

BMN HIKE REPORT

Diez Vistas Trail (May 27, 2017)

By Mark Johnston



View from the first of the diez vistas, looking down Indian Arm toward the communities of Deep Cove and Dollarton, and beyond toward a large swath of Metro Vancouver. *Terry Puls photo.*

Last year, our scheduled hike on the Diez Vistas Trail was cancelled due to heavy rains. This year we would have no such worries. We were in for clear skies and warm temperatures, and after a prolonged stretch of cool rainy weather, didn't mind should the mercury rise into the 30s.

Nine of us gathered near the warden's office at Buntzen Lake Recreation Area. After brief introductions, we shouldered our daypacks and set out along the Buntzen Lake Trail toward the floating bridge. Our intention was to hike along Buntzen Ridge first and then return via the eastside lake trail. On the other side of the bridge, as we began our ascent to the ridge top, we started to string out along the trail. Four of us hiked at a faster pace, and four, while steady, were slower; our leader, Steve, occupied the middle. But the faster group was never too far ahead, and with an abundance of viewpoints along the way, there were multiple opportunities to collect ourselves.

We stopped for a short water break in the saddle between Sugar Mountain and the heights of Buntzen Ridge. But our first long breaks were at the trio of viewpoints (not counted as part of the diez vistas) at the

south end of the ridge. Halvor Lunden, the trail builder, named these Punta Largueza, Punta Apprecio, and Punta del Este. The first looks toward Bedwell Bay, the peninsula that divides the bay from Indian Arm, Dollarton on the north shore, and a large swath of Metro Vancouver. The second has an aerial view of Sasamat Lake. The third, where we lingered longest, looks down upon South Beach and across Buntzen Lake to Eagle Ridge. From here, we could also see Mt. Baker and by walking to the north end of the viewpoint, the new Port Mann Bridge.

Although we could have made a beeline for the diez vistas and skipped the latter two viewpoints, we had started on the viewpoint loop, so we continued around it until we regained the main trail. Now we began a kind of roller coaster journey, walking up short rises and down into hollows, through beautiful mature forest dotted with small ponds. We were at the western edge of the ridge, and whenever we could see the water of Indian Arm below, felt a cooling breeze, very welcome on a warm day. We stopped at the first of the diez vistas, probably the best, offering a view similar to the first of the southern viewpoints but much more expansive. Although we were beginning to think about lunch, there was a small crowd vying for places to sit, and we decided to press on to one of the farther viewpoints. As the first vista seems for many to be a turnaround point, we figured that if we continued on, the crowds would begin to thin out, and this proved to be the case. We finally settled on the third vista for lunch. While the prospect was more circumscribed, and mainly in the direction of Mt. Seymour, the viewpoint was shaded and had a nice level area padded with mosses and lichens, which made for comfortable seating.

After lunch we resumed our walk along the ridge. The forest here consists of Douglas-fir, cedar, and hemlock, but from time to time I noticed western white pine cones on the ground and looked up to locate their source tree. At some of the viewpoints we found another pine, *Pinus contorta*. Most of the later viewpoints offer diminishing returns, and unless one is paying close attention, it is easy to bypass a couple of them altogether. Finally, No. 10, while it has a nice rocky spine for sitting, has no view at all!

View from the "eleventh vista," looking down Indian Arm toward Capitol Hill. Terry Puls photo.

Past viewpoint No. 10, we descended steeply to an old logging road and then after a while made another descent to second logging road. But shortly before reaching the latter road, a couple of us who were familiar with an "eleventh vista," directed our party off trail onto a sketchy path leading to a cliff edge. Here there is arguably the best view of all. Although not as high as those that precede it, from this viewpoint can one look both up and down a considerable length of Indian Arm, and across the water to several



peaks of the Fannin Range. Those of us who dared to approach the edge so as to look over it were also rewarded with a bird's-eye view of Buntzen Powerhouse No. 2.



View from the "eleventh vista," looking across Indian Arm toward Mt. Seymour. *Terry Puls photo.*

Returning to the main trail, we continued on the logging road to the Old Buntzen Trail. On this trail we skirted McCombe Lake and had spectacular views of Swan Falls, which was cascading down at full volume—both in terms of amount of water and loudness of sound.

We spent quite a long time at North Beach. We had feared that on such a nice day the beach might be very peopled, but besides our party there were only one or two others. We sat on benches in sun or shade, and our leader Steve, went for a dip in the lake's cool waters. Others of us entertained ourselves by observing two ravens which had planted themselves nearby.

Over the winter months and into the early spring, the eastside lake trail was closed for upgrades. Now open, we were delighted to see many improvements to this popular trail. Ruts have been filled in, exposed roots covered up, and many bridges replaced. The trail is built to a very high standard, and given the amount of use, probably needs to be. Without having to worry about where we placed our feet, we were free to enjoy forest, lake, and company.

It was once suggested that we do the Diez Vistas Trail yearly. We haven't done that, but we do return to the Buntzen Lake area almost annually. We are lucky to have such a scenic and well-kept recreation area so close to home!