

A SALMONID TOUR OF THE ALBERNI VALLEY

We invite you to take a tour in the Stamp-Somass River system—one of the largest watersheds on Vancouver Island, with a drainage basin of 1280 square kilometres. Among the most productive fisheries on Vancouver Island, this system accounts for close to 90% of the escapement for Barkley Sound. The scale of the fishery is a testimony to:

- major enhancement by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, most notably the establishment of Robertson Creek Hatchery on the upper Stamp River
- ongoing restoration and enhancement of many tributary creeks, much of it by done by volunteers.

The tour provides an opportunity to visit a variety of sites with interpretive signage explaining:

- ecosystems within the watershed
- ongoing enhancement and restoration work
- what to see at different times of the year

START YOUR TOUR AT VICTORIA QUAY

Overlooking the Somass Estuary, First Nations Welcoming Figures greet visitors to the Alberni Valley and the Stamp-Somass Watershed. To the left of the Welcoming Figures, signage celebrates the estuary:

- its importance to First Nations from time immemorial
- its history from early post-contact to the present day
- its importance to all aspects of the present day fishery
- the purchase and conservation of 100 hectares by the Pacific Estuary Conservation Program in 2001.



Best Time to Visit: Year round to see eagles, hawks and waterfowl. Bears are frequently seen along the opposite river bank, particularly in the fall.



Produced by
Alberni Valley
Enhancement
Association



ALBERNI VALLEY ENHANCEMENT ASSOCIATION

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1. CLUTESI HAVEN MARINA

The First Nations fishery dates back for thousands of years. Near the mouth of Kitsuksis Creek, opposite Clutesi Haven Marina, the remains of a traditional weir are visible at low tide.

Best Time to Visit: Any time of year at extreme low tide.



2. SOMASS ESTUARY

Estuarine lands managed by Ducks Unlimited Canada lie directly across the Somass River from Victoria Quay and Clutesi Haven marina. The estuary is one of the most environmentally sensitive areas in the Alberni Valley and is important to many plants and animals:

- it provides critical habitat for juvenile salmonids as they make the transition from fresh to salt water
- it is important to many species of birds year-round, but particularly in winter when large numbers of swans, geese and other waterfowl can be seen there
- eleven endangered plant species are found in the estuary

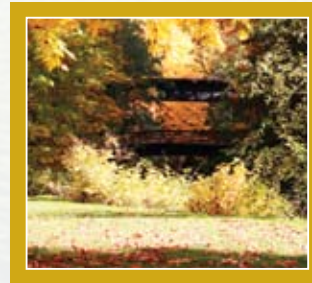
Access to the Ducks Unlimited lands is limited for conservation reasons.



3. ROGERS CREEK PARK

Rogers Creek is one of the most impacted streams in the Alberni Valley and is the site of a major restoration project which began in 2007. Signage in the park highlights some of the work which has been done.

Best Time to Visit: Any time of year.



escapement of 8,000 fish, illustrating the importance of healthy tributary streams.

Best Time to Visit: Kitsuksis is a pleasant place to walk at any time of the year; however, after the first heavy rains in fall, you may see adult fish jumping up the falls by the railway trestle at the east end of Spencer Park.

5. STAMP FALLS PROVINCIAL PARK

Stamp Falls Provincial Park is famous for its spectacular canyon and fish ladder. A new anglers trail north of the falls was completed in 2008, opening up an additional eight kilometres of the river to hikers and fishermen. Much of the trail passes through old-growth forest and is impressive in all seasons.

Best Time to Visit: Fall is the best time of year to see fish negotiating the falls, but the park is worth a visit at any time of year.



4. KITSUKSIS WALKWAY AND SPENCER PARK

Kitsuksis Creek, in contrast to Rogers Creek, shows many of the characteristics of a viable coho stream, with good spawning beds and a well-developed riparian area. It has an average annual



6. ROBERTSON CREEK HATCHERY

Robertson Creek Hatchery on the upper Stamp has been the focus of major enhancement on the Stamp-Somass since 1972. Its beautiful location provides an opportunity for bird—and occasionally bear—watching.

Best Time to Visit: Fall is the busiest time of year, when adult fish return and there is plenty for visitors to see, but the hatchery is worth a visit in any season. The hatchery is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

7. MCLEAN MILL

In addition to being a national historic site, the McLean Mill is also home to a salmon hatchery operated by the Alberni Valley Enhancement Association. Fry are raised there and educational programs are run from the hatchery. The AVEA also operates upstream and downstream fish traps at the mill site; returning adult fish and out-migrating fry are counted to assist in monitoring fish stocks.

Best Time to Visit: The McLean Mill is open to the public during summer months, 10:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. daily.



Photo credit: Alberni Valley Museum

8. THE ALBERNI VALLEY MUSEUM

The Alberni Valley Museum has a wealth of information on First Nations history and culture, including traditional use of the fishery and artifacts discovered at Shoemaker Bay in the Somass Estuary during the archaeological dig carried out in 1973 and 1974.

Best Time to Visit: The museum is open year-round Tuesday to Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and open late on Thursdays, until 8:00 p.m.

