

# Strathcona Provincial Park TrailRider Program

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## **What is a TrailRider?**

The TrailRider is a unique single-tire “wheelchair” (Figure 1) designed to facilitate outdoor recreation for individuals living with physical disabilities or reduced mobility. Assisted by two to six porters, the unit provides opportunities for participants to access trails that might otherwise be beyond their physical limits, or the limits of a traditional wheelchair or scooter. The TrailRider has been tested on various terrains from Mount Everest basecamp to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro as well as city and provincial parks.



Figure 1. The unique one-wheeled TrailRider.  
Photo: Kawak Access Equipment Inc.

The Strathcona TrailRider program is offered through the non-profit Strathcona Wilderness Institute (SWI) in

partnership with BC Parks and is completely dependent on volunteers. Those who enjoy hiking and are eager to share that experience with those who face a physical barrier are encouraged to volunteer to help push/pull the TrailRider.

Video of the TrailRider in use: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7ZQWswTFu8>

## **History of the TrailRider**

*(extracted from the BC Mobility Opportunities Society website)*

As a teenager, Sam Sullivan enjoyed hiking in the wilderness of British Columbia and promised himself that he would return to it regularly. But in 1979, at age 19, he broke his neck in a skiing accident and became a quadriplegic. The wilderness seemed forever out of his reach but Sam pursued his passion and founded the BC Mobility Opportunities Societies (BCMOS) in 1985, with a goal to make it possible for people with significant disabilities to access BC’s great outdoors.

In 1988, Sam met Paul Cermak, a volunteer with the Tetra Society, another organization founded by Sam, which recruits engineers and technicians to create customized assistive devices for people with disabilities. Sam and Paul became friends and one day in 1995, they sketched a design of the “bush chair”. Within a week Paul produced a prototype made from a recycled aluminum lawn chair and after a series of design modifications, the first functional TrailRider was crafted. That summer, Sam went camping overnight for the first time since his injury, fulfilling the promise he made to himself. Since that time the TrailRider has experienced steady refinement. Along with the development of other

equipment such as specialized protective clothing, hiking and camping is now entirely possible for everyone.

Today, BCMOS is the leading not-for-profit association in British Columbia, Canada providing challenging outdoor recreational activities for people with significant disabilities. Based out of Vancouver in Pacific Spirit Regional Park, BCMOS completes over 200 hikes each season.

**BCMOS website:**

<https://www.facebook.com/BritishColumbiaMobilityOpportunitiesSociety/>

**Strathcona TrailRider Program**



The Strathcona TrailRider program is focused on providing access to the Forbidden Plateau area where trails and facilities have been adapted to accommodate a TrailRider (Figure 2). Boardwalk sections, ramps, a fishing dock and accessible pit-toilet have been developed to provide easier access to those with mobility issues.

Figure 2. Boardwalks throughout the Forbidden Plateau area provide a smooth ride for the TrailRider. Photo: Andy Smith

- **Program Highlights:**
  - **As a rider:**
    - Experience new places
    - Meet new people who share a passion for the outdoors
    - Enjoy nature and the associated health benefits of spending time outdoors
    - Challenge yourself by doing something different in a safe and supported way
  - **As a volunteer:**
    - Enrich an individual's quality of life by providing an opportunity to explore the backcountry which would otherwise be difficult to access
    - Contribute to community spirit and inclusiveness
    - Explore new areas while improving your own health and fitness
    - Become part of a new group of friends and foster a strong sense of teamwork

**Strathcona Provincial Park website:**

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/strath/>

**TrailRider video at Paradise Meadows:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE3QvgB77JQ&feature=share>

**Program Fee**

While a \$10 maintenance and administration donation is requested for a single-day use, this amount will be waived if affordability is a factor. There are no other costs associated with the program. The intent of the program is to make the backcountry accessible to as many people as possible.

**Access to Other TrailRiders**

If you do not live in the Comox Valley but would still like to experience a TrailRider trip there are other TrailRiders available for use.

- **Campbell River Recreation:** <http://sci-bc-database.ca/recreation-and-leisure/outdoor-adventure/campbell-river-trailrider-loan-program/>
- **Powell River Mobility Opportunities Society:** <http://prmos.org/programs.html>
- **Victoria- Alpine Club:** <http://accvi.ca/index.php/trailrider-program>

**How to Get Involved**

If you are interested in being a rider or volunteer porter or know someone who might enjoy adventuring into the backcountry of Strathcona, we strongly encourage you to get involved with us! To explore using the TrailRider or to get on the volunteer list please contact **Strathcona Wilderness Institute** for more information and/or bookings.

- **Email:** [strathconawilderness@gmail.com](mailto:strathconawilderness@gmail.com)
- **Phone:** (250) 287-1507 (July-October)

**TrailRider Loan Procedures**

The following procedures are applicable for persons wishing to borrow the TrailRider.

**1. Loan Fees**

- A \$10 fee per/trip is required prior to equipment use.
- The fee covers administration and maintenance costs. If the borrower requests the equipment for longer than one day, another \$10 per week is charged (providing that the TrailRider is not previously booked).

## 2. Damage Deposit

- A damage deposit of \$100 (cash, cheque or debit card deposit) is required prior to use. Cheques are not processed, but are held until the equipment is returned.
- Upon return of equipment, the condition is thoroughly inspected; if no damage is noted, cheques are destroyed, cash is returned, or debit refunded.

## 3. Conditions for Borrowing

No one will be permitted to borrow the TrailRider unless they have:

- Completed and signed the *Trailrider Loan Information Form* and completed an orientation for the use of the TrailRider with a SWI designated volunteer (see page 2 of the above form)
- Fully completed, signed, dated and had witnessed the *Participant Registration and Waiver Form*.
- Given written notification of route(s), date(s) and time(s) of trip. Equipment cannot be used outside of these parameters without notification to the SWI.
- Provided a photocopy of a driver's license or other picture ID (e.g. BC ID card) with their current address as identification.

## 4. Bookings & Pick-Up of Equipment

- All bookings are recorded and must be booked a minimum of 24 hours in advance.
- Availability of volunteer staff to do the orientation may determine whether or not the equipment is available in 24 hours.
- Pick up and drop off times need to be arranged with the SWI (generally between the hours of 9 am and 4 pm during seasonal operating period- July 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>).
- During the winter and shoulder periods, it may be possible to access the TrailRider by contacting SWI to discuss proposed use.

## Additional resources

- **Forbidden Plateau map:**  
[http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/strath/strath\\_forbidden\\_are\\_a.pdf](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/strath/strath_forbidden_are_a.pdf)
- **History of the TrailRider:** [http://www.bcmos.org/main/trailrider\\_history.php](http://www.bcmos.org/main/trailrider_history.php)
- **Strathcona Park photos:**  
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/strath/photos/>
- **Additional photos (taken by Andy Smith): see next page**

