

GONZALES HILL, OAK BAY

This hike is a two booter because of the steep uppy bits and trails that run over rock outcrops to get to a couple of lookouts. Parking can be found off Crescent Road adjacent to Gonzales Park (that's not Gonzales Hill Park!) and behind the public washroom building next to the park area. This walk will take about 1.25 hours if you don't dawdle but longer if you're going to take in the views and some time at the historical sites along the route.

1. Head east along Crescent Road and take the first road on the left, Irving Road. You will come to a road off to the right that leads up to Foul Bay Road where you turn left. A short distance down Foul Bay Road turn right into Shotbolt Road and then right on Fairfield Road. Take the next turning on the right off Fairfield and walk up the hill to the top of Fairfield Place.
2. Once in Gonzales Hill Regional Park, through the trees to the right, you will see the Gonzales Hill Observatory Building, which is well worth a visit. The Observatory was originally a weather station, built in 1914 as the Dominion Meteorological Services Pacific Coast headquarters. Designed by William Henderson and meteorologist Francis Napier Denison, the building maintained its weather station status for 75 years, recording weather, as well as seismic and astronomical readings. After Environment Canada abandoned the building, it stood empty until 1992, when, after many failed proposals, the CRD purchased the building and surrounding land.
3. Once you come down off the Observatory turn right along Denison Road. After a short distance you will come to the edge of another park on the left which has a path leading up to a lookout on the top of the hill. A little further along Denison you will come to a trail on the left which plunges down the hill. But, off to the right is an informal trail that leads over rocky outcrops to a World War Two observation platform with spectacular views across to the United States.
4. If you've been to the top of Walban Hill return to the trail across Denison that leads downhill. Once on the trail, you will find lots of stairs and you will end up at the junction of Sunny Lane and King George Terrace. Cross the main road, turning right and follow the road up the hill. After a while the road begins to drop down a hill and you will find a parking lot where the Terrace turns to the right. On the seaward side of the parking area you there is an informal trail going downhill over some rocky outcrops. At the bottom of the hill, you will see a trail leading off to the left which takes you down to the shoreline if you wish. Our route brings you immediately on to Maquina Street where you turn

left and follow Maquina to the end where you will see a trail leading between the houses.

5. At the end of that trail you come to Penzance Road. If you wish to, you can turn right here and follow the road back to Crescent Road. Alternatively, you can carry straight on down towards the shoreline along the edge of the Chinese Cemetery. In 1903 the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association purchased 3.5 acres of land at Harling Point and established the Chinese Cemetery. Traditionally it was a sanctuary of temporary repose before final interment in China, a pattern which reflected the early aspirations of these immigrants to return to their homeland. After the Sino-Japanese war broke out in 1937, it was no longer possible to ship remains back to China. In 1961, bones of 849 Chinese pioneers whose return to China had been blocked since 1937 were finally laid to rest at Harling Point. At that time the cemetery became a memorial site in honour of Chinese-Canadian pioneers. While burials on the site ended in 1961, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association continues to own and maintain the site. In 1994 the Chinese Cemetery at Harling Point was designated a National Historic Site by the Government of Canada.
6. The trail leads along the shoreline and meets Crescent Road. Follow Crescent Road, passing the main entrance to the cemetery, and keep straight on to Crescent Road where you turn left. Crescent Road will lead you back to the parking lot. Alternatively, you can take one of two paths down to the beach and walk along the beach back to the park. You will find a set of stairs running up into the park at the other side of the bay.