

BEAR HILL AND ELK LAKE

This hike is very definitely a three booter but it takes you up to two spectacular viewpoints, one looking east and the other north. There are two start points – one at the large Elk Lake parking lot at the east end of Brookleigh Road, and the other on the west side of the lake down Bear Hill Road. The first one is just around the corner from the Sayward/Pat Bay junction and the second is towards the end of Bear Hill Road, off Brookleigh. The parking lot on the second one is about half a kilometre down the road on the left (just past an access road that has a gate across it, again on the left).

1. From the Brookleigh Road parking lot. Walk down to the lakeside and turn right. Follow the shoreline trail until you start to see houses on the right. When you come to the last house (at 'A') you'll see a small garbage can on a post. Turn right there and go up to Brookleigh Road (more directions at '3' below).
2. From the Bear Hill Road parking lot. From the parking lot, head north along the shoreline. You'll cross a bridge over a creek and then turn right onto a parking lot adjacent to a boat launch (there are public washrooms here too). Cross the parking area and pick up the trail along the shoreline. After about 200 metres or so you'll come to a house on the left (at 'A') and a small garbage can on a post. Turn left here and follow the short path up to Brookleigh Road.
3. At the end of the short footpath up to Brookleigh, turn right and about 20 metres along the road you'll see a trail head on the left at the edge of the forested area. This leads up a trail that gets quite steep towards the top and involves some rocky bits of trail too! Eventually, on the left, you'll see a communications tower and just off to the right is a short trail to a spectacular viewpoint ('B'). This is a good place to sit and have a rest!
4. Back on the main trail, about 10 metres along you'll come to a junction at 'C'. To the left is an easy route up to the next viewpoint at the top of Bear Hill. If you are taking this route, walk about 100 metres and turn right and then, after a short distance, right again. You'll then see a trail leading off to the left that will take you to the viewpoint.
5. If you're doing the 'black' route, turn right at 'C'. You'll come to a trail leading off to the left at 'D' which, if you wish, you can take up to the top of the hill, keeping an eye out once up the steep uppy bit for the trail that leads off to the right that will take you to the viewpoint. The main route continues northwards and then starts to drop down over an area of glacially polished rock. You'll come to a junction where you turn left at 'E'. There's a rocky bit to get over

and then the trail gradually flattens out. Take the next junction keep left and then take the next turn on the left, it will bring you to the second spectacular viewpoint.

6. From the hilltop viewpoint, work your way back to the main trail on the west side of the viewpoint area. At the main trail turn left and down a short hill you'll come to a trail junction. Turn right. Be aware that this section of the route can be quite steep going downhill and there are a couple of sections where it can get a bit tricky underfoot – so take your time! Note that you'll come to another junction at 'F' where you keep right because the other trail is a horse trail and is very badly broken up.
7. Once down at Bear Hill Road, turn left and find your way to a pathway at the end of the paved road that leads to another section of Bear Hill Road. Carry straight on until you come to Brookleigh Road. For those who started at the Brookleigh parking lot, turn left and follow the road around to the parking lot associated with the boat launch and follow the shoreline trail back to the cars (keep in a single file to the left because cars can come around a couple of blind corners).
8. If you started from the Bear Hill Road parking lot, cross Brookleigh to the side road that leads directly ahead and make your way down Bear Hill Road to your cars.