

Mukilteo to Bellingham Auto Tour

Our **Mukilteo to Bellingham Auto Tour** traces a back-road itinerary, avoiding the main highways and hugging the shores of Puget Sound. En route we visit quiet villages like Warm Beach, Bayview and Edison, the bustling towns of Marysville and Stanwood, plus the popular tourist community of La Conner. We traverse an ever-changing landscape of forest and farmland, often within sight of saltwater. Recreation sites at Kayak Point, Barview and Larrabee State Park offer camping and picnic facilities.



Looking across Swinomish Channel to the picturesque fishing port of La Conner

TOTAL AUTO TOUR MILEAGE: 79
ESTIMATED DRIVING TIME: 2 hrs

Traffic is heaviest in the Everett and Bellingham areas. Elsewhere we're mostly on two-lane county roads with relatively light traffic. You'll need to watch some of the junctions and signing carefully. The Mukilteo to Bellingham Auto Tour is driveable year round. It's particularly delightful in spring when the flower fields in the lower Skagit Valley are in bloom; and during the fall foliage season.

Our auto tour begins at **MUKILTEO** (pop. 17,180, alt. 30 ft.) which climbs a hilly bluff overlooking Possession Sound. Its name is derived from a Native American word meaning "good camping ground." The frontier town, established originally at Point Elliott, briefly served as Snohomish County's seat in 1861. By 1877 Mukilteo boasted the first salmon cannery on Puget Sound. **Mukilteo State Park**, just south of the ferry landing, is a pleasant place for beachcombing and picnicking. Here in 1855 leaders of 22 Native American tribes signed the Point Elliott Treaty, relinquishing their land claims. The nearby **Mukilteo Lighthouse**, built in 1905, is open to visitors weekend afternoons.

In Mukilteo Fifth Street leads east from SR-525; passing the Everett city limits it becomes Mukilteo Boulevard and winds along the bluffs overlooking the sound.

EVERETT (pop. 86,730, alt. sea level to 450 ft.) is an important industrial city and port occupying a hilly peninsula framed by the Snohomish River and Port Gardner bay. Look for **Harborview Park** on the left; it offers a good panorama of the bay. Captain George Vancouver, exploring Northwest waters for the English crown, "discovered" the site of Everett, setting foot on the shore north of here in 1792. Eastern capitalists selected the deepwater harbor as a site for a major industrial center in the early 1890s. The Panic of 1893 dashed their dreams, but by 1900 Minnesota timber entrepreneur Frederick Weyerhaeuser had established a sawmill on the fledgling town's waterfront -- within a decade it became the world's largest. Labor disputes plagued the mills in the early 20th century, culminating in the Everett Massacre of November 5, 1916, when seven men were shot and an unknown number drowned.

Mukilteo Boulevard traverses **Forest Park**, the city's largest. Established in 1900, it features several miles of trails, playfields, picnic sites and a children's zoo. Leaving the park follow 41st Street to Rucker

Avenue and turn left -- Rucker leads to the central business district through a neighborhood of older residences. The downtown area has several buildings of interest -- the **Snohomish County Court House** (on Rockefeller between Wall and Pacific) was built in 1910 in the California mission style. The **Everett Theatre** (on Colby between Hewitt and Wall) dates from 1901. Another historic structure is the restored 1925-era **Monte Cristo Hotel**, on Wall between Colby and Hoyt. For an overview of the city's history visit the **Snohomish County Museum** (2817 Rockefeller Avenue).

Everett has pleasant residential neighborhoods overlooking the bay, Olympics and the Cascades. Timber barons owned many of the mansions lining Rucker and Grand avenues north of the downtown area. Most reflect the craftsman style of architecture popular in the early 1900s. **Grand Avenue Park** (between 16th and 19th streets) features a plaque commemorating Vancouver's landfall.

Everett's economy, once dependent on forest products, is today dominated by service industries, aerospace and the military. Boeing selected an abandoned air force base south of the city as the site for its 747 manufacturing plant in the mid-1960s. The **Boeing Tour Center**, on SR-526, offers weekday tours of its plant, including a visit to the world's largest volume building where 747, 767 and 777 aircraft are assembled.

From downtown follow Everett Avenue west, turn right on Marine View Drive (SR-529) which leads down to the waterfront, dominated by port works and the large **Naval Station Everett**, established in 1994. The base is home to several naval vessels including the aircraft carrier *U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln*. **Everett Marina Village**, just north of the base, has a collection of shops and eateries. Offshore lies **Jetty Island**, a wildlife refuge, home to seabirds and a colony of California sea lions -- Everett Parks Dept. operates a shuttle boat from the marina to the island during the summer.

Highway 529 runs north along the waterfront to the mouth of the Snohomish River. On the bluff above is **American Legion Park** (accessible by Avlerson Boulevard on your right). The park features the **Everett Area Arboretum**, a collection of native and exotic trees and plants. Just past the large riverside forest products plant, follow signs for northbound SR-529 (Broadway / Pacific Highway) -- this is the original route of US-99; it bridges the Snohomish River and its floodplain sloughs and islands.

MARYSVILLE (pop. 20,680, alt. 17 ft.) was founded as a trading post in 1877 on Ebey Slough. Early farmers drained and diked the rich floodplain, raising strawberries and dairy cattle. The town that grew up around the post was named for Marysville, California, home to two of the early settlers. Lumbering and boatbuilding became important local industries. Today Marysville is a fast-growing suburban city and a trading center. The city celebrates its agricultural roots with the annual Strawberry Festival each June. **Jennings Park**, north of SR-528 on Armar Road, preserves the 1884 **Gehl House**, constructed of hand-hewn cedar. The park also has a seasonal petting zoo and the Washington State University extension service demonstration garden.



Map 1: Southern Section of Auto Tour: Mukilteo - Stanwood.
Descriptive text follows auto tour from south to north.

From downtown Marysville head west on Fourth Avenue. After crossing beneath Interstate 5, this road curves into Marine Drive (also known as Tulalip Road). The land west of the freeway constitutes the **Tulalip Indian Reservation**. Established in 1859, it covers nearly 22,500 acres and features a tribal center, fish hatchery, golf course and marina. The **Tulalip Casino**, just west of the freeway on your right, attracts those seeking favors from Lady Luck, offering blackjack, craps, poker and roulette.

Our Auto Tour route traverses the reservation, a half-mile or so inland from the shore. Several real estate developments line Possession Sound which you can glimpse occasionally through thickets of alder and cedar. In the **Mission Beach Cemetery** lies the grave of Chief Patkanim, one of the signatories of the 1855 Point Elliott Treaty. Most of the beaches along the Tulaip shore have no public access and roughly half of the area within the reservation boundary is off-limits to non-Indians.

Just north of the reservation boundary lies **Kayak Point County Park**, with a wide range of recreation activities, including beachcombing, swimming, picnicking, camping, fishing, hiking and golf.

Watch your junctions approaching **WARM BEACH** (pop. about 400, alt. 20 ft.), a residential community of vacation homes. Views stretch west across Port Susan to Camano Island. Six miles inland, **Wenberg State Park** on Lake Goodwin, offers fishing, boating and warmer fresh water for swimming.

North of Warm Beach our route crosses the delta of the Stillaguamish River, a rich farmland settled in the late 19th century largely by Norwegians. **STANWOOD** (pop. 3,380, alt. 6 ft.) dates from the establishment of a general store on the banks of the Stillaguamish in 1877. First called Centerville, the settlement prospered as a logging and trading center for the surrounding farms. Peas grown in the district are renowned for their tenderness, said to be the result of the long but cool growing season coupled with proximity to saltwater.

The arrival of the Great Northern Railroad in the late 1800s precipitated a split in the community evident to this day in its two business districts. The G.N. built its depot a full mile east of the riverside town. A small community known as East Stanwood grew up around the station. So critical was a rail connection

that business interests in Stanwood proper funded a narrow gauge link to the mainline in East Stanwood. This short line, which operated until 1938, was known as "The World's Shortest Railroad." To learn more about Stanwood stop by the **D.O. Pearson House Museum**, located 2 blocks north of SR-532 on 102nd Avenue NW (open limited hours).

Camano Island Sidetrip

From Stanwood Highway 532 leads west -- after bridging the narrow channel of Davis Slough we enter **CAMANO ISLAND**. In 1841 the Wilkes Expedition charted this long, wooded island, naming it 'McDonough' for a master commandant who distinguished himself in the War of 1812. Later, Kellet, charting for the British Admiralty, restored many of the place names given by the Spanish who had explored the area in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Kellet's map of 1847 bestowed the name 'Camano' in honor of the Spaniard don Jacinto Caamaño.

The island has many vacation and summer homes. The quiet village of **UTSALADDY** (pop. about 200, alt. 30 ft.) was a bustling logging and boatbuilding town in the 1860s. Its Native American name means "many berries." Ten miles south on the island's west shore, **Camano Island State Park** offers great beachcombing, picnicking, hiking and camping. The view stretches across Saratoga Passage to Whidbey Island. Politically, Camano, together with Whidbey, form Island County -- although because of its proximity and ease of access Camano enjoys closer commercial ties with mainland Stanwood and Snohomish County.

Return to Stanwood.

Resuming our main Auto Tour route, at Stanwood proceed north on Pioneer Highway (accessible from SR-532 just west of the railroad tracks). The highway runs through rich farmland with distant views of Skagit Bay off to the west. Farther north the railroad embankment hides the tangle of marsh and riparian woodland that extends across the delta of the Skagit River. The farming community of **CONWAY** (pop. about 190, alt. 5 ft.), is dominated by the white steeple of its Lutheran Church (1916). The old business district has several interesting second-hand/antique shops. Note that most of the older homes in the area sit atop substantial basement foundations -- flooding is a perennial problem in this low-lying district. At the north end of town turn west (left) on Fir Island Road.



Map 2: Northern Section of Auto Tour: Stanwood - Bellingham

The highway bridges Skagit River and enters **FIR ISLAND**, which lies between two deltaic arms of the Skagit. The alluvial soils are highly fertile -- island farms raise corn, peas, broccoli, cauliflower and other vegetables (roadside signs identify the crops). In season you'll pass several produce stands on the roadside. The **Skagit Wildlife Area**, one mile south on Mann Road, protects the wintering grounds of over 35,000 Siberian snowgeese. The best viewing time is from mid-January into late April, especially when high tides at the saltwater end of the delta drive the geese off the distant tideflats into the fields. A magnificent wildlife spectacle occurs when the snowgeese depart en masse for their Siberian summering grounds on Wrangell Island. They leave over a 24-hour period that always falls between April 17th and May 5th.

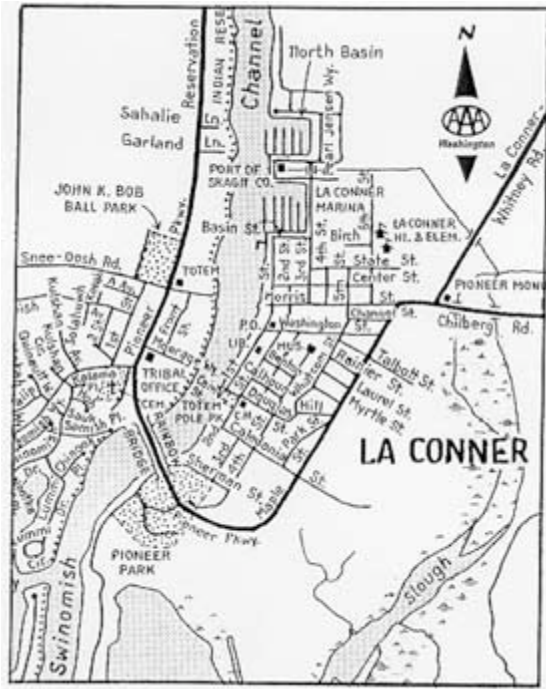
After crossing the north branch of the Skagit River, our route climbs a low ridge. From this modest height a sweeping view extends north across the checkerboard pattern of farmland of the lower Skagit River Valley to the snowcapped Cascades. In clear weather the 10,778-foot dome of Mount Baker, with its permanent crown of snow and ice, dominates the horizon.

The highway drops back to the valley floor -- watch for the junction with Chilberg Road -- turn west (left). Chilberg runs between farm fields to historic **LA CONNER** (pop. 800, alt. 20 ft., one of the most popular getaway destinations in northwest Washington. This picturesque fishing port dates back to the founding of a trading post in 1868. J.S. Conner purchased the store in 1870 and named the settlement for his wife, (L)ouisa (A)nne. In the late 19th century dikes and drainage works transformed the boggy marshlands of the nearby Skagit Flats, a popular name for the floodplain, into fertile farmland. Hops and oats were early boom crops that made La Conner an important trading center and port.

Streets in the town's compact business district along Swinomish Channel offer dozens of interesting shops, boutiques and galleries. Some of the buildings date back to the late 1800s. Visitors enjoy the

cozy cafes and historic accommodations. Lodgings range from bed and breakfasts and country inns to a turn-of-the-century hotel.

Attractions include the **Skagit County Historical Museum** (501 S. Fourth Street); the **Gaches Mansion** (2nd and Calhoun) featuring Victorian period furnishings and the **La Conner Quilt Museum**. The **Museum of Northwest Art** (downtown at 121 S. First) showcases works by Northwest artists. Nearby is the see-through-the-window display of the **Fireman's Museum**.



Map 3: La Conner Area

The town's oldest structure is **Magnus Anderson's Cabin**, located beside Town Hall at Second and Commercial. The Swedish immigrant built this cabin in 1869. **Tillinghast Seed Company** (on Morris east of Sixth) is the Northwest's oldest continuously operating seed store, established in 1885. Boat charters for fishing or sightseeing are available along the waterfront or at the large marina on the north side of town. **Pioneer Park**, at the south end of town, offers picnicking, fishing and camping. From the park the **Rainbow Bridge** leads across Swinomish Channel, providing a picture post card view of La Conner's waterfront with Mount Baker in the background. The land on the west side of the channel is part of the **Swinomish Indian Reservation**, established in 1855.

Back at the eastern edge of town, take the Whitney-La Conner Road -- this runs north across flat farming country. Watch for bicyclists along these narrow roads. The Skagit Flats is one of North America's major commercial bulb-growing areas. Fields of daffodils bloom in March, tulips flower in mid- to late April while iris hold sway in early May. A number of bulb growers have established display gardens showcasing blossoms throughout the long growing season. In April the area hosts the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival (during the festival traffic on area roads can be heavy, especially on weekends).

After crossing busy Highway 20 (traffic signal) our Auto Tour route jogs to follow the shore of Padilla Bay. The Spanish explorer Francisco de Eliza named this bay *Seno de Padilla* in 1791, honoring the viceroy of Mexico. The open waters of the bay and its fringe of tideflats have been set aside as a national estuarine preserve to protect the varied wildlife habitats. The hamlet of **BAYVIEW** (pop. about

200, alt. 25 ft.), platted in 1884, overlooks the bay. Across the bay you can see the storage tanks of the oil refineries on March Point. Just north of town is **Bay View State Park**, a popular recreation area since the late 19th century. The park offers beach access and camping. Just up the road the **Breazeale Interpretive Center** features displays of the area's natural history and the nearby national estuarine preserve. Nature trails loop through a meadow and down to the beach.

Our auto tour route continues north; crossing a wooded ridge, we drop back down to flat farming country, cross the meandering Samish River, then zigzag into the village of **EDISON** (pop. 300, alt. 3 ft.). Founded in 1876, its name recalls inventor Thomas Alva Edison. The large Lutheran church and orderly frame homes set in well-tended lawns reflect the town's Scandinavian heritage.

Just east of town our route joins Highway 11, known as Chuckanut Drive -- turn left (north). This road runs a few miles north across the table-top flat floodplain of the Samish, then winds along the rocky shore of Samish Bay at the base of Chuckanut Mountain. One of the Northwest's loveliest drives, it offers an everchanging panorama of saltwater bays and the wooded San Juan Islands offshore -- there are several roadside pullouts. In places a dense forest arches over the roadway. In fall maples and alders blaze with color. Chuckanut Drive was part of the original Pacific Highway, the West's main north-south arterial. In 1926 it was designated as US-99. The Burlington Northern & Santa Fe mainline between Seattle and Vancouver, BC winds along the shore below the roadway.

Larrabee State Park, donated to the state in 1915, is Washington's oldest. It covers more than 2,500 acres, extending from the rocky shores high up the slopes of Chuckanut Mountain. Facilities include a boat launch, picnic sites, camping, several freshwater lakes and over eight miles of hiking trails -- one, the Interurban Trail, follows an abandoned railroad right-of-way north to Bellingham. A narrow gravel road climbs 3*-miles to the 1,900-foot summit of Chuckanut Mountain where views extend north to Bellingham and out across the island-studded bay.

North of the park Highway 11 skirts Chuckanut Bay, first named *Puerto del Socorro* (Port of Help) by Eliza in 1791. Expensive homes dot the headland guarding the northern edge of the bay -- soon we are in **BELLINGHAM**, metropolis of northwest Washington (pop. 64,100, alt. sea level to 800 ft.). The southern section of the city was once the separate and thriving municipality of **Fairhaven**, founded in 1883. Its substantial brick buildings now house shops, boutiques and cafes recalling an early 20th century ambiance. This area has been declared a National Historic District. The **Bellingham Cruise Terminal**, at the foot of Harris Avenue, is the southern terminus of the Alaska Marine Highway ferry service to Ketchikan, Juneau and other ports in the Alaska panhandle. Passenger boat service is also available to the San Juan Islands and Victoria, BC.

From Fairhaven continue north on 11th street, which becomes S. State Street -- this leads to Bellingham proper which lies beyond the forested ridge to the north. The city was formed by the 1903 consolidation of four adjacent communities -- Fairhaven, Bellingham (first called Unionville), New Whatcom (Sehome) and Whatcom. The new city took the name of the bay, which was in turn named by Vancouver's 1792 expedition for Sir William Bellingham, a controller in the British Navy who had personally checked Captain Vancouver's supplies prior to embarkation from England. The city's somewhat confusing street grid system is the result of the piecing together of these separate towns.

Bellingham's central business district rises behind the docks at the head of the bay. A left turn on Holly will take you into the heart of the downtown area. Among the sights are the **Mount Baker Theatre** (106 N. Commercial St.), a 1926 movie palace with an Art-deco Moorish interior and the original pipe organ that provided accompaniment to silent films; the **Whatcom Museum of History and Art** (121 Prospect St.), a 1892 brick masterpiece that served as city hall until 1962. The **Maritime Heritage Center** (1600 "C" St.) occupies the site of an 1852 sawmill. Several blocks of Holly St., between Commercial and Central, feature a collection of antique and second-hand shops, great for browsing. There's a **Farmers Market** (Saturdays, April through October) at Railroad and Chestnut.

Bellingham has an impressive collection of Victorian and craftsman-style homes, particularly in the residential neighborhoods to the south and north of the downtown area. **Eldridge**, on the near-north side, is a National Historic District noted for its concentration of stately mansions. The 1906 **Roeder Home** (2600 Sunset Dr.) is open to the public. **Squalicum Harbor**, at the north end of the waterfront below Eldridge, is a large marina with some shops, eateries and a 2*-mile promenade. Here you can catch a fishing or whale-watching charter.

The campus of **Western Washington University** occupies a wooded site on Sehome Hill, south of town. Established in 1893 as Washington State Normal School, the campus is noted for its **Outdoor Sculpture Collection** (descriptive brochure available at several venues). **Old Main**, an ivy-covered Greek Revival building erected in 1896, still houses the university's administrative offices. **Sehome Hill Arboretum** crowns the heights east of campus. Trails lead through native forest to viewpoints overlooking the city and bay. Mount Baker dominates the eastern horizon while the jagged peaks of southern British Columbia lie off to the north.

Newer sections of Bellingham sprawl to the north and east. Lakeway Drive leads east to **Whatcom Falls Park**, with hiking trails, a fish hatchery and a wide range of recreation sites. Electric Avenue branches off Lakeway to **Bloedel Donovan Park** at the western end of Lake Whatcom, a scenic gem framed by forested hills.