

Victoria Routes

James Bay

There are two main ways out of James Bay – downtown or around Beacon Hill Park.

I can go downtown by riding north along Menzies or Government to the Legislature, and along Government and Wharf along the Inner Harbour. I could go north along Douglas or Blanshard, but I never do. Both are heavily travelled. Douglas has a lot of buses and trucks, and it becomes a highway west to Colwood and Langford. It has a paved shoulder and bike lane, but the traffic on the entrance and exit ramps is significant. Blanshard runs up to Saanich and Swartz Bay. It has bike lanes, and significant traffic.

Mainly, I cross downtown on Wharf along the harbour and use the Johnson Street Bridge. That is the start of the Galloping Goose Trail, and the entry point for Esquimalt Road or Tyee and Craigflower, the main streets running through Esquimalt. Esquimalt is a peninsula bounded on the east by the Gorge, the south by Victoria Harbour, and the west by Esquimalt Harbour. There are bridges across the Gorge at Tillicum and Admiral's Road, permitting an exit to the north east into Saanich. The Island Highway runs northwest in View Royal and Langford, and then turns and heads southwest to Colwood.

I also can go north on Fort Street, which has a bike lane. It connects to Oak Bay and runs east out to Beach, or carries on and becomes Cadboro Bay. There is also an option of heading up Richmond, which leads out towards U Vic.

The second main way out of James Bay is by going east along Dallas. At 1 k., I reach Douglas on the west side of Beacon Hill. At 2 k., I reach Cook, the east side of the park. That first k. is a climb, but the second k. is fast. Dallas continues until it runs into Hollywood Crescent and Crescent Drive, which also follow the water's edge along the Strait. The traffic along Dallas is steady. The worst feature, going west to east is a few sections where cars park at an angle facing the Strait. The drivers have little vision and can back into oncoming traffic.

There is a 5 k. loop around James Bay on Belleville along the Harbour on the north, the streets at the west end, Dallas on the south, and Douglas on the east. There is a longer loop around Beacon Hill Park by Cook Street, and some loops in the park. These are usually safe in the evening but the traffic on Sundays is murderous between tourists and middle-aged women taking elderly parents for a stroll.

Short Routes

VCKC

The Victoria Canoe & Kayak Club is on Gorge Road just past Tillicum. My best route is through downtown, over the Johnson Street Bridge, along the Galloping Goose to the park at the West Victoria Y, near the Selkirk Trestle. At that point it's off the trail through the park to Craigflower and then on Selkirk, a side street that runs parallel to Craigflower, all the way to Tillicum. At that point a right turn onto Tillicum, across the bridge, a left turn onto Gorge Road and that's it. 6.8 k one way, mainly off the main roads.

Mount Douglas

The University of Victoria campus, near Gordon Head is one major way point, and Mount Douglas and the park around it are another. Both are generally north and east of James Bay and down Victoria.

The most direct route to Mount Douglas, bypassing U Vic and Gordon Head, is straight up Cook Street, until it branches onto Cedar Hill. Cedar Hill turns into Shelbourne near the Park. Shelbourne turns into the Cordova Bay Road at the edge of the Park. Cook is heavily travelled by Victoria standards, but wide and generally 4 lanes. There are some sharp climbs on Cook and some really steep ones along Cedar Hill. The surface is good. Other routes to Mt. D. start along the Strait. Along Crescent, at about 5 k, I can turn north on Foul Bay Road. I can take a brief jog on Oak Bay, then continue along Richmond past the Royal Jubilee Hospital ground and ride north to the Cedar Hill Cross (X) Road. A short jog on the X Road takes me to Shelbourne or to Cedar Hill, and then north to the Park. Again, this approach bypasses U Vic.

Typically I stay on Foul Bay until it branches on Cadboro Bay Road, near the Hospital, or on Foul Bay. Either way, there is a long steady climb, about 1 k., to Lansdowne. Along Cadboro Bay, that brings me to the Uplands Golf Course. Along Foul Bay it's the main campus of Camosun College. Both routes reach the Cedar Hill Cross Road, which skirts the southern edge of the U Vic campus. I can pass U Vic on Cadboro Bay and continue to Gordon Head, or go through or around the campus 3 or 4 different ways.

If I stay on Cadboro Bay, it runs into Arbutus, which runs into Ferndale. If go through or around U Vic, I can go by Finnerty or Gordon Head Road to Arbutus and/or Ferndale. Ferndale become Grandview, and Grandview become Ash, running to the edge of Mount Douglas Park where it becomes Cordova Bay Road. The different routes mean slightly different scenery, and slightly different distances and climbs. The roads are good, not too heavily traveled except for the east end of McKenzie, which I usually avoid. There is fast straight downhill on Ash, which gets tricky if a slow car turns out of driveway or side street. I can also stay on Crescent Drive instead of turning at Foul Bay, continue up and over King George Terrace and then along Beach until it connects with Cadboro Bay Road near U Vic - which continues as I described above.

Regardless of route, I come out on Cordova Bay Road at the south east edge of the park and run along the base of Mount Douglas through some older Douglas firs. The road is heavily traveled, but it has a bike lane. At the north end of the park, Cedar Hill reaches an intersection. I can make sharp left and head south up Blenkinsop and hook up with Cook. I make soft left onto Royal Oak, or I can make a soft right and proceed on Cordova Bay. The main routes back are by Blenkinsop or Cedar Hill to Cook. Another direct return takes a short stretch on Royal Oak, and then diagonally across Saanich on the Lochside trail. This is mainly gravel from Royal Oak to McKenzie and Quadra.

Uplands and Oak Bay

I can add variations to the ride to Mt. D. by taking cross streets between Beach, Foul Bay, and Cook, including Richardson and Oak Bay, and Lansdowne. I can also stay in Oak Bay and the north east part of Victoria and make some climbs and loops. On Rockwood, I can make a quick run to Cook or Blanshard and the edge of downtown. Lansdowne involves the same climb from the water to Uplands Golf Course and Camosun, from a different direction. Instead of turning off Lansdowne for U Vic, I can follow Lansdowne, which becomes Hillside and then turn on Cook, or stay on Hillside and follow it as it become Gorge Road. Lansdowne and Hillside are heavily traveled, as they pass some shopping malls.

Gallopig Goose and Lochside Trails

The trails start at the Johnson Street bridge and runs on the Esquimalt shore to the Portage trestle, then in a cut west of Douglas Street out as far as Mayfair, and it crosses Douglas via the Swing bridge. At the northeast end of the swing bridge, it forks into the Lochside and Gallopig Goose trails. The first part is paved, except for a gravel patch under the Bay Street

Bridge, and level, with a climb up the Swing Bridge. It has several road crossings. It tends to twist, and it has a mixture of slow and fast cyclists, pedestrians, skateboard, bladers, dogs and children.

Lochside runs diagonally north and east toward Mount Douglas. The Lochside is mainly paved out past McKenzie Avenue, then continues as a mix of gravel trails, asphalt streets and gravel roads out as far as Island View, where it become a trail. It's a straight route - about 11.5 k to get even with Mt. Douglas, 12 k to Royal Oak, 19.5 k to Mitchell's Farm at Island View. After Island View, it is a combination of following Lochside Drive with a trail along Highway 17, and some streets through Sidney. It has wooden trestle bridges at Swan Lake and Blenkinsop lake. The gravel is good - depending on traffic and grade. There is some loose gravel and dirt on a working farm south of Island View, but that can be avoided. There is loop through Hunt Valley which adds about 2.5 k each way. I can turn off the trail just north Lochside Park by turning right on Sayward or Dooley and following Hunt Road, Welch and Martindale, coming back to the trail near Mitchell's Farm at Island View. The Hunt Valley part is pebbled asphalt with some climbs but some nice downhills, and lovely views. It is not hard to hold 24-26 k on the gravel.

The Galloping Goose runs north and west on the east side of Douglas out to Colwood, then follows the Island Highway and Happly Valley south through Langford and Metchosin, and then runs west to Sooke. It's paved along Douglas into View Royal, gravel for most of the distance. It has long stretches without road crossings. Some of the road crossings are at the bottom of hills, so it's tempting to blast across to get a run up the other side. The gravel is dusty and loose in places. It's better in the spring, before the road bed dries out, or after a light rain. Some sections develop puddles after rain. The traffic is variable, as it passes through suburbs. I have to ride out past Royal Roads to Langford to get a 40 k round trip.

Long Routes

A ride to Sidney and back from James Bay would be about a 70 k ride on the Lochside trail or by way of Blanshard & Highway 17. I can turn it into a century by going to Oak Bay and out to Mt. Douglas first, then crossing to West Saanich Road and meandering across rural Saanich around the airport, or out around Deep Cove or Swartz Bay before riding to Sidney.

On July 15, 2007 I started with the outbound part of the Mt Douglas ride. Second leg: Brentwood Bay by Royal Oak & W. Saanich Rd. Third leg: Sidney by Stelly's X, E. Saanich Rd., Mount Newton X, Lochside. Break: at 47 k., Serious Coffee in Sidney. Fourth leg: Brentwood Bay by Lochside, Mt Newton X, E. Saanich Rd, Wallace. Fifth leg: east again by Keating X to Oldfield, south to Brookleigh (N end of Elk and Beaver Lake) east to the Pat Bay Hy, south on the shoulder. Sixth leg: Royal Oak to W. Saanich, Markham and the Camosun campus to the Interurban, south to Burnside. Then I had a short stretch on the Goose, out Cloverdale to Cook, down to Dallas. 90k. Finish: Loops around Beacon Hill (busy on Sunday) and James Bay.

On August 6, 2007, I tried a route that started with the outbound part of the typical Mt. Douglas ride. Second leg: Royal Oak to W. Saanich Road, and out to Brentwood Bay. Third leg: Wallace to Saanichton, E. Saanich Rd to Willingdon, around the airport. Mills, Beacon, to Sidney. Break at 50 k at Serious Coffee in Sidney. Fourth leg - South: Lochside along Bazan Bay to Mt Newton X. Central Saanich, (Keating X) and Oldfield to Brookleigh. Pat Bay Hy. (shoulder) to Royal Oak, W. Saanich to Markham, Camosun, Interurban, W. Burnside, down to Douglas. Fifth leg - south and east: Galloping Goose to the Gorge. Gorge Road, Hillside, Lansdown to Foul Bay Rd. Finish: waterfront to Cook, up to Cook Street Village, loop on Oxford and Moss back to Dallas, past Ogden Point. Montreal, Niagara and Boyd.

Another option of getting a century would be Mount Douglas, Royal Oak, and then West Saanich all the way to Deep Cove, around Swartz Bay, and then back into Sidney, etc.