

Parks Make Good Neighbours

Francis/King Regional Park and its neighbours – Thetis Lake Regional Park to the west and Mill Hill Regional Park to the southwest – are three gems in the regional parks system. Visit them and you'll discover a regionally significant landscape in a protected natural setting.

Thetis Lake is popular for nature exploration on the lake and along the trails. Paddle calm waters at sunrise, or explore Thetis Lake Nature Sanctuary on a lazy afternoon. The High Ridge and Centennial trails in Francis/King Regional Park lead under the hydro power line to Thetis Lake.

Mill Hill, headquarters for CRD Parks, is known for its abundance of wildflowers (many of them rare) and its panoramic views of Greater Victoria. Hike the trail to the summit, and discover the colours of spring and a bird's eye view of the world. Mill Hill is adjacent to Thetis Lake, with a trail connecting the two parks. Enter Mill Hill off Atkins Avenue in Langford.

How to Get There

Follow the Trans-Canada Highway from Victoria, and take the Helmcken Road exit. Turn left on Burnside Road West, then right on Prospect Lake Road. Turn left on Munn Road, which leads to the park entrance on the right. Allow approximately 20 minutes driving time from Victoria.

Park Etiquette: What You Need to Know

To help preserve parks for everyone to enjoy, please:

- stay on designated trails
- keep dogs under control and on the trail
- keep dogs on leash on the Elsie King Trail
- pick up your dog's droppings
- carry out litter
- ride horses and bicycles on designated trails only

The following are prohibited:

- motorized vehicles
- wildflower picking
- camping and open fires
- alcohol
- removal or disturbance of plants or animals

Need More Info?

For more information about your regional parks and trails, visit the CRD Parks web site at www.crd.bc.ca/parks.

Dial 9-1-1 in case of emergency or fire, or if you observe unlawful activities.



Regional Parks

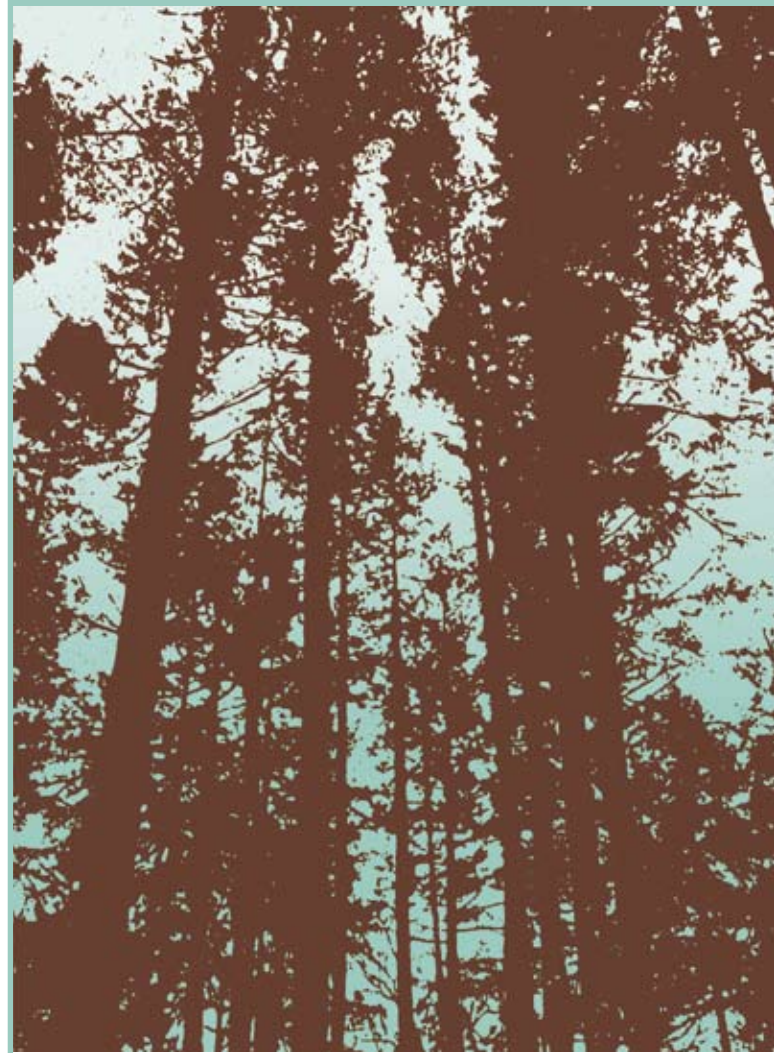
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FRANCIS/ KING Regional Park



Regional Parks

Francis/King Regional Park

The forests here are over 10,000 years old – the rocky hills, millions of years old! This 107-hectare park, nestled in the rolling farmland of Saanich, has sheltered generations of people... first the Coast Salish, then the early pioneers, and now you.

Move through time...

The forests and open spaces in Francis/King Regional Park provided food and shelter to the Coast Salish People and inspired their rich culture. These First Peoples harvested plants such as horsetail sprouts, camas bulbs and salal berries. Some they ate raw, others steam-cooked, mashed or roasted. Berries were often dried into cakes to last the winter. The elders knew which plants had healing properties. Licorice fern was used for stomach troubles. They took only the wood they needed from the giant cedar forest – for canoes, clothing, household wares and ceremonial objects.

Early pioneers also saw the richness of this land. James Francis purchased property on the east side of Munn Road in the 1840s, and except for minimal logging, preserved its natural beauty. His son, Thomas, lived there all his life, bequeathing the land to the Province of BC in 1960. It became Thomas Francis Park. The property on the west side of Munn Road was transferred from the City of Victoria to the Province in 1967. Freeman King Park was named after an early conservationist and naturalist who inspired many young Victoria naturalists. Both parks were managed by the Victoria Natural History Society until 1981, when they were transferred to CRD Parks.

Move through seasons...

Begin in spring, when the forest comes alive. The scented yellow blossoms of bigleaf maple appear overhead; at eye level, look for early-blooming Indian plum. At your feet, discover wildflowers such as shooting star and white fawn lily.

In summer, the rocky outcrops hold heat, and carpets of lichens and mosses are crackle-dry. Hear crickets chirping, northwestern gartersnakes moving through dry grasses, and Pacific tree frogs serenading each other in the swampy areas.

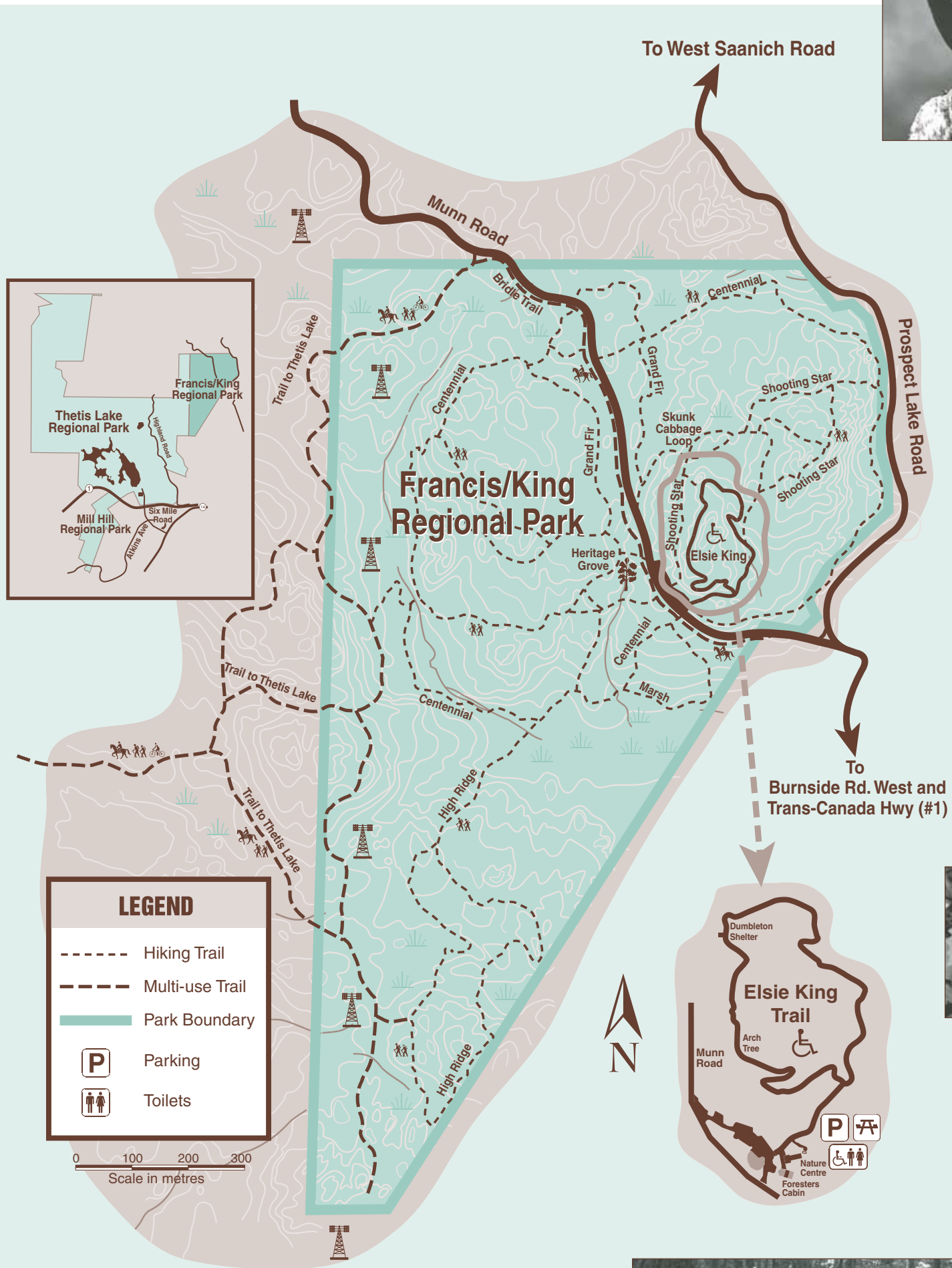
Fall offers its own colours. The delicate yellows and oranges of red alder and bigleaf maple slowly carpet the forest floor. Autumn rains break them down, and fungi with unusual names appear: witch's butter, elf's saddle, dead man's hand.

Don't ignore winter, when everything is cool and wet. Trees keep growing, mosses are rich green, and most animals never completely hibernate. Listen for the scolding sound of the small but vocal winter wren or the more strident call of the Steller's jay.





The Elsie King Trail is named after a prominent leader in the Victoria Girl Guides and the wife of naturalist Freeman King. The trail brings people with limited mobility and agility closer to nature. It includes an access ramp, eight interpretive signs, wooden curbs, benches and a shelter. Whether you explore by wheelchair, or with a walker or cane, head up the trail into the magic of this woodland park.



Take a walk to the tall trees. In the dense forest, dark columns rise through the canopy overhead. Wrap your arms around a tree three metres (10 feet) thick. Lean back to check the height: 75 metres (245 feet). These magnificent Douglas-fir trees, approximately 500 years old, are some of the tallest in the region. You'll discover the majesty of the forest in this small grove.

Stop by the Nature Centre, where CRD Parks staff and volunteer naturalists give you a sense of direction before you hit the trails. Brochures are available and seasonal displays focus on the plants and animals found in the park.

Photos: Will Husby