



West Coast Discoveries

First Place Amory Adventure Award Winners

BY THE 1ST PORT MOODY VENTURER COMPANY

The West Coast Trail is a world renowned trail known for its beauty, challenge to hikers, and richness of historical value. Winding for approximately 100 km through forests, bogs, beaches and other interesting terrain, there are many rivers and streams, some requiring a cable car to cross. Two sections use a ferry to cross the rivers. For some portions, you are required to walk along the beach trail, carefully timed according to the tides.

The Juan de Fuca Trail, although a lesser known trail, is also a very scenic trail, which many consider an even greater challenge than the West Coast Trail. It's 47 km long, located in the Juan de Fuca Provincial Park.

As a very camping-oriented Venturer company, we saw both trails as the perfect way to challenge our own abilities.

Discovering the West Coast Trail

June 24th, 2009

This was it. Today we would finally be leaving for the West Coast Trail (WCT).

Before we could start our backpacking adventure, over the next two days we traveled by ferry and car to reach the WCT orientation in a log cabin near the trail-head. The park ranger went over all the features of the trail, and the safety procedures when dealing with wild animals.

On June 26, we started off strong — all our training had paid off. Up the ladders we climbed, gaining elevation quickly, and then suddenly dropping down. The trail wound its way through the great forest, past giant red cedar trees and small sword ferns and salal that lined the path. We marveled at the scenery during the rest of the trail, passing bleached rocks and tidal pools when we walked along the beach. Eventually, after a long day, we reached Tsocowis Creek to camp.

The next day was supposed to be our longest day: 20k, and to make matters worse, we had to make it to Nitinat River before 4:00 to catch the last ferry of the day. Keeping that in mind, we set off, climbing ladders and crossing boardwalk bridges. Along the way, we came across our first cable car — a metal cart pulled on a cable over a river with two people in it. We quickly got the hang of it, and were across the river in no time. Reaching the ferry at the last possible moment it began to pour rain. Donning our rain gear, we made the final trek to our camp. Arriving at the Cheewat Campsite, we set up tents, ate both lunch and dinner and went to bed early.

June 28 was a day of beach walking. In the past, walking on the beach had proved difficult with its loose sand but the sand was hard packed.

"That beach walk was the most beautiful thing that I've ever seen so far on the trail. The waves lapped on the rocks as lone trees grew out of boulders in the sand. It was a perfect sample of West Coast beauty" - Cam

Kevin, one of the adults joining us on the hike, took a nasty fall on one of the rocky beaches. This injury would dog him through the entire hike. As per our contingency plan, we redistributed and took as much of his pack weight as possible. Pushing on, at one point we had to move from boulder to boulder to avoid the advancing tide. We finally made it to the campsite, but we had to wade through knee deep water to get to it. Such a memorable day!

On the fourth day, we began the day on a classic inland trail — lots of mud, roots and ladders. Our previous days were beginning to take its toll on many in our group, so we were slower. After climbing 4-5 ladders, we crossed an elaborate suspension bridge. To get to the cable car that crossed a river, we had to climb down seven ladders and up eight! Then we came to a river where the bridge was washed away. After some scrambling across the rocks, we stopped for lunch. The rest of the hike was long, very muddy and rough but we finally made it to our campsite.

Photos courtesy of the 1st Port Moody Venturer Company

"Tomorrow we should finish the West Coast Trail – although it makes me sad, since I've really enjoyed this trail" - Daniel

If all went well, the fifth day would be our last day on the WCT. With that in our minds, we packed up and were on the trail very quickly. We crossed the last cable car, and were on our way. At one point, we reached the highest point of the trail (240 metres above sea level). Fuelled by the notion we were almost done, we soon found ourselves reaching the final marker. It was a huge relief, and we all felt so proud! Checking the GPS, we were surprised to find that the trail was really not 75km, but almost 100km! A park ranger later confirmed that the markers were quite inaccurate (the last measurements were made by a man with a pedometer in the 1940's!). That explained the stretches of kilometres that felt more like two!

Tired but happy we went to bed. We had completed the West Coast Trail, but the Juan de Fuca Trail was still ahead.

Discovering the Juan de Fuca Trail

It seemed fitting that July 1, Canada Day, would be spent enjoying the wilderness of our country. After hiking the 10 km between the two trails, we met up with Andrew and Earl. Scouter Earl, along with Andrew, a 3rd year Scout, would be joining us to complete Andrew's Chief Scout challenge. Kevin (who had decided to head home because of his injury) and Cam, who decided not to continue on the Juan de Fuca Trail (JDF) said their goodbyes.

We started the trail late, just before 7 pm. We only hiked 7 km due to how late it was, but got a chance to see the views of the sunset over the water. Arriving at our



inland campsite, we went to sleep — tired, exhausted, but filled with anticipation — our hike across the JDF had begun. *"It feels great to have finished the West Coast Trail. It certainly was quite a journey in itself. I can't wait to see what the Juan de Fuca will be like!" - Todd*

July 2nd began our first full day of hiking the JDF Trail. Knowing that this was the second leg of our journey gave us newfound strength and we were able to push ourselves. Just as we were finishing our lunch on Sombrio Beach, Nathan said, "Look! A dog... oh no wait, BEAR!" We all looked and realized that there was a mother bear and her two cubs less than 20m away from us. Luckily, they paid little attention to us, but we knew what to do. We slowly moved away, remained calm, and the bears passed right by us. *"Seeing the bears was certainly an adrenaline rush! I was so surprised, but it was really neat to see them so close. I'll definitely remember all the wildlife I've seen on this trail" - Nathan*

Pushing ourselves, we arrived at China Beach and went straight to bed, tired from the long day.

Today was probably one of the hardest days of the JDF. After breakfast, we set off for Bear Beach. The trail was very steep, with multiple switchbacks and hills along the coast. We passed numerous suspension bridges providing great views of the ocean below. After a great night by the warm fire, we all headed to sleep, preparing for our final day tomorrow.

"I am both happy and sad to be almost finished the hike. I've really come to like being out here." - Todd

It was the last day and home was in sight. We hastily ate our breakfast, packed our things, and were on the trail fairly early. The morning fog rolled in, creating a pretty, surreal atmosphere. We pushed hard and grew even more eager each time we saw the kilometre marker 9km, 8km, 7km, 6km... Finally, the end of our nine day journey came into view with the 0km marker. Like a weight had been lifted off our shoulders, we all sat down and relaxed, waiting for our advisors to bring the car.

In hindsight, we should have allowed more time to fully experience the trails, however we had accomplished our goal. Sitting there, we radiated pride — we had completed the West Coast and Juan de Fuca Trails. This was a trip of epic proportions to treasure for the rest of our lives. ✕
1st Port Moody Venturer Company

*Mark Pickell (16)
Nathan Lister (15)
Daniel Shearer (15)
Todd Pickell (14)
Cameron Ward (16)*

