

A good place for a bike or a stroll

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The Olympian

What: biking, hiking on Anderson Island

Where: A ferry ride west of Steilacoom

To do: A biking adventure to be sure. Hilly, scenic and serene, the tiny island (8 miles long, 5 miles wide) provides a country-like escape. After a 17-minute ferry ride across the island-studded Puget Sound, you arrive. Once the ferry traffic dissipates (maximum load is 55 cars), the roads return to a country quiet (island's year around population is 1,000).

On a recent Saturday visit, traffic was light and courteous. One island resident said with a chuckle there's been no "reported" hit and runs. Make sure you stop at the island's grocery store. While you restore your supply of munchies, Angel, the store's clerk who is a rare lifelong island resident now raising her kids on the island, can give you directions and the latest gossip.

After a cheery farewell, continue south down Johnson Road, the eight-mile stretch of pavement that cuts the island in half.

Shortly after passing the old schoolhouse (built in the 1800s and is now a museum), take a right on Sandberg Road. Riding through a stretch of wooded meadows, follow the signs to Andy Park. It's named after Andrew Anderson, one of the island's original settlers who also was a friend of my great grandfather.

My suggestion is to park your bike at the small, rustic picnic area and walk the half mile along a narrow and at times steep trail (I took a spill into the bushes) to the beach and Carlson Cove on the west side of the island. Returning to Johnson Road, I continued south and the island opens into picturesque farmland, with frequent glimpses of the Puget Sound.

At the southern tip of the island, there's a beautiful view of the Nisqually Delta and the rolling Black Hills. Back up Johnson Road and at the end of Lake Josephine Boulevard, is the Riviera Marina on the east side of the island.

A three-mile ride through the island's most populated spot (still spotted three deer) takes you to the marina's entrance and the beginning of an unbelievably steep hill, which is actually a paved cliff. It's an 18-percent grade. Going down isn't the problem. But it's four blocks of lung-aching pain going up, with first gear bringing little relief (But I made it. Lance Armstrong would have struggled). The walk along a rocky beach makes the hill worth the ride.

Directions: Take exit 119 (DuPont/Steilacoom) off Interstate-5. Turn left off the freeway and right onto DuPont-Steilacoom Road into Steilacoom for about eight miles. Ferry terminal is at the end of the road.

Ferry schedule: There are 12 departures every weekday to Anderson Island from Steilacoom, with another two late trips added for the weekends. Departures are nearly every hour starting at 7 a.m. Taking a car will cost you \$18.75.

Highlights: The ferry ride is an experience unique to the Northwest. For adult walk-on passengers, round-trip ticket is \$4.60. Cheaper than buying a boat.

Birdwatchers on a bike: There's plenty of birds. If you can watch the road and the birds, you might see a Rufous Hummingbird, swallows, Cedar Waxwings, robins (of course) and woodpeckers.

For more information: Check out the island's Web site at www.andersonislandhs.com.



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The boardwalk at Carlson Cove at Andy Park on the west side of Anderson Island offers a close-up of the Sound. (Gail Wood/The Olympian)