

THE HOWE SOUND CREST TRAIL CYPRESS PROVINCIAL PARK



This hike offers spectacular views of the famed rocky outcroppings known as the 'Lions', Howe Sound and an expanse of the Coastal Mountain Range. The 30 km trail stretches north from Cypress Bowl in Cypress Provincial Park to Highway 99, just south of Porteau Cove Provincial Park on Howe Sound. Shorter day trips from either end also offer beautiful scenery. Cypress Park is accessed from the Upper Levels Highway in West Vancouver and Highway 99, near Porteau Cove, 22 km north of Horseshoe Bay.

Please treat this spectacular area with respect by staying on marked trails, taking care not to disturb plants and animals and packing out all your garbage. Open fires are not permitted. Thank you.

This is a summer use only trail, as several areas pose a high winter avalanche danger. Snow free season generally starts mid-July and ends mid-October. Access during the rest of the year is not recommended. Steep and rocky areas along the ridges require extra caution, particularly in wet or foggy weather. The trail is well marked with orange flagging, orange metal markers and orange paint on rocks throughout most of its length. There is one section between the Lions and Brunswick Lake that can be challenging. Later in the season, sources of drinking water can be very limited so be sure to carry an adequate supply. Be aware of natural hazards along the trail.

From Cypress Parking Lot, the trail rises 600m to the highest point of the route at 1542m along Unnecessary Ridge to the base of the Lions. Continuing north, the trail climbs and descends several times, passing several alpine lakes before descending to sea level near Porteau Cove.

Below is a section-by-section description of the trail. Distances are described as one way, as are the suggested northbound hiking times.

Southbound hiking times from Highway 99 to the Brunswick Mountain Trail should be doubled due to the uphill grade.



Trailhead in Cypress Park to Strachan Meadows

2.64 Kilometres - 3/4 hour

This first section offers good photo opportunities at Lions View Lookout. A short side trail to the west leads to the Bowen Island Lookout and provides a glimpse of Howe Sound.

Strachan Meadows to St. Marks Summit

2.85 kilometres (5.48 kilometres total)

1 1/4 hours (2 hours total)

Along this section, the trail climbs 275m to the summit of St. Marks Mountain. Try the short jaunt to the west for an expansive view of Howe Sound.

St. Marks Summit to Unnecessary Mountain (South Peak)

2.93 kilometres (8.41 Kilometres total)

1 1/2 hours (3 1/2 hours total)

The developed trail continues a short distance down the north side of St. Marks Mountain. Beyond this point the trail is undeveloped, but flagging marks the next section - a fairly steep climb of 200m to the ridge of Unnecessary Mountain. Once on the ridge, the route narrows and the trail is easy to follow. Watch for flagging and remember to stay on the ridge.

Unnecessary Mountain (South Peak) to Base of the West Lion

2.06 kilometres (10.47 kilometres total)

1 1/2 hours (5 hours total)

Allow yourself time to enjoy the spectacular scenery but watch your footing. Often the trail becomes braided, so please stay on the flagged route to prevent further damage to the subalpine. Just past the South Peak of Unnecessary Mountain, a trail from Lions Bay to the west links up with the Howe Sound Crest Trail. Be sure to continue on the ridge. The trail then descends the north side of Unnecessary Mountain and leads on towards the base of the Lions. Be careful on several short but steep sections, particularly if the rock is wet. Closer

to the base of the West Lion, the route branches. To the east, the trail switchbacks down and across to take you between the Lions and on towards Porteau Cove.

West Lion to James Peak

1.75 kilometres (12.22 kilometres total)

2 hours (7 hours total)

North of the Lions the marked route drops quickly, skirting the east base of Thomas Peak along an open slope of large boulders. The trail climbs again to Enchantment Pass then follows the steep southern ridge leading to the summit of James Peak. Use caution when crossing the short rope section of the ridge. James Peak offers splendid views in all directions.

James Peak to Harvey Creek Saddle

1.4 kilometres (13.62 kilometres total)

1 hours (8 hours total)

The route follows down the northwest slope of James Peak onto a meadow in the saddle between James and David Peaks. Beyond the meadow the trail drops quickly to avoid the east-facing cliffs of David Peak and Harvey Pass. Watch carefully for trail markers on open slopes.

Harvey Creek Col to Magnesia Meadows Hut

.70 kilometres (14.32 kilometres total)

1/2 hour (8 1/2 hours total)

The developed trail begins again at Harvey Creek Col and climbs a logged and burnt slope to the head of the Harvey Creek Basin at Harvey Pass. The gentle route to the hut passes a small lake and offers dramatic views of Mt. Harvey, Howe Sound and Magnesia Meadows.

Magnesia Meadows Hut to Brunswick Mountain Trail

2.24 kilometres (16.56 kilometres total)

1 hour (9 1/2 hours total)

The trail climbs slightly through the meadows

before entering the forest and then remains fairly level as it crosses the southern and western slopes of Brunswick Mountain before intersecting with the Brunswick Mountain Trail. Periodic views to the south feature Horseshoe Bay and Bowen Island.

Brunswick Mountain Trail to Brunswick Lake

2.50 kilometres (19.06 kilometres total)

1 hour (10 1/2 hours total)

The trail continues northwest to Hat Pass then begins the long descent to the Brunswick Lake Hut. The views of Brunswick Mountain, Brunswick Lake, Mt. Hanover and the Deeks Lake Valley are superb. Be careful not to disturb the vegetation in this remarkable area.

Brunswick Lake to Deeks Lake (Outlet)

3.22 kilometres (22.17 kilometres total)

1 1/2 hours (12 hours total)

This section parallels the creek connecting the two lakes and crosses it twice. Use extra caution when crossing. Enjoy the waterfall and views of Middle Lake and Deeks Lake. A cleared area, suitable for camping, is located just beyond the Deeks Lake outlet.

Deeks Lake (Outlet) to Highway 99

6.70 kilometres (28.87 kilometres total)

2 1/2 hours (14 1/2 hours total)

From Deeks Lake the trail climbs at first, then quickly drops through a mature forest and connects with a logging road. Further along the road a marked trail to the north provides the recommended higher elevation bypass route of 1.5 km, avoiding a dangerous slide area along the lower route. There are signs marking a short-cut trail along the bypass route, to the west, below the rock bluffs. Below the slide area the road winds northwards towards Howe Sound. A side trail to the south leads to the mouth of Deeks Creek. As the road approaches Highway 99, a marked trail to the west leads to the trailhead.

