

DRIVING DIRECTIONS TO THE AVATAR GROVE, RED CREEK FIR, SAN JUAN SPRUCE, & BIG LONELY DOUG!

Port Renfrew, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, is ‘Canada’s Tall Tree Capital’. Close to this charming little sea-side town grows the world’s largest Douglas-fir tree, the massive Red Creek fir, as well as the newly found “Big Lonely Doug”, Canada’s second largest Douglas-fir. They are wonders to behold. En route to the Red Creek Fir is one of Canada’s largest Sitka spruce trees, the San Juan Spruce, its massive limbs draped with mosses and ferns. Also close by is the amazing Avatar Grove, the “Cathedral Grove of Port Renfrew”. Farther north are the magnificent ancient rainforests of Carmanah Valley Provincial Park, the partially protected Walbran Valley, and Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, home to Canada’s largest tree, the Cheewhat Cedar.

The world-renowned Avatar Grove, just a 20 minute drive from Port Renfrew along good gravel roads, has become a major tourist destination since it was found and popularized in 2010. It was protected from logging in 2012 after a 2 year campaign involving the Ancient Forest Alliance, Port Renfrew Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, BC citizens, and more. Sections of boardwalk have now been built by the AFA to help protect the area’s delicate understory plants and tree roots from foot traffic, improve visitor safety and access, and support local eco-tourism. To help complete this vital boardwalk project donate at: www.AncientForestAlliance.org

Red Creek Fir - World’s Largest Douglas-fir

The Red Creek Fir measures 13.3m (43.7 ft) in circumference, 4.3m (14 ft) in diameter, and 73.8m (242 ft) tall. The Red Creek Fir has been estimated to be upwards of 1,000 years old. This tree is a survivor of a stand of Douglas-firs that became established sometime after a forest fire that occurred circa 635 A.D.



Avatar Grove is filled with some of Canada’s largest western redcedars and Douglas-firs. Many of the cedars have massive, odd-shaped “burls” growing on their trunks, including “Canada’s Gnarliest Tree” in the Upper Avatar Grove. The local Pacheedaht First Nation’s traditional name for the area is ‘T’l’oqwxwat’, meaning “wide bluff overlooking river”.

Already 90% of the ancient forests on southern Vancouver Island have been logged. These forests are important for endangered species, clean water, the climate, tourism, and many First Nations cultures.

The Ancient Forest Alliance, a non-profit organization, is working with local businesses to protect the last remaining pockets of old-growth forests in the Port Renfrew region and to ensure the sustainable logging of second-growth forests. To help protect these forests please sign our petition at: www.AncientForestPetition.com and visit our website at: www.AncientForestAlliance.org

Please also support local businesses to show them the benefits of old-growth forest protection, such as the Pacheedaht Campground, Coastal Kitchen Café, Soule Creek Lodge, Big Fish Lodge, Handsome Dan’s Wild Coast Cottages, Homestead Cabins, Port Renfrew Pub, Port Renfrew Marina & RV Park, the General Store, and many more! Enjoy your trip and please always treat the land & people with respect :)

Driving Directions from Port Renfrew to Red Creek Fir (one way driving time about 1 hour)

1. km 0.0 - start at the Port Renfrew Community Center/Fire Station and drive down Deering Rd.
2. km 0.2 - continue over single lane bridge over the San Juan River
3. km 1.4 - keep right at fork
4. km 2.7 - cross Deering Bridge and turn right towards Lake Cowichan (***To reach Avatar Grove instead, turn left after crossing and follow directions on the opposite page.**)
5. km 15.8 - turn right at 9 Mile Junction onto Len’s Creek Main (start of gravel road)
6. km 18.2 - keep right at fork (Len’s Triangle) onto Bear Main
7. km 20.2 - cross the large bridge over the San Juan River. The San Juan Spruce tree & Recreation Site are accessed via a left hand turn just after the bridge
8. km 20.4 - continue straight uphill past the San Juan Spruce
9. km 22.3 - turn right onto Mosquito Creek Main and begin heading uphill
10. km 23.4 - keep left up steep hill through recent clearcut
11. km 24.7 - keep straight
12. km 26.1 - keep right at fork
13. km 26.8 - keep right at fork onto Red Creek Main. This road appears less-used and descends downhill for quite some time, so don’t feel that you’ve gone the wrong way!
14. km 30.0 - turn right at “T” junction at the bottom of the hill
15. km 31.2 - park where the road noticeably widens on both sides. The trailhead is found just a few meters beyond on the right hand side. It is a 10-15 minute walk to the Red Creek Fir, the largest known Douglas-fir tree in the world! Watch for 3 incredible old-growth redcedar trees along the left hand side of the trail about halfway up as well.

**GPS coordinates for Red Creek Fir parking area: 48.57990,*

Odometer readings will vary from one vehicle to another so please use your best judgement when referencing the distances above. **This route is also not recommended for vehicles with low clearance. SUV’s, pickups, and 4wd vehicles are best.** The gravel logging roads from Len’s Main onwards are not well maintained. Whenever travelling on logging roads it is recommended that you have a full tank of gas, a working spare tire, and drive defensively with your headlights on. Always let a friend know where you’re going and when you intend to be back. **There is no cellphone reception in Port Renfrew** and the surrounding areas so always be prepared in case of an emergency!

Map by Geoffrey Senichenko. Photos by TJ Watt.

Reproduced by the Ancient Forest Alliance in 2017.

For more local info visit: www.RenfrewChamber.com

***The Ancient Forest Alliance, its staff, and directors, assume no liability for one’s safety or belongings while driving or hiking and using this map or directions as a guide.

These are remote wilderness areas - travel and hike at your OWN RISK!!

Directions to Avatar Grove

(continued from Red Creek Fir Direction #4 - on left)

5. Once you’ve turned LEFT after Deering Bridge, stay on the mostly-paved Gordon River Main road and after approximately 5 km or so it will become gravel and you will hit a “Y” where you go LEFT and cross a high bridge over the beautiful Gordon River.
6. After crossing the bridge keep on the Gordon River Main for about 1.5 km, staying to the RIGHT at the next “Y”.
7. Shortly after you will cross a small bridge over a creek (Baird Creek). Park on the right immediately after the bridge and look for the trail entrance signs that lead to the Upper and Lower Groves.
8. The trail on the left side of the road leads into the Upper Grove where you can reach “Canada’s Gnarliest Tree”! This path has a steady incline throughout and passes by numerous giant redcedar trees.
9. The trail on the right side of the road takes you down to the Lower Grove’s “Loop Trail”. This features more gentle terrain with huge burly redcedars & large Douglas-fir trees.

Canada’s Gnarliest Tree - Upper Avatar Grove



Directions to Big Lonely Doug

(continued from Avatar Grove Direction #7 - on left)

8. Continue past the Avatar Grove on the Gordon River Main for approximately 5 km and take your FIRST RIGHT onto Edinburgh Main. This is a narrower looking road.
9. Soon afterwards you will reach a bridge over a very deep canyon on the Gordon River. (***Note: Vehicles with 4wd and good clearance are necessary from here on. It is possible to park here though and walk the next 2km if you’re willing.**)
10. Follow the rough road as it veers right and uphill. Continue on the main road for approximately 3-5 minutes.
11. A giant clearcut from 2012 will eventually appear on your right hand side with a clear view down to the tree. Park on the side of the road and follow the rough footpath to the tree. The hike in should only be attempted by those with good balance. Please also limit time spent around the sensitive base of the tree but be sure to give Doug a hug :) GPS coordinates: 48.64622, -124.45051

Harris Creek Spruce

This huge Sitka spruce grows just off the Pacific Marine Circle Route between Port Renfrew and Lake Cowichan. A short, easy trail leads to the tree, which is about 4m (13ft) wide. Watch for a ‘Point of Interest’ sign.

San Juan Spruce tree

To reach the San Juan Spruce, follow the Red Creek Fir driving directions #1-9.

The giant tree growing by the river in the San Juan Bridge Recreation Site is one of Canada’s largest Sitka spruce trees, based on volume of wood. It has a circumference of 11.6 m (38 ft) and a height of 62.5 m (205 ft).

