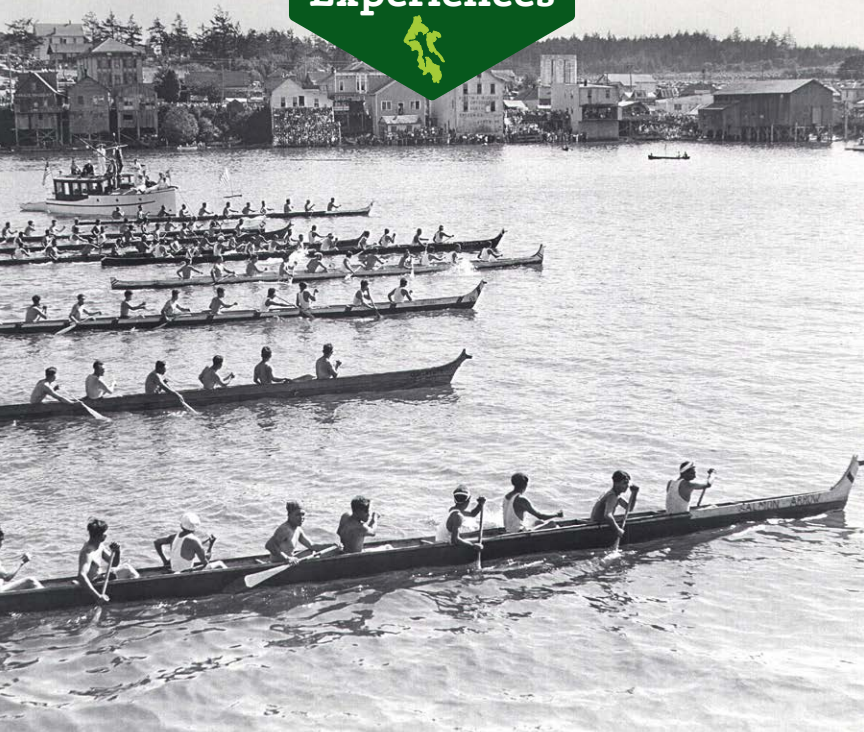


24
**Cultural &
Heritage**
Experiences

FIELD

GUIDE



Whidbey and Camano
ISLANDS
Washington State - USA

WhidbeyCamanoIslands.com



Please embrace these islands’ history and culture thoughtfully.

Many of the sites featured in this guide are sacred to the islands’ indigenous peoples, and all are important parts of the islands’ communities. Your respect and thoughtful appreciation for these places will help ensure their availability and authenticity for future visitors and residents.

- Respect private property
- Heed signage
- Park courteously
- Give to local organizations
- Become a volunteer
- Be mindful of your carbon footprint



Explore beyond the guide: WhidbeyCamanoIslands.com

The site gives more information on the experiences in this guide, plus additional things to do, places to stay, eat, sip, and take part in our island communities.

Accommodations booked through this site support the business owners directly, by avoiding third party commissions.

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Embrace Whidbey and Camano Islands



TRANSFORMATIVE PLACE
Accredited by the Transformational Travel Council



Winner
2023 Destination
Stewardship Award

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Partners

Thank you to the following organizations for their expertise and assistance in creating this guide. It's through the hard work and commitment of organizations such as these, their staff, volunteers, and local residents, that the history and culture of these islands is carried forward for future generations.



Writing: Laura Hilton, unless otherwise noted.
Graphic design: Rosenkranz Productions, Inc.



Deception Pass Bridge, circa 1940s. Photo: 1978.48.1.7, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma WA.

Leave the car behind.

Island Transit is about connecting communities. Many places in this guide are accessible via Island Transit services. Island Transit believes that everyone should have equal access to all that Island County has to offer. All routes are fare-free, ADA accessible, and carry two to three bikes on a first-come, first-served basis. This service is for locals and visitors alike, supporting a healthy, safe, and accessible community for all.



Island Transit



Scan for current route and schedule information. Or visit islandtransit.org
360-678-7771.

An Immemorial Indigenous Presence



Tsimshian Haayuuk Dancers, Penn Cove Water Festival.

Whidbey and Camano Islands were home to different tribes prior to the arrival of settlers, including the Kikialus, Snohomish, and Lower Skagit, as well as other tribes and bands signatory to the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott. Since time immemorial the ancestors of these tribes hunted, gathered, and fished throughout their traditional territories. Now, the treaty guarantees the right to practice these traditional ways of life.



While the Lower Skagit lived in the northern portion of Whidbey Island, land from the head of Holmes Harbor through the southern tip of the island was used by the Snohomish, ancestors of the Tulalip Tribes. The Snohomish had three permanent villages on southern Whidbey Island.

Whidbey and Camano Islands

dəgʷasḥ, meaning “in the basket” or “lots of a certain species of crabs,” on Cultus Bay was the largest of the three village sites. The village was home to six or seven longhouses, two cemeteries, and a potlatch house that other tribes visited. čəčʰtq, meaning “ripped nose,” in Sandy Point was located on what is today the city of Langley. This village also had a potlatch house as well as clam beds. šəłšəłšʰ, meaning “scorched leaves,” was located on the west side of South Whidbey Island at Bush Point. šəłšəłšʰ had three longhouses, a potlatch house, and a cemetery. ʃʷuyšəd was another village that was used for seasonal clamming following an earthquake and great landslide in 1825.



TOP: Susie Kettle (maiden name Slapoose, Lushootseed name Teloleta). Susie was Lower Skagit, born about 1861 and died 1938. Photo: Island County Historical Museum. ABOVE: A display at the South Whidbey Historical Museum featuring works from various local tribes.

An Immemorial Indigenous Presence

The Snohomish also shared Camano Island with the Kikialus and Lower Skagit, now part of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community. The Kikialus lived on the northern part of the island, and the Snohomish lived seasonally on the southern part. Both tribes had seasonal camps on Camano Island. While we know that the camps were located on the east and west shores of Elger Bay, and on a gravel beach less than a mile northwest of the southern tip of Camano, the names of the camps are unknown. Seasonal camps were in Elger Bay on the south and around the east side of Camano Island. The west side of Elger Bay also had a sweathouse.

Chinook, coho, pink, chum, and sockeye salmon were an abundant source of food. On the island's prairies, bracken fern grew seven feet tall. Dried bracken roots were ground into flour that would be baked for bread. Fresh camas could



ABOVE LEFT: Penn Cove Water Festival circa 1930. Photo: Island County Historical museum. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Charlie Snetlum drums and sings his family song to bless the 2006 festival canoe races. Photo: Lynda Imburgia.

Whidbey and Camano Islands



Chief Billy Barlow (William Squiqui)'s Potlatch at Monroe's Landing prior to 1905. Photo: Island County Historical Museum.

be boiled and eaten like potatoes, or bulbs could be dried and preserved. Cultus Bay was a favorite gathering place for smoking salmon and digging clams.

The region's tribes lived as one with the environment, and the people only took what was necessary to sustain themselves. This way of life is still practiced today. Tribal ancestors managed the landscape and ecosystems. The landscape has changed greatly since the arrival of settlers, and currently faces many different challenges. The environment gives tribal members a sense of place that connects tribal members to their elders before them. Teachings and values guide the tribal peoples to work to protect the environment and honor the earth for future generations.

Please visit local museums, the Hibulb Cultural Center, and tribal websites to gain a deeper understanding of the role Indigenous peoples have played as caretakers of Whidbey and Camano islands, throughout history, and in current times.

Written by Ana Ramirez, Education Curator. Hibulb Cultural Center & Nature Preserve.



LEFT: Spirit of the Salmon, Penn Cove Water Festival commemorative carving by Roger Purdue, whose mother was a member of the Tsimshian Tribe. **RIGHT:** Button blanket and cedar hat created by Samish Tribe members, Diana and Pat Dunn.

For the broadest history of these islands in the Salish Sea, a visit to the Island County Historical Museum is a must. With its prime waterfront location, overlooking the iconic Coupeville Wharf and flanked by an 1855 blockhouse, you're surrounded by history before you've even stepped inside. This beautifully curated museum is staffed by dedicated volunteers who can tell you about the exhibits and direct you to even more sites of interest.



Discover the rich layers of history in Island County, from the formation of the islands themselves over glacial periods going back several millennia to the present. See for yourself the bones and teeth of prehistoric mammoths who once roamed these parts. Imagine thousands of years of uninterrupted indigenous culture before the shocking arrival of colonists. The museum houses a particularly beautiful

collection of traditional dugout canoes, including one of the oldest existing examples of an ocean-going family canoe. Don't miss the exquisite moving display, "Four Seasons of Water", created by a Native artist over 13 years and featuring more than two million tiny seed beads.

See the first car on Whidbey and try to picture it traversing from the Captain Whidbey Inn to Coupeville, in the earliest 1900s. Learn about the first pioneer families making land claims and establishing farms, some of which are still in operation today. Immerse yourself in the maritime and logging history of the region or discover the roots of an early communications company still used by islanders today.

Explore this classic museum's informative and entertaining exhibits at 908 NW Alexander Street, Coupeville.



TOP LEFT: The Snetlum "family canoe" first belonged to Chief Snetlum of the Lower Skagit Tribe in Penn Cove and was passed down through generations of this family since his death in 1852. **TOP RIGHT:** A Holsman Automobile, purchased by Henry Kerchner, was the first automobile on Whidbey Island. **BOTTOM:** The Island County Historical Society Museum, originally founded in 1949.

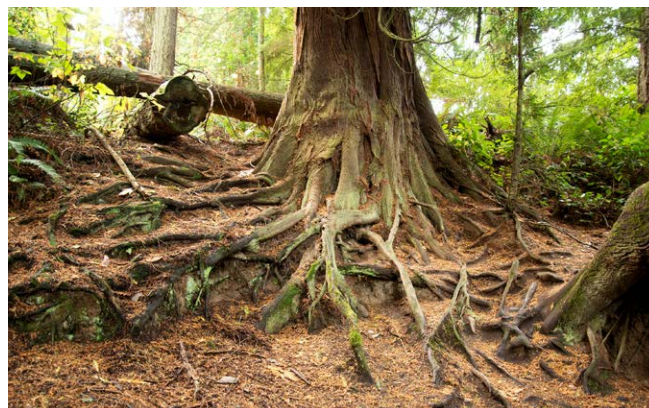
Culture of Natural Preservation

Although the colonial period of Whidbey and Camano Islands' history is marked with heavy logging, there is a staunch spirit of environmental activism among modern islanders that goes way back. So many of the public lands now held most dear to residents and visitors were saved from clear cutting and development plans; at times while facing down extraordinary odds. Some of the oldest known trees have been saved from destruction by citizen-led campaigns. Generous residents continue to donate land for protection and stewardship to the Whidbey Camano Land Trust, which has also secured over \$80 million in grants to



TOP: Saratoga Woods, owned and managed by Island County, with a conservation easement held by the Land Trust. This property was protected by the community. **BOTTOM:** Thanks to the efforts of Friends of Camano Island Parks, Island County acquired the property that became English Boom Historical Park in 1997.

Whidbey & Camano Islands



There is a deep-rooted love of nature and public access on Whidbey and Camano Islands.

purchase important lands. This is a proactive community, with both islands supporting an astonishing number of environmental groups and volunteer stewardship efforts. The hard work of some of these groups has been felt statewide, with legal precedents being applied to other regions in Washington. Local island efforts have even benefitted some international environmental protection campaigns.



Photo: Whidbey Camano Land Trust

Get involved.

Visit the Embrace Whidbey and Camano Islands website to learn more about how to connect with the non-profit organizations helping to preserve the natural character of the islands.

whidbeycamanoislands.com/preservation

Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve (established in 1978) is a first-ever, one-of-a-kind partnership model to protect a unique piece of the nation's heritage. Spanning nearly 20 square miles, Ebey's Reserve envelops the middle section of Whidbey Island and offers stunning views of a cultural landscape where one can spot Mount Baker, Mount Rainier, and the Olympic Mountains on a clear day.



Administered by a Trust Board composed of representatives from the National Park Service, Washington State Parks and Recreation, Island County, and the Town of Coupeville, Ebey's Reserve provides myriad recreation opportunities, historical interpretation, and land management tools to ensure future generations will benefit. Privately funded and federally funded protective easements create a patchwork of farmland



LEFT: An Aerial view of Ebey's Prairie and the town of Coupeville. **ABOVE:** Ebey's Prairie Farmers with Hubbard squash harvest. Photos: Island County Historical Museum.

that remains operated by multi-generational family farmers. Some of the most prominent and popular crops of recent generations include award-winning wheat, the Rockwell Bean, and Sugar Hubbard Squash.

Ebey's Reserve interprets a 12,000 year history, dating back to the glacial meltings that left prime soils for cultivation. Before white European exploration and Anglo-American settlement resulted in the displacement of local tribes, the fertile prairies were home to nettles, bracken ferns,

Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve

and the culturally-significant camas. Some operations still harvest camas bulbs for Coast Salish tribal rituals and celebrations. Areas of Ebey's Reserve are the homeland of the Lower Skagit, a tribe who was forced off of Whidbey Island as a result of the 1855 Point Elliott Treaty.



Today's visitors come to enjoy the interconnected trail system or learn about the region's military history, Coast Salish history, agricultural history, and maritime history. Sweeping views of natural landscapes and the Puget Sound draw photographers and filmmakers. For local residents, Ebey's Reserve ensures that a living landscape will be protected in perpetuity.

Start your journey at the Pratt Cottage Visitor Center at 162 Cemetery Road, Coupeville. From there a quick, level hike takes you to the Jacob and Sarah Ebey House.

Written by The Office of the Trust Board of Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve.



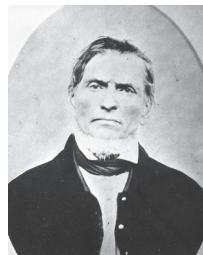
TOP: Wilbur and Karen Bishop of Ebey Road Farm. **ABOVE:** Front Street Coupeville, circa 1890. Photo: Island County Historical Museum.

Jacob and Sarah Ebey House

The Ebey family came west from Missouri, ending their journey on Whidbey Island when they came upon the best farmland they'd ever seen. Family members became the first settlers in the area to use the 1850 Donation Land Claim Act, claiming hundreds of acres of Lower Skagit land to establish family farms before the act was even official. Jacob and Sarah Ebey named their place Sunnyside Farm, where the pioneer cemetery took its name and most of the Ebey's now



rest. You can still visit their home and a blockhouse perched at the edge of a magnificent bluff in Ebey's Reserve. From the visitor center parking lot, take a five-minute stroll along a level, packed gravel trail to this home that has looked west over the Salish Sea for the better part of two centuries.



TOP: Jacob Ebey. Photo: Island County Historical Museum. **ABOVE:** Al and Roger Sherman at the restored Jacob & Sarah Ebey House. Both men were instrumental in the creation of the Reserve. Photo: Kristen Griffin.

Farming & Agriculture



ABOVE: Whidbey Island wheat harvest, circa 1890. Photo: Island County Historical Museum.

From the first Coast Salish nations farming the prairies and clamming the beaches, to mussel rafts and multi-generational farms of today, the islands have a rich history of delicious, local food. The mild climate and lush soil were a great advantage to early pioneers, especially when combined with proximity to the marine shipping lanes. Some of those early pioneer names are still attached to descendants working those land claims today. New farmers are drawn to the islands to learn skills and set down roots.



All this local farming makes the culinary scene on each island a delight. Many restaurant creations are low on food miles and high on mouth-watering flavors. Cooking classes and farm-to-table events allow diners to engage completely with their meal. An explosion of craft beverage creation has taken hold, with wineries joined by breweries, distilleries,

Whidbey & Camano Islands

cideries, and even a meadery. Locally-grown berries feature in locally-produced liquors, served up by local mixologists in the form of creative cocktails.

Visit local farms for tours, classes, or u-pick experiences. Check out the many excellent farmers markets and charming roadside farm stands. Create your own island-inspired feast by using the Whidbey Island Grown Cooperative's Food Hub. Place an order online from a multitude of local farms before you visit and pick up your goods when you arrive, or seek out local products in island grocery stores.



TOP LEFT: The Organic Farm School, Clinton. TOP RIGHT: Eckholm Farm, Coupeville.
MIDDLE RIGHT: Local produce on offer at Farmers Market. Photo: Sherrye Wyatt.
BOTTOM: Historic Kristoferson Farm, 332 NE Camano Drive, Camano Island.



Visit historic Langley and breathe life into the stories of early residents with a trip to the South Whidbey Historical Museum. The museum is housed in a logging bunkhouse built by Jacob Anthes, the founder of Langley, who came to Whidbey alone as a teenager in the late 1800s. It's one of a thousand fascinating tales you'll discover, as the knowledgeable docents have really focused on the people and families whose efforts still have a massive impact on our lives today.



Explore exhibits ranging from the ancient and varied cultures of Coast Salish tribes to Langley's first all-female city council in 1920. Join a guided walking tour in the summer, or take a self-guided tour any time by looking out for educational plaques on most historical buildings downtown. QR codes are being added that link to more detail online.

A sprawling ongoing archival project is revealing previously unknown and compelling chapters of the area's history. "A Tangled Web of History" was sparked when a collection of more than 500 artifacts were found at the home of a South Whidbey pioneer family.



TOP: Holmes Harbor, Freeland, circa early 1900's. **MIDDLE LEFT:** Ernest Meier. Circa 1916. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** The South Whidbey Historical Museum. **BOTTOM:** Jacob Brehm standing in his wagon, Circa 1914. He is in front of the livery stable he built in 1904. Photos: South Whidbey Historical Museum.

Visit this fascinating museum at 312 Second Street, Langley. Go to southwhidbeyhistory.org for hours.

Islanders are so fortunate to live on the Salish Sea, home to some very special neighbors: several varieties of whales. The Orca Network is a non-profit organization dedicated to education and awareness of whales in the Pacific Northwest, as well as the importance of protecting their habitats. Visit the Langley Whale Center to dive into this group's important work. See where the most recent sightings have occurred and be sure to ring the Whale Bell if one of these majestic creatures appears in Saratoga Passage or Penn Cove.



TOP: Replica of a juvenile orca skull. **BOTTOM:** Langley Whale Center street view. **RIGHT:** Pat Price Ocean Listening Exhibit—a unique underwater listening experience for visitors.



Juvenile gray whale skull on display in the baleen whale exhibit.

The Whale Center docents offer insights into the behaviors of different types and families of Orcas; as well as Gray whales, Minke whales, Humpbacks, and other Puget Sound marine life. Examine bones and baleen or listen to the incredible calls of these fascinating animals with The Ocean Listening Exhibit. A welcoming Kids Room with ocean murals introduces youngsters to this important topic, and the gift shop is laden with adorable toys and beautiful artwork.

Learn about environmental efforts aimed at preserving healthy habitats and how you can help. Discover the heartbreaking story of the Penn Cove Roundup and the activism it inspired. Pay your respects to our fallen friend Tokitae and hear more about her life. Find out about annual events such as Ways of Whales Workshop, Orca Action Month, Sound Waters University and Welcome the Whales Festival and Parade.

Have a whale of a time at 105 Anthes Avenue, Langley. Visit website for hours.

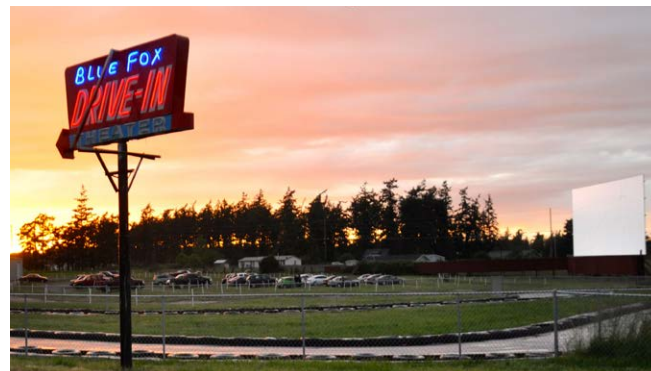
Classic Cinema Experiences

The Clyde Theatre has been an anchor of Langley's downtown since 1937, and in all that time has been owned by just two families! Norman and Hazel Clyde built the movie house during the height of the Depression era, and the much-loved Willeford family has kept the movie magic alive since the early 1970s. By adding a stage, they made the Clyde a great live venue too, where many local children have made their theater debut. Colorful printed schedules, designed by different local artists, adorned most South Whidbey refrigerators for decades before the Clyde started showing first-run movies. Keep an eye on their website or weekly email now for a mixture of new release blockbusters, nostalgia movies, foreign films, indie pictures, and documentaries. Enjoy the rare culture of neighborly patrons, who often stand outside chatting after the screening. The Willefords are deeply involved in the community and often host special events or raise funds for local causes.

Visit theclyde.net for coming attractions, then catch a show at 217 First Street, Langley.



North & South Whidbey



The Blue Fox Drive-In Theater opened near Oak Harbor in 1959, but this beloved piece of Americana has been lovingly ushered into a new era by the Bratt family, who have owned it and lived onsite since 1988. All the timeless traditions remain, such as a pre-show cartoon, and patrons donning comfy clothes for snuggly viewing within their cars. The Bratts have diversified though: building a go-kart track, arcade, and most recently an open-air tavern. They do screen printing as well, so you can purchase Blue Fox merch along with your popcorn. This local institution hosts many community events and has employed generations of island teenagers. The drive-in is open every weekend, year-round, and seven nights a week in the summer.

Load up the car for a cinematic experience at 1403 North Monroe Landing Road, Oak Harbor. Visit bluefoxdrivein.com for coming attractions.



South Whidbey has had beach communities far longer than it's had roads. Some were only accessible by water until the 1940s! Because of this, there were once many small stores in the region, but all had closed by the late 1980s except for one. Bailey's Corner Store remains, having stood at its wooded crossroads for over a century.



Built around 1909, Bailey's was originally a small country schoolhouse known as the Ingleside School. A Mr. Bailey bought the building in 1939, and it has been known as Bailey's Corner Store ever since. Although it's changed hands several times and various additions built on over many decades, this has only increased its appeal and added layers to its story.



ABOVE: Outdoor seating and stage. LEFT: The storefront today looks much as it did in 1939.

Southernmost islanders have long counted on Bailey's as the closest place to buy essentials, but in recent years it's experiencing a revival. The covered porch has always been a popular place for locals to shoot the breeze, but now the kitchen serves hot meals and a brewery has opened next door. A beer garden and stage have been added, with trivia nights and live music featuring local musicians. No longer simply a stop of convenience for a few, Bailey's is now a favorite gathering place for many.

Visit Bailey's Corner Store for a burger and brew, and look for upcoming events on their Facebook page.

Greenbank Farm houses local businesses featuring art, gourmet foods, gifts, wine, and scrumptious lunches. Venue spaces make this a popular choice for community events or private parties. The surrounding education gardens are tended by Washington State Master Gardeners and open to the public.



Originally established by Danish residents in 1904, Greenbank Farm started out as a dairy. By the 1950s it was the largest loganberry farm in the U.S., and by the 1970s possibly the largest in the world. The farm's future was in jeopardy by the 1990s however, when a developer won an auction to buy the land and planned to build a giant housing estate. Residents formed partnerships with local and state government officials, and a successful "Save the Farm" campaign led to purchase of the farm as a public entity in 1997.

The Port of Coupeville, alongside community members and local non-profits, successfully turned the farm into a vibrant and sustainable place to be enjoyed by visitors and locals alike. Visit Greenbank Farm and discover all the ways to enjoy this beautiful property, saved by passionate islanders for future generations.

Hike, shop, eat, drink and explore the farm at 765 Wonn Road, Greenbank.



Greenbank Farm's historic barn and expansive outdoor spaces continue to host community events and private gatherings. Barn circa 1904.

On Whidbey and Camano Islands, art is not a passive experience. Almost everyone is engaged in some form of artistic expression, and for those who haven't found their medium yet, this is a good place to take a creative quest. In an artistic calendar always bursting with events, perhaps highlights of the year are the annual studio tour on each island. Explore the working space of a wide selection of local artists to see how their creative process unfolds, and purchase artwork which



ABOVE: Stone Carving Class, Matzke Fine Art, Camano Island. **TOP RIGHT:** Participant at Pacific Northwest Art School class. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Washington State University Extension's Bread Lab class on Whidbey Island.

tells a story while supporting a local creator. These islands are a good place to find talented teachers who can elevate your art or introduce you to a new form. Discover fine arts schools and studio-based classes, often in inspiring settings taking advantage of abundant natural beauty. Galleries abound, and artist collectives host pop-up shows and events throughout the year. Whatever medium intrigues you, there is likely a talented island mentor to be found.



Find an art class.

Visit the Embrace Whidbey Camano Islands website to find art schools, classes and studio information.

whidbeycamanoislands.com/learn_art



Artists

Visual Artists

It's easy to see why visual artists flock to these gorgeous shores, and island scenery has adorned many a blank canvas. Painters are drawn to plein air, photographers can't resist the wildlife, and assembly artists scour the secondhand shops. Blown glass, so famous in the region, is created in all manner of whimsical shapes. Blank walls become colorful murals. Locally renowned chainsaw art sits side-by-side with world renowned bronze sculptures. You can wear this art, or bring it home, or walk amongst it in the woods.



TOP LEFT: OHHS graduate, Kat, working on her 2023 Algire Project mural recognizing cycling culture and tourism on Whidbey Island. Photo: Sarah Schacht. **TOP RIGHT:** Craig Johnson photographing shorebirds on whidbey Island. Photo: Craig Johnson. **BOTTOM LEFT:** "Comfort" by Sabah Al-Dhaher hand carved sandstone, life-size. Matzke Fine Art Gallery and Sculpture Park, Camano Island. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** A glass ball created for Camano Island's famous Northwest Glass Quest event. Photo: Evan Caldwell.

Artists

Performance Artists

Residents of the islands never lack entertainment with so many talented types around. Check out local venues and tasting rooms for year-round musical performances. In the summer that extends to markets, festivals, and street corners; with island musicians livening up every event. Plentiful dance schools inspire locals and visitors alike. Annual music festivals draw crowds. Audio performances, local podcasts, and screen productions are made here. Actors can take the stage at any age. From classic Shakespearean tales to contemporary new plays, these experiences of human creativity are fleeting and transformational.



TOP: Whidbey Playhouse cast checking out filmed scene from Whidbey Playhouse's production of "Having our Say." Photo: Whidbey Playhouse. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The famous Whidbey Island Shifty Sailors performing. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Performers at the Oak Harbor Music Festival.

Artists

Literary Artists

For plenty of solitude to aid concentration and a lively natural setting for inspiration, of course writers would choose the islands. Many accommodations bill themselves as writers retreats for good reason, and there are also numerous groups and classes available. Authors, screenwriters, playwrights, and songwriters have all put pen to page and shared their ideas. Incredible local non-profits aim to support writers of underrepresented backgrounds. Readers and writers both can enjoy the six exceptional Sno-Isle libraries located in island communities.



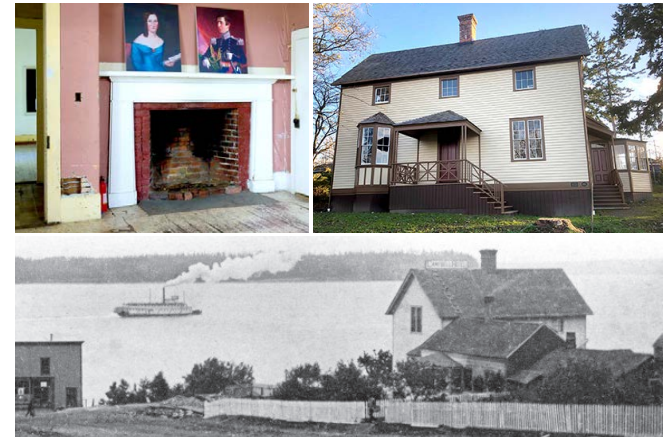
A display of Whidbey authors and artists works at Moonraker Books in Langley.

Haller House

The historic Haller House could be considered the birthplace of Coupeville's downtown. Raphael Brunn established the area's first commercial maritime business in 1859, building a cabin and general store on the site, plus a wharf and warehouse just below. Colonel Granville Haller bought the operation in 1866 and built a grand home off the front of the modest cabin. An Army officer in the early Washington Territory, Haller bore witness to the tumultuous Treaty Era of the 1850s and the "Pig War" boundary dispute with Great Britain. Now under the care of Historic Whidbey, this beautiful house will be transformed into a heritage center featuring interpretive history exhibits, a Victorian soda fountain and period mercantile store in the very same cabin that Brunn built.



Located at 1 Front Street NE, Coupeville.
Visit historicwhidbey.org for more information.



TOP: Interior and exterior restoration continues. **BOTTOM:** Haller House with the steam ship Farihaven in the background, circa 1890.



The population of Central Whidbey began increasing dramatically with the activation of Fort Casey, and Coupeville Wharf was built in 1905 to keep up with growth. Constructed by local farmers and merchants, they took the wharf out 500 feet so it would be viable even in low tides. The wharf was a busy hub for commerce, and passengers would arrive and depart daily by steamboat. The last steamer from Seattle ran in 1936, as the construction of Deception Pass Bridge brought much more vehicle traffic to the island.



Today the wharf is still a daily part of life in Coupeville, and so iconic that it has featured in several film and television productions. The Port of Coupeville manages the wharf and important maintenance of this historic structure. There are some retail and dining spaces inside and a permanent display of whale bones and other marine exhibits. Enjoy a picnic table in the sunshine and views across Penn Cove and Mount Baker.



TOP: Lady Washington arriving at the Coupeville Wharf. Photo: Dennis Hill.
ABOVE: Front Street, circa 1906. Photo: Island County Historical Museum.

Coupeville Wharf is also home to the Gatsby-era wooden schooner *SUVA*, pride of the Whidbey Island Maritime Heritage Foundation and available for sailing tours.

Located at the West end of Coupeville's historic Front Street. Stroll out to the end for spectacular views of the town and Penn Cove, as well as interactive interpretive displays, shopping and dining.

Maritime History

Ever since there have been people in the Pacific Northwest, the waterways have served as transportation corridors. From time immemorial through the early 1900s, entire Coast Salish families would travel incredible distances in ocean-going canoes. When European explorers first entered these waterways many thousands of years later, it was via four-and five-masted timber schooners.

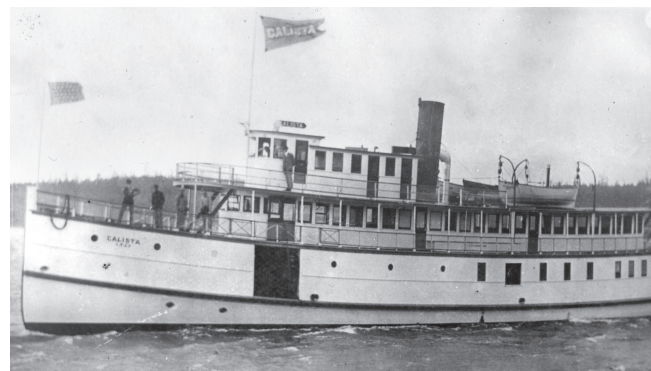


As small towns formed along coastlines, several long wharves came and went over the years, with sand bars and storm tides creating challenges. Between the 1880s and 1920s, a giant collection of steamships operated around Puget Sound. Known as the Mosquito Fleet, they served as



ABOVE: The stern wheeler, Fairhaven, seen here at the Langley Wharf, was an early member of the “Mosquito Fleet” that brought passengers and freight to Whidbey and Camano Islands. Circa 1910. Photo: South Whidbey Historical Museum. **TOP RIGHT:** The Coupeville based steamer Callista, circa 1915. Photo: Island County Historical Museum. **RIGHT:** Washington State Ferry Tokitae, on the Clinton-Mukilteo route.

Whidbey & Camano Islands



a primary form of transportation and fueled the growth of the area, able to reach just about anywhere with a waterfront.

Maritime heritage is still a daily part of life, with a vast number of Washingtonians crossing parts of the Sound regularly. The state ferry system is the largest in the country and among the largest in the world. Many exemplary boats found worldwide were built on the shores of Holmes Harbor. It's fitting then, that the Maritime Washington National Heritage Area was designated in 2019, encompassing 3,000 miles of the state's saltwater coastline and enveloping both Whidbey and Camano Islands.

Visit any of the museums featured in this guide to learn more about how the waterways surrounding Whidbey and Camano islands have been used since time immemorial.



Admiralty Head Lighthouse

The grand and beautiful Admiralty Head Lighthouse was built in 1903 to replace the Red Bluff Lighthouse, which had operated from 1861. Lighthouses were imperative to the safety of mariners and could never be left unattended. Technologies changed however, and Admiralty Head Lighthouse was deemed obsolete less than 20 years later.



Washington State Parks acquired the lighthouse in the 1950s and restored the lantern house, but it did not stand up to the salty air and eventually needed to be replaced again. This was the basis of an amazing island-wide effort in 2010, where students from Oak Harbor, Coupeville, and South Whidbey High Schools planned and rebuilt the



Central Whidbey



ABOVE: Fresnel lenses, circa 1800s. **RIGHT:** Spiral staircase leads visitors up to the lantern house.

lantern house themselves. This was made possible with guidance from their teachers and park volunteers, as well as metal work experts from Nichols Brothers Boat Builders.

The lighthouse sits 127 feet above the water and you can tour it with volunteer docents, learning about the keepers who lived there. Remnants of their daily lives remain, such as the original coal-fired hot water heater and the first indoor bathtub on Whidbey Island. See ornate Fresnel lenses from the 1800s, still in pristine condition today. It's only about 30 steps to the top of the tower, but steep and tight enough that it feels more like climbing a ladder than a staircase. It's well worth the climb if you're not claustrophobic, because the views from the top are magical.

Visit the lighthouse at 1280 Engle Road, Coupeville. Go to parks.wa.gov for lighthouse and gift shop hours.

Triangle of Fire

In the 1800s, Admiralty Inlet was considered so strategically important for the defense of Puget Sound that land was set aside for military fortification. Three forts with large guns were built around the entrance, forming a “Triangle of Fire”. Whidbey Island’s point in the triangle was Fort Casey, which was equipped for defense and used until the 1940s as a training facility. Washington State Parks took over the fort in 1955.



The strategic military advantage of the site now translates to breathtaking views over the waterway where Puget Sound meets the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Explore the fortified bunkers and see the mounted guns, including two rare 10-inch disappearing guns. What was once a parade field is



TOP LEFT: Worth Battery military reenactment. Photo: Sherrye Wyatt. **TOP RIGHT:** One of two 125-ton, 10-inch guns on retractable carriages. **BOTTOM:** Gun emplacements and raised fire control booth.

Camp Casey Conference Center



TOP: The Colonel's House. **BOTTOM:** Quartermaster's Building. **RIGHT:** Camp Casey Military Reenactment. Photo: Sherrye Wyatt.

now a popular place to fly kites or enjoy a picnic. Educational displays and a gift shop can be found at the Admiralty Head Lighthouse or park office.

At one time Fort Casey housed 10 officers and 428 enlisted men, so there are plenty of vintage homes and barracks still standing resplendently. In the 1950s when the bunkers and lighthouse became part of a state park, Seattle Pacific University (SPU) took ownership of the grand parade field and area where troops were housed. Today it is known as Camp Casey Conference Center, where SPU offers educational programming and hosts school groups, retreats, family reunions and more. Many of the antique buildings are available as accommodation. Stay in noncommissioned officers' housing and use this historical crossroads as a perfect base from which to explore.

Explore Fort Casey at 1280 Engle Road, Coupeville and Camp Casey at 1276 Engle Road, Coupeville.



PBY-6A on the Ramp across from Sitka, Alaska, July 1949. From the Gene Guthrie Collection, 4/2001 PBMYF 2006-0216B. Photographer Unknown.

Oak Harbor was known for generations as a small, quiet farming community. When Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941, Whidbey Island had already been selected by the U.S. Navy as an important base for seaplanes patrolling the waters of the Pacific Northwest. By 1942, squadrons of PBY Catalinas (large patrol bombers) were routinely departing from Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) for missions along the Pacific Coast. NASWI has played an important part in the U.S. Navy's training and coastal defense ever since, deploying to operations worldwide. Today, it is commonplace to see regular fly-bys of EA-18G Growlers; MH-60S Knighthawks; P-3 Orion; the P-8 Poseidon, and others.



Visitors to Oak Harbor can explore the Pacific Northwest Naval Air Museum, which was founded by WWII PBV Veterans and their families, determined to preserve the

history and heritage of the impressive PBV aircraft. It has evolved into an organization dedicated to preserving the history of naval aircraft in the Pacific Northwest, and its impact on the development of the culture of this community. Primarily staffed by volunteer docents, visitors to the museum are treated to flight simulator experiences, night vision goggle training, an A-6 Intruder ejection seat, interactive displays of tail hooks, and a genuine PBV gunner turret. Be sure to check the museum website for updates to their location and hours.

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, the museum's PBV-5A Catalina is open to the public for tours, by appointment during the week or at regular intervals during open hours on weekends.



TOP LEFT: EA-18G Growler currently stationed at NAS Whidbey. Photo: Jack Penland.

BOTTOM LEFT: Grumman A-6 Intruder, circa 1979. Photo: Sherrye Wyatt.

ABOVE RIGHT: USN uniform Chief Petty Officer. Collection PNWNAM. Photo: Ric Colgan 2023.

Deception Pass Bridge

The steep cliffs on each side of Deception Pass were carved by receding glaciers. Early explorers saw the tumultuous waters and assumed they were unpassable, believing it to be the mouth of a river or entry to a bay. This “deception” is where the pass takes its name, and islanders dreamed for half a century of having a bridge to connect them with Fidalgo Island and the mainland.



The pass was deemed to have military value, so over a thousand acres was put aside in 1866 for defense use and was partially fortified during WWI. In the early 1920s this land was sold back to the state to become a park, and it remains the most visited state park in Washington to this day. Dramatic vistas are complemented, rather than interrupted, by the iconic curves of the bridge.



Deception Pass Bridge Construction, 1935. Photo: courtesy of the Anacortes Museum, Wallie Funk Collection.

North Whidbey



TOP & RIGHT: Deception Pass Bridge. Photos: Rick Lawler. **ABOVE:** Lighthouse Point trail Deception Pass State Park. Photo: Annette Pitts.

A model of the Deception Pass Bridge design was shown at the Alaska-Yukon Pacific Exposition in Seattle 1909, but it was the Great Depression era and programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps that finally brought the bridge to fruition. Constructed in less than a year, the bridge opened in July of 1935 and has earned a spot on the National Historic Register.

Visit Deception Pass State Park at 41229 State Route 20. The bridge connects Whidbey and Fidalgo Islands.

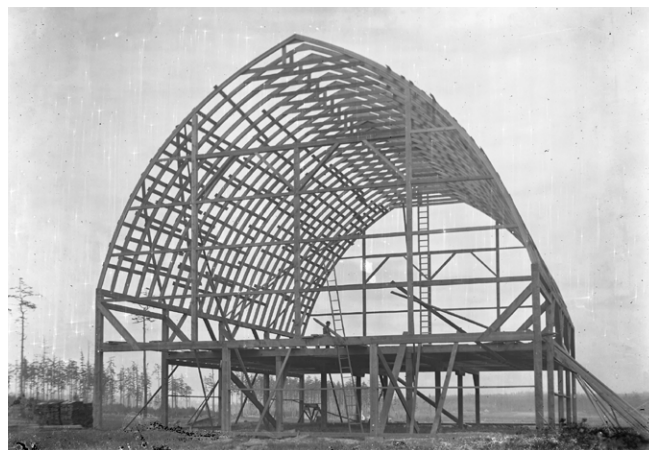
Perhaps the most lasting physical legacy of Oak Harbor's rich Dutch history is the iconic, round-roofed Neil Barn. Built by Otto Van Dyk in 1912, it was once the largest barn on the West Coast. With craftsmanship still on display today, the barn and nearby water tower have earned their places as historic landmarks. Today they stand surrounded by apartments and residential developments, a stark reminder that the site was once at the center of hundreds of acres of farmland.



This barn has lived many lives though. Upon its completion a grand barn-warming was held, with an orchestra brought by boat from the mainland. After a few decades serving as a dairy, the barn was restored and refitted as a skating rink in



ABOVE: The Roller Barn as it appears today. **TOP RIGHT:** Neil Barn under construction in 1912. **RIGHT:** The "Windmill" water tower, which was never actually a windmill.



1950, earning its current name of the Roller Barn. Roller skating and competitive dance skating became popular local pastimes, and this era would also see the construction of Blue Fox Drive-In and the Oak Bowl.

Today the Roller Barn is a beloved community gathering place and link to Oak Harbor's history. Patrons still enjoy roller skating, along with pickleball, laser tag, concerts, parties, and a spooky annual haunted house! The much-loved barn is family owned and operated.



Check out their site at therollerbarn.com for hours and events, and stop in for a skate at 98 NE Barron Drive Oak Harbor.

When Camano Island's classic one-room schoolhouse was built in 1906, "Camano City" was a quickly growing logging and mill town. During this bustling era, the little village built a long wharf and had daily boat service to Whidbey Island, Everett, and Seattle. Camano City had several stores, two first class hotels, a local newspaper, and even an independent phone company connecting them to Stanwood as early as 1908.



The schoolhouse served local families until 1936, when students began attending Stanwood schools. It was purchased by the Camano City Fire District in 1945, and the island's first fire hall was built next door in 1946. The Fire District's Women's Auxiliary, the "Sparklers," ran the schoolhouse as a community hall: organizing meetings, hosting fundraisers, and sometimes providing volunteer firefighter services themselves.

In 2012 the Camano Schoolhouse Foundation purchased the schoolhouse and began restoring it. Inside, vintage



Camano City Schoolhouse, circa 1906.



The school house's restored classroom, with original chalkboards.

desks face the original chalkboards, creating an inspiring space and a sense of time travel. The foundation has recently returned the bell to the schoolhouse rooftop after a 60-plus-year absence and begun an archiving and digitizing project to preserve historic documents. Programming events and educational opportunities highlight Camano's history and provide enrichment.

The Foundation purchased the fire hall in 2018 and is restoring one of four bays as a Fire District Museum. They recently acquired a 1935 Ford fire engine. Interactive events such as the annual Stanwood-Camano Historic Sites Tour highlight Camano's storied history. Video tours and many other resources are available online.

The schoolhouse is located at 993 Orchid Road, Camano. Visit camanoschoolhouse.org for upcoming events.

Utsalady Ladies Aid is the second oldest continual organization in Island County. It was formed in 1908 by a group of pioneer women who wished to improve the quality of life on the island and have a social break from their hardworking lives. Engaging in civic duties and planning community events, the women did good works that stretched well beyond their island shores, supporting the war effort and disaster relief in times of crisis.



After many years of clam bakes and raffle drawings, the group had raised enough money to construct their own building. Built by volunteers for \$566, the Utsalady Ladies Aid Building is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Many social, civic, and even government events took place there. A beautiful table from the grand Utsalady Hotel was donated to the Ladies Aid which still serves up lunches today. Local legend suggests President Hayes and General Sherman visited Camano Island in 1880 and sat at this very table!

The first meeting in the building took place in April of 1924, and the Utsalady Ladies Aid has continued to serve Camano from there for a century, hosting community gatherings and awarding scholarships to high school graduates. The membership also includes men and multiple generations of some families. This dedicated group maintains the historic building beautifully and provides staple events in the annual calendar of islanders.

This historic building is located at 78 Utsalady Road, Camano Island. Look for the interpretive panel at the front of the building.



TOP: The Utsalady Ladies Aid building today. **ABOVE:** Grennan & Cranney's Saw Mills at Utsalady, circa 1862.

A visit to Cama Beach Historical State Park lets you experience a bygone era, when waterfront family resorts were popular in the Pacific Northwest: Camano Island alone saw 26 of these fishing resorts come and go between 1921 and 1990. Rows of original waterfront cabins are available for overnight stays, and the Cama Center is a popular venue for weddings and events. Enjoy a meal with a view at the popular onsite cafe.



Even if you can't stay the night, there is every chance to immerse yourself in the history of this stunning 488-acre park, with a visit to the Center for Wooden Boats at Cama Beach. The historic building was originally central to the resort, with small boats rented and launched via trailer dollies on rails from right inside the boathouse, known as a "marine railway." Today the historic building is still a hub of activity, with fascinating museum displays and educational programming, plus the opportunity to rent a variety of boats and get out on the water.

Come out on any Saturday year-round for the weekly Toy Boat Building, or check the schedule online for full-sized boat building workshops. Chat with knowledgeable staff,



explore the maritime history of the area, or rent some gear to catch your own dinner. Walk the mile-long trail connecting Cama Beach with Camano Island State Park and enjoy these coastlines as so many generations have before.

Visit the Center for Wooden Boats for a look back at the fishing and sailing boats of Camano Island's historic fishing resorts, and see how these craft are being preserved, restored and built today.

BELOW: Interior of the historic boathouse now home to the Center for Wooden Boats.
BOTTOM: Original Cama beach cabins and historic boathouse.



Although Stanwood is on the mainland, their history and that of Camano Island are inextricably linked. The neighboring communities once shared destinies as logging and milling towns, poised perfectly to take advantage of all the commerce happening on Puget Sound. The two continue to share resources and community spirit today.

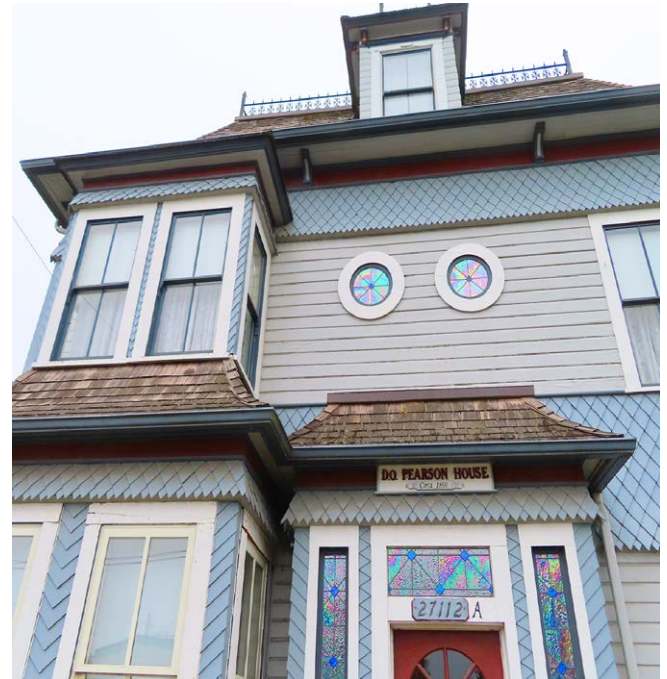


The Stanwood Area Historical Museum features exhibits and amazing collections of stories. Artifacts across several historic buildings reveal the connection between Stanwood and Camano Island histories. Starting in the D.O. Pearson House, home of the first Mayor of Stanwood, the museum has grown to encompass a whole historic corner, including the Tolin House and a former Oddfellows Hall. Today the hall is known as the Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center and serves as a community gathering place for events.

The sprawling museum and cultural center has no central reception area, so wander around and don't give up if you don't meet someone right away. There is plenty to see before you even go inside, such as the Fir Log Cross Section representing the logging boom of the area. Felled in 1928, the tree was approximately 1,200 years old and 150 feet tall. It's worth seeking out a docent to hear tales of this time and walk you through the many other intriguing displays.

Located at 27122 102nd Avenue NW, Stanwood. Look for a volunteer tour guide in the Eldridge Center or the Tolin House. Go to sahs-fncc.org for hours and events.

TOP RIGHT: The D.O. Pearson House, built circa 1890. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Stanwood-Leque Island Bridge over the West Pass of the Stillaguamish - dedicated in 1909. Photo: courtesy of Stanwood Area Historical Society.



You don't need to consider yourself a bird-watcher to be repeatedly awestruck by bird life on the islands. From the thrum of a tiny, curious hummingbird to the dramatic swoop of an enormous bald eagle, both islands are surrounded by the undeniable majesty of birds everyday. For most of the Northwest Coast tribes, various birds represent the most important clan crests and are frequently seen carved into totem poles. It's not hard to understand why, when the hoot of an owl or raspy call of a heron are so wonderfully commonplace here. Both islands have active Audubon societies with long histories, providing education, advocacy, and research. A side trip to Camano Island or North Whidbey are popular choices when the incredible snow geese are migrating by the tens of thousands to Skagit Valley each year.



Explore the wealth of birding opportunities Whidbey and Camano Islands have to offer year round.



Great blue heron. Photo: Jann Ledbetter.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Great Horned Owl. Photo: Jann Ledbetter. Bald Eagle. Photo: Jann Ledbetter. Black Oystercatcher. Photo: James Vancouver. Snow Geese. Photo: Jann Ledbetter. Pigeon Guillemot. Photo: dypics.

**These islands existed long before us,
and will exist long after us. Help keep
them real while you are here.**

Put yourself into an island state of mind,
and jot down a few of your thoughts.

- One thing I discovered today
- One thing that inspired me today
- One person I met today
- One thing I'm grateful for today
- One intention I have for tomorrow

*Adapted from the Transformational Travel
Journal by the Transformational Travel Council.*



**“... instead of thinking how things
may be, see them as they are.”**

Samuel Johnson, (1696-1772) American philosopher.



**Whidbey and Camano
ISLANDS**
Washington State - USA

Together, we are bridge-builders.

We aspire to connect and foster a sense of
belonging. While honoring the uniqueness of our
inhabitants and our communities,
we celebrate our shared identity.

We share this sense of place,
hoping you bring your whole self to us,
as you engage with our community
and awe-inspiring, natural environment.

As stewards of these islands, we strive to honor
our interconnections and restore balance and
mutual respect among all living things.

Honoring those who came before us, we are
creating a home for generations to come.

We offer our whole selves to you,
and we part better, stronger,
and more resilient because of
our time together.



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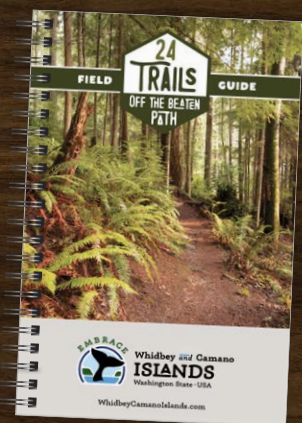
Accredited by the Transformational Travel Council





Get your FREE trails guide

At any Whidbey
Island visitor center,
and select locations
on Camano Island.



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Call or stop by a visitor center for in person travel tips.

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