

SAN JUAN ISLANDS

PIG PICKING ANYONE?

For us, the San Juan Islands offer great places to get away from the hustle and bustle of work life. The islands are places to relax and enjoy the natural beauty with mountains, trees and the ocean. The San Juan Islands are comprised of four major islands - San Juan, Orcas, Lopez, and Shaw - and are located off the coast of Washington state with Vancouver and Victoria Island, Canada to the north and west. Access to the San Juan Islands is either by ferry from Anacortes or by airplane from Seattle. The main and more populated island is San Juan Island, which is a one-hour ferry ride from Anacortes to Friday Harbor. If you fly into Friday Harbor, there are car rental companies in Friday Harbor.



Source: <http://www.thesanjuans.com/homepagenews/maps-of-the-san-juan-islands.shtml>

SPANISH EMPIRE IN PRESENT DAY WASHINGTON



Spain, Russia, and Great Britain were exploring the Pacific Northwest in search of the Northwest Passage. The Spanish claim to the Pacific Northwest was based on the Spanish explorer Juan de Fuca reaching the northern coast of present-day Washington in 1590. The claim laid dormant until 1792, when renewed Spanish exploration resulted in claiming the region for the Spanish crown. Their claim extended from the Alta California coast to modern day Alaska. The Spanish eventually went back to their colony of New Spain (south of Alta California) in the mid-1790s. The Spanish explorer Francisco de Eliza named these islands *Isla y Archipelago de San Juan* (San Juan) as he explored and charted the islands in 1791. De Eliza named them for Juan Vicente Juan de Güemes Padilla Horcasitas y Aguayo, 2nd Count of Revillagigedo and Viceroy of New Spain under whose authority the expedition was conducted.

I have always been intrigued on the origins of names in San Juan Islands. Here is a brief summary of the source of each island's name:

- For 2nd Count of Revillagigedo:
 - San Juan Island
 - Orcas Island (shorten version for Horcasitas)
 - Guemes Island
- For Gonzalo Lopez de Haro, an officer in the expedition lead by de Eliza, and Haro is credited with being the first European to discover San Juan Islands.
 - Haro Strait
 - Lopez Island
- De Eliza originally also named **Rosario Strait** as "Gran Canal de Nuestra Señora del Rosario la Marinera." The British explorer George Vancouver changed a portion of it to **Strait of Georgia** for British King George III.
- Strait of Juan de Fuca named for the explorer Juan de Fuca by British Ship Captain Charles William Barkley.

FERRY RIDE

We flew into the Seattle – Tacoma airport and rented a car for our drive to Anacortes and the exploration of San Juan Islands. The drive to Anacortes is about two hours, or 90 miles north of Sea-Tac. We spent the night in Anacortes to catch the first ferry to Friday Harbor next morning, and there are many options for spending the



night. The ferries run year-round. We took both of our trips in December, and we did get snow on both trips. On one of the trips, we arrived in Anacortes, and the weather was stormy with lot of rain and high winds. When we arrived in Anacortes, the storm had passed through, and half of the town had no power. We drove around Anacortes looking for a breakfast place and found [Calico Cupboard Cafe & Bakery](#). After our breakfast, we went sight-seeing, which was cut short due to the weather. Driving on one street, we noticed the garbage cans had been blown on to the street. I got out to put the garbage cans back to the curb with the help of another driver. The driver mentioned to me that it wasn't safe to be driving since power lines were down and the high winds had toppled some trees. We went back into town and bought our groceries for our weekend getaway and waited for the ferry. As we were waiting for the ferry, it started to rain, and the winds picked up again. The ferry was delayed by 15 minutes due to the bad weather. Once we had boarded the ferry and parked the car, we went up to the galley. The ferry ride was very choppy, and we docked at Friday Harbor only 10 minutes behind schedule.



The Washington State Ferries system recommends getting reservations in advance of your trip, and we agree with the recommendation, as the line gets long for cars and pedestrians.

Here is the ferries system website that has information about [reservations](#). The ferry ride is very scenic with great views of the mainland and the various San Juan islands.



Ferry dock at Lopez Island

FRIDAY HARBOR



The ferry docked at Friday Harbor, which is a quaint town. Around the harbor there are restaurants, shops, a whale museum, and the San Juan Historical Museum. Some of the shops and restaurants by the harbor were closed for Christmas. There is a grocery store to buy groceries. We walked

around Friday Harbor. A couple of restaurants we visited were

[Downrigger](#), which is close to the water, and [Cask & Schooner Public House & Restaurant](#), which is across the street from Downrigger and up a little hill. We

enjoyed both restaurants. The sun sets by 4:30 p.m. in December so we made sure we were back in our cabin at Snug Harbor before it got dark. A friend of ours had mentioned that there are not many streetlights on the island, and we could run into wildlife if we were out driving too late in the evening.



[Salty Fox Coffee](#) shop in Friday Harbor

DRIVE AROUND THE ISLAND

Driving around the island is very easy. If you don't have a car, there is a public transit system. (A map with routes is



shown below.) We drove all around the island and enjoyed all the different views. On the southwest



corner of the island is Lime Kiln Point State Park (pictures to the right and above), where

you can see Vancouver Island in Canada.

We didn't see any whales while we were

there. A place that we like is [Krystal](#)

[Alpaca farm](#) and they have sweaters, gloves, and other alpaca wool products.

Another spot worth visiting is the lavender farm.



ROCHE HARBOR

Roche Harbor, on the north side of the island, is on Haro Strait. Roche



Harbor started as a company town by John S. McMillin, who discovered the richest and largest deposit of lime in the Northwest. Roche Harbor has hotels, condos for vacation rental, shops, restaurant grocery stores and a marina. Private yachts and boats of all size dock at Roche Harbor. The boaters resupply at Roche Harbor and spend some days being landlubbers, as they sail the Pacific Northwest. We walked around the harbor and savored the various sites, including gardens, views of the historic hotel, old workers' homes converted into vacation rentals, and the lime factory facility.



Yachts at Roche Harbor



Roche Harbor

THE ROAMING PIG, THE BRITS, AND THE AMERICANS

As we were driving around the Island, we noticed signs for an English camp and an American camp, and those signs piqued our curiosity. We stopped at American Camp and found the backdrop to why there are two camps. American Camp is on an old British sheep farm with no trees. The site provided a view of the ocean to spot ships either approaching the island or trying to land on the southern part of the Island. The British, located on the northern portion of the island, also had good views of the straits and were in a wooded, hilly, and very scenic area just south of Roche Harbor.



American Camp Headquarters



English Camp Headquarters



View from American Camp

After the Spanish ceded their claim in the Pacific Northwest, the San Juan Islands (which was part of Oregon Country that encompassed province of British Columbia, States of Washington, Oregon, Idaho,

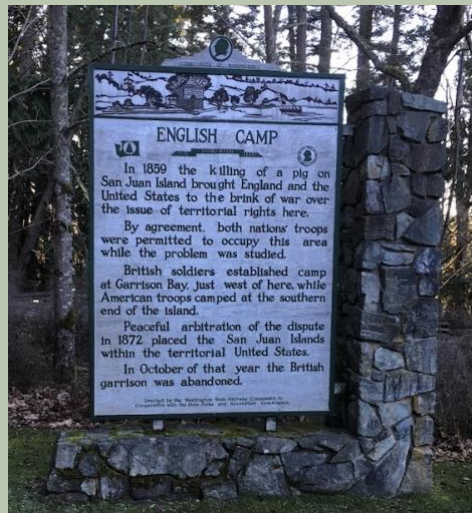
and portions of Wyoming and Montana) were jointly claimed by



United States and Britain after President Jefferson's Louisiana purchase that expanded American boundaries westward. Both United States and Britain jointly administered the area. The Oregon Treaty, signed by United States and Great Britain in London in 1846,

established the boundary between the United States and Great Britain on the 49th parallel, from the Rocky Mountains "to the middle of the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's Island" then south through the channel to the Strait of Juan de Fuca and west to the Pacific Ocean. The San Juan Islands lay in both straits, which led to both Great Britain and the United States claiming the islands and having presence on the island. The map on the right illustrates the border dispute (source NPS San Juan Islands). The status of the San Juan Islands was not an issue until the "Pig Incident." On June 15, 1859, an American shot and killed a pig that belonged to the British and had roamed to the American side. This event escalated, and ultimately there was a stalemate. Rear Admiral R. Lambert Baynes, Commander of the British naval forces in the east Pacific, commented to Vancouver Island Governor James Douglas that he would not "involve two great nations in a war over a squabble about a pig."

This stalemate lasted for 12 years until 1871, when the United States and Great Britain selected Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm to arbitrate the dispute. In 1872, the Kaiser awarded possession of the San Juan Islands to the United States, therefore ending the only war where the only casualty was a pig. This begs the question, was there a pig picking to celebrate the end of the war, or am I asking the question too soon?



Marker at English Camp

SNUG HARBOR

We stayed at Snug Harbor, a resort that has cabins for rent. We



stayed in one of the cabins. This is a great setting with stunning views of a small marina and the mountains surrounding the site. It is on the west side of the border. Snug Harbor's rooms have a kitchen and a grill. We took full advantage of both amenities.



Boat at Snug Harbor



View of Snug Harbor

ORCAS ISLAND

We took the ferry to Orcas Island and explored the island by car.



The island is hilly and has mountains. We drove clockwise on the island and went to Obstruction Pass at the southeast part of the island, went up to the peak of Mt.

Constitution. It started to snow, and it was very picturesque, and the views were gorgeous. We went to the east side of the island to Deer Harbor. We saw lot of houses and mansions, and the island is heavily wooded and lush. We didn't go to a restaurant because we wanted to see all of the island. The ferry schedule was limited in December, and we didn't want to miss the ferry back to Friday Harbor. Map Source: www.orcasisland.net



Ferry Landing at Orcas Village



Mt. Constitution



Snow fall at
Moran State Park



View of East Bay outside of Olga



Deer Harbor



Deer Harbor

TRIP BACK TO SEATTLE

On our trips back to the Sea-Tac Airport, we took the time to sightsee instead of sitting in a terminal.

Everett and Mukilteo

As we were driving south on I-5, we saw a lot of planes parked on the tarmac and had all the markings of an airport. We decided to take the exit and explore the area. It was a Boeing facility in Everett. Unfortunately, the Boeing Museum was closed, and I want to come back and visit it. The tarmac is along both sides of the road



and seeing so many airplanes parked was a sight to behold. As we were exploring the area we drove towards the coast and went into Mukilteo. Mukilteo has a lighthouse (picture to the left) and drove into the park. We are glad we did because we like lighthouses. We also

found out that this was the site where Captain George Vancouver landed on May 30, 1792, when he was exploring the Pacific Northwest. The marker is next to the lighthouse (picture below). I love when I can experience history.



Marker at sight where Captain George Vancouver Landed in Washington

Mercer Island

Another stop we made on our way back to the airport was at Mercer Island. It has nice houses and spectacular views of downtown Seattle. You can reach Mercer Island from I-90 from the west or east; from the north or south, take I-405 and take I-90 west.



Downtown View of Seattle from Mercer Island

FINAL THOUGHTS

We would like to go back to San Juan Islands during the summer months, though we do like having the Island all to ourselves in the winter.



View from the Ferry - Mount Baker (10,781 feet elevation) in the horizon