

## HISTORY

Chuckanut Drive comprises some of the most difficult road-building terrain in the state. Thousands of dollars were invested in the creation of this road at a time in Washington's history when transportation by road was one of the least efficient methods of travel.

Chuckanut Drive was home to a wide variety of industrial enterprises including logging, mining, a thriving fish cannery, rock quarry and ferry port. A portion of the road through the Samish Farmlands was a waterway traveled by steamboats and canoes carrying valuable commercial cargo. Chuckanut Drive was home to Lyman Cutler, a man whose actions brought the U.S. to the brink of war with Great Britain.

**1850-1890** – The only way to get from Bellingham to Mount Vernon or Seattle was by boat.

**1893** – The Great Northern Railway began its first scheduled service from Minneapolis/St. Paul to Seattle. Sometime after that they began service between Seattle and Vancouver, BC. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe line ran from Seattle to Mount Vernon, Bellingham, and Vancouver, BC, skirting the shores of Samish and Bellingham Bays at the base of the Chuckanut Mountains some 200 feet below Chuckanut Drive.

**1896** – A logging access road was built, connecting Bellingham to Bow. Although only a dirt logging road with deep ruts, this was the first time communities in Whatcom County had been connected by land to points south.

**1905** – The Washington State Legislature allocated funds to pave Chuckanut Drive. Funding ran out after only a few miles had been paved.

**1907** – Entrepreneur Charles Larrabee and his partner, Cyrus Gates, surveyed the cliff-side road and, due to persuasive lobbying efforts in Olympia, succeeded in constructing the Fairhaven section of Chuckanut Drive.

**1916** – Chuckanut Drive opened to motorists as a new gravel road with saltwater views, and a key link in the developing Pacific Highway from Vancouver, BC to San Francisco.

**1921** – Paving of Chuckanut Drive between Fairhaven and Blanchard is completed and helps usher in a new era of transportation for the region.

**1931** – Chuckanut Drive became a scenic highway; the more inland route closely following the route of Interstate-5 was built for US-99.

**TODAY** Chuckanut Drive is designated as State Route 11 and is a Washington State Scenic Byway.

## VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

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## Resources



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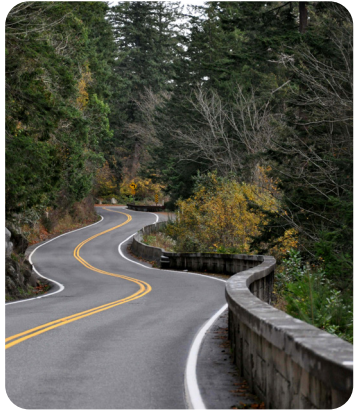
# CHUCKANUT DRIVE

A Driving Guide to Washington  
State Route 11



VISIT  
**Bellingham**  
WHATCOM COUNTY

## CHUCKANUT DRIVE



Chuckanut Drive (State Route 11) is a beautiful and slow-paced alternative to Interstate-5. This designated scenic byway connects Whatcom County to Skagit Valley by winding along the rock shoulder of the Chuckanut Mountains and follows the shoreline a couple hundred feet above sea level. It overlooks the San Juan Islands and offers stunning views of Chuckanut and Samish Bays, as well as the Olympic Mountains and Lummi Island. It travels through Larrabee State Park, farmlands and near numerous trailheads, unique art galleries, restaurants and cafes.

From the south, Chuckanut Drive can be accessed near Burlington at I-5 Exit 231 or from the north near Bellingham's Fairhaven Village District at I-5 Exit 250.

Chuckanut Drive is made up of two very different sections of highway. The north end of the byway (mileposts 21 to 9) curves along Chuckanut Mountains with trees, cliffs and scenic viewpoints looking out over Bellingham Bay, Samish Bay, the San Juan Islands and the Coastal Mountains to the west. The south end of the byway (mileposts 8 to 0) runs through the Skagit Valley farmlands located on the delta of the Skagit River. These wide open farmlands are some of the most productive in the country.

## Recreational Opportunities Year-Round

**The Interurban Trail** parallels Chuckanut Drive and Bellingham Bay on a path amid evergreens, deciduous trees, and the occasional home. Though Chuckanut Drive is a hilly, curvy road, the trail is mostly flat. This all-season 7-mile trail is optimal for walking/day hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking and camping. It also serves as a connector trail to several other moderate-to-difficult hiking trails through the Chuckanut Mountains and Arroyo Park.

**Larrabee State Park** is located on 1,885 acres along the saltwater shores of Samish Bay south of Bellingham. It's the oldest state park in Washington, its designation in 1915 has helped protect a variety of Northwest foliage: Douglas fir, western red cedar, alder, hemlock, bigleaf maple, willows, rhododendron and sword fern. Look for sea life in tidepools at Larrabee Park Beach or dip in the water at Wild Cat Cove with your kayak, canoe or boat.

**The Chuckanut Mountains** are home to several trails ranging from easy to strenuous. Explore the maze of trails including Chuckanut Ridge, Fragrance Lake, Pine and Cedar Lakes, North Lost Lake, Hemlock, Salal, Huckleberry Point and Raptor Ridge trails. Most range from 2 to 10 miles, roundtrip.

**Blanchard Mountain**, south of the Chuckanut Mountains, offers more technical hiking on the Pacific Northwest Trail, Oyster Dome, Lily and Lizard Lakes and Samish Overlook trails. Oyster Dome is an intriguing and scenic natural landmark, and its trail is littered with jumbled boulders, talus fields and bat-breeding caves. Blanchard Mountain is also a popular takeoff point for hang gliders.

## BOW/EDISON

Though small, the communities of Bow and Edison boast a rich history and offer charm for locals and visitors alike. Both were established by homesteaders in 1869, and have enjoyed a continuous farming history for more than a century.

Today, Bow is a quiet, unincorporated area, but it does have its own post office and is home to some highly renowned restaurants and cheese farms.

Edison was named for inventor Thomas Edison. The town's most famous resident was journalist Edward R. Murrow, who graduated from Edison High School (which no longer exists).



## FAIRHAVEN VILLAGE



Known for its Victorian-era charm, artsy shopping and delicious restaurants, the Fairhaven Village District is located on the southern edge of Bellingham Bay and at the northern point of Chuckanut Drive. Fairhaven's main intersection is at 12th Street and Harris Avenue. The 6-block district was included on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. It was originally founded as the City of Fairhaven in 1883 by Daniel Jefferson Harris, whose nickname was Dirty Dan. Fairhaven was a boomtown in the early 1890s, as speculators and developers hoped it would become the western terminus for the Great Northern Railway. It is still home to many buildings constructed at that time. In the winter of 1903-1904 the residents of Fairhaven voted to merge with the neighboring town of New Whatcom and become the City of Bellingham. In 2004, a granite marker was erected on the original boundary line to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the union.

Fairhaven frequently hosts festivals and special events on the grassy Village Green at the corner of 10th and Mill Avenue. Annual gatherings include the Dirty Dan Day Festival in April, the Wednesday Farmer's Market June through September, a Summer Solstice Artwalk in June and the Fairhaven Outdoor Cinema in July and August. The Fairhaven Village District also lights up for the holidays each year, and is a great place to find local gifts.



## TIPS & INFORMATION

No vehicles over 18,000 lbs are allowed on Chuckanut Drive (mile 9-14), which includes tour buses and commercial trucks. RVs are not recommended. (Safe driving tips in red below.)

**Please Note:** Chuckanut Drive is a narrow road. Watch for pedestrians, bicyclists & wildlife.

### BIKE LANES

**Mile 0-8:** 3' bike lanes on either side.

**Mile 9-14:** No bike lanes.

**Mile 14-20:** Use Interurban Trail, parallel to Chuckanut Drive.

**Mile 18-21:** 4' bike shoulders on either side.

### MILE-BY-MILE GUIDE

Green milepost markers can be seen along the side of the highway.

## FAIRHAVEN VILLAGE

### DRIVING DIRECTIONS

Take I-5 Exit 250 (Chuckanut Drive/Old Fairhaven Parkway) to Mile Marker 21.

**Mile 21** – Mini-marts, gas stations and espresso stand (South). I-5 Exit 250, Old Fairhaven Parkway.

**Mile 20** – Old Fairhaven Parkway. Fairhaven Historic District (North two blocks), filled with restaurants, galleries, bookstores, fine gifts, a grocery store, lodging and more. Bellingham Cruise Terminal and Fairhaven Station at the west end of Harris Avenue. Home to seasonal foot ferries to the San Juan Islands, Alaska Marine Highway System, Amtrak and Greyhound. Fairhaven Park Entrance at Padden Creek (South). Interurban Trail Rotary Trailhead and parking (South). Interurban Trailhead (South). Trail parking, turn south on 22nd Street (South). Nursery. Bike lanes on both sides of Old Fairhaven Parkway. Edgemoor/Happy Valley neighborhood (West). Main entrance to Fairhaven Park (East). Bridge over Padden Creek. Gas station and shops (East and West).



**Mile 19** – Sharp curves ahead. Reduce speed to 15 mph. North Chuckanut Mountain Trailhead and parking (East). Open dawn to dusk. Keep pets on leash. No overnight camping or parking. Gallery, gift and garden shop (West). Turnoff to Old Samish Road to Cedar and Pine Lakes trailhead (trail approximately 4 miles round-trip) (East). View of Chuckanut Bay (West).

**Mile 18** – Spectacular views of Chuckanut Bay, Nature Conservancy, Chuckanut Island and Clarks Point (West). Teddy Bear Cove trailhead (West - 1.8 miles round trip). Wooden staircase takes you down the trail. Park at North Chuckanut Mountain Trailhead parking lot.

## CHUCKANUT MOUNTAINSIDE

**Mile 17** – Road to Cyrus Gates Overlook (East, 3.5 miles). Narrow gravel road. Follow Hiline Road to Cleator Road. No camping or trailers. Gate closes at dusk.

**Mile 16** – Boat launch/Cove Road (West). Follow Cove Road downhill, left over the railroad tracks for about 0.4 miles. Follow signs. Open 8 AM to dusk. Self-pay station. Permissible watercraft include: powerboats, rowboats, sailboats, canoes, kayaks, jet skis and inflatables. Restrooms and picnic tables. No camping or overnight parking.



**Mile 15** – Larrabee State Park main entrance. Parking and restrooms. Gates open 8 AM to dusk. Parking fee. Larrabee State Park (West). RV and tent sites, restrooms with showers, beach access, trails and tide pools. Day use hours are 8 AM to dusk. Reservations accepted in the summer. Chuckanut viewpoint/Fragrance Lake Trail (East, across from Larrabee State Park entrance). Trail/viewpoint (0.9 miles): Fragrance Lake (approximately 4 miles roundtrip). No overnight camping or camping at Fragrance Lake. Keep pets on a leash. Bicycles permitted on certain trails; access to Interurban Trail. Trailhead access at Lost Lake Parking lot, bathrooms and pay station (East). Open to walking, jogging, bicycling and horseback riding. Parking fee or Discover Pass required.

**Mile 14** – Larrabee State Park southern boundary. Skagit and Whatcom County boundary. **Vehicle weight limit past this point (18,000 lbs or less only). No tour buses or commercial trucks. Large RVs not recommended.**

**Mile 13** – View of Anacortes. Windy road, slide area. Pullout (West).

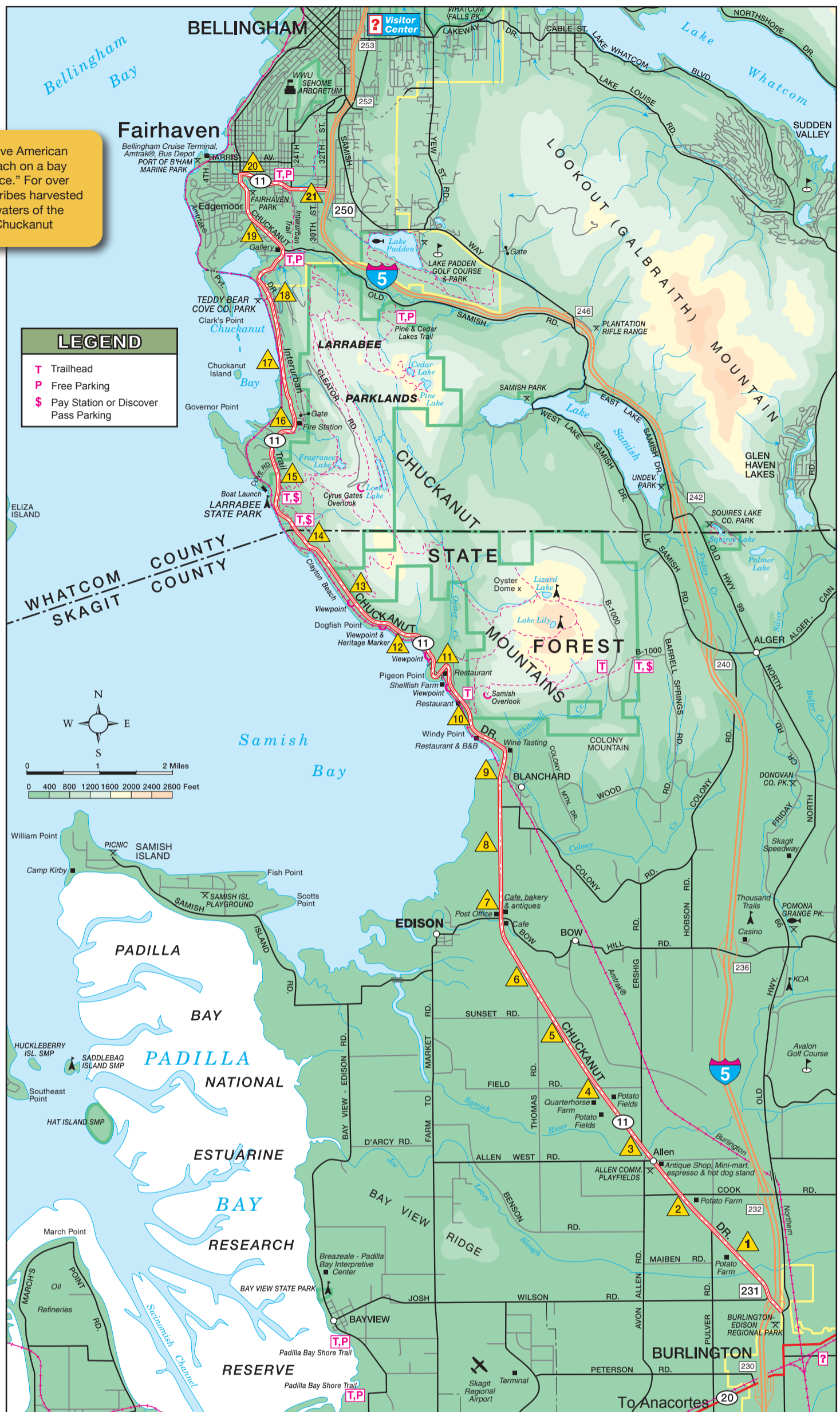
**Mile 12** – Pullout/heritage marker (West). Incredible views of Samish Bay and San Juan Islands. Picnic tables (West). **Reduce speed to 25 mph.**

**Mile 11** – Several pullouts (West). Restaurants with breathtaking views (West). **Road is narrow with sharp curves. Bicyclists use extreme caution.** Waterfalls emerging from rock (East). Shellfish farm (West). Follow side-road down for about a half mile. Fresh oysters, crab and mussels. **Caution, road crosses active railroad tracks.**



Shellfish Farm - Mile 11

**Chuckanut:** A Native American word meaning "beach on a bay with a small entrance." For over 8,000 years, local tribes harvested shellfish from the waters of the sheltered cove of Chuckanut



**Mile 10** – Blanchard Mountain (East). Hiking trailhead to: Oyster Dome (6 miles round-trip), The Samish Overlook (3.8 miles round-trip, spectacular views of the Olympic Mountains and the San Juan Islands) and Lily Lake trailhead (East). Restaurant (West). **Trailhead not clearly marked on road. Curvy bridge with sharp turn, slow down to 15 mph. No Parking Lot.**

## SAMISH FARMLANDS

**Mile 9** – View of Samish Bay. Excellent bird watching area (blue heron, raptors, migrating swans and more). View of Samish farmlands (West). Pacific Northwest Trailhead (East).

**Mile 8** – View of farmhouses (East & West).

**Mile 7** – View of farmhouses and livestock (East & West). Café, bakery, antiques and collectibles shop (East). Bakery, Taqueria, Cafe. To Bow-Edison (West). Turn east on Bow Hill Road to blueberry and organic cheese farms. Town of Edison (West on Bow Hill Road).

**Mile 6** – View of farmlands.

**Mile 5** – View of foothills (East). View of several farmhouses (East & West).

**Mile 4** – Quarter horse farm (West). Potato and other crop fields (East & West).

**Mile 3** – Antique shop, mini mart, espresso and hot dog stand, seasonal market stand (East). Swans and other migratory birds visible in the winter.

**Mile 2** – Notice the "Meadowlarks singing" sign. Potato and other crop farms (West). Pass through the town of Allen, where a huge shingle mill used to exist.

**Mile 1** – Potato and other crop farms (West)

**Return to I-5 via Exit 231** – Burlington. Food, lodging, gas and shopping nearby.

**For complete Bellingham and Whatcom County travel and relocation information, stop by the Visitor Information Center at: 904 Potter Street, Bellingham, WA 98229, call (360) 671-3990 or visit [bellingham.org](http://bellingham.org).**

