



SECRET LAKES

OF SOUTHERN VANCOUVER ISLAND

Exploring the recreation, nature and history of 25 lakes
from the Saanich Peninsula to the Sooke Hills

ADAM UNGSTAD

Matheson Lake

At over 160 hectares, Matheson Lake Regional Park offers just about anything a person could want from a lake. A sand beach, hiking trails, and direct access from the Galloping Goose Regional Trail make Matheson a favourite for families and cyclists.

FACTS

Surface Area	25 ha
Max Depth	5 m
Elevation	21 m
Land Status	Regional Park

ACTIVITIES

Swimming	Good swimming. Watch for turtles.
Hiking	Trail circling the lake provides a good workout. The north east side is flat and easy, while the south west side is moderate to challenging.
Cycling	Access from the Galloping Goose Regional Trail. Cycling not permitted in the park.
Boating	Boats with electric motors permitted.
Fishing	Stocked with Cutthroat and Rainbow trout.
Picnics	Bring a blanket for the beach.
Pets	Must be under control and on trails. Must be on a leash at the main beach from June 1 to Sept 15.

FACILITIES

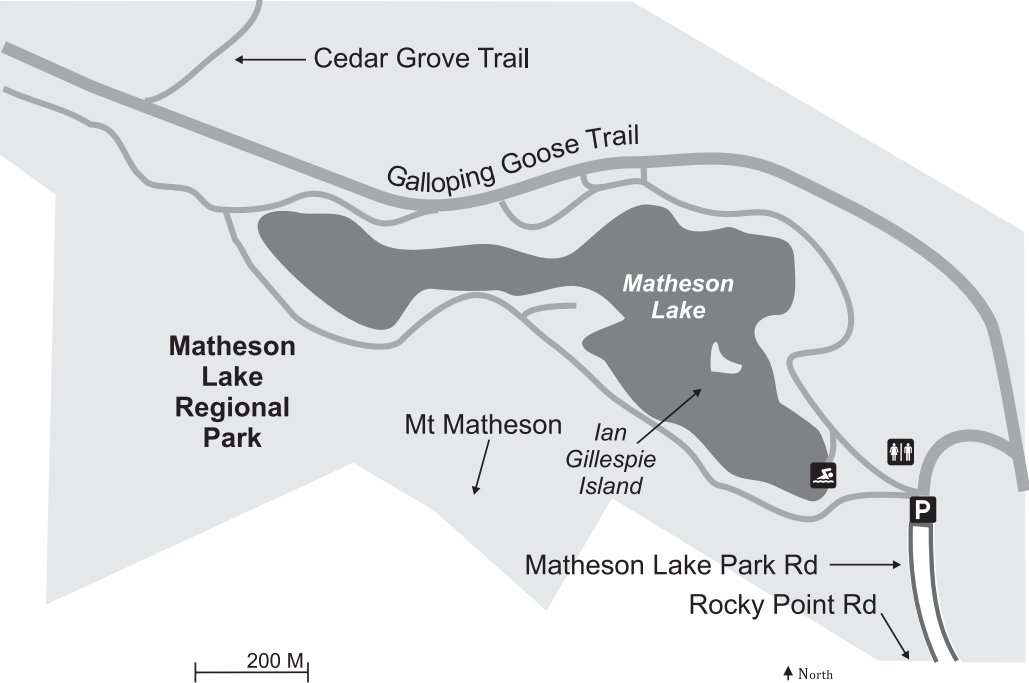
Beach	Large sandy beach close to the parking lot.
Washrooms	Available close to the main beach.
Accessibility	The short trail to the beach may not be wheelchair accessible. The near by Galloping Goose Regional Trail offers a wheelchair accessible stroll, but does not provide lake views.



Swimmers on Ian Gillespie Island at Matheson Lake. Photo by Adam Ungstad.

DIRECTIONS FROM VICTORIA

1. *Head north on Douglas St (Trans-Canada Hwy)*
2. *Take Exit 10 toward View Royal/Colwood*
3. *Slight right onto Island Hwy S*
4. *Continue onto Old Island Hwy S*
5. *Continue onto Sooke Rd S*
6. *Turn left onto Metchosin Rd*
7. *Turn right onto Happy Valley Rd*
8. *Take the 1st left onto Rocky Point Rd*
9. *Turn right onto Matheson Lake Park Rd*



Referred to as a “precious jewel” in a 1979 edition of the Victoria Times, Matheson Lake is a wonderful place with a sand beach, surrounding mid-growth forest, and plenty of trails to explore nearby. It will take several visits to truly know the nature of this magical place.

If you prefer being in the water rather than on the trails, swim from the main beach out to Ian Gillespie Island. This small island offers plenty of space to lie down and soak up the sun after a good swim. While you are there be sure to say a friendly hello to the colony of peaceful ants that calls the island home.

Leading through Douglas fir, arbutus, and western red cedar woods, the full lakeside trail takes about 2 -3 hours. It connects with the Galloping Goose Regional Trail and crosses Wildwood Creek before taking an incline up Mount Matheson on the south side. Watch for yellow skunk cabbage at the west end of the lake as well as chickadees, woodpeckers, and Steller’s jay in the branches around you.

If you decide to hike the full trail, keep in mind that maps can be deceiving and that the south side of the lake requires a bit of endurance. If you venture to the south side be sure to wear better shoes than flip flops! The views of the lake make this effort worthwhile.

Matheson Lake is a local favourite for fishing, either from the shore, a boat, or a float tube. The lake is stocked with cutthroat and rainbow trout, and the fishing is best in April and May. If you don’t mind carrying your boat about 300 meters from the car park it’s possible to launch small boats from the main beach area. Boats with electric motors are permitted.

HISTORY

Matheson Lake and its neighbour, the 700 foot Mount Matheson, were named after Sir James Matheson, a prominent business man in Hong Kong in the early 1800s. It is not clear whether James Matheson ever visited the area.

The lake was originally referred to as ‘Big Lake’ in an early Victoria Directory, and was also known as Ash’s Lake after Dr. John Ash who owned land in the area.

Before the Galloping Goose Railway was converted to a trail, the residents of Sooke would pack a lunch and walk along the rail line to Matheson Lake, making it an all-day outing. Many of them would return home at the end of the day with plenty of fish.

Did you know?

Aboriginal lore recounted by Chief Ed Underwood of the East Saanich First Nations band states that Matheson Lake is guarded by all-powerful giants called Sheyeyas. Superior in intelligence and larger than sasquatches, Sheyeyas are invisible and can take on any shape they wish. It is believed that the Sheyeyas took the shapes of swans to guard the lake in the past.



A glimpse of Matheson Lake through the trees on the lakeshore trail.
Photo by Adam Ungstad.

Kemp Lake

Found just past the municipality of Sooke, Kemp Lake is ideal for canoes and kayaks. Bring a picnic lunch to watch dragonflies circle water lilies. Aside from being a beautiful place to visit, the lake serves as a water source for the community living nearby.

FACTS

Surface Area	25 ha
Max Depth	11 m
Elevation	33 m
Land Status	Private Land / Municipal Access Points

ACTIVITIES

Swimming	Good swimming. Watch for turtles.
Hiking	A network of trails exists on the east side of the lake (Broom Hill). These trails are on private land.
Boating	Carry-in boat launch at Chubb Rd. Power boats not permitted.
Fishing	Cutthroat and rainbow trout (stocked in 2012).
Picnics	The best place for a picnic at Kemp Lake is on your canoe.
Pets	Must be under control and kept on trails.

FACILITIES

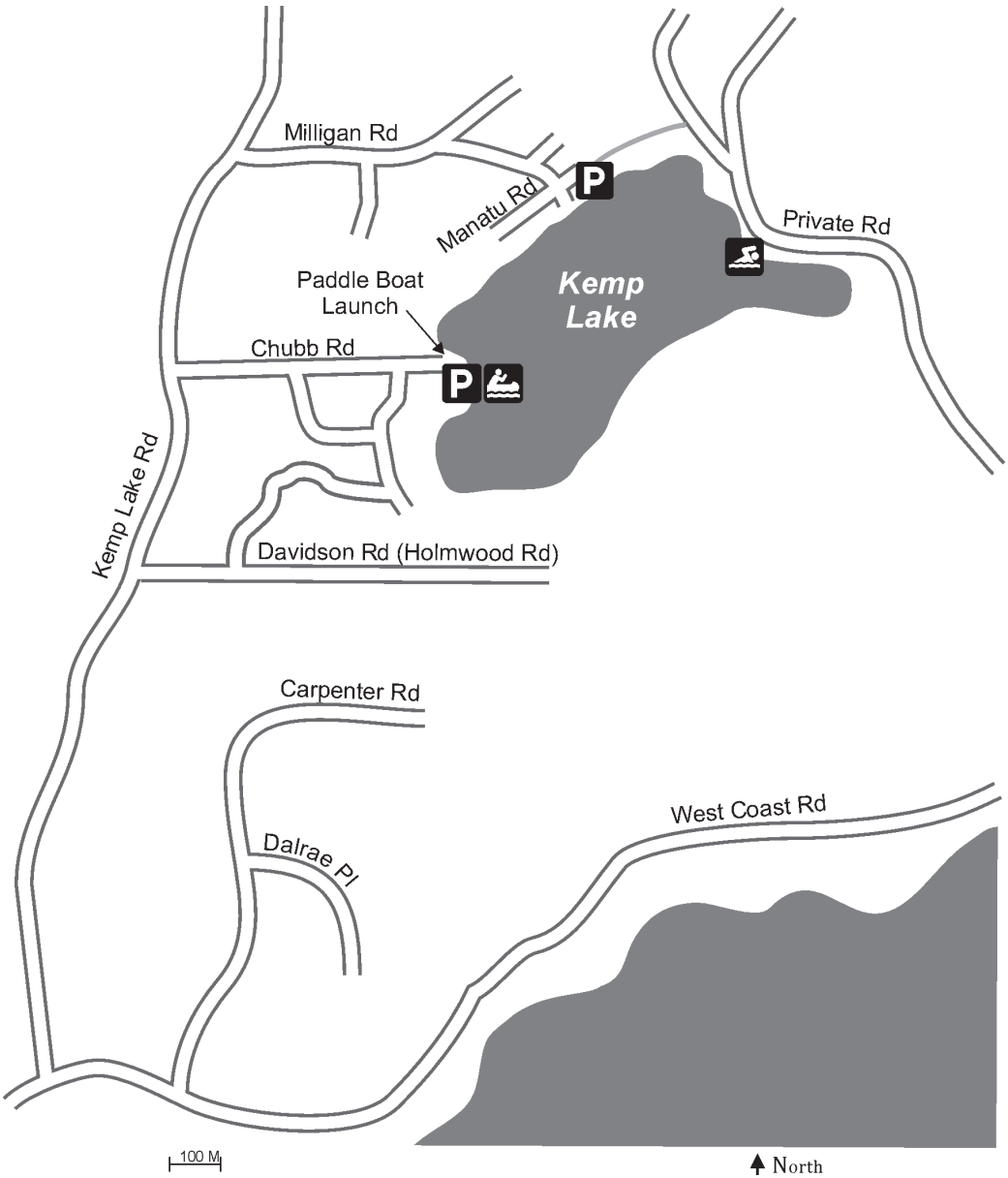
Beach	A sand beach can be found at the north-east corner of the lake. The beach is accessible only by canoe or paddle boat however, as the beach is not on public land.
Washrooms	None.
Accessibility	Chubb Rd provides an easy point to view the lake.



A beach on the north-east side of the lake offers a great place for paddlers to stop for a picnic.
Photo by Adam Ungstad.

DIRECTIONS FROM VICTORIA

1. *Head north on Douglas St (Trans-Canada Hwy)*
2. *Take Exit 14 toward Langford/Sooke/Highlands*
3. *Keep left at the fork, follow signs for McCallum Road W*
4. *Merge onto Millstream Rd S*
5. *Millstream Rd S turns into Veterans Memorial Pkwy*
6. *Turn right onto Sooke Rd*
7. *Follow Sooke Rd past the town of Sooke*
8. *Turn right onto Kemp Lake Rd*
9. *Turn right onto Chubb Rd*



If you are coming from the city the first thing you will notice getting out of your vehicle at Kemp Lake is the pristine, fresh ocean air in the Sooke area – the air at Kemp Lake alone will make your trip worthwhile!

Located just beyond the municipality of Sooke, this beautiful body of water is particularly well suited for non-motorized boats such as canoes, kayaks, and other rowboats. The boat launch and main access point is located off Chubb Road. Take a picnic lunch and watch for wildlife, dragonflies, and water lilies on the surface of the lake.

The east side of the lake, known as Broom Hill is currently private land, but local advocates are working to have the area become a park. And so they should – the network of trails in the area is an asset to the community.

A unique feature of Kemp Lake is that it is an active water source for approximately 750 people that live in the area. The Kemp Lake Waterworks District is managed by three elected trustees, with a new trustee being elected each year for a three year term.

**THANKS FOR READING!
THIS HAS BEEN A SAMPLE OF**

**SECRET LAKES
OF SOUTHERN VANCOUVER ISLAND**



**THE FULL GUIDEBOOK COVERS 25 LAKES
IN VICTORIA, SOOKE AND SAANICH!**

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