's military installations from attack by sea. A short trail leads to the battery's concrete platforms, bunkers and gun emplacements. The park also has two miles of hiking trails, a campground and a mile of beach at the base of steep bluffs. Lake Pondilla, near the main parking lot, is stocked with bass and beckons swimmers in summer. Look for eagle nests in the tall trees around the park.

NORTH WHIDBEY

The northern part of the island begins north of Penn Cove. **SAN DE FUCA** (pop. 200, alt. 20 ft.) is a scattered community at the junction of SR-20 and Penn Cove Road. In 1889 local developers proposed building a canal across the narrow neck of land between the west end of Penn Cove and Whidbey's west shore, to provide direct shipping access to the new community where a rail connection to the Great Northern line to Anacortes via a bridge across Deception Pass would create rise to a prosperous trading port. All this speculation created an actual town, but the bubble burst with the financial Panic of 1893.

Between San de Fuca and Oak Harbor we have a choice of several routes. Highway 20 is the fastest but **West Beach Road**, which branches north from Libbey Road ½ mile west of the junction of SR-20 and Madrona Drive, offers a pleasant drive along the island's west shore to Joseph Whidbey State Park (described under Oak Harbor). **Penn Cove Road** leads eastward along Penn Cove two miles to **PENN COVE PARK** (pop. 750, alt. 55 ft.), a residential community overlooking its namesake bay. The boat ramp at the western edge of town marks the site of **Monroes' Landing**, a pioneer wharf built by A. W. Monroe. Penn Cove Road continues east as Scenic Heights Road; curving north it reaches Oak Harbor in four miles.

OAK HARBOR (pop. 22,638, alt. 84 ft.), Whidbey Island's metropolis, faces its namesake bay. The first settlers arrived in 1849, naming the bay and the town that sprang up in the early 1850s for the beautiful Oregon white oaks common in the area.

Area landowners specialized in potato farming in the late 19th century, many renting their plots to Chinese tenant farmers. Anti-Chinese sentiment ran strong, however, and by the end of the 1800s they were run off the land.

Immigrants from the Netherlands settled here in the 1890s and early 1900s. Renowned for their horticultural expertise, they cleared the land and took up dairying and growing specialty crops. The city celebrates its Dutch heritage with the **Holland Happening Festival** (www.hollandhappening.org) the last weekend in April annually.



*Windmill in Oak Harbor's Windjammer Park
[Photo: Greater Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce]*

Oak Harbor remained a quiet backwater (its population did not reach 1,000 until 1950) until the Navy picked nearby Crescent Harbor as the site of a seaplane base in early 1941. In November of that year they also decided to build an air station on a level prairie north of Oak Harbor. The sites offered good flying weather and were strategic to other military installations in the region. Work on these projects accelerated after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Naval Air Station Whidbey Island has become the island's major employer, with staff of 6,000-7,000 uniformed personnel.

Old Town Oak Harbor, the location of the original settlement, extends along Pioneer Way facing the head of the bay. The one- and two-story buildings recall the early 1900s. Here you'll find a variety of specialty shops and boutiques. A fringe of parkland parallels the shore. **Smith Park**, a block north of Pioneer on Midway Blvd., has some beautiful old white oaks and a glacial erratic, a boulder deposited here during the Ice Age. **Holland Gardens**, between Fourth and Sixth on Ireland Street, has a blue and white windmill set amidst beds of flowers and shrubs.

Windjammer Park, near the junction of SR-20 and Pioneer Way, is Oak Harbor's largest municipal park and is also known as *City Beach*. Within its 28 acres are a sandy beach with a swimming lagoon and wading pool, walking paths, ball fields, tennis courts, an RV park and a full-scale replica of a Dutch windmill.

JOSEPH WHIDBEY STATE PARK (www.parks.wa.gov, Discover Pass required) is located three miles northwest of Oak Harbor via Swantown Road. The 112-acre day-use park features 3,100 feet of frontage on Whidbey's west shore, overlooking the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Park facilities include 2 miles of hiking trails and picnic sites. The park offers panoramic views across the Strait to the Olympic Mountains (30 miles to the southwest), the San Juan Islands and Vancouver Island. Smith Island, seven miles offshore, was first charted in 1791 by Spanish explorers, who called it and a neighboring rock *Islas de Bonilla*. A light warns shipping of the navigation hazard.

NAVAL AIR STATION WHIDBEY ISLAND is located at Ault Field, three miles north of Oak Harbor. The station is home for the Navy's electronic warfare squadrons and Pacific Meteorology and Oceanographic Detachment. The base also is a center for Navy and Marine Corps Reserve training. The former seaplane base, a mile east of Oak Harbor, currently has military family housing, a family services center, commissary and exchange. NAS Whidbey Island also operates an outlying field southeast of Coupeville, where pilots practice landings on a carrier deck. The base formerly hosted a popular annual air show, but this was discontinued because of heightened security after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. For base information, phone (360) 257-5641 - Web www.cnic.navy.mil/Whidbey.

Visitor Information: Greater Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce, 32630 SR 20, Oak Harbor, WA 98277. Phone (360) 675-3755 – Web www.oakharborchamber.org

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Boating

- **Oak Harbor Marina** has several charter operations. 1401 SE Catalina Drive – Phone (360) 279-4575 – Web www.whidbey.com/ohmarina

Drive-In Movies

- The **Blue Fox Drive-In**, 2 miles south of town via SR-20 to 1403 Monroe Landing Road, is one of just six remaining drive-in theaters in Washington State. Film season runs mid-June to Labor Day. Phone (360) 675-5667 – Web www.bluefoxdrivein.com

Golf

- **Gallery Golf Course**, 3065 N. Cowpens Rd., Naval Air Station Whidbey, is a semi-private 18 hole, par 72 course (open to active and retired military & their civilian guests). Phone (360) 257-2178
- **Lam's Links**, 585 W. Bucken Road near Deception Pass State Park, is a 9-hole, par-28 public short course. Mini golf is also available. Phone (360) 675-3412 – Web www.lamsgolfinks.com
- **Whidbey Island Golf and Country Club**, 1411 W. Fairway Lane, is an 18-hole, par-72 private course. Phone (360) 675-4546 – Web www.whidbeygolfandcc.com

Scuba Diving

- **Whidbey Island Dive Center**, 1020 NE Seventh Avenue #1, offers instructions, sales and dive trips. Phone (360) 675-1112 – Web www.whidbeydive.com

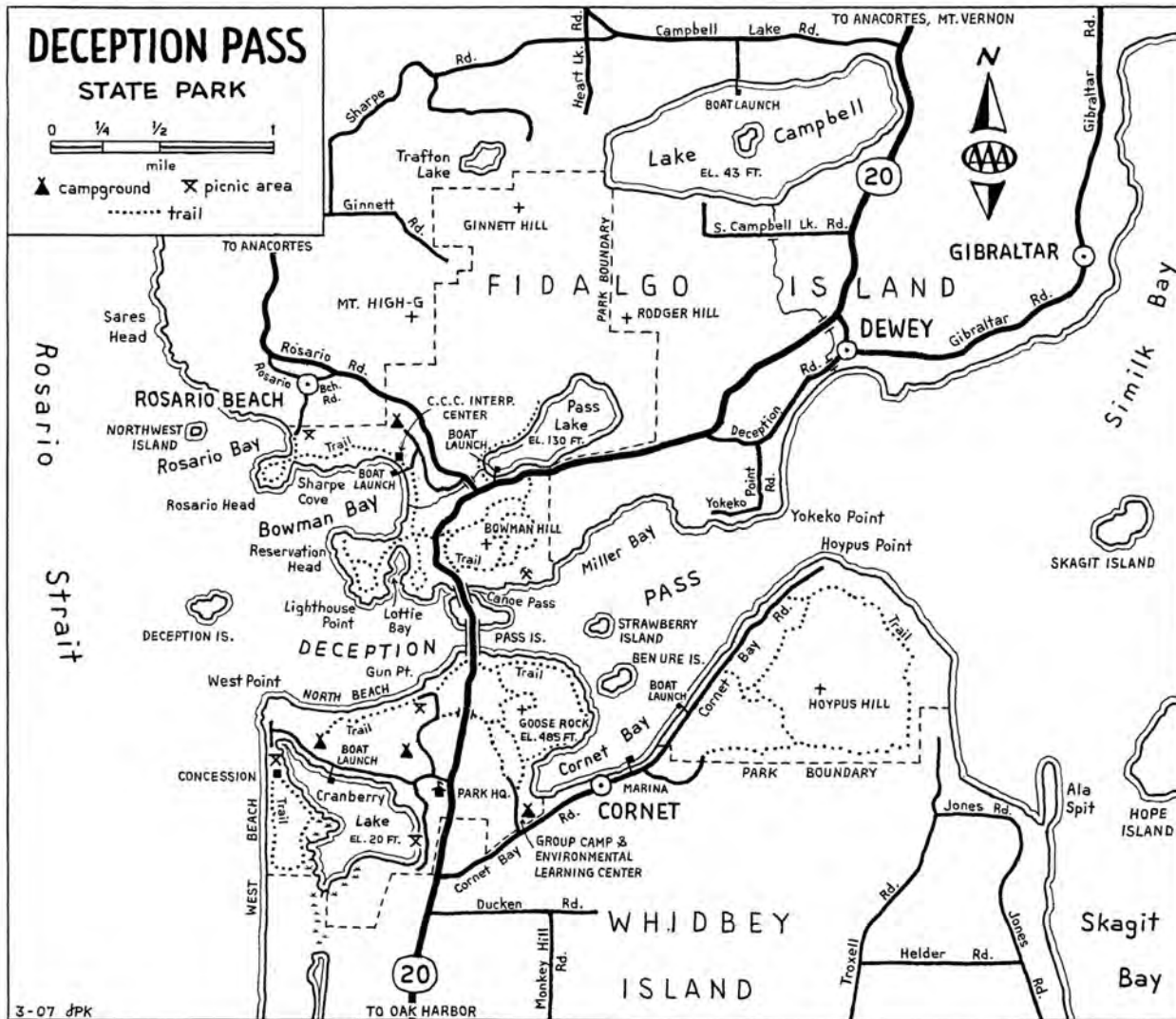
Swimming

- **John Vanderzicht Memorial Swimming Pool**, 85 SE Jerome Street, is open to the public at selected times daily. Phone for open swim schedule, (360) 675-7665 – Web www.oakharborpool.com

Highway 20 runs north from Oak Harbor, skirting the eastern edge of the Naval Air Station's Ault Field. Here the island reaches its greatest width – nine miles. The eastern lobe of North Whidbey is hilly, including the island's highest elevation (531 feet). Four miles north of Oak Harbor, SR-20 passes Dugualla Pond, a brackish inlet of Dugualla Bay, then skirts the northern part of the air station, finally turning north.

Forest closes in on the highway as we enter **DECEPTION PASS STATE PARK** (www.parks.wa.gov, Discover Pass required). One of the Evergreen State's scenic gems, this is Washington's most popular state park!

Within its 4,134 acres are freshwater lakes, tracts of forest, rocky hills, marshland, sand dunes and islands. Its 15 miles of saltwater shoreline range from cliffs with hidden coves and rocky headlands to tide flats and beaches of sand and gravel. There are more than 38 miles of hiking trails and six miles of equestrian trails. The park's namesake feature is the narrow, cliff lined channel separating the north end of Whidbey from Fidalgo Island.



The first European to see the area was Spanish navigator Manuel Quimper, who in 1790 named it *Boca de Flon*. After Joseph Whidbey navigated the channel from end to end in 1792, Captain Vancouver bestowed its present name, reflecting that he too had been “deceived” into believing the feature to be a bay.



Aerial View of Deception Pass, including the Bridge and State Park
 [Photo: Wikipedia]

The best view of the channel is from the landmark **Deception Pass Bridge** (parking area south of bridge – no Discover Pass needed here). Built in 1934-35, it spans its narrowest part.

The panorama is spectacular: 182 feet below, the waters pulse with a tidal ebb and flow that reaches 8 knots. Cliffs up to several hundred feet high, rising in a sheer face in places, flank the waterway. Their upper slopes alternate with grassy meadows and a dark, evergreen woodland of conifers and madrone. To the west the pass broadens into the open waters of Rosario Strait.

A monument, located at the south bridge parking lot describes the discovery and naming of Deception Pass and Whidbey Island. South of the bridge lies the park's main visitor area and campgrounds at Cranberry Lake, West Beach and North Beach. There is a marina at Cornet Bay.

Deception Pass Tours takes visitors on guided jet-drive catamaran trips through the scenic waterway. Trips depart hourly 11am-6pm from the marina on Cornet Bay from April through October. Admission (ticket booth at south bridge parking lot). Phone (888) 909-8687 – Web www.deceptionpasstours.com

North of the bridge, on Fidalgo Island, turn onto Rosario Road. Just beyond this junction a paved lane winds down to Bowman Bay. The **Civilian Conservation Corps Interpretive Center**, housed in a CCC-built stone structure, documents the labors of this Depression-era group in Washington's state park system. The center is open by appointment only Memorial Day through Labor Day. Phone (360) 675-2417 for details.

WHIDBEY ISLAND CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- FEBRUARY** (last full weekend) – **Langley Murder Mystery Weekend** – The whole town's a suspect every year!
- MARCH** (first full weekend) – **Penn Cove Mussel Fest** – shellfish celebration in Coupeville
- APRIL** (last weekend) – **Holland Happening Festival** – Oak Harbor's celebration of Dutch heritage
- JULY** (early-month) – **Freeland Fireworks Display** – Freeland Beach Park
- JULY 4** – **Oak Harbor Fourth of July Grand Parade** – includes carnival & fireworks show
- JULY** (weekend after 4th of July) – **Choocokham Arts Festival** – Langley's celebration of the arts, including street dances
- JULY** (late-month) – **Loganberry Festival** – Greenbank Farms hosts fair devoted to sustainable agriculture
- AUGUST** (second weekend) – **Coupeville Arts & Crafts Festival** – Whidbey's biggest festival with music, food & more
- AUGUST** (mid-month) – **Island County Fair** – Carnival, animals, music & food, Americana-style in Langley

Updated 7/19/2011 tm