

➔ Picturesque  
Genoa Bay is the  
second stop on this  
'three-bay weekend,'  
noted particularly  
for its fine dining.





BY JOHN LUND AND  
MARIANNE VAN TOOR  
PHOTOS BY JOHN LUND

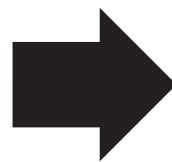
# THE 3-BAY WEEKEND

COWICHAN BAY

GENOA BAY

MAPLE BAY

Cowichan, Genoa and Maple bays each offer their own unique charms, but are all close enough to explore in a weekend



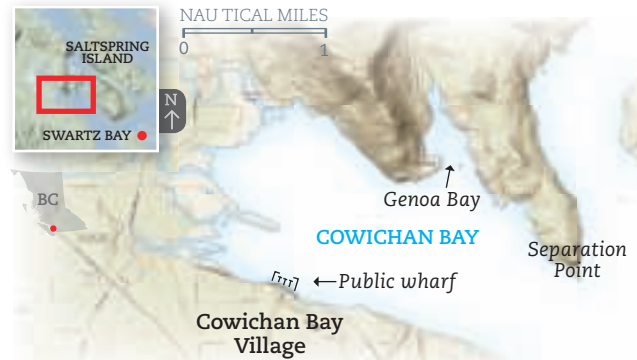
ONCE IN A WHILE A SUNNY SUMMER weekend arrives and catches us without any cruise plans. Fortunately, we live in Nanaimo and have many different options for one, two or three-day trips. One of our favourites comes from the three-day folder and covers three bays in three days. Cowichan, Genoa and Maple bays are close together and connected by Sansum Narrows, which divides Vancouver Island from Salt Spring Island. This trip leads us to maritime and local history in the funky former fishing village of Cowichan Bay, a happy combination of gorgeous setting and fine dining in out-of-the-way Genoa Bay, and one of the northwest's most popular rendezvous spots at the well-run Maple Bay Marina. Each of these destinations is easy-to-get-to, fun and unique. Taken together they make for a great three-day weekend. ▶



➔ From top: Float homes at Cowichan Bay's new dock. A restoration at the Maritime Centre. The freshly baked artisan bread at True Grain Bread. *Rebel Wind* on the ways at the Maritime Centre.



## COWICHAN BAY



■ FROM NANAIMO WE LIKE TO MAKE THE RUN ALL the way south to Cowichan Bay via Stuart Channel connecting to San-sum Narrows. Rounding Separation Point, you can see the village to starboard in the southwestern corner of the bay. Canadian Hydrographic Chart #3478 will aid navigation in this region.

From mid-June to mid-September, Cowichan Bay's public dock offers 940 feet of visitor moorage. Many of the public docks have been refurbished since our last visit. Services include water, 20-amp power, garbage drop, toilets and showers. Harbour manager Chuck Von-Haas says lunch and shopping stops are free until 14:00 when overnight moorage rates start. Call 250-746-5911.

■ WHEN IN COWICHAN BAY We love to walk the length of the seaside village to check out the varied shops, maritime museum, art galleries and sundry attractions. Marianne has a nose for food venues while I scout the eclectic mix for photo opportunities. The variety keeps us both happy.

On this trip we meet artist Arthur Vickers at his waterfront Shipyard Gallery and enjoy chatting with him about art, history and boatbuilding. When he learns we are boating writers he excitedly shows us two beautifully handcrafted lapstrake rowboats created by Terry Gustafson of Raincoast Rowboats. Getting a tour of Arthur's historic workshop is a treat in itself.

When hunger strikes, Cowichan Bay has many options starting at the top of the public dock at The Masthead in the old Columbia Hotel (circa 1868). The dinner menu includes local salmon, halibut, chicken, venison, duck and crab dishes, which you can enjoy on their deck overlooking the bay. For a casual lunch, we recommend the halibut and chips at the Rock Cod Café topped off with some locally-made ice cream at The Udder Guy's Ice Cream.

Before heading out, we stock up with fresh baked artisan loafs and buns at True Grain Bread and delicious local cheeses from Hilary's Cheese & Deli next door.

Every visit to Cowichan Bay takes us to The Maritime Centre, a must-see for anyone interested in boatbuilding, historic inboard and outboard motors, model ships, and northwest history. I find it nostalgic to roam amongst motors and boats from my youth. The fact that the displays are counted as maritime "history" has me contemplating my own newly minted "senior" status.

The non-profit Maritime Centre is operated by the Cowichan Wooden Boat Society, which hosts the Cowichan Bay Fast & Furious Boat Building Festival, the Christmas Sail Past and a Pirates Festival. Call 250-746-4955 for information.

# GENOA BAY

■ RATHER THAN STAY OVERNIGHT IN COWICHAN Bay we choose to take the 15-minute cruise across Cowichan Bay to Genoa Bay Marina behind Skinner Point.

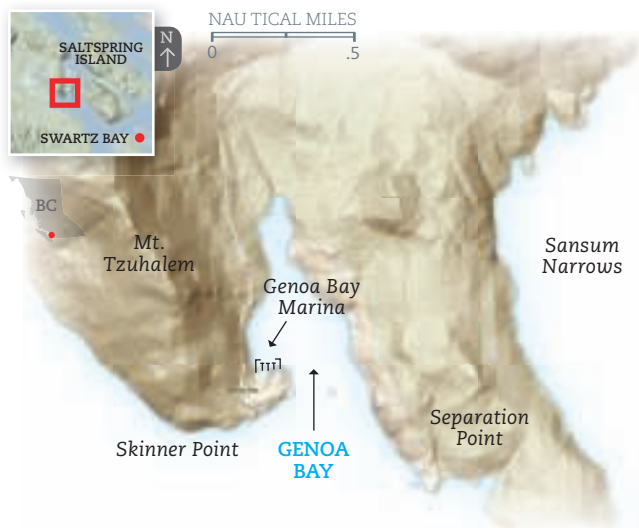
If headed directly to Genoa Bay from Sansum Narrows, enter Genoa Bay off the north side of Cowichan Bay, using charts 3478 and 3441. Keep the red triangular day buoy to starboard and the green can to port. The marina is found to port and answers VHF 66A from mid-May to Labour Day. There is about 1,200 feet of moorage available but on summer weekends you should call 250-746-7621 ahead to confirm space. Genoa Bay has anchorage over a mud bottom but southeast winds can ruffle the waters in the centre of the bay.

Genoa Bay's docks have 15 and 30-amp power and water. A new building in a park-like setting and surrounded by metalwork sculptures is home to washrooms, showers and laundry. You will find a general store and dock office at the head of the marina. During July and August, a shuttle service is available (by donation) for moorage customers to go shopping in Duncan, sightseeing in Chemainus, wine tasting at Cherry Point Vineyards, or for a round of golf at Cowichan Golf Course (250-746-7211) or Glen Meadows Golf & Country Club (250-656-3136).

■ WHEN IN GENOA BAY Tucked under the steep treed slope of Mt. Tzuhalem, Genoa Bay is one of our favourite places to hang out on the West Coast. For us, returning here is like coming home. Owner-operators and brothers, Ben and Will Kiedaisch, maintain a friendly laid-back atmosphere at Genoa Bay Marina that is hard to find anywhere else. This is the place where we relax, chat with fellow boaters or, best yet, share a meal with friends at The Genoa Bay Café.

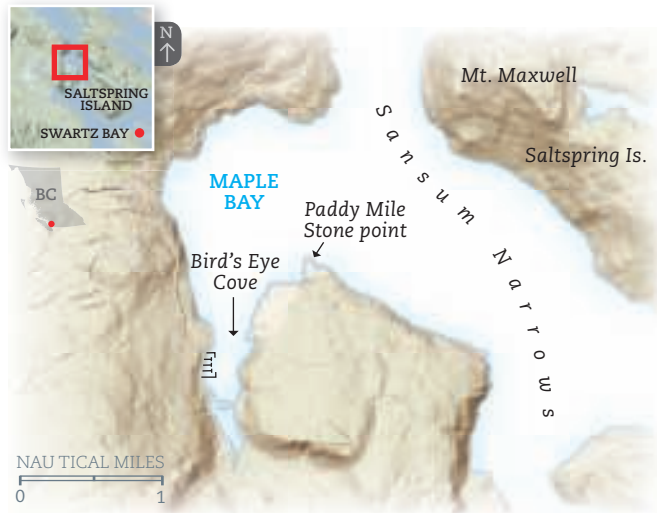
Our first shore duty upon arriving at Genoa Bay is to make reservations for the evening meal at the rustic café hanging on the rocks above the marina. The Genoa Bay Café has changed hands since our last visit. Chef Dave Cartner's menu features northwest fare and local organic produce. Call 250-746-7621 for reservations.

Be sure to walk F dock and view the found metal art pieces by Tom Faue that decorate the walls of the dock's floating homes. ▶



▶ From top: Two examples of metal art by Tom Faue. Owner-operators and brothers, Ben and Will Kiedaisch, maintain a friendly laid-back atmosphere at Genoa Bay Marina that is hard to find anywhere else. The Genoa Bay Café features northwest fare and local organic produce.

# MAPLE BAY



Having spent the night at Genoa Bay, we find ourselves on the Genoa Bay Café's patio again for an early lunch before heading to Sansum Narrows. Turning northeast under the shadow of nearby 1,985-foot Mt. Maxwell on Saltspring Island, I get that "coming home" feeling once again. I have been sailing here since the '60s when Maple Bay Yacht Club actually resided in Maple Bay before moving to its present location in Bird's Eye Cove. Maple Bay YC celebrates the 55th running of its Maple Bay Regatta on the 2010 Labour Day Weekend.

For those visiting Maple Bay Marina for the first time, enter Maple Bay from Sansum Narrows by heading west and then south past Paddy Mile Stone point. At the head of Maple Bay, next to the Rowing Club (ex-Maple Bay YC), is a small public dock should you simply want to put ashore for a short time. Otherwise, Bird's Eye Cove is home to Maple Bay Yacht Club, Bird's Eye Cove Marina, Cove Yachts (marine repairs) and our destination, Maple Bay Marina.

## ■ MAPLE BAY MARINA

By steering toward the blue roof of the fuel station at the south end of Bird's Eye Cove, you will find Maple Bay Marina. Marina staff monitors VHF 66A or you can call for slip assignments and



➡ Clockwise from left: A bird's eye view of Bird's Eye Cove. Maple Bay Marina has a reputation as being a great spot for yacht club gatherings and rendezvous. The entrance to the Shipyard Pub.



## LOOKING BACK AT COWICHAN, GENOA AND MAPLE BAYS...

**Cowichan Valley** is the homeland of one of the largest Coast Salish tribes and has been a gathering place for the Cowichan people for thousands of years. More recently they have become world famous for their Cowichan Indian sweaters. The name Cowichan means *warm land* and, indeed, the weather always seems nicer here than points north or south.

The first European settlers arrived in the valley at Cowichan Bay with Governor James

Douglas onboard the HMS *Hecate* in 1862. Established as a commercial fishing village, today it is a lumber port and tourist town.

Cowichan Bay is home to the second oldest lawn tennis club in Canada, the South Cowichan Lawn Tennis Club, established in 1887.

Of note for those willing to venture out by dinghy or kayak is the mouth of the Cowichan River, renowned for its steelhead fishing; it is an excellent place to explore and to view wildfowl.

reservations at 250-746-8482.

Newly refurbished docks have 15 and 30-amp power, and water. On shore there are washrooms, showers and laundry, garbage disposal and recycling, plus business services such as fax, photocopying, and postage. The fuel dock supplies gas, diesel, propane and CNG, and serves as a floatplane base.

Lindstrom Marine Ltd. operates The Marine Supply Store and the Maple Bay Marina Boat Yard (haul outs to 50-tons). Call 250-748-9199.

■ **WHEN IN MAPLE BAY** Under management of the Messier family since 1990, the popular Maple Bay Marina has a reputation as being a great spot for yacht club gatherings and rendezvous. The immaculately maintained property and well-protected harbour is surrounded by lovely steep-sided tree-covered hills and makes a great destination for all boaters. Facilities like The Quarterdeck pavilion is ideal for yacht club gatherings and for breakfast, served from 07:00 to 10:00 daily—a morning institution. Also within the marina grounds you can find reasonably priced dinners and drinks served on the glassed-in patio above the marina at the lively Shipyard Restaurant & Pub.

For a unique dining experience, call 250-746-7028 for reservations at the Quamichan Inn, a Tudor-style mansion featuring restaurant and bed & breakfast. This hillside venue offers country charm and great food. For a ride, call Bob Lord who runs Executive Travel, a shuttle service in the area at 250-891-3881.

On our last visit we talked with Warren and Marilyn Little of Victoria onboard *Carousel*, their 26-foot Tollycraft. Asked why they liked Maple Bay Marina, Marilyn said, “We love the grounds and the flowers, and the staff are always accommodating. We feel welcome here. It’s a great place to spend a weekend.”

**IF YOU GO**

**Canadian Coast Guard**

Ganges: 250-537-5813; VHF 16

**Cowichan Bay Harbour Authority**

Wharf Manager: 250-746-5911; VHF 66A

**Genoa Bay Marina**

250-746-7621; VHF 66A

**Maple Bay Marina**

250-746-8482; VHF 66A

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