The San Juan Islands in Washington State include a number of islands including Orcas Island, which has long been a favorite destination for generations of vacationers. Located approximately 60 miles north of Seattle, it lies in the Strait of Georgia between Anacortes and Vancouver Island. To the north, on the mainland, is Vancouver, B.C. With its fjord-like bays and sounds, deep harbors, lakes, streams, and waterfalls, Orcas is considered the most spectacular of the islands. The island is over 56 square miles in size and has more than 125 miles of saltwater shoreline. Winding roads fan out from the business and social center of Eastsound village to the nearby communities of Deer Harbor, Orcas, and Olga. One of the greatest assets of the island is Mt. Constitution in Moran State Park, which offers panoramic views of the entire archipelago and is surrounded by miles of trails and sparkling lakes.

Activities on Orcas

Orcas Island offers an unhurried setting to enjoy the spectacular scenery and wildlife, with a wide variety of recreation. Activities include hiking, biking, golfing, sailing, kayaking, shopping, flying, and fishing. During the summer and on weekends and holidays, several resorts and lounges offer live music. Throughout the year, Orcas Theatre and Community Center offers concerts, plays, art exhibits, dances, workshops, movies, and many special events.

Bicycling Safety

Orcas Island is the most challenging of the islands for bicyclists. This is due to the narrow, winding roads and hilly terrain. When bicycling on the island, ride single file and keep to the right side of the road. Make stops on a straight-of-way rather than at the top of a hill or on a curve. Motorists cannot negotiate blind approaches safely with a bicyclist on the road. When stopping to rest or regroup, enjoy the scenery, but please move completely off the road. As you enjoy the scenery, be alert for potential traffic and the condition of the roadway. When leaving the ferry, pull over to the side of the road and let the automobiles pass.

Marine Parks

These marine parks are accessible only by boat:

* Sucia Island: Cluster of 11 islands; trails, bays, and bluffs; 2.5 miles from Orcas Island
* Patos: Two buoys, four campsites, trails (no water)
* Matis: One hundred and fifty acres, two buoys, and ten campsites

Directions to Orcas Island

You can reach Orcas Island either by ferry or by airplane. The primary departure point for the Washington State Ferry is Anacortes. To reach Anacortes, take Interstate 5 to State Highway 20 (exit 230) and travel west about 20 miles to the ferry terminal. The ferry ride lasts approximately one hour and fifteen minutes. Consider arriving at least one hour ahead of your desired departure time. Kenmore Air and West Isle Air each offer scheduled flights from Anacortes and Bellingham to Orcas Island. Flights arrive at Eastsound Airport, Rosario, or Westsound. Landings in Rosario and Westsound require float planes.