

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the British Columbia Forest Museum – 40 hectares (100 acres) dedicated to the story of man and the forest. This brief guide will help you to enjoy your visit.

1. THE FOREST MUSEUM – Three historic standard gauge logging locomotives are on exhibition. Three narrow gauge steam engines, as well as two gasoline switch engines and a self-propelled crew-carrying "speeder" are in operation at the Museum.

The rails over which you ride date back to the 1880's, and were used on the original CPR tracks in British Columbia. Later, they were found in local logging camps.

2. MADILL SPAR – This 30m Madill Spar marks the entrance of the B.C. Forest Museum. Built in 1962, it was retired 20 years later. In that time it yarded enough lumber to build houses for all the residents in a city the size of Nanaimo. The mechanical metal spars were introduced in the 1960's to replace the wooden spar trees used until the mid 60's.

3. ORIENTATION BUILDING – Opened in July 1984, this is the beginning of your B.C. Forest Museum adventure. Buy your ticket for the train and enjoy the displays. A large map will prepare you for your trip around the B.C. Forest Museum Park.

4. COWICHAN VALLEY RAILWAY – Climb aboard as often as you like and take a ride behind a real steam locomotive of the three-foot narrow gauge railway that circles the park. Enjoy one of the last remaining steam rides in Canada.

Narrow gauge railways once hauled logs on Vancouver Island but were abandoned in 1925 in favour of the wider standard gauge (4' 8 1/2") because of the large logs.

5. ALDERLEA STATION – Board the train at Alderlea Station – the name suggested for what is now Duncan, but the name of the pioneer farmer, Duncan, stuck.

6. SOMENOS LAKE FARM – The forests had to give way to early settlers. The present farm structures were built at the turn of the century, replacing the far more modest original dwelling. This area will be developed further as time and funds permit.

7. LOGGING CAMP – Step into a logging camp of the 1930's. Visit the bunkhouse, surveyor-engineer's shack, filer's shed, time-keeper's office, first aid room, cookhouse, and blacksmith shop. Experience the logger's life in a camp that was originally located in Copper Canyon, only a few miles from the Museum.

8. WESTHOLME POST OFFICE – This typical small-town Post Office was built in 1914 for the community of Westholme, just north of the Museum.

9. LOOKOUT TOWER – In the fire season, a lone lookout man kept watch for fire, the great enemy of the forests. Towers like this one numbered well over 100 in the forests of British Columbia in the 1950's. Aerial surveillance now replaces the lookout man in many parts of the province. This tower was built for a P.N.E. exhibit.

10. DIAMOND CROSSING – An unusual but necessary feature to accommodate the railway on a limited area of land.

11. MAINTENANCE SHOPS & SERVICE AREA – The railway and all rolling stock are maintained to British Columbia passenger-carrying standards. Engineers, operators and structures are inspected annually.

12. OVERPASS – Enjoy the view and take pictures from this safe and accessible foot bridge over the railway.

13. DRINKWATER STATION – Named after the pioneer farmer and original owner of the present Forest Museum Park site.

14. SAWMILL – Donated in 1982 by the King family, this two-man sawmill has been expanded and now cuts logs to supply most of the Museum's needs. The area also includes an operational pit saw and planing mill.

15. WATERWHEEL – Restored by the students at Cowichan High School, the original water wheel pumped water to a nearby farm. Water-wheels powered the first district sawmills at Chemainus and Mill Bay.

16. TRAPPER'S CABIN – The "Lily of the Valley" was built by trappers, but used mainly by timber cruisers, measuring the amount of wood in nearby forests. The cabin was originally located at Wild Deer Lake, about 15 miles away.

17. THE TRESTLE – Over 100 metres long and built of pressure-treated Douglas Fir pilings, it crosses over Somenos Lake. A typical railway logging bridge, the trestle was rebuilt in 1981.

18. SOMENOS LAKE – Indian name for "resting place". The B.C. Forest Museum Park includes the historic site of the summer camp of the Cowichan Indian bands along the lake shore.

19. WATER TANK AND WINDMILL – Provide water for the steam locomotives. Windmills often pumped water in the early days.

20. NORTH COWICHAN STATION – Named after the second oldest rural municipality in British Columbia. Leave the train here and visit the LOG MUSEUM and outdoor LOGGING EXHIBITS.

21. LOG MUSEUM BUILDING – Built in 1966, it is located close to the site of the original public building of 1862 which served as a meeting place, school and church – the centre of social life of the first Cowichan settlement.

22. "1000-YEAR OLD MOTHERS" – East of the Log Museum, this small grove of Douglas Fir trees was planted in 1967, Canada's Centennial Year. They are the offspring of 1000-year old trees on Waterloo Mountain, 20 miles away.

23. BULL SAW – 108 inches in diameter, this was the largest circular saw of its kind, used on Chemainus sawmill log deck to cut long logs into shorter lengths. The Chemainus sawmill closed in 1983 after almost 100 years of continuous operation – the longest operation in B.C.

24. FLITCHES OF THE STEAM AGE – Beautiful examples of lumber cut from the heart of huge logs: Douglas Fir, Red Cedar, Sitka Spruce and Western Hemlock. The flitches were cut for display at the 1939 San Francisco World Exposition.

25. LITTLE JAKEY – Waterloo Traction Engine brought from Northern Ontario and used in this district during World War I. It is similar to the first steam tractor used in 1880 by Jeremiah Rogers to log the site of present Vancouver.

26. WIDE CEDAR SLAB – Split from a large cedar tree over one thousand years old.

27. GIANT CEDAR LOG AND GIANT SPRUCE LOG – The cedar log was felled in 1958 from a nearby old-growth forest where the trees were over 1300 years old. The spruce log was discovered by log salvagers at the bottom of Lake Cowichan where it remained underwater for more than 30 years. It was moved to the Museum in 1983.

28. HEMMINGSEN STEAM DONKEY, 1903 – Matt Hemmingsen used this powerful steam donkey to yard big logs from the woods to the railway landing.

29. POLE CAR, c.1895 – a primitive log car on a pole track, used by early loggers.

30. SPOOL DONKEY, c.1894 – restored from parts of the first steam donkey used in British Columbia at nearby Chemainus. Ground-yarded logs had proved that machines could replace oxen.

31. "OLD FAITHFUL", TWO-DRUM DONKEY – Built in Victoria in 1914, this steam machine loaded logs for fifty years.

32. CUMMINGS OR GAS DONKEY AND GIN POLE, "LITTLE TUGGER" – This machine marked the beginning of the gasoline age in the woods: it was used for clearing right-of-way.

33. FORESTERS' WALK – Take a walk through the forest and enjoy old growth trees towering over 40 m.

34. 1919 REPUBLIC TRUCK – Once the heaviest logging trucks on Vancouver Island.

1918 MAXWELL TRUCK – Hauled telephone poles and piling.

35. CLETRAC TRACTOR, 1928 – Gas-powered crawler tractor and "bummer", – preceded the "arch-skidding" method of logging.

36. GRADER – Originally used by the Municipality of North Cowichan and presented to the Museum.

37. HAND CAR – Every railway logging camp had several of these for emergency and maintenance work.

38. 1947 HOME-MADE FIRE TRUCK

39. TREE ROOM AND THEATRE – The Tree Room and Theatre are yours to enjoy. Note the daily schedule of films.

40. LOCOMOTIVE DISPLAY – A new addition to the grounds in 1984, this locomotive storage shed houses the Museum's display locomotives, including a Climax.

41. FOREST NURSERY – The demonstration nursery is currently in fallow.

42. 1905 SCHOOLHOUSE – This pre-fabricated building was produced at Hastings Mill (Vancouver). The wall sections were bolted together with the shingle roof being completed by hand.

43. KOKSILAH RANGER STATION & GARAGE – Moved to the Museum in 1986, these buildings now house the 75th anniversary exhibit dealing with the history of the British Columbia Forest Service from 1912 to 1987.

Cowichan Valley Forest Museum, Vancouver Island, BC, c 1978

