



DESTINATION FOCUS

AAA Washington Travel Services

San Juan Islands

Glaciers that covered northwest Washington approximately 15 million years ago created the San Juan Archipelago. Bathed in clear, cold saltwater, the group consists of 172 islands ranging in size from rocky islets to 57-square-mile Orcas. The island's geography typically features rounded ridges and rolling lowlands cloaked in dense forests. The shore is invariably rocky, in places indented with long inlets and deep bays. Port settlements and villages cling to the coast. Patches of farmland spread over the interior.

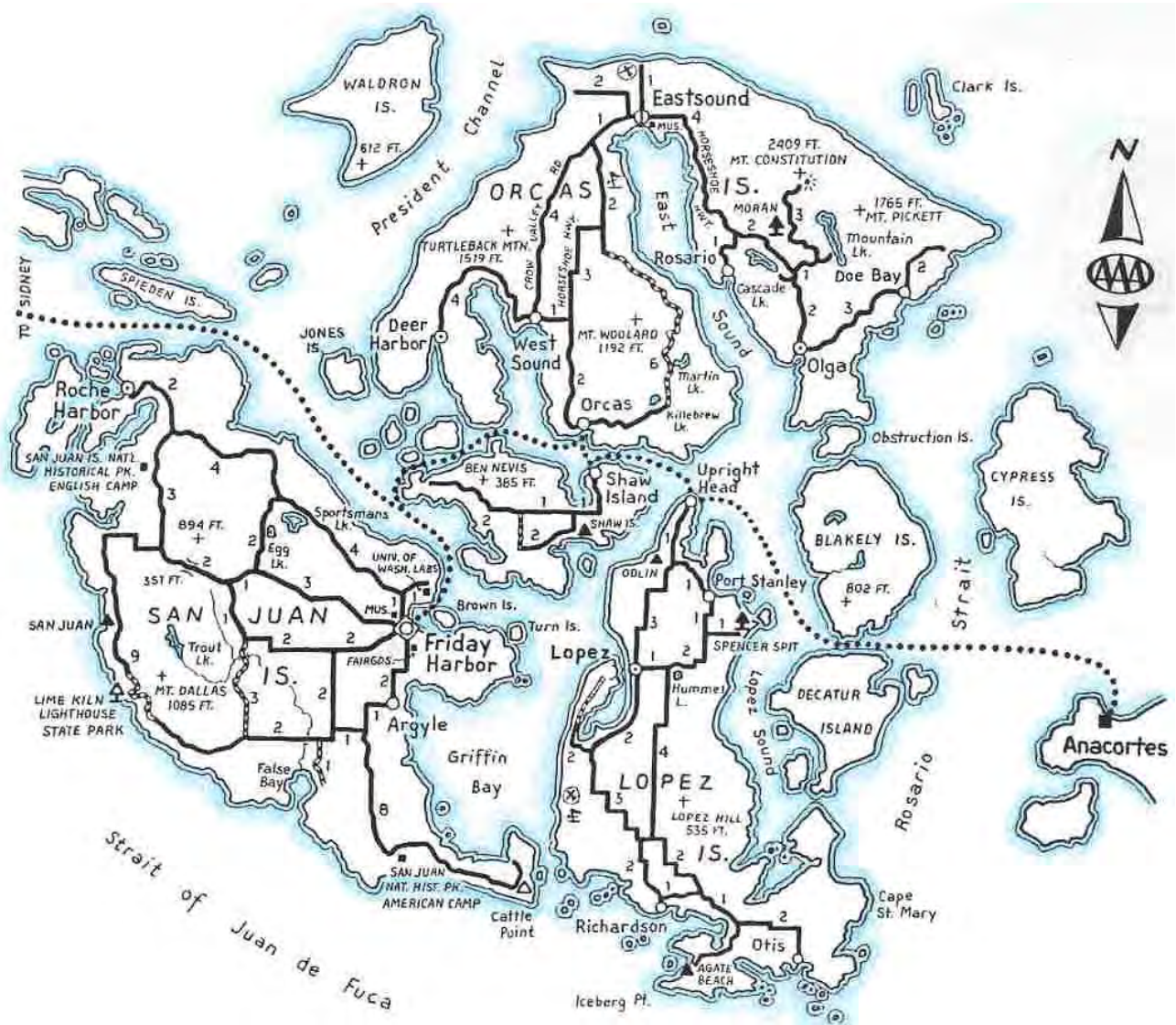


Boats crowd the picturesque port of Friday Harbor on San Juan Island

Most of the island names date back to Spanish exploration in the late 18th century. Spanish captain Francisco Eliza charted and named the islands in 1791, 16 years after a previous expedition had discovered them. In 1792 Capt. George Vancouver claimed the islands for Britain and in 1841 Capt. Charles Wilkes declared them part of the United States. The ensuing ownership dispute nearly brought the U.S. and England to blows during the infamous Pig War of 1859, so called because a stray British pig was shot in an American potato patch. The opposing sides occupied the San Juans for the next 13 years, but agreed to arbitration by German Kaiser Wilhelm I, who ruled in favor of the United States. What remains of the British and American forts now constitute part of the San Juan Islands National Historical Park.

Fidalgo, Lopez, Orcas, San Juan and Shaw are the largest and most populated islands. The San Juan Islands National Wildlife Refuge encompasses 48 smaller islands and rocks – all but Matia and Turn

islands are closed to the public. Wildlife abounds in the San Juans. Visitors typically see bald eagles (the largest grouping of these magnificent birds in all the 48 contiguous states). Great horned owls, tufted puffins and a variety of other birds and mammals inhabit the islands. The surrounding waters support salmon, seals, dolphins and several species of whale.



Recreational opportunities include boating, swimming, scuba diving, fishing, hiking, bicycling and bird watching. A network of narrow, paved roads offers motorists and cyclists many miles of pleasant itineraries. Wildlife and sightseeing cruises are available.

Lodging choices abound, ranging from bed & breakfasts, cabins and inns to small hotels and resorts. Reservations are advised, especially during the busy summer months and on weekends. Contact your nearest AAA Washington service center for more information and reservations.

Access to the islands is by sea or air. Fidalgo, close to the mainland, is connected by bridges to the state highway system. Its main city, Anacortes, 15 miles west of I-5 exit 230 at Burlington via SR-20, is the chief ferry gateway to the San Juans. **Washington State Ferries** offers daily car ferry service to Lopez, Shaw, San Juan and Orcas islands, and on to Sidney, British Columbia; vehicle reservations are possible; phone (800) 843-3779 for more information. The ferry terminal is 4 miles west of downtown Anacortes – follow SR-20.

A flotilla of smaller passenger ferries links the islands with other mainland ports during the summer season. From Bellingham, **San Juan Cruises** serves Friday Harbor; phone (888) 443-4552. From Port Townsend, **Puget Sound Express** serves Friday Harbor; phone (360) 385-5288. From Seattle, **Clipper Navigation** serves Friday Harbor; phone (800) 888-2535.

Most visitors take Washington State Ferries from Anacortes. Your boat heads west across Rosario Strait, an important shipping route linking Puget Sound with the Inside Passage. The high, wooded landmass to the north is **Cypress Island**, accessible by private boat. Its 1,484-foot peak is the second highest in the San Juans. Next the ferry negotiates Thatcher Pass, the narrow channel separating Blakely and Decatur islands, both privately owned. Our first port of call is Lopez Island.

Lopez Island

Third largest in the chain (29½ square miles), Lopez was named by Captain Juan Francisco de Eliza for his sailing master Gonzalo López de Haro. One of the lesser visited of the major San Juans, Lopez is popular with cyclists. Miles of back road lead through gently rolling wooded country interspersed with pasture and farmland.



Lopez Island is home to 2,500 people.

Ferries dock at Upright Head on the island's northern tip. **Odlin County Park**, one mile south of the ferry landing, fronts a sandy beach. Park recreation includes camping, beachcombing, clamming, swimming and fishing.

The island's major population center is the village of **LOPEZ** (pop. 650, alt. 24 ft.), a cluster of commercial establishments, marinas and residences overlooking Fisherman's Bay. The **Lopez Historical Museum** chronicles island life with maritime and pioneer exhibits (open Weds.-Sun. in summer, closed Oct.-April). Saturdays from May into September, stop by the **Lopez Farmer's Market** for fresh produce and crafts. On the road leading into town is **Lopez Island Vineyards**, using grapes from the Yakima Valley and their own vineyard at the winery (closed from Christmas through March). The peninsula across the bay from the village offers some interesting hikes. **Center Church**, 3 miles south on Fisherman Bay Rd., dates from 1887. Symbolic of island hospitality, the sanctuary hosts both Roman Catholic and Lutheran congregations.

Hummel Lake, a mile east of Lopez village, is a popular trout fishing pond and features a campground for cyclists. **Spencer Spit State Park**, 4 miles northeast of the village, preserves a wave-built sand spit enclosing a saltwater lagoon. Activities include camping, picnicking, clamming, beachcombing and birdwatching. The relatively warm waters of the lagoon offers a nice spot for a summer swim. The south coast of Lopez Island is more rugged with steep cliffs and isolated coves. The all-but-abandoned hamlet of **RICHARDSON** (pop. about 10, alt. 25 ft.) on Mackeye Harbor was a busy fishing port and canning center at the turn of the 20th century. Boats once carried island-grown produce to urban markets in Puget Sound ports. At **Agate Beach County Park**, 3 miles southeast via Mackeye Harbor Rd., a trail leads down the steep bank to a small

crescent-shaped pebble beach. The bay, hosting an abundance of purple sea urchins, is popular with scuba divers. Trails lead to Iceberg Point, at the southwest tip of the island, part of San Juan Islands National Monument.

Visitor information: Lopez Island Chamber of Commerce - phone (877) 433-2789 / Web – www.lopezisland.com.

SAN JUAN ISLANDS NATIONAL MONUMENT protects 75 sites of cultural and ecological significance scattered throughout the archipelago. These lands include ancient fishing sites and camas meadows important to Native American culture. The monument also protects popular recreation destinations like Iceberg Point and Watmough Bay on Lopez Island, Cattle Point on San Juan Island and Patos Island. It includes historically important lighthouses on Patos Island and at Turn Point on Stuart Island. Recreation includes outstanding wildlife viewing, as well as fishing, kayaking, hiking, and camping.



Watmough Bay on Lopez Island



Cattle Point Light on San Juan



Ancient tree at Iceberg Point on Lopez Island

Most of the sites are remote and accessible only by boat. Cattle Point, adjacent to the American Camp unit of San Juan Island National Historical Park, is accessible by trail. On Lopez Island, Iceberg Point with rocky cliffs, gnarled trees and dramatic views is accessible by trail from the parking lot in Agate Beach County Park. Stunning Watmough Bay at the southeast end of Lopez, is accessible by trail from a lane branching off Watmough Head Road.

The monument, established by presidential proclamation in 2013, is administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Note: some trails use easements across private lane; please respect private property. Phone (360) 468-3754.

RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Bicycling

- **Lopez Bicycle Works**, 2847 Fisherman Bay Rd., Lopez Island, WA 98261, has bikes for rent. Open May- Sept. only. Phone (360) 468-2847 / Web – www.lopezbicycleworks.com.

Kayaking

- **Cascadia Kayak Tours**, offers day and multi-day trips April-November from various locations. Write: 441 Sweetbrier Lane, Lopez WA 98261. Phone (360) 468-3008. Web – <http://cascadiakayaks.com/>.

Shaw Island

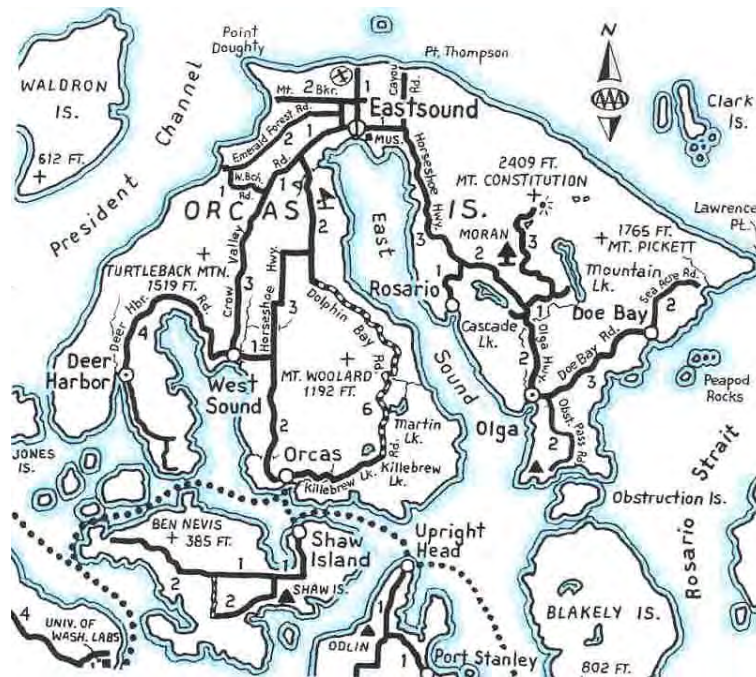
Dwarfed by its larger neighbors, 7.7-square-mile Shaw Island is the smallest served by Washington State Ferries. Most of heavily wooded Shaw is privately owned. A scarcity of fresh water has limited development and the population totals 254. The commercial hub of the island is the combination store / post office / gas station and marina at the ferry landing. A small community of Franciscan nuns formerly **The Little Portion Store**, named for an Italian church favored by St. Francis of Assisi. The nuns also had a contract to operate the ferry terminal on the island (from 1976 to 2004). With no new nuns to replenish their community, they left the island in June, 2004. Another religious community, a cloistered Benedictine order, runs a farm raising rare breeds of cattle and sheep.

Near the island's center are two points of interest. The **Little Red School House** is a functioning one-room school. It's on the National Register of Historic Places. Across the road stands the library. Its adjacent log cabin houses the **Shaw Island Historical Museum** (open Tues., Thurs. and Sun.). Outside you'll see a reefnetter's boat, a type of craft and fishing style peculiar to the San Juans.

Shaw Island County Park (also known as South Beach), 1/4 mile south of the ferry dock on Indian Cove, offers the island's only campground. Its sandy beach is one of the best in the archipelago.

Visitor information: Shaw Island Association - Web www.shawislanders.org.

Orcas Island



Largest and most rugged of the San Juans, Orcas covers 57 square miles and is home to nearly 5,000 people. Its name recalls an 18th-century viceroy of New Spain, as Mexico was then known, part of whose very long name was 'Horcasitas.' The island is shaped like a horseshoe featuring two large inlets opening to the south. State Ferries dock at the village of **ORCAS** (population 300, alt. 16 ft.) on the island's rugged south shore. The white-frame Orcas Hotel, built in 1900, dominates the settlement. **Orcas Island Eclipse Charters** offers daily 3½-hour whale-watching boat trips; phone (800) 376-6566 for reservations and departure times. Bike rentals are also available in Orcas village (see *Recreation Activities* below). **Killebrew Lake**, 2 miles east, offers fishing and wilderness camping in a wooded setting.

Horseshoe Highway, the island's trunk road, heads north from the ferry landing. A mile off this route is the village of **WEST SOUND** (population around 100, alt. 20 ft.), a collection of homes and a few stores overlooking a large marina. Deer Harbor Road winds around the head of the inlet whose name, Massacre Bay, recalls a Haida raid on a Lummi Indian camp in which some 100 Lummi perished. The powerful Haida periodically pillaged coastal tribes as far south as Puget Sound, traveling from their base in British Columbia's Queen Charlotte Islands in magnificent ocean-going canoes.

DEER HARBOR (pop. 100, alt. 65 ft.), 4 miles west of West Sound, is a pleasant community of shops and cafes fronting a popular marina on the island's westernmost inlet. Quiet in the off-season, boaters flock to this protected bay in the summer months, swelling the population to over 500. The settlement dates back to 1859, when the Hudson's Bay Company set up an outpost to supply venison to its fort in Victoria. The village's oldest standing buildings were erected in the 1890s. The marina rents boats; phone (360) 376-3037.

Return to West Sound, where the Crow Valley Road strikes north, running along the eastern edge of forested **Turtleback Mountain**, a natural preserve whose steep ridge rises to an elevation of 1,519 feet. A former one-room school built in 1888 now houses the **Crow Valley School Museum**; open Thursday-Sunday afternoons in summer.

EASTSOUND (pop. 1,200, alt. 40 ft.), located at the head of its namesake inlet, is the largest population center on Orcas Island, offering a full range of visitor services. The town is an eclectic mix of old and new structures with a few dating back to its founding in the 1870s. **Emmanuel Episcopal Church**, built in 1886, resembles an English country parish. The **Outlook Inn**, one of the state's oldest operating hostelries, has been serving guests since 1883. For insights into the area's past visit the **Orcas Island Historical Museum**, 2 blocks north of Main Street on North Beach Road. Its exhibits range from Northwest Indian basketry to pioneer artifacts, including 4 original log cabins (open Tuesday-Sunday afternoons in summer). The **Funhouse Discovery Center**, just north of town at 30 Pea Patch Lane, is a children's museum featuring dozens of hands-on activities demonstrating scientific principles (open Wednesday-Sunday in summer). Village Square hosts the **Orcas Island Farmers Market**, Saturdays from May through September.

Beyond Eastsound the Horseshoe Highway continues around the head of the inlet, then swings south, first following its eastern shore, then climbing into the rugged interior of Orcas' eastern lobe.

Moran State Park, a gift from the estate of shipbuilder and former Seattle mayor Robert Moran, is one of the scenic gems of Washington's park system. The park sprawls over 4,606 acres, encompassing freshwater lakes and streams, miles of scenic drives, campsites, picnic areas and more than 30 miles of hiking trails. Cascade Falls, with a 100-foot drop, is the largest waterfall in the San Juans. A narrow paved lane winds up to the flat-topped summit of Mt. Constitution. This 2,409-foot peak is the highest elevation in the islands. A short trail leads to a four-story stone observation tower styled after a 12th-century fortress in Russia's Caucasus Mountains. A magnificent 360-degree panorama stretches across the maze of islands and waterways of the San Juans to Vancouver Island, the Olympics and the snowcapped volcanoes of the Cascade Range.

Moran's elegant mansion, built in 1906, is now part of the Rosario Resort complex, located outside the park overlooking East Sound.

The hilly southeast section of Orcas has two waterfront hamlets: **OLGA** (pop. 150, alt. 18 ft.) and **DOE BAY** (pop. 40, alt. 22 ft.). Southeast of Olga a paved lane leads to the rocky shore of Obstruction Pass, the channel separating Orcas from Blakely Island. **Peapod Rocks**, a mile-long chain of islets east of Doe Bay, is a State Park Underwater Recreation Area, popular with scuba divers.

Visitor Information: Orcas Island Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 252, Eastsound WA 98245. Phone (360) 376-2273. Web – www.orcasislandchamber.com

RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Bicycling

- **Deer Harbor Marina** rents bikes. Write: 5164 Deer Harbor Rd., Deer Harbor WA 98243. Phone (360) 376-3037
- **Dolphin Bay Bicycles** rents bikes near the ferry landing in Orcas village. Write: P.O. Box 1346, Eastsound, WA 98245. Phone (360) 376-4157. Web www.rockisland.com/~dolphin
- **Wildlife Cycles** rents bikes at 350 North Beach Rd. in Eastsound. Write: P.O. Box 1048, Eastsound WA 98245. Phone (360) 376-4708. Web www.wildlifecycles.com

Kayaking

- **Shearwater Adventures** offers guided 3-hour sea kayak tours daily April-October. Full-day and multi-day tours also available. Reservations recommended. Write: P.O. Box 787, Eastsound WA 98245. Phone (360) 376-4699. Web www.shearwaterkayaks.com

San Juan Island

Westernmost of the archipelago's major islands, San Juan covers 55 square miles. It's also the most populous, housing more than 7,500 residents, roughly half the county's total. Rolling in the east, its western half rises to wooded heights more than a thousand feet above the sea. **FRIDAY HARBOR** (pop. 2,220, alt. 91 ft.) is both the seat of San Juan County and its only incorporated municipality. The town spreads over a sloping site overlooking its namesake bay on the east side of the island. The town is named for Friday, a shepherd of Hawaiian ancestry employed by the Hudson's Bay Company.

The busy harbor is the focus of Washington State Ferries and a variety of other seasonal passenger boat services to Bellingham, Port Townsend, Seattle and Victoria. Antique shops, art galleries, cafes and other commercial establishments cluster along Spring Street extending west from the waterfront and spilling into the branching side streets. Friday Harbor has the county's largest collection of tourist facilities, ranging from B&Bs and inns to small-scale hotels. A selection of lodgings

are also scattered across the island's rural environs.

Friday Harbor features a number of outfitters offering wildlife and whale watching excursions. Choices include **San Juan Excursions** (phone 800-809-4253), **San Juan Safaris** (phone 800-450-6858) and **Western Prince Cruises** (phone 800-757-6722).

Attractions in town include the **Whale Museum** (61 1st Street N.), featuring a comprehensive display of cetaceans; open 10am to 5pm daily (admission). The **San Juan Historical Museum** (405 Price Street) has several buildings dating back to the 1890s, including a farmhouse and former jail (admission). **Island Museum of Art**, 314 Spring St., showcases works by local and regional artists. Open Tues.-Sun. March through November.

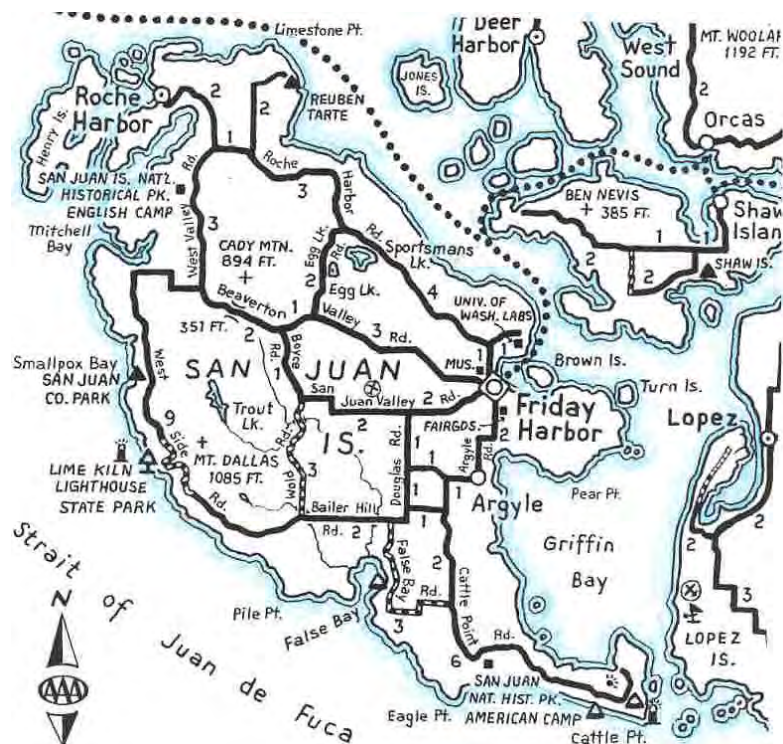
San Juan Island National Historical Park has a visitor center on Spring a block above the waterfront. The park's two historical sites are on the west and south sides of the island (*see*

listings below). The University of Washington maintains its **Marine Laboratories** on the north side of the harbor. Established in 1904, it attracts scientists and researchers from around the world. **Spring Landing Aquarium**, in the Passenger Ferry Terminal, has displays of area marine life.

Around San Juan Island

A series of county roads forms a 45-mile loop (including some doubling-back) around the island. Motorists note, island roads tend to be narrow – watch for bicyclists! From central Friday Harbor follow Second Street and Guard to Tucker Avenue. The latter becomes Roche Harbor Road, which leads across the northern part of the island towards its namesake community. Three miles out of town, **San Juan Vineyards** offers wine tasting daily noon-6pm in an early 1900s farmhouse. Most of their grapes come from eastern Washington, although they produce limited bottling from their local vineyard.

The road winds through rolling, wooded landscape, skirts Sportsman Lake, then drops down to sea level at **ROCHE HARBOR** (pop. 350, alt. 55 ft.), overlooking its namesake bay at the island's northwest corner. This is a U.S. Customs port of entry – during the summer, boats and yachts from all over the West crowd its bay swelling the seasonal resident population to over 1,500. Founded as a Hudson's Bay Company trading post in 1850, its name recalls Richard Roche, who served aboard English naval expeditions to the San Juans in those days. In the 1880s, mining tapped into the area's rich limestone deposits – the ruins of the lime works line the bluffs south of town. The Roche Harbor Lime & Cement Company, the largest lime producer in the West, set up its headquarters here. Roche Harbor became a model company town. At its peak the kilns



employed hundreds of workers. Company president John S. McMillin entertained lavishly; his guests included President Theodore Roosevelt. The quarries closed in 1956.

A cluster of historical buildings faces the marina. The **Hotel de Haro**, now part of Roche Harbor Resort, started as a bunkhouse. The three-story rambling wood structure set amid gardens overlooking the bay is now on the National Registry of Historic Places. The resort includes former company homes, now rented as cottages. Nearby is **Our Lady of Good Hope Chapel**, built in 1892. Visitors are welcome in this privately owned Roman Catholic chapel. An unusual attraction is **Afterglow Vista**, the McMillin family's mausoleum, decorated with Masonic symbols. It's located on a hillside about a half-mile north of the hotel. At **Westcott Bay Sculpture Park**, on Roche Harbor Road, trails loop through a 19-acre site dotted with more than 100 installations.

Three miles south of Roche Harbor lies **English Camp**, a unit of **San Juan Islands National Historical Park**. In 1859, both England and the United States claimed the San Juans. England drew the international boundary through Rosario Strait, claiming the San Juans as part of its Vancouver Island colony. Americans said the boundary should pass through Haro Strait, meaning the archipelago was under the Stars and Stripes. When an American settler shot a pig belonging to the manager of the local Hudson's Bay Company sheep farm, tempers flared to the danger point, sparking a period of conflict known as the Pig War. The potentially explosive situation continued until the conflicting claims were arbitrated peacefully in 1872. Restored barracks, a commissary, hospital and blockade recall the English detachment stationed here from 1860 to 1872. An old orchard and traces of a formal garden dot the grassy slope facing Garrison Bay. The British Military Cemetery is a short walk from the parking lot.

The West Side Road parallels San Juan's western shore. **San Juan County Park**, on Smallpox Bay, has the island's only public campground (reservations recommended in summer, call 360-378-1842). The bay's name recalls an 1860 smallpox outbreak that devastated the native population, which had no immunity to the virulent disease. The area is popular with scuba divers. Views extend across Haro Strait to Vancouver Island.



Lime Kiln Light overlooks the western shore of San Juan Island

Lime Kiln Point State Park nestles at the base of Mt. Dallas (elev. 1,085 ft.), the island's highest point. The near shore waters are favored feeding grounds for orca and minke whales and the park's rocky point offers a good vantage point for wildlife watching. Orcas occasionally graze the kelp beds within 25 feet of the beach. If you're lucky, you may glimpse porpoise and the rarer pilot whale.

Late summer through fall is the best period for whale watching. The lighthouse, built in 1914, is now automated. The property became a state park in 1984, and is said to be the only one in the country dedicated to whale watching. The visitor center is open Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.

South of Lime Kiln Light the road winds along the rocky shore. In spring and early summer wildflowers carpet the hillsides. The road curves eastward, crossing the farmlands of the San Juan Valley. A gravel lane branches south to **False Bay**, a beachcombers paradise, especially at low tide. The bay constitutes an ecological preserve and visitors are admonished not to disturb the area's natural history.

The **American Camp** unit of **San Juan National Historical Park** occupies the barren southeast toe of the island. Remains of the U.S. defense redoubt and a reconstructed officer's barracks are visible. The military occupied the camp from 1859 to 1872. A $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile interpretive trail leads through the site. You can also climb 290-ft. Mt. Finlayson. Giant piles of driftwood back South Beach, the island's longest, facing the Strait of Juan de Fuca. In clear weather the Olympics and distant Mt. Rainier frame the horizon. Eagle Cove, at the western edge of the park, is where the first European settlers came ashore in 1850. The road continues through the park ending at Cattle Point, part of **San Juan Islands National Monument**. Here a small lighthouse marks the narrow entrance to the channel separating San Juan from Lopez Island. The park has a picnic site and beach access.

Follow Cattle Point Road north from the park. Turn right on Argyle Road, which leads back to Friday Harbor. Just south of the **ARGYLE** community, a couple miles south of Friday Harbor, is the site of the former town of **SAN JUAN**. During the early settlement period, San Juan was a raucous frontier port. After the international boundary dispute was arbitrated in 1872, commissioners of the newly organized San Juan County decided to place the county seat in a more tranquil setting several miles north at Friday Harbor. Commercial establishments gradually relocated to the new town. A brush fire destroyed what remained of San Juan in 1890.

Visitor Information: San Juan Island Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center, 1 Front Street (upstairs behind Front Street Ale House). P.O. Box 98, Friday Harbor WA 98250. Phone (360) 378-5240. Web www.sanjuanisland.org

Public Transportation: San Juan Transit offers scheduled bus service around the island. Buses operate daily during the peak visitor season. For more information phone (360) 378-8887. Web www.sanjuantransit.com.
Taxi service is also available, phone (360) 378-8294.

RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Bicycling / Mopeds

- **Island Bicycles** rents mountain bikes (better than skinny-tire bikes for San Juan roads and terrain) from two locations: 380 Argyle St. in Friday Harbor and at Roche Harbor Resort. Write: P.O. Box 1609, Friday Harbor WA 98250. Phone (360) 378-4941. Web www.islandbicycles.com
- **Susie's Mopeds & Scooters** has rentals at two locations: at 125 Nichols Street in Friday Harbor and in Roche Harbor. Phone (360) 378-5244 or (800) 532-0087. Web www.susiesmopeds.com

Kayaking

- **Crystal Seas Kayaking** offers 3-hr., sunset, full-day and multi-day kayak tours from various sites on the island (includes complimentary shuttle pick-up). Write: P.O. Box 3135, Friday Harbor WA 98250. Phone (360) 378-4223 or (877) 732-7877. Web www.crystalseas.com
- **Discovery Sea Kayaks** offers guided half-day, sunset and multi-day trips from various sites (includes shuttle from office adjacent to ferry dock). Write: P.O. Box 22743, Friday Harbor WA 98250. Phone (360) 378-2559 or (866) 461-2559. Web www.discoveryseakayak.com
- **San Juan Kayak Expeditions** offers kayak rentals (\$90 -100 per day) and guided 3- and 4-day sea kayak excursions. P.O. Box 2041, Friday Harbor WA 98250. Phone (360) 378-4436. Web www.sanjuankayak.com
- **San Juan Safaris** offers 3-hr. sea kayak tours May-Sept. from Friday Harbor and Roche Harbor and 5-hr. tours May to mid-Aug. from Roche Harbor. Rentals also available. Phone 360-378-1323 or 800-450-6858. Web www.sanjuansafaris.com
- **Sea Quest Expeditions** offers guided half-day and full-day sea kayak tours daily. Meet at ferry dock; includes shuttle to beach. Multi-day excursions offered late May to mid-October. Write: P.O. Box 2424, Friday Harbor WA 98250. Phone (360) 378-5767 or (888) 589-4253. Web www.sea-quest-kayak.com

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