



# CARIBOO CHILCOTIN COAST

TRAVEL & TOURING GUIDE

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Photo Credit: Cael Cook

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# We Are ‘A Land Without Limits’

When you turn these pages, we encourage you to open your mind and soul to the endless travel adventures available in this wild place within British Columbia.

Let your ideas and travel plans take shape as your eyes and mind navigate this land of breathtaking beauty, ruggedness, incredible wildlife and outdoor-adventure opportunities. For you’re about to enter into a region that truly is “*A Land Without Limits*”.

We’re delighted to share this snapshot of our diverse world and its distinctive landscapes. *Evergreen timberlands, ocean fjords, deserts, arid canyons, deciduous woodlands, alpine mountains and glaciers.* These ecosystems are the perfect setting for all the physical and cultural activities you can experience in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Fraser Canyon. Since our boundaries embrace virtually every kind of terrain and climate, we can boast the most diverse range of activities of any BC region, our wild lures visitors from around the world.

Many of the region’s resorts, guest ranches, festivals and events take advantage of our exciting wild west past, which includes the history of our First Nations peoples, the fur trade, the gold rush, ranching and agriculture. We offer a world where aboriginal cultures and contemporary lifestyles exist harmoniously, where both ancient traditions and modern life have an integral role to play in a vast, dramatic land.

Travel thousands of kilometres of coastline in the Great Bear Rainforest, including secluded coves, fjords, inlets, pristine beaches and rocky shores, where you’ll find world-class saltwater fishing and eco-adventures, with opportunities to view bears, seabirds, whales and porpoises up close. Welcoming First Nations villages offer a rich and storied heritage that residents are pleased to share.

If you time it right, you may even witness one of nature’s most remarkable feats: salmon migrating back to their birthplace, to spawn in many of the rivers and streams on the Coast, throughout the Fraser Canyon and into the Cariboo and Chilcotin.

We proudly embrace and showcase our open skies and rustic side, but, of course, we have much more to offer: sophisticated wilderness and eco-resorts, championship golf courses and a wide range of cultural, intellectual and adventure experiences.

Photographers, mountain bikers, skiers, hikers, snowmobilers, golfers, campers, fishermen and sailors all find nirvana in this geographically diverse region. Yet we’re a land of small cities, towns and villages, where you can explore our richly storied past while enjoying present-day activities and ‘*wild*’ outdoor adventures.

As you immerse yourself in this guide, we hope you are encouraged to experience *your* adventures with us soon. We look forward to sharing our legendary hospitality with you, your friends and family.

## Our Land Without Limits Welcomes You!



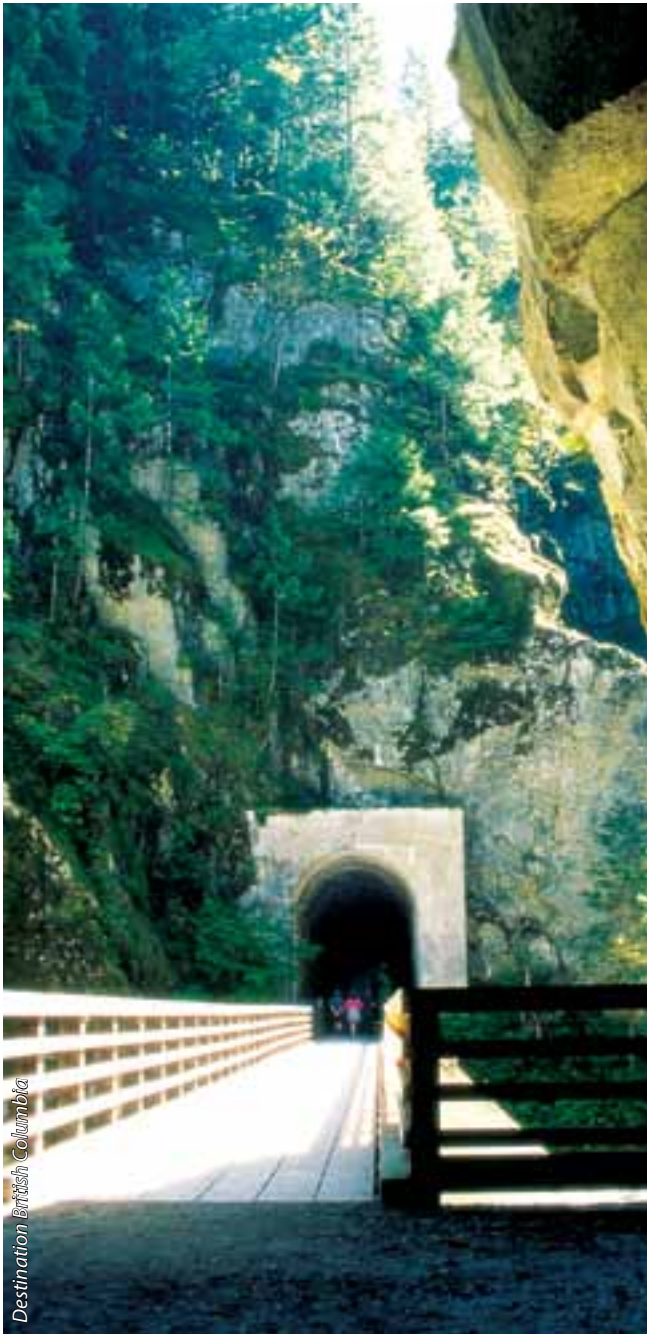
Chris Harris

Chilcotin River Landscape









Destination British Columbia



Anne Weaver/Yale Historic Site



Destination British Columbia



Hell's Gate Airtam



Geoff Moore





Michael Bednar

*The Fraser Canyon has long been an important transportation corridor – as a trading route for First Nations, then as a trail for fur traders, a rough road for prospectors to the goldfields of the Interior and a cliff-hugging path for Canada’s national railways. But today the canyon is also a destination unto itself. Thrill-seekers flock here to raft the Nahatlatch River’s churning rapids or ride the Airtram above the thundering Fraser River at Hell’s Gate, fly fishers hook onto the Thompson’s trophy-sized steelhead, western buffs to kick back at Ashcroft’s old-time rodeo, hikers to search out the Nlaka-pamux (ing-khla-kap-muh) First Nation’s Stein River Valley rock paintings and golfers to take a shot in Cache Creek at one of the toughest nine-hole courses in the province.*

Cutting a narrow chasm through two mountain ranges, the Coast and the Cascades, British Columbia’s Fraser River has created one of the most spectacular river canyons in the world. The winding Hwy. 1 drive through the Fraser Canyon is stunning – with steep rock faces split by numerous high waterfalls and a panorama of marbled-brown landscape. Below, the turbulent waters of the Fraser surge through the canyon, increasing in fury until the torrent reaches a crescendo at Hell’s Gate – the deepest and narrowest point on the river, where water surges through a mere 33m/108ft-wide channel at high-water runoff.

The canyon is also rich in history. Before Europeans ventured this far inland, First Nations lived in the canyon, canoed its rivers and, in areas where the waterways were impassable, constructed narrow, elevated paths to travel from the Interior to the Coast. In 1808, Scottish explorer Simon Fraser became the first European to navigate the canyon when he and a group of voyageurs journeyed from Prince George to present-day Vancouver with the aid of First Nations guides.

A few isolated Hudson’s Bay outposts also took advantage of the elevated canyon trails built by the Nlaka-pamux, to transport furs from Fort Kamloops to Fort Langley. For the

most part, though, the canyon remained largely ignored by Europeans for several decades after Fraser’s passage. Then in 1858 a major gold find near Fort Yale sparked the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush, and boom towns sprang up virtually overnight as an estimated 30,000 gold seekers flooded the banks of the Fraser River from Hope to just north of Lillooet. This initial gold rush had faded by 1860, but prospectors fanning out across B.C. soon discovered other deposits in the province’s Interior, most notably near Barkerville in the Cariboo. Thus, gold fever became the catalyst for the building of early roads, the creation of many towns and the founding of the province of British Columbia.

Today, the southern end of the Fraser Canyon, extending northward from Hope to Lillooet and Cache Creek, is the major transportation corridor for the Trans-Canada Highway and iron tracks of the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railways – all three routes carved out of rock and linked by a series of tunnels, bridges and trestles. In addition to these feats of engineering, the canyon’s savage geography is also responsible for some of the finest whitewater rafting conditions in North America, including those of the jade-green Nahatlatch River, which descends via a chain of lakes into the Fraser north of Boston Bar, with 37 rapids over a 12km/7.5mi stretch rated three, four and four-plus. Other sections of the Nahatlatch are ideal for first-time whitewater enthusiasts, while those seeking more tranquil pleasures are able to canoe the area’s placid lakes, float in backwater pools or fish from its lakeshores. Backcountry hiking, birdwatching, wildlife viewing and camping in rustic splendour are also popular pastimes here.

Another prime whitewater rafting spot is the 36km/22mi stretch of the Thompson River between Spences Bridge and Lytton, where 18 major rapids are ranked from one to five. West of Lytton, those who prefer land-based action can explore Stein Valley Nlaka-pamux Heritage Park, an integral ecosystem within the last unlogged intact watershed

in southwestern BC. Completely surrounded by mountains, the valley encompasses three small glaciers, four major lakes, picturesque alpine meadows and, though there are no roads and few camping facilities, several trails suitable for weekend hikes (others, such as the Stein Heritage Trail, take a week to complete). Just south of the Stein Valley, Mehatl Creek Provincial Park – recommended for seasoned outdoor adventurers – features alpine ridges, more lush subalpine meadows and pristine old-growth forests. Hikers can also explore the Tikwalus Heritage Trail, a recently restored 10km/6mi section of one of the elevated canyon paths built by the Nlaka-pamux – a span 50km/31mi north of Hope with spectacular canyon views.

Scientists and environmentalists also cite the ecological importance of the canyon's historic Fraser River – a major artery in one of the largest salmon-producing river systems in the world, where millions of fish return each year to spawn. This phenomenon can be viewed up close from fish ladders flanking the river, or from the Hell's Gate International Fishways. As well, the Thompson River between Lytton and Spences Bridge offers plentiful salmon fishing, from early August to mid-September, followed by a legendary steelhead season that begins in October. The Fraser is also home to white sturgeon, and anglers travel from near and far to do battle with these enormous, ancient fish.

### Hope

Scenically positioned at the southern entrance to the Fraser Canyon, and straddling the junction of four major highways (1, 3, 5 and 7), Hope is a key gateway to BC's Interior, one that is increasingly popular with hikers and other recreationists. Originally a fur-trade and gold-rush town, the community now celebrates its connection with forestry, wildlife viewing and wilderness adventures through such passions as river rafting, mountain biking, cycling, rock hounding, camping, gold panning and backcountry skiing. Railway fans, history buffs and photographers are drawn here by the Othello Tunnels, a



Geoff Moore

series of railway bridges and manmade passages carved into the sides of a 91m/300ft-deep gorge just east of Hope. This amazing engineering marvel, completed for the Kettle Valley Railway in 1914 and abandoned in the 1960s, still rates as one of the most expensive sections of rail bed ever built. The tunnels are now part of an easy, but visually dramatic, 3.5km/2mi round-trip walking trail in Coquihalla Canyon Provincial Park.

Hope is popularly referred to as BC's "Chainsaw Carving Capital," with more than 60 giant wooden outdoor sculptures and a wild international chainsaw-carving competition. As the birthplace of the Rambo character, brought to life by Sylvester Stallone in the three-part film series *First Blood*, the town also attracts fans who embark on self-guided tours of local film locations and purchase souvenirs at the Hope Visitor Centre and Museum Complex. Exhibits at the Hope museum also highlight the colourful characters and stories of the Fraser River Gold Rush, the culture of the local Sto:lo First Nation and the history of the area's early European settlers.

### Yale

The discovery of gold on a gravel bar just south of Yale in 1858 transformed

this Hudson's Bay fur-trading fort into a boisterous frontier settlement of 8,000 residents, one that remained a key hub even after the focus of the gold rush shifted north to the Cariboo. Yale was the last place on the Fraser that the paddlewheelers from Vancouver could reach, and after the construction of the Cariboo Wagon Road in 1865, wagon and mule teams would depart from here on their 650km/404mi trek north to Barkerville. When the railroad came through in the mid-1880s, the road was eradicated and Yale's importance faded. Today, residents number only 200, but artifacts from Yale's rowdy past are still exhibited at the local museum in Creighton House, an 1870s heritage building. Nostalgia buffs can also tour St. John the Divine Church (dating back to 1863), try their hand at panning for gold or explore another historic site: Alexandra Bridge. One of the oldest spans on the Fraser, the bridge is located 22km/14mi north of Yale, adjacent to Alexandra Bridge Provincial Park.

### Hell's Gate

About 27km/17mi north of Yale is the deepest, most dangerous and fastest-moving section of the Fraser River, where sheer rock faces rise to heights of 1,000m/3,280ft and, down below, the boiling river smashes its way through a constricted channel. At the river's



narrowest point, 757ML/200Mgal of water per minute thunders through a 35m/115ft-wide passage - prompting the first European to explore the region, Simon Fraser, to describe the gorge as "the gates of hell," after he and his men inched their way along its cliffs in 1808 using rope ladders made by their aboriginal guides. But today, Hell's Gate is one of the province's most unique and popular draws, with visitors 'flying' over the gorge in a gondola for a bird's eye view of churning rapids and the fishways installed to help migrating salmon on their upriver journey to spawn. Sightseers can also watch award-winning videos at the onsite Fisheries Exhibit, sample the chowder at Simon's Café and linger at the Fudge Factory, which boasts more than 30 mouth-watering flavours.

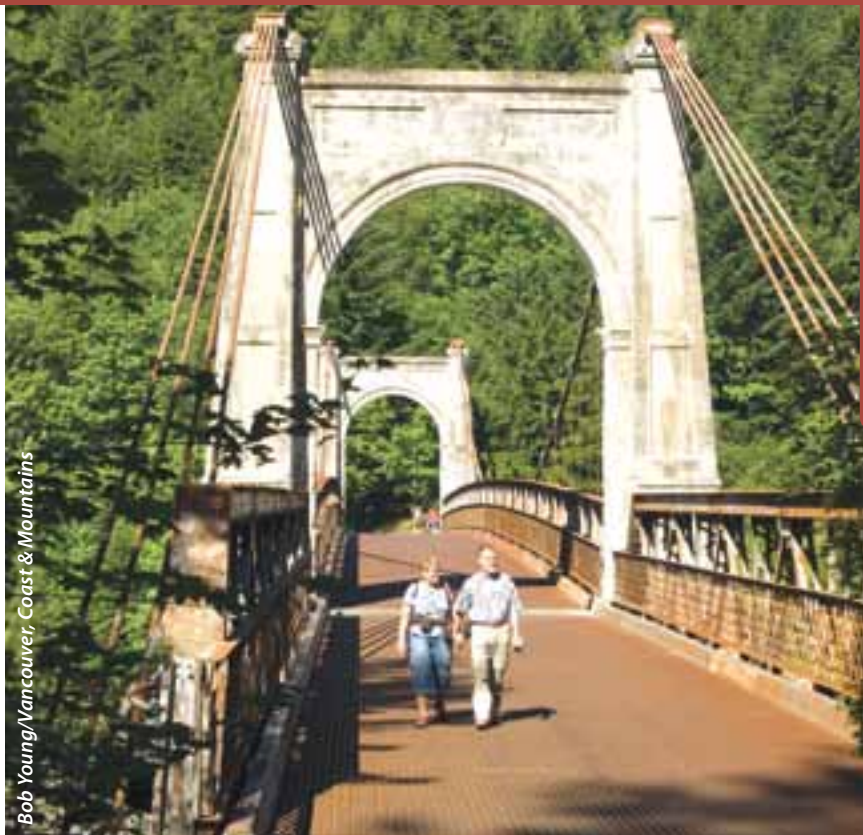
**Boston Bar**

Boston Bar was a bustling roadhouse stop during the 1860s gold rush. A gold-bearing sandbar, or sandy riverbank, is known as a 'bar,' and the sandbar slightly downriver and opposite Boston Bar in the 1860s was heavily populated by American prospectors who were mostly from Boston. This prompted local First Nations to refer to the Americans as Boston men; hence the town was named Boston Bar.

Directly across the Fraser River from Boston Bar is the small town of North Bend, which only became accessible by road in 1986, when a bridge was built to replace North Bend's one-car aerial ferry (now housed at Francis Harrington Park, on Hwy. 1). Travellers skirt from here along West Side Road to explore the pastoral Nahatlatch River Valley and the Nahatlatch River itself, which features one of BC's most exciting stretches of whitewater rafting. Another local attraction, just 5km/3mi south of Boston Bar, is Tuckkwiowhum (*tuck-we-ohm*) Village, where guests overnight in a teepee next to the thundering Fraser River to experience the pre-European Nlaka-pamux way of life, with classes in drum and jewellery making, salmon preparation and leather working.

**Lytton**

Situated at the confluence of the Fraser and Thompson rivers, Lytton was



Bob Young/Vancouver, Coast & Mountains

originally a First Nations village, known as A'q'emcín (rivers meeting) later anglicized to Camchin (*kum-sheen*). Only 300 people are listed as residents today. But thanks to the community's prime location, Lytton has earned the title of "Whitewater Rafting Capital of Canada," first-class rafting companies navigate whitewater riders through the local rapids, and those seeking slower-paced activities opt for camping, fishing and hiking close to town. Lytton also boasts one of the few reaction ferries left in BC, a turn-of-the-century river transport that uses the power of a river's current to propel the craft from one riverbank to another – and well worth experiencing. This free ferry provides access to the

Stein River Valley's main trailhead, while the nearby campground in Skihist Provincial Park is a base camp for exploring the awe-inspiring Thompson River Canyon and for picturesque strolls along remnants of the original Cariboo Wagon Road.

**Spences Bridge**

The fishing around scenic Spences Bridge attracts anglers from around the world during peak season (September to December), with hard-fighting steelhead the major lure. On the Thompson River at Goldpan Provincial Park, for example, it's possible to catch and release these sport fish – prized for their size, stamina and tremendous

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strength – like there’s no tomorrow. The community’s world-class whitewater rivers are a major draw. Other highlights include: locally grown vegetables and fruits sold at stalls beside the highway, in town and at wayside stops (agriculture is a major local industry); a three-day Desert Daze Music Festival each August; wild herds of California bighorn sheep that wander around the community year-round; the now-defunct Kettle Valley Railway right-of-way that runs east from town through the Nicola Valley to Merritt, with incredible views for rail-trail enthusiasts; two-tier Murray Creek Falls, just west of town in a picturesque desert canyon gorge, and the infamous Widow Smith gravesite.

### Ashcroft

A desert haven for artists, artisans and recreationists, Ashcroft recently adopted the slogan “Ashcroft – Wellness Awaits You” as a nod to its clean air, fresh water, locally produced foods and New Age health studios. The image is a far cry from the town’s origins as a teeming transfer point where, in the 1860s, freight and mining supplies were unloaded off CP railcars and hauled north to the Cariboo goldfields. Yet, the Ashcroft Museum, housed in the town’s 1917 post office, brings such stories alive with exhibits of regional railway, ranching, mining, farming and Chinese and First Nations history. Another draw is the village’s Heritage Place Park, for unique historic attractions specific to Ashcroft, such as an authentic sod house, a still-operational waterwheel and a railway caboose outfitted with an antique newspaper-printing press.

Just south of town on the Trans-Canada Hwy., visitors can also explore Ashcroft Manor, a popular stopover for travellers heading north to the goldfields in the 1800s, and later the district’s first courthouse - presided over by Judge Matthew Begbie, the infamous ‘hanging judge’ - and now a teahouse, museum and art gallery. As well, thrill-seekers can check in at Zipity Doo Dah Zipline Adventure Park for 427m/1,400ft ziplines, mountain biking, hiking and guided wildlife and birdwatching tours. Additional highlights include Ashcroft’s self-guided ‘history’ walk (wheelchair accessible), car show and geocaching;



Reo Rafting Resort/Ryan Robinson

plus, drag-strip racing at the nearby Nl'akapxm (*ing-khla-cappum*) Eagle Motorplex and, in winter, ice racing with cars at Barnes Lake.

### Cache Creek

The origin of Cache Creek’s unusual name is still in dispute. Some claim it is derived from the fur trade of the 1800s, when supplies were stored or cached at the valley junction. Others contend that it came from a gold-rush stagecoach robbery, when bandits buried their loot along the creek bed. Whatever the true story, Cache Creek today is known as the crossroads for Cariboo country and the southern stretch of the province’s Interior known for its distinctive attractions, including Horsting’s Farm market garden, historic Hat Creek Ranch, a BC Heritage Site that offers a rare opportunity to explore one of the region’s original gold-rush roadhouses. The community also boasts some of the best rock hounding in BC, canoeing, horseback riding and hiking in a setting of dry grasslands, working ranches, market gardens and dramatic desert landscapes. ♦



Seasonal

Drive the Scenic Fraser Canyon with its’ 7 mountain tunnels into the historic heart of British Columbia and visit the biggest ‘rush’ on the Gold Rush Trail.

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# the Cariboo



Chris Harris

Horse Lake, South Cariboo









Amy Thacker



Mike Hawkrige/Hidden Valley Ranch



Lisa Richardson



Thomas Drasdauskis



Thomas Drasdauskis



Geoff Moore



Chris Harris



*From rare grasslands, pine and aspen forests to tranquil lakes and granite-walled river gorges, the Cariboo's distinctive landscape is as diverse as its mix of recreational and cultural attractions. Williams Lake is the "Shangri-La of mountain biking," the Bowron Lakes canoe circuit one of the world's top five. History buffs flock to the gold rush town of Barkerville, a Canadian National Historic Site. Anglers find nirvana amidst the "Fishing Highway's" myriad of lakes, and art lovers trek to the region's most celebrated arts hub: the tiny heritage town of Wells. Winters options also abound, from dogsledding near 100 Mile House, to snowmobiling at Gold Bridge and ice fishing on numerous area lakes.*

Cariboo country stretches from Lillooet and Cache Creek in the south to just north of Hixon and Stoner, bordered by the Cariboo Mountains in the east and Fraser River to the west. Named after the once-abundant woodland caribou, it was the first region in BC's Interior settled by non-indigenous people. It also played a significant role in early European settlement of the province, as the hub of an 1860s gold rush that lured prospectors from around the world and saw mining towns and roadhouses spring up almost overnight. Today, that same sense of frontier adventure lives on in the pioneering spirit of those proud to call the Cariboo home, and in legends that still echo in its historic communities and revived or re-created ghost towns, most of which are linked by Hwy. 97 – the legendary Gold Rush Trail.

In fact, many communities along this historic route are still signposted according to their distance from Lillooet, or Mile 0, marking where early roadhouses provided food, drink and accommodations for miners, pack-train operators, wagon trains, and stagecoach travellers who could afford \$130 for a one-way ticket. One of the largest of those to survive is Hat Creek Ranch, 11km/7mi north of Cache Creek amid rolling sagebrush hills at the junction of Hwy. 97 and 99. This BC Heritage Site marks not only a geographic crossroads, but the intersection of major threads in the Cariboo's compelling history: fur trading, ranching, the gold rush and First Nations culture. In a landscape seemingly airlifted out of an old western, the Cariboo of today remains firmly rooted in cowboy culture. BC's Cowboy Hall of Fame and premier ranch and rodeo museum, as well as one of Canada's largest rodeos, are all found here alongside the largest percentage of guest ranches in BC.

The region's geographic diversity is another major attraction. Just east of Quesnel in the Cariboo Mountains, for example, Bowron Lake Provincial Park features one of the world's top-five canoe circuits: 10 glacial lakes connected by channels, rivers and short portages in a rugged landscape populated by a variety of wildlife. Adrenaline junkies are drawn to the network of multi-purpose trails snaking through the sienna hills around Williams Lake, a landscape *Bike* magazine calls "the Shangri-La of mountain biking." Distance hikers come

for the Nuxalk-Carrier Grease Trail, aka the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail. Extending 347km/216m westward to the Pacific, it was once the Nuxalk (*nuxalk*) and Carrier First Nations' primary trade route, which in 1793 explorer Alexander Mackenzie followed to become the first European to reach the Pacific Ocean by land.

Wildlife enthusiasts love the region's world-renowned diversity of wildlife. West of Quesnel, the waters of Nazko Lake Provincial Park buoy the endangered American White Pelican. To the northeast, the Blackwater River is the most outstanding dry-fly-fishing destination in North America, with virtually every pool nurturing hard-fighting rainbow trout. The "Fishing Highway" in the South Cariboo features 100-plus lakes filled with kokanee, rainbow and lake trout, all within an hour's drive. Excellent fishing and kayaking are also found in the Horsefly and Likely areas wildlife-rich terrain where grizzlies scoop salmon from rushing currents as the fish migrate by the millions up the Quesnel River to spawn in the Horsefly and Mitchell rivers.

### Lillooet

"Guaranteed Rugged" describes both the mountainous terrain around Lillooet and the year-round active lifestyle this setting inspires. The landscape is wild, rocky and steep, roads are carved out of mountainsides with ever-changing views of the Fraser River, and both locals and visitors alike revel in the thrill of living life here to the fullest.

## What the Locals Say

“Why do I live in Horsefly? For me, it’s about the people. Everyone works together here. We live 12 kilometres from town and yet we still know all our neighbours, and they would help us with anything. There is great community spirit and an active involvement in things. It’s just a really friendly place to live.” ~ *Rich Kenny, guitar- and dulcimer-maker at Cariboo Musical Instruments, Horsefly*

“Coming from a very congested place in western Europe, we moved to Canada to find peace, reconnect with nature and build a new life. Lillooet is our new home, where we found opportunity with wilderness just around the corner. The land is rugged with landslides, avalanches and steep terrain. It’s also immensely rich in history and we’re now becoming part of that history by working that same land growing premium grapes.” ~ *Rolf de Bruin, founder and owner of Fort Berens Winery in Lillooet*

“What impresses me most about the North Cariboo is our wildlife. As you travel Hwy. 26 from Quesnel to Barkerville, it’s incredible what you’re liable to see: moose, bears, deer, caribou. I even saw a lynx last summer. We see wildlife here so often that we tend to take it for granted. Moose are so common they’re regarded as road hazards.” ~ *Richard T. Wright, historian, photographer and operator of Barkerville’s Theatre Royal*

“I was riding with a geologist at the ranch years ago, and he said that, with so much ancient volcanic and glacial activity, this area is a geologist’s dream. Maybe that’s why the countryside is so visually stunning. Depending on how the light hits the hills, it never looks quite the same twice. Certainly a photographer’s dream, anyway!” ~ *Cynthia Rowe, general manager and co-owner, Sundance Guest Ranch, Ashcroft*



Geoff Moore



Easily accessible from north or south, Lillooet offers a compelling blend of cultural and recreational opportunities, with a range of restaurants and lodging. Boating, mountain biking and backpacking are just a few of the outdoor adventures possible spring through fall, along with unparalleled ice-climbing, heli-skiing and snowmobiling in winter. Lillooet embraces the ways of the St'át'imc (*stat-lee-um*) First Nation, which offers award-winning cultural tours in history, traditions and authentic cuisine through its Xwisten (*hoyshten*) Experience Tours; July's popular Apricot Tsaqwen (*cho-com*) Festival also celebrates local culture.

Geocachers can search out more than 100 caches in the trails around Lillooet or pick up local hiking guidebooks on wildlife viewing and birdwatching. More leisurely pursuits include golfing at the Sheep Pasture Golf Course (featuring resident sheep as live hazards!), a rock-hounding stroll along the banks of the Fraser River, a tour of downtown's 'Jade Walk' (a tribute to Lillooet's jade-mining history) or a Friday rail journey on the Kaoham Shuttle, which skirts the turquoise waters of Seton Lake en route to Seton Portage (via the same tracks the internationally renowned Rocky Mountaineer travels). Historians can drop by the museum and visitor centre to view Gold Rush exhibits or take self-guided tours of turn-of-the-century architectural gems such as Miyazaki House, featuring 1890s architecture and Dr. Miyazaki's original office. Friday nights in July and August, Miyazaki House hosts summer concerts, while the award-winning Fort Berens Winery lures wine connoisseurs.



Brad Kasselman/coastphoto.com

**Clinton**

The village of Clinton is routinely referenced for its wild west ambience and gold-rush and pioneer history, exemplified by its original western store fronts, historical walking tours and excellent museum archives and exhibits (located at the village's 1892 schoolhouse). Equally significant is the diversity of the surrounding landscape's unique geological variations, including Chasm Provincial Park's Painted Chasm. Northeast of Clinton, this 8km/5mi-long bedrock-box canyon features rock layers in shades of orange, pink, yellow and lavender. Other geological highlights include the Limestone Quarry, a haven for fossil hunters and rock hounds, and the Marble Range, where cliffs, caves, disappearing streams and wildlife trails lure climbers, cavers, hikers and horseback riders.

As BC's "Guest Ranch Capital," Clinton is also the community hub for many guest ranches, including an award-winning Thai-influenced spa and ranch or more traditional family focused outfits offering trail riding, horsemanship classes, gold panning and sleigh rides. Nordic skiing is also popular around Clinton, with 60km/37mi of Nordic ski trails (also suitable for hiking and mountain biking, in season). Clinton's Jamboree in August, and Annual Ball, held every May long weekend since 1868, are also big draws.

**70 Mile House**

Picturesque 70 Mile House is a key centre for accessing the Green Lake Recreation Area, one of the Cariboo's most popular destinations for water sports, along with nearby Watch Lake, a habitat for thriving waterfowl and

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Thomas Drasdauskis

## Festivals & Events

**Cariboo Challenge Sled Dog Races** Share the love of the mush at the Jack Gawthorn Sled Dog Races by visiting the Heritage Site events.  
**108 Mile House. January 10-11**

**Peel Out Mountain Bike Festival** Contenders descend on “The Puddle” to gun for the top spot in the Invitational Downhill and Super Enduro.  
**Williams Lake. May**

**Williams Lake Stampede** Professional rodeo events and scads of family fun including a parade and street party.  
**Williams Lake. June 26-29**

**Billy Barker Days** B.C.’s largest free family festival celebrates the Cariboo Gold Rush with a rodeo, parade, midway and more.  
**Quesnel. July 16-19**

**Arts on the Fly Festival** Top performers in jazz, indie, folk, rock and other musical genres.  
**Horsefly. July 10-11**

**ArtsWells Festival** B.C.’s funkier event showcases 300-plus musicians, artists, film screenings, workshops and more.  
**Wells/Barkerville. July 31-August 3**

**BC Metis Music Jamboree** Old-fashioned bluegrass-style festival featuring country music, Metis fiddling and non-stop dancing.  
**McLeese Lake. August 7-9**

**South Cariboo Garlic Festival** Garlina the mascot struts alongside food vendors, musicians and the annual battle for title of Master Garlic Chef.  
**Lac la Hache. August 29-30**

**Salmon in the Canyon** celebrates the world’s greatest salmon-spawning river and the Fraser Canyon’s diverse ecosystem, with a wild Salmon BBQ, musicians and family fun.  
**Lillooet. Late August**

**7 Summits Challenge** Seven mountains, seven stages, 7,000 feet up! An epic, but fun, friendly day of biking and hiking.  
**Wells/Barkerville. September 19**



raptor populations. No doubt when 70 Mile House was established in 1862 as a hostel for Cariboo Wagon Road work crews, residents had no idea the area would evolve into a thriving guest-ranch and outdoor-recreation hub, with a diverse network of hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, Nordic and snowmobile trails, plus canoeing, kayaking, birding, wildlife viewing, ice fishing and angling. As well, nearby Big Bar Lake Provincial Park boasts spectacular lake views, great fishing, plus excellent boating and swimming.

**Interlakes/The Fishing Highway**

Hwy. 24, between 93 Mile House and Little Fort, and its junctions with Hwy. 97 and Hwy. 5, is today known as “The Fishing Highway”. Tracing sections of the old Hudson’s Bay Fur Brigade Trail, it accesses 100-plus lakes where fly-fishing, spin casting, trolling and ice fishing yield big fish, with month-long fishing derbies in June and September, horseback riding, snowmobiling and ATV excursions. Near the highway’s western end is Lone Butte, a peaceful village named for a solitary volcano plug that inspires invigorating hikes up “the Butte”. With restaurants, cafés, shops, lakes, resorts and guest ranches dotting the length of Hwy. 24, along with man-made natural highlights such as the Lone Butte Water Tower, West Sheridan Trail System, Huckleberry Butte and Bridge Lake Provincial Park, the only challenge here is what to enjoy first.

**100 Mile House**

100 Mile House claims a couple of lofty titles, including “Handcrafted Log Home Capital of North America” and “International Nordic Ski Capital.” The



Thomas Drasdauskis

latter reflects the fact that 100 Mile House has one of the most active nordic ski clubs in BC with access to one of the longest groomed-trail networks in Canada, a distinction it celebrates by displaying the “World’s Tallest Pair of Cross-Country Skis” outside its visitor centre. Another highlight is the community’s prime location on the 170km/106mi Gold Rush Snowmobile Trail, a maintained, signed route and home base for local snowmobile clubs, and horse-drawn sleigh rides, snowshoeing and dogsled tours.

Spring through fall, these Nordic and other backcountry routes are also ideal for mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding, photography and wildlife viewing, while numerous lakes attract fishers, canoeists and swimmers. Birding is also a major draw, with such

popular viewing sites as the wheelchair-accessible 100 Mile Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary, with parking at the Visitor Information Centre.

Art lovers appreciate Parkside Centre, at the entrance to Centennial Park, community events, while theatre and music aficionados are rewarded at Martin Exeter Hall. History buffs can explore the village’s origins as a fur-trading station as well as its key role as an 1860s stagecoach stop on the Gold Rush Trail, with a stroll past outdoor murals honouring the area’s early-pioneer families and a photo op featuring an original Barnard Express Stage Coach.

**108 Mile House**

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“Just came back from biking the trails around Williams Lake. Holy freakin’ amazing! Why don’t more people know about these sic trails?! (I guess they do now...lol!)” –*John Craighton*

“If you love fishing, like I do, Hwy. 24 around 100 Mile House is *the* place to go – so many lakes and tons of fish. I live in Alberta. But I make sure to visit this area every year.”  
–*Richard Davis*

“Thanks for sharing the photo [of the Cariboo log home] – *love The Timber Kings* TV show. I watch it every week down here in the States, and I’d love to visit where you build those incredible log homes.”  
–*Elizabeth Barlow*

“Billy Barker Days were a treat. My kids loved dancing around on the outdoor stage to the great music. Quesnel is so cool. We’ll be back.”  
–*Stephen Logan*

“I’ve been to the Williams Lake Stampede a couple of times: once when I was young and foolish (the barn dance was a blast) and just a couple of years ago with my kids. They *loved* the rodeo bulls, parade and pancake breakfast – and the photo of Carey Price on his horse; didn’t know he was into rodeo stuff.”  
–*Johanna Dourey*

“Paddled the Bowron Lakes. One of the best trips my husband and I have ever been on.” –*The Shewots & friends*

“I took my cousin and his wife to Barkerville when they came for a visit from Scotland,” and they really enjoyed the Theatre Royal production. They even knew some of the old songs.”  
–*Pat Gunderson*

“Had a great few days west of the Fraser River across the Rudy Johnson Bridge. Saw lots of deer, a beauty cinnamon bear, grouse – *love the Cariboo*; heading to the Blackwater next week.”  
–*Don Pearse*



Chris Harris



the countryside here, reportedly the ill-gotten gains of local hotel proprietors, the McVeas, in the late 1800s. Indeed, stashes of gold have been unearthed at several modern-day construction sites locally. A more tangible attraction, however, is the village's 108 Mile Ranch Historic Site: a collection of lakeside heritage buildings that includes the largest log barn of its kind in Canada (built in 1908 to house a herd of 200 Clydesdales); the 105 Mile roadhouse and 108 Mile telegraph office; an 1867 hotel and store; a trapper's cabin, the 134 Mile schoolhouse and period implements and tools.

**Canim Lake**

Canim is one of the larger Cariboo lakes, located just 35km/22mi northeast of 100 Mile House, past the community of Forest Grove. In a provincial park, Canim Lake is surrounded by lush meadows, mountains and forested hills, this is an incredibly scenic spot, with resorts dotting the lake's vast pebble-beach shoreline (a remnant of the glacial age). Summertime here is idyllic, with endless

blue-sky days of canoeing, kayaking, swimming, hiking, boating and fishing backdropped by magnificent waterfalls, volcanic cones (near Spanish Creek) and ancient pictographs and pit houses (at Deception Creek). In winter, opportunities for snowmobiling, ice fishing, backcountry skiing and snowshoeing abound.

**Lac la Hache**

This village is often referred to as the "Longest Town in the Cariboo," reflecting how its resorts, ranches and vacation homes are scattered along the lake's 19km/12mi-long shoreline. Decades before European fur traders came into the area, the Secwepemc (*shi-huep-muh-k*) established pit houses here and the Chilcotins (*chilko-teens*), who travelled back and forth through the region, named the lake Kumatakwa, Queen of the Waters. With a strong history of ranching and agriculture, today, Lac la Hache is one of the most popular lakes along Hwy. 97, particularly with water skiers, anglers and power boaters. Foodies love its South Cariboo

Garlic Festival, held in late August, while winter brings crisp, sunny days ideal for ice fishing, snow shoeing, pond hockey and for skiing nearby on Mt. Timothy's slopes.

**150 Mile House**

150 Mile House is a quiet ranchland community known for its gold-rush and pioneer history and log homes. It is also home to the Little Red Schoolhouse, the oldest functional school building in the Cariboo Chilcotin. Constructed in 1896 beside the original Cariboo Wagon Road when 150 Mile House was a commercial hub, the wood-frame, one-room building is now a historical site and classroom open to the public in summer. Another local lure is The Yellow Umbrella & Thyme for Tea, an old-fashioned English-style teahouse and gift shop off Hwy. 97, just north of town, serving meals and 100-plus blends of tea. Several guest ranches are also found nearby, with horseback riding a popular summer pastime and

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snowmobiling and snowshoeing in winter. From 150 Mile House, travellers also generally decide whether to continue north to Quesnel or head northeast along the Gold Rush Trail to the resort lakes around Horsefly and Likely, or the “Backroad to Barkerville”.

### Horsefly

A close-knit community of 1,000 in the foothills of the Cariboo Mountains, Horsefly is the Gold Rush Trail’s scenic gateway to Quesnel Lake, Horsefly Lake, Crooked Lake and the Cariboo Mountains. As such, it makes a unique home base for artists and outdoor adventurers exploring the area’s hundreds of small, picturesque lakes, creeks, rivers and waterfalls – whether camping, hiking, fishing, kayaking, mountain biking, backcountry skiing or ice fishing. In turn, Horsefly plays year-round host with lively community events, including spring’s *The Horsefly Follies*, July’s Arts on the Fly Music Festival, a Fall Fair and September’s Horsefly River Salmon Festival.

Horsefly also attracts a substantial contingent of history buffs to its Pioneer Museum and visitor centre, with exhibits highlighting how the first gold discovery of the Cariboo Gold Rush took place on the Horsefly River; guided by native Long Baptiste, the prospectors collected an astonishing 2,835g/100oz of nuggets in a single week, and, in the process, triggered the gold rush of 1859.

### Likely

Likely is located about 85km/53mi northeast of 150 Mile House at the west end of Quesnel Lake, the deepest fjord-lake in North America. The community was originally called Quesnelle (*kwe-nel*) Dam, after the dam built nearby in 1898 to provide mining access to the Quesnel River. The name was changed in 1923 in honour of prospector John “Plato” Likely.

Today, the local economy is driven by tourism, forestry and mining, with intriguing examples of past mining ventures showcased at the nearby Bullion Pit Mine and in Cedar Point Provincial Park, home to the community’s Cedar City Mining Museum and Bullion Mines’ giant 1906 Vulcan steam shovel. The park also provides access to old mining trails, tourist information, a public boat launch to Quesnel Lake and river ‘floats’; a hike, bike or snowmobile ride up nearby Yanks Peak affords panoramic views of the Cariboo Mountains.

Likely is also known as the gateway to the scenic “Backroad to Barkerville,” a gravel forestry road that winds past stunning waterfalls and the Cariboo River in an alluring backcountry landscape of sub-alpine meadows. Paddle on glacier fed lakes, backdropped by snow-covered mountain ridges, and photographically capture the postcard perfect vistas. The route can be accessed by motorcycles, trucks and campers; driving access to Quesnelle Forks from Likely is also possible, though the road is unpaved. (Seasonal backcountry road conditions vary; check with local visitor centres prior to travelling.)



**Quesnelle Forks**

Quesnelle Forks is a hauntingly striking ghost town accessible to the public by a dirt road out of Likely (just 9km/5.5mi away), featuring a late-1800s graveyard and pioneer log cabins. There are no entrance fees or employees, no souvenir shops or cafés, just fragments of the town's 1860s heyday when gold fever was rampant at the confluence of the Quesnel and Cariboo rivers, where "the Forks" quickly grew into a rowdy camp of 5,000-plus residents. Even after the gold seekers moved farther north, the town's prime location ensured that it remained a major gateway into the goldfields. But when the Cariboo Wagon Road was completed in 1865, the community was bypassed. By the mid-1870s, most residents had left, though a community of Chinese prospectors and merchants temporarily remained to support a widely dispersed mining community.



**Williams Lake**

Located in a valley at the junction of Hwy. 97 and Hwy. 20, Williams Lake has been a major Cariboo Chilcotin crossroad for centuries. Even prior to the arrival of the first white settlers, the Williams Lake valley was a traditional meeting place for the Secwepemc First Nation. In fact, the city is named after a local Secwepemc (*shi-huep-muh-k*) chief of the 1800s, an aspect of the community's heritage that can be explored further at Xat'sull Heritage Village, a 20-minute drive north.

Today, the region's "Hub City" is the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast's largest urban centre, with 11,200 residents within city limits and a distinctive western-frontier personality vividly showcased at its

Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin – BC's premier ranch and rodeo museum and home to the BC Cowboy Hall of Fame. The City also hosts one of Canada's largest pro-rodeo festivals, second only to the Calgary Stampede in size but not spirit. The Williams Lake Stampede,

held on the Canada Day-long weekend (July 1), features Canadian Professional Rodeo Association action, with rodeo stars from around the globe competing in traditional and unique homegrown events, including the Mountain Race and Ranch Challenge.



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Michael Bednar

Backcountry dirt biking is another key attraction, along with rock climbing at the Elser and Alkali Bluffs and stock-car racing at Thunder Mountain Speedway. Rated one of BC's premier mountain-biking destinations, Williams Lake boasts unique, dedicated trail systems – Westsyde Ridge, Desous Mountain and Fox Mountain – with a diverse mix of routes, from double-track beginner to epic cross-country and steep, gnarly downhills. From the city centre, the scenic 12km/7.5mi River Valley Trail leads bikers, horseback riders, walkers and runners around a variety of geological features that shelter deer, beaver, birds of prey, songbirds, waterfowl and the occasional bear. For wildlife viewing and spectacular views of the surrounding plateaus, hikers can also tackle “the Dome,” while birders find avian haven at Scout Island, a trail-laced sanctuary for birds and small wildlife located right on Williams Lake.

More leisurely pursuits include downtown strolls among the city's quaint shops, art galleries several featuring local art, including the works of First Nations artists, and the restaurants and cafes found on nearly every side street. The City's three golf

courses, impressive log tourism centre and 1919 Railway Station House (now the Station House Gallery) are also popular attractions. With heritage murals displayed on buildings throughout the downtown core, “The Mural Capital of the Cariboo” is an excellent home base for Chilcotin and Bella Coola Valley excursions.

#### **McLeese Lake**

This picturesque resort community, just 30 minutes north of Williams Lake, was originally known as Mud Lake. It was renamed in the 1880s in honor of nearby Soda Creek's Robert McLeese, a member of the Legislature who owned a sternwheeler, hotel and store and who was postmaster of Soda Creek for 25-plus years. Today, travellers here enjoy water sports, trout fishing and August's BC Metis Music Festival & Jamboree, plus hiking, camping and off-roading. In winter, hiking trails welcome snowmobilers and Nordic skiers, while the lake is transformed into a skating and ice-fishing wonderland.

#### **Quesnel**

Located at the confluence of the Fraser and Quesnel rivers, Quesnel is the launch point for outdoor lovers who

appreciate diversity when camping, fishing, snowmobiling, hiking and mountain biking. At the Dragon Mountain Trail Network south of the city, mountain bikers weave through a unique Douglas fir ecosystem to tackle the only slick-rock riding in the Cariboo. Just 5.5km/3.4mi west of Quesnel, hikers in Pinnacles Provincial Park overlook 12-million-year-old hoodoos en route to panoramic views of the city, while throughout the area foodies hand-pick fresh vegetables and strawberries, sample boreal amber birch syrup, learn to spin and weave wool, navigate a corn maze or hike with llamas on a North Cariboo farm tour.

Quesnel itself is a hugely walkable city, with extensive green spaces that include the Heritage Rose Garden in Lebourdais Park and its 200-plus floribunda and tea roses, and Petunia Mile on Front Street. The Fraser River Bridge at the intersection of Front Street and Carson Avenue is one of the world's longest wooden-truss pedestrian bridges, and a convenient entry point to the city's Riverfront Trail system, featuring industrial heritage machinery and interpretive kiosks.

Quesnel's cultural and historical sights are equally diverse. The nickname “Gold Pan City,” written large across a 5.5m/18ft-high gold pan at the town's northern entrance, is a nod to its gold rush history, and highlights of a city centre walking tour include interpretive signs posted on many buildings, an 1862 Hudson's Bay Company Trading Post (now a co-op for local artists) and “little people” fire hydrants depicting colourful historical figures (walking-tour guides available at the museum). As well, the Quesnel and District Museum and Archives is one of the best community museums in BC, with one of North America's most significant collections of Chinese artifacts. Its innovative use of technology also enables visitors to “meet” the people of the Cariboo, past and present, through the remarkable photographs of C.D. Hoy and C.S. Wing and recorded stories of First Nations and Chinese elders. “Mandy, the Haunted Doll,” and a Discovery Area for children also make it a popular stop for families.



Quesnel's 'living history' is exuberantly celebrated each July during Billy Barker Days, commemorating the rowdy era of the 1860s. The family-focused 150-plus events, held over four days, include pie-eating duels, stage shows, free outdoor concerts, stock-car racing, a parade and children's festival and the Quesnel Rodeo, BC's largest amateur rodeo. Just 26km/16mi east of Quesnel, Cottonwood House Heritage Site is an 1861 roadhouse with barns, animals, stagecoach rides, an old-fashioned candy store, the ultimate root cellar and a great picnic spot. In winter, January's Quesnel-to-Wells Gold Rush Trail Sled Dog Mail Run features dogsled teams joined by cross-country skiers.



Gordon Baron

**Nazko**

Nazko is a small First Nation community just 100 km/62 mi west of Quesnel, where the main draw is the surrounding valley, lakes and rivers. This area is popular for hiking and horseback riding through spectacular alpine meadows, plus excellent fly-fishing, canoeing, snowmobiling, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing and "trapper cabin" retreats. The valley lies within the traditional territory of the Carrier people, who in 1793 guided explorer Alexander MacKenzie on his way to the Pacific. Historical sites in the valley include the Nuxulk-Carrier (Alexander MacKenzie) Grease Trail, Blackwater Homestead, Krestenuk Trading Post, Old Red School House and Chuntezn'l' and Homesteader cemeteries.

**Hixon**

Hixon Creek is named for prospector Joseph Foster Hixon, who found gold in the Fraser River near here in 1866. Situated 60km/37mi north of Quesnel on Hwy. 97, the community offers accommodation and supplies for adventurers exploring Hixon Falls and Three Sisters Lake Provincial Park at Stone Creek. Local hiking opportunities abound, along with horseback riding tours and great camping.

**Wells**

The mountain town of Wells, an 82km/51mi drive east of Quesnel and the jumping off point for the Bowron Lakes canoe circuit, was built as a company

town for Fred Wells' Gold Quartz Mine, when the promise of more gold in the Cariboo gave many an opportunity to escape the great depression of the 1930s in what was then northern BC's largest community and cultural centre.

While there are fewer than 300 year-round residents in Wells today, many of its heritage buildings have been restored, including the Wells Hotel and Sunset Theatre. Other architectural landmarks sport rainbow colours in a nod to the town's vibrant arts scene. The Island Mountain Arts Society's celebrated arts school, for example, offers classes in the visual, literary and performing arts, while the wildly popular

**SADDLE UP**

Forged by a spirit of adventure and independence, Williams Lake is a child of the gold rush days. Today, the City is a place that embodies the 21st Century cowboy spirit: an honest, free-rein lifestyle with a spectacular backcountry and cultural playground that you can enjoy at a nature centre, cowboy museum, art gallery, in your hip waders, or on a mountain bike, quad, and yes, even a horse. Like the sound of it? Drop us a line.  
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Chris Harris

*Bowron Lake Provincial Park, North Cariboo*



ArtsWells Festival of All Things Art (held the first weekend in August) features an infusion and diversity of more than 100 musical performances, along with film screenings, dance and live theatre.

Outdoor adventures here are steadily garnering acclaim, with excellent trail systems available for mountain biking, hiking, snowmobiling and ATV-ing. The surrounding landscape has hundreds of kilometres of stunningly scenic trails – many accessible from the town centre. Nearby Jack of Clubs Lake features tranquil canoeing. In winter, hut-to-hut cross-country getaways in the Mt. Murray Area are available, and, straddling the Trans Canada Snowmobile Trail, the Wells network of “sled” trails links to Likely, with access to the Prince George snowmobile clubhouse.

**Barkerville**

Although many boom towns sprang to life during the Cariboo Gold Rush, a ramshackle collection of buildings called Barkerville, squeezed against the bank of a mountain creek at the terminus of the Gold Rush Trail, proved the most resilient. Yet by 1958 when government declared the community a BC Heritage site, the town was virtually deserted; the last residents were relocated as work began on restoring the town’s “heyday splendour.”

Today, Barkerville is a Canadian National Historic Site, BC’s best-known heritage destination and the largest historic

site in western North America. Full of colour and vitality, it features stagecoach rides, live theatre, saloons serving quaffs of sarsaparilla, a photo studio, a café and bakery, a well-preserved 19th-century Chinatown and intriguing cemetery tours. Interpreters roam the streets as historical characters, greeting newcomers as if they’d just arrived on a Barnard Express stagecoach. More than 120 restored buildings are open for touring as the ‘locals’ set off to work at the mine or otherwise bring a bygone era to life. As well, the Barkerville Museum houses one of the largest and most important collections of ancient Chinese artifacts outside China.

**Bowron Lake Provincial Park**

It’s big (149,207hec/368,698ac), as are the snowcapped Cariboo Mountains that rim this wilderness expanse. But it is the park’s most unusual physical feature that is key to its popularity: a rectangular-shaped water system and wildlife sanctuary that forms a 116km/72mi canoe circuit. Where else can one paddle for 10 days without backtracking and end where one began? No other canoe circuit boasts the same combination of mountain scenery and wildlife, including osprey, eagles, moose, mink, beavers and bears. The former home of the southern Carrier, Athabaskan and Dene First Nations, who built kekulis (*kik-will-ees*), or pit houses, close to Kibbee Creek, is now an international attraction, one so popular that canoeists must reserve their “paddle slots” well in advance. ♦

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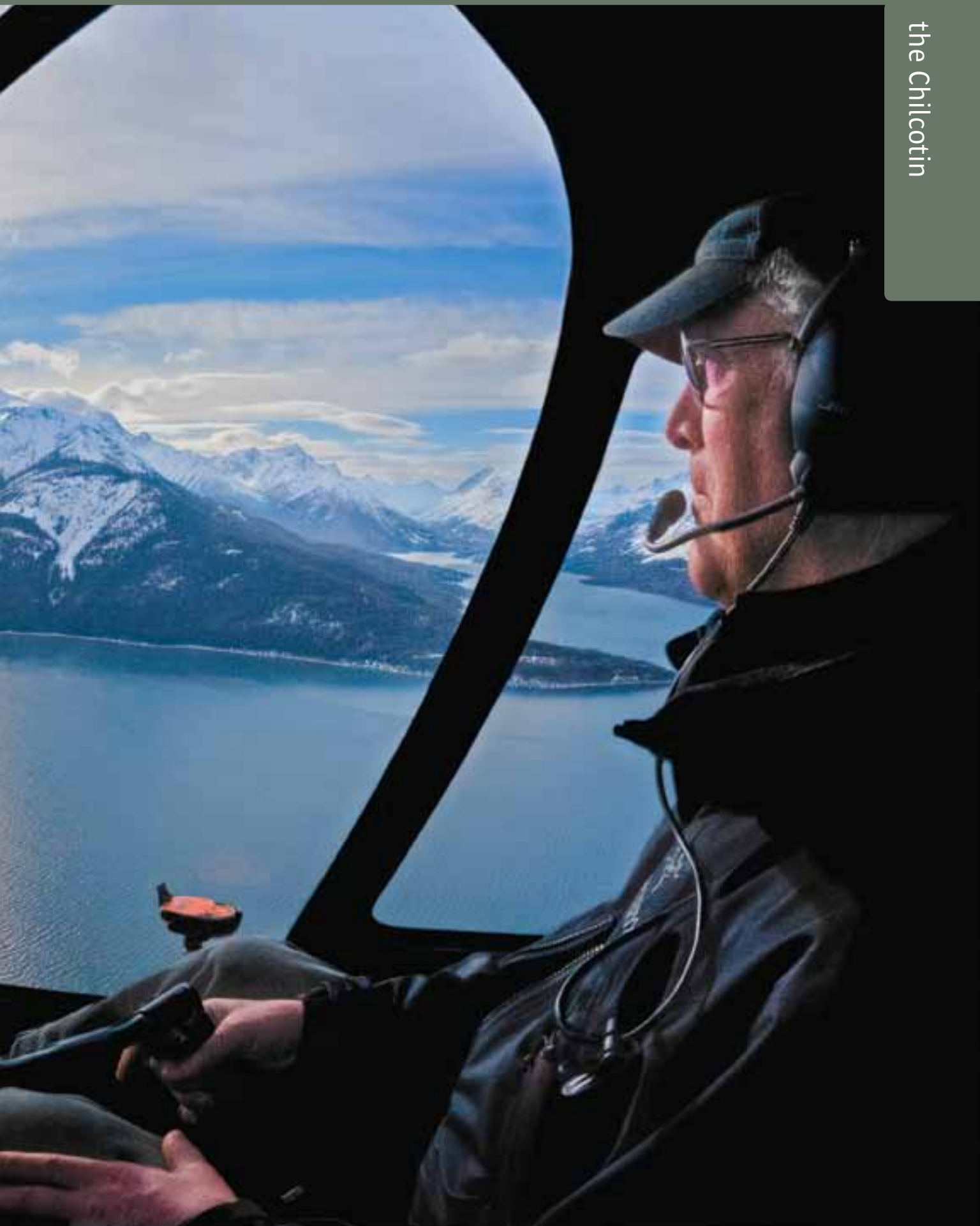
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*This is BC's real-life Wild West, where the outdoor thrills range from aerial tours of the Homathko Ice Field and deep-powder heli-skiing adventures in the southern Chilcotin Mountains, to multi-day hikes of Tweedsmuir Provincial Park and horseback riding and photography treks in the scenically stunning Charlotte Alplands. No wonder bucket-list adventurers flock here, whether it's to tackle one of the most challenging whitewater rivers in North America, the Chilcotin – and its tributary, the Chilko, which boasts the longest continuous stretch of Class 3-plus whitewater on the continent – or to pit dry flies against feisty native rainbows in the Blackwater and Upper Dean rivers' fast-action fisheries, or to fly into remote lakes in the fly-fishing nirvana of the west Chilcotin.*

Unlike the Cariboo, the vast, spectacular landscape of the Chilcotin – framed by the Coast Mountains to the west and Fraser River to the east – was never invaded by swarms of gold-crazed prospectors in the 1800s. The result is a world of fewer roads, little industry and barely a scattering of residents, the majority of them First Nations – plus a diversity of wildlife, including populations of rare white pelicans, trumpeter swans, long-billed curlews, bears, lynx, moose and wolves, Canada's largest numbers of bighorn sheep and the only herd of wild horses in the country outside Alberta and Nova Scotia.

With the bulk of the Chilcotin accessed off Hwy. 20, its southern wilds are most easily approached from Vancouver and Whistler via Lillooet on Hwy. 99, or via Lytton and the Fraser Canyon on Hwy. 12. The communities of Dog Creek and Alkali Lake also have backcountry access, via Big Bar-Jesmond from Clinton or from various points along Hwy. 97. Those with a serious thirst for adventure can follow the Fraser River north from Lillooet via a series of particularly scenic back roads to Hwy. 20, east via the Big Bar ferry to Hwy. 97, or westward to the Bridge River Valley communities of Gold Bridge, Bralorne and nearby Tyaughton Lake. (Before journeying off main highways into the unspoiled wilderness of the Chilcotin backcountry, sufficient fuel, accurate and detailed maps and tires suitable for gravel roads are required for both safety reasons and peace of mind.)

In the north, as noted, the Chilcotin is linked to the B.C. Interior by Hwy. 20, which crosses the Chilcotin Plateau and Coast Mountains – stretching 456km/283mi from Williams Lake to Bella Coola. En route the highway connects wildly different landscapes, from alpine meadows and biodiverse grasslands to dramatic canyons and mountain peaks, with not a single traffic light breaking its length, though brief stops may be required for free-range cattle and wandering moose or bears. Excellent views of the Coast

Mountains are also afforded by roads leading off the highway, with access to backcountry lakes, fishing resorts and specialty lodges.

Much of the Chilcotin, though, is composed of the high-elevation 50,000sqkm/19,305sqmi Chilcotin Plateau, where thousands of cattle roam amid tremendous geographical diversity: from hot, dry, native grasslands to ice-covered heights of more than 4,000m/13,123ft, where glaciers descend to azure-blue lakes. The rolling hills and terraces of the Chilcotin Ark grasslands, in particular, have supported livestock grazing for more than 130 years, along with an estimated 40 per cent of BC's at-risk wildlife species plus rare plant species and ecologically significant, but threatened, habitats. Towering over these ice-carved plateaus and valleys is Mt. Waddington, at 4,016m/13,176ft the highest peak to lie entirely within BC, while three major river systems, the Homathko, Klinaklini and Dean, run westward through the Coast Mountains. The southeast is drained by the great Chilko, Chilcotin and Fraser river systems, where grassland canyons feature desert landscapes similar to those in the southwestern U.S.

Nothing reflects the spirit of the Chilcotin more than Hwy. 20. Known as the "Freedom Road" after its completion in 1953 finally made road access to the Central Coast possible, the highway



## What the Locals Say

“It’s no secret, I love the whitewater rafting in the Cariboo Chilcotin and Fraser Canyon. This region has some of the best whitewater rafting in the world, with an amazing diversity of rivers and rapids. Many people don’t realize that all of the best rivers are tributaries of the Fraser River, which runs right through Cariboo Chilcotin country. I’ve personally rafted the Quesnel, Chilcotin (and tributaries the Chilko and Taseko), Bridge, Stein, Thompson, Nahatlatch and Coquihalla. These rivers are incredibly unique, exciting and relatively unknown.”

*- Bryan Fogelman,  
founder and president of  
REO Rafting Resort*

“I consider the Cariboo Chilcotin grasslands a ‘wonder of the world’ as they’re the largest intact temperate grasslands left on the planet. When you consider that a hectare of prime, uncultivated grasslands contains greater biodiversity than a hectare of any other ecosystem, its in our very best interest to maintain this jewel for the ‘Seventh Generation.’”

*- Chris Harris,  
photographer and author*

“I love the rough-edged and raw wilderness flavour of the Chilcotin, and Tatlayoko Lake in particular. A large proportion of the Chilcotin remains essentially as it has been for the past few thousand years. I find that very appealing.”

*- Peter Shaughnessy,  
West Chilcotin project manager,  
Nature Conservancy of Canada*

“In the Chilcotin, we share bonfires, supper tables, dance floors and stories. We breathe clean air and drink pure water. And when I walk to the north side of our property on timeless nights, the Northern Lights perform their show for anyone who stays up late enough to applaud their presence.”

*- Lise St. Gelais James,  
photographer, resident of Nimpo Lake*



Yoho Adventures



Thomas Drasdauskis

originally ended at Anahim Lake – just 137km/85mi short of Bella Coola on the Pacific. Still, the provincial government refused to extend the route, claiming that the area’s mountainous terrain made doing so impossible. So, working from opposite ends, with just two bulldozers and supplies purchased on credit, local volunteers finished the job with the same determination and independent spirit that remain integral characteristics of Chilcotin and Coast residents today. And indeed, those who settled this isolated region had to be tough—such as Nellie Hance, who in 1887 became the first white woman to travel into the Chilcotin, riding sidesaddle on horseback for 485km/301mi to reach her husband Tom’s trading post near Lee’s Corner (also known as Hanceville).

Other Chilcotin pioneers were not only tough, but, some would say, a little crazy. The rancher after whom Lee’s Corner is named, for example, Norman Lee, set off from the Chilcotin with 200 head of cattle on a 2,500km/1,553mi trek to the Klondike goldfields in May 1898. None of his cattle survived. But Lee did, arriving in Vancouver five months later with a roll of blankets, a dog and one dollar. After borrowing enough money

for the train to Ashcroft and a horse to ride from the train station home, Lee was soon ranching again, and by 1902 was well on the way back to prosperity (his descendants still ranch in the area).

Lee was not the only rancher in the late 1800s eager for new markets. Cattle spreads in the Chilcotin were primarily established to provide beef to the Cariboo gold-rush towns of the early 1860s, including the iconic Gang Ranch, founded in the region’s southeast by two American brothers in 1863 and the largest ranch in North America in its heyday. By 1870, though, the Cariboo gold rush was waning and the demand

for Chilcotin beef was fading along with it. It would be another 15 years before the Canadian Pacific Railway reached BC and opened up new beef markets in eastern Canada and the U.S. and south of the BC border for Chilcotin ranchers such as Lee. At the turn of the century, the country’s new national rail service had, by most accounts, arrived just in time to salvage the cattle industry.

Today, ranching remains a key economic driver in the Chilcotin, with cowboy boots and fancy belt buckles standard apparel. Tourism is also an important mainstay, and often goes hand in hand with cattle raising for the region’s

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## Festivals & Events

**New Years Eve Ice Party** Ice bar, skating, curling, music, barbecue, bonfires and fireworks.

**Nimpo Lake.** *December 31-January 1*

**Tatla Lake Ski Challenge** Nordic skiers compete on countryside courses, with food stations in a warming hut.

**Tatla Lake.** *Late January*

**Bridge River Valley Winterfest**

Outdoor hockey, lake curling, ice-fishing and a vintage snowmobile show.

**Little Gunn Lake.** *February 7*

**Snowmobile Water Skipping** Riders drive snowmobiles 'on' the river as fast as possible – without sinking.

**Dean River.** *May*  
*(date weather dependant)*

**Dean River Canoe Races** Paddlers race from Nimpko Lake to Anahim Lake, followed by a dinner and dance.

**Nimpo Lake.** *May 11*  
*(or, after ice off – weather dependant)*

**Tatla Lake Gymkhana** Horses and riders test their equine skills.

**Tatla Lake.** *June 20-21*

**Puntzi Lake Fishing Derby** A family tradition since 1984, open to all, in the heart of **summer**.

**Puntzi Lake.** *July 3-5*

**Anahim Lake Stampede** Old-fashioned rodeo, staged since 1938, that includes barrel racing, bronc riding, barbecue and beer garden. **Anahim Lake.**

*July 3-5*

**Nemiah Pow-Wow** This traditional powwow is a colourful display of celebration and dancing.

**Nemiah Valley.** *July 25-26*

**Redstone Rodeo** Professional Rodeo action – plus a cowboy breakfast and barn dance.

**Alexis Creek.** *August 15-16*

**Tatla Lake Fall Fair** Clowns, balloons, horse-and-buggy rides, a petting zoo and a farmer's market.

**Tatla Lake.** *Early September*

numerous working ranches, many of which host vacation adventures, pack trips and trail rides. As for that rustic road that officials refused to call a highway, even after its completion, its existence eventually convinced provincial authorities to take over maintenance and improvements in 1955. Known today as Hwy. 20, the former Freedom Highway is now a key link in the region's world-renowned Discovery Coast Circle Tour route – the communities of the Chilcotin strung along its length like beads on a necklace, each with its own story and general store. These hospitable and historic community landmarks also continue to play a vital role in the region as community centres and meeting hubs, while still functioning as multi-purpose shops. One iconic example is the A.C. Christensen General Store in Anahim Lake, where a sign for shoppers states: "If we don't have it, you don't need it!"

**Seton Portage**

Seton Portage is a historic rural community located between Seton and

Anderson lakes, just 25km/15.5mi by boat (78km/48mi by road over Mission Mountain) west of Lillooet. During the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush of 1858 to 1860, thousands of prospectors – following what was then known as the "Lakes Route" from the Lower Mainland – swept through this narrow strip of land and across a wooden rail link built to connect the community's two fjord-like lakes, as they pushed north to the goldfields. In addition to fishing, hiking and boating, Seton Portage's main attraction today is the Kaoham Shuttle train, which snakes along the shores of turquoise-hued Seton Lake, through the third-longest tunnel on the CN Rail line and alongside the nearby Bridge River hydroelectric development.

**Gold Bridge**

Surrounded by the towering peaks of the South Chilcotin Mountains, 105km/65mi west of Lillooet in the Bridge River Valley, Gold Bridge sprang to life during the Great Depression with the 1932 opening of a large gold mine in nearby Bralorne. The Bralorne Pioneer

Mine would produce more than four million ounces of gold (124 metric tons) before its closure in 1971, making it the richest gold mine in Canadian history while prompting construction of the towns of Gold Bridge and Bralorne, with schools, churches, homes, offices, recreation halls and rustic hunting lodges.

After lying abandoned for many years, the mine re-opened in 2011 in response to rising gold prices, and is again producing gold. History buffs can still enjoy poking around Bralorne's mostly dilapidated buildings (a few are being redeveloped for recreational purposes), along with other local ghost towns and their abandoned mines, while outdoor lovers will appreciate the valley for its fishing, hunting, rock hounding, numerous alpine lakes and rugged mountain vistas. In addition, resorts are scenically situated on the shores of several local lakes, with air-assisted mountain biking

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“Fans and Followers”



“Wow. After vacationing around Chilko Lake it’s no wonder people refer to it as God’s Country. Simply an amazing and breathtaking part of the region. Keep the wonderful stories and photos coming – it’ll make me want to come back soon.”

–Randy Preeper

“I’ve seen those wild horses in the Chilcotin a few times (at least I think they were the wild ones, lol!) Amazing sight, to see them running free across such beautiful countryside.”

–Willie Compton

“I was blown away by the beauty of the Fraser River Canyon in the Churn Creek Area. Such an interesting palette of colours, truly spectacular.”

–Chris McKillican,  
wildlife and nature photography

“Great photo over the glaciers. I was probably in that very same plane last year when I took the flightseeing trip from Nimpo Lake over the mountains and Hunlen Falls. Wish my grandkids could experience that; they need a dose of mother nature.”

–Fran Gray

“Awesome! The photo of the bear standing up next to the picnic table at Chilko Lake is the best. I’m heading that way to hike and camp next summer.”

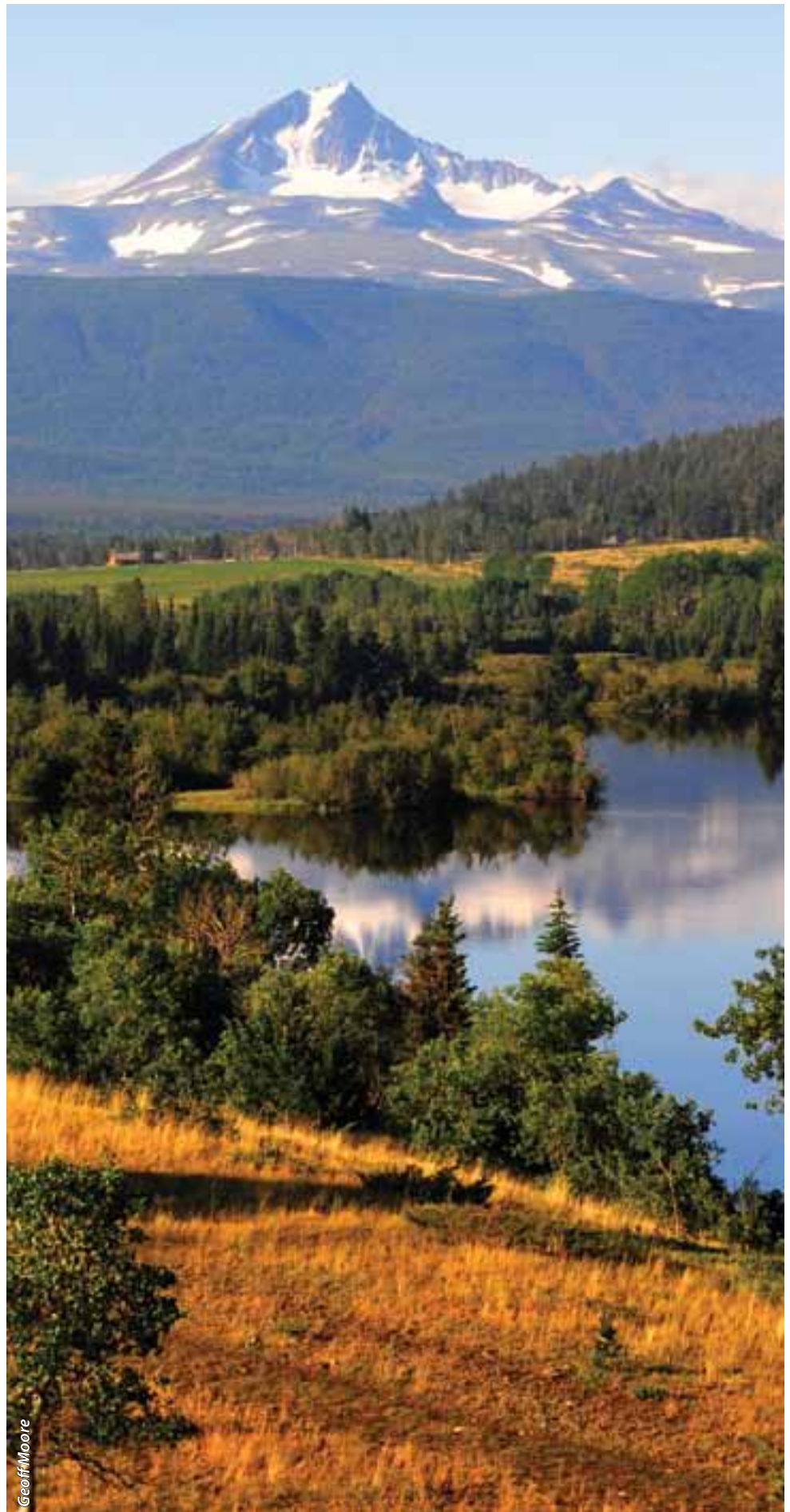
–Jason Smart

“My favorite place in the world . . . the Chilcotin. I hike all over the world, and the scenery and topography doesn’t get much better than the Charlotte Alplands.”

–Jenna Gleeson

“My wife and I were driving to Bella Coola on holiday, and couldn’t believe our eyes when we saw pelicans flying over us. I’ve since learned that the birds nest at various Chilcotin lakes. Who would have thought?”

–Martén Geisbrecht,  
Germany



Geoff Moore



Andrew Doran / Tjux Adventures

a popular activity, along with snowmobiling on spectacular glaciers and phenomenal heli-skiing. The service-and-supply hub for the valley's upper basin, Gold Bridge also makes an excellent home base for outdoor expeditions into wildlife-rich Southern Chilcotin Mountains Provincial Park and the Bendor Range, a particularly popular destination for alpinists.

### Alkali Lake

Although geographically located in the Cariboo, the communities of Alkali Lake and Dog Creek, which embrace several fishing lakes between them, are linked to the Chilcotin by proximity and landscape. Both are also the source of one of the most touching stories in BC: how for 39 years, the Esk'etemc (*es-ket-em*) First Nation has invited Alcoholics Anonymous members from around the world to its annual Pow-Wow Arbor rodeo and conference to share inspirational stories. Alcohol addiction almost destroyed the Esk'etemc a half-century ago. And the account of how this First Nation saved itself, through members taking control of their lives and the nurturing of dignity and hope, was brought to the screen in 1985's *The Honour of All*, a film still shown at international festivals.

In addition, in 1858, BC's oldest ranch was established in this picturesque valley by German-born settler Otto Bowe, who built a "stopping house"

here alongside a river trail that once wove its way through the Cariboo to the northern goldfields. Bowe also married a daughter of the Alkali Band chief, had four children with her, and the couple's 10,117hec/25,000ac ranch stayed in the family until 1908, when it was purchased by Englishman Charles N. Wynn-Johnson – grandfather of Charles N. "Chunky" Woodward. (The multimillionaire owner of BC's iconic Woodward's department-store chain and a world-champion cutting-horse rider in his own right). In its glory days, the Alkali Lake spread boasted more than 4,000 head of cattle and horses and employed dozens of working cowboys. Now an impressive 14,973hec/36,999ac, it continues to operate as a working ranch today.

### Riske Creek

Riske Creek is a small community set amidst sweeping grasslands on the Chilcotin's eastern border, 47km/29mi west of Williams Lake. The community is named after Polish pioneer and entrepreneur L.W. Riske, who built a sawmill and flourmill here during the 1860s from which he sent supplies and produce to the Cariboo goldfields.

Today, the history of the area can be relived by visiting the community's Chilcotin Lodge, a 1940s hunting lodge and one of the last examples of authentic pioneer-style log construction in the Chilcotin. Just south of Riske Creek near the

confluence of the Fraser and Chilcotin rivers, on Farwell Canyon Road, is Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park – a 4,573hec/11,300ac preserve sheltering 500 California bighorn sheep, one-fifth of the world's population. Hikers may spot the animals among the hoodoos or scaling the preserve's steep sandstone riverbanks; in the surrounding area, black bears, coyotes, foxes and cougars are also found. And, at nearby Farwell Canyon, once the site of a native village, the desert-dry canyon's limestone and sandstone walls feature hoodoos and other intriguing water-carved formations. Hikers can also view ancient pictographs on the cliff faces here and observe traditional First Nations fishers dip-netting for salmon in the fall.

### Hanceville

About 50km/31mi west of Riske Creek, a roadside plaque describes the legendary Yukon cattle drive of Norman Lee, who, as mentioned in the introduction to this region, set out from his Chilcotin ranch in 1898 with 200 head of cattle on a disastrous trek to Dawson City. Lee later wrote a chronicle of the misadventure that became a book entitled *Klondike Cattle Drive*, and set up shop at Lee's Corner. Today, Lee's "town", is known as Hanceville (though the Corner Store & Restaurant still bears his name), and travellers can venture southwest from here into the Nemiah Valley for wild-horse and wildlife viewing opportunities, or to Taseko Lake, a four-





season wilderness playground offering camping, hiking, wildlife viewing and snowmobiling.

### **Big Creek**

South of Hanceville, on what is now a popular backcountry circle tour to Riske Creek through Farwell Canyon, stands the unincorporated community of Big Creek – home to the Chilcotin district post office from 1907 to 1975. Today there is little evidence of the former town, but lodges and guest ranches in the area offer popular revitalization and recreational getaways for those keen to escape the beaten path. Tellingly, nearby Fletcher Lake's healthy population of fat rainbow trout, for example, ensures its small campground is popular every long weekend.

### **Nemiah Valley**

The Nemiah Valley, which lies within the traditional territory of the Xeni Gwet'in (*honey-koteen*) First Nation, shelters one of the last remaining herds of wild horses in North America. In fact, results of recent DNA tests suggest that the bloodlines of these mustangs are linked not only to Canadian horses, but to a small horse native to Russia and to horses brought to the North American continent hundreds of years ago

by the Spanish. With no road access to the rest of the Chilcotin until 1973, the valley itself has also remained relatively undisturbed, and the landscape here is pristine and truly spectacular. Home to members of the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation and assorted ranchers, the valley supports a number of wilderness hunting and fishing lodges, and, while there are no official tours, local ranches and B&Bs can assist with the coordination of wild-horse adventures.

### **Alexis Creek**

Just 20km/12.5mi west of Hanceville is the namesake community of Chief Alexis, the local Tsilhqot'in (*tseelh-cohteen*) leader who ruled here during the Chilcotin War, and just outside Alexis Creek are two historic sites where fierce intertribal battles were fought between the Chilcotin and invading Shuswap and Bella Coola nations: Bull Canyon and Battle Rock. But today, the former site of the Chilcotin Plateau's eastern Hudson Bay trading post is a tranquil and picturesque spot, one that continues to function as a service centre for the area and for travellers who stop here for basic snacks, supplies and travel tips from its tourist info booth (full washroom facilities also available) – before journeying west or into the

backcountry alongside the glacial-green waters of the Chilcotin River.

### **Redstone and Puntzi Lake**

Redstone Reserve is a small First Nations community 36km/22mi west of Alexis Creek on Hwy. 20, where the Redstone store is a key stop for fuel and supplies. The community's Redstone Rodeo, held annually in August as part of the Chilcotin Tour Series, is also an excellent opportunity to visit with the locals and explore the area, well known for its network of biking and hiking trails and excellent canoeing, kayaking, fishing and hunting. Just outside of the reserve on Hwy. 20, the recently opened Kinikinik Restaurant and Store serves certified-organic vegetables and meats – including grass-fed beef, pork, lamb and poultry – sourced from its adjoining 'biodynamic' ranch. (The owners also operate a popular organic meats store in Vancouver, *Pasture to Plate*.)

As well, just 21.6km/13.4mi west of Redstone, Puntzi Lake is a major draw for birdwatchers. The American white pelican uses the lake as a food source in early spring and throughout the summer, while trumpeter swans feed here in the fall until the lake freezes over. Fishing resorts and serviced RV

campsites are also found lakeside, with local activities typically spring-, summer- and fall-focused, the lake's kokanee and rainbow trout get a welcome reprieve in snowmobiling season.

**Tatla Lake**

Tatla Lake is located on the western perimeter of the Chilcotin grasslands, 108km/67mi west of Alexis Creek – where Irish pioneer Robert Graham jumpstarted a ranching legacy. First, in 1902, Graham and his wife purchased the Tatla Lake place from Benny Franklin. The couple then built a fine new house and, in 1930, a store. Today that house – adjacent to the Tatla Lake Manor – is the Graham Inn, which specializes in serving excellent meals while the community provides access to stellar mountain hikes, Nordic ski trails and several backcountry resort and guiding operations that showcase the grasslands' biodiverse ecosystem.

Tatla Lake also acts as the gateway to three major mountain valleys: West Branch, Chilko and Tatlayoko, which

extend south via secondary roads. Nearby Bluff Lake is a fixed-wing flight-seeing and helicopter-tour access point for a number of impressive wilderness destinations, including the massive Homathko Ice Field and Mt. Waddington, the highest peak in the Coast Range. As well, anglers find fat rainbow trout and Dolly Varden, while several lodges offer wildlife viewing.

**Kleena Kleene**

This tiny settlement is just 31km/19mi west of Tatla Lake on Hwy. 20 and minutes away from Clearwater Lake, a departure point for float-plane excursions to remote fishing lakes and rivers and the region's celebrated alpine wilderness. Backcountry enthusiasts here enjoy stunning vistas from the lookout point at Perkins Peak (2,819m/9,249ft), hikes to Klinaklini Falls and heli-hikes in the massive Pantheon Range. Local guest ranches and lodges, some with canoe-to-your-door chalets, also offer boat touring, photography treks, working ranch holidays and excellent horseback riding excursions, from guided day-

trips to multi-camp extended trail rides in the Charlotte Alplands Alpine Wilderness Area, where highlights include 75 lakes, numerous alpine ecosystems and the headwaters of one of BC's purest and most important salmon-river systems, the Atnarko. Both anglers and recreationists also find that Big Stick, Clearwater and One Eye lakes all offer excellent, pristine wilderness canoeing and fishing, while hunters can embark from Kleena Kleene on guided expeditions for moose, bear, mountain goats and wolves.

**Charlotte Lake**

Located 11km/6.8mi southeast of Nimpo Lake, 16km/10mi-long pristine Charlotte Lake is a haven for fly-fishers who appreciate trophy rainbow trout as well as loons, bald eagles, osprey and trumpeter swans – one of the heaviest living birds still capable of flight. One of the most idyllic settings to be found in the Chilcotin, the surrounding

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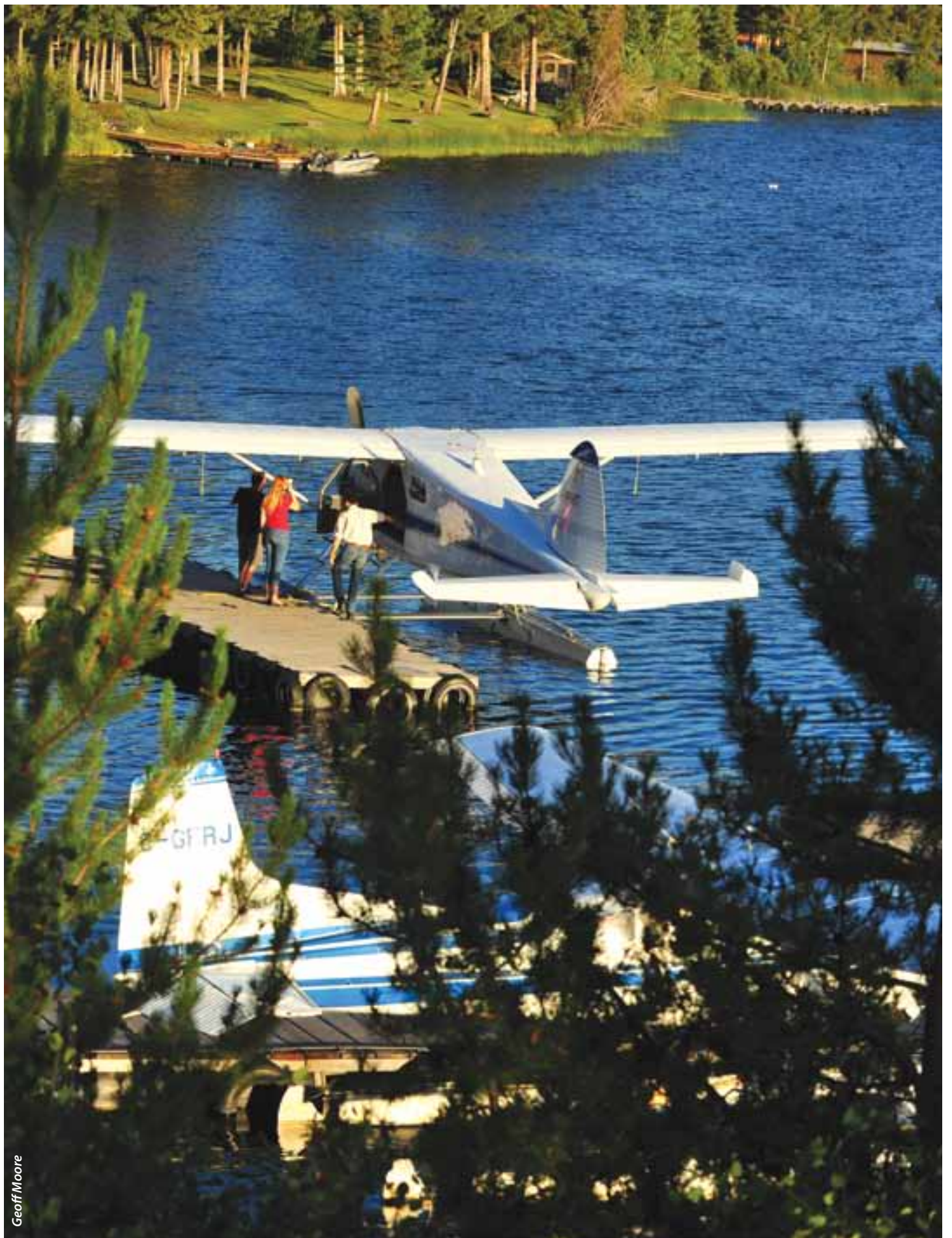
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wilderness is laced with hiking, mountain biking and winter sledding trails, while the nearby Charlotte Alplands features rare wildflowers, alpine lakes and an incredible diversity of wildlife, all of which only enhances the unique day treks and multi-day guided horseback riding, hiking, photography and wildlife-viewing excursions available. For exploring this exceptional landscape, most of the local lodges and B&Bs are similarly situated in idyllic settings, with certified guides available for many of the region's wilderness forays.

**Nimpo Lake**

Affectionately known as the "Float Plane Capital of BC," Nimpo Lake is a major launch point for flight-seeing tours and fishing fly-ins to the west Chilcotin's wilderness lakes and rivers, and for adventurers accessing isolated cabins nestled in dramatic backcountry settings. Backdropped by towering Mt. Kappan, Nimpo Lake itself also features terrific rainbow trout fishing, while its wilderness trails provide both rugged workouts and excellent birdwatching and wildlife-viewing opportunities. Local ranches offer horseback riding and hiking tours, pack trips, fly-in fishing, yoga classes – plus organic meals featuring locally sourced produce, fish, fowl and game. In winter, entertainment options include sleigh rides, snowshoeing, skating, festive Nordic skiing and a range of lake-based snowmobiling adventures.

**Anahim Lake**

Located just 135km/84mi east of Bella Coola, Anahim Lake is the site of a long-established Chilcotin settlement that expanded when the Carrier peoples moved here from remote villages in the 1940s and 1950s. Today, the community is the eastern gateway to the rugged southern wilderness of Tweedsmuir Provincial Park and its phenomenal recreational opportunities. As well, its Anahim Lake Airport is the main airport for the Chilcotin, with regular, scheduled Pacific Coastal Airlines service to Vancouver and both private and chartered flights to local lodges and resorts – catering to both guided and self-guided fishers, hunters and hikers, plus those who prefer organized pack trips and mountain heli-rides. In



David Jacobson

addition, float planes can be chartered for backcountry adventures, while guided horseback and hiking treks are just as easily arranged for exploring the surrounding Itcha and Ilgachuz mountains and the dramatic Rainbow Range of Tweedsmuir Park, where peaks of eroded lava and fragmented rock display a spectrum of vivid red, orange, lavender and yellow hues.

The town's most famous attraction, of course, is the Anahim Lake Stampede, staged every July since 1938 – where the most celebrated competitor is the star goaltender of the NHL's Montreal Canadiens and a Team Canada Olympic Gold Medalist who grew up in Anahim Lake: Carey Price.

Anahim Peak, a spectacular pillared cone of volcanic rock rich in obsidian, was once an important trading commodity for members of the Carrier First Nation, who used it for weapon making. In fact, First Nations history permeates this region, as exemplified by the remains of large wooden "culla culla" houses at Ulkatcho on Gatcho Lake and at Natsadalia Point on Anahim Lake, all open to the public. ♦



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# the Coast



Chris Harris

*Ptarmigan Lake, South Tweedsmuir Park*









Geoff Moore



Boomer Jerrett



Cael Cook



Geoff Moore



Michael Wigle





Chris Harris

*The wild, rugged beauty of BC's central Pacific coast has long drawn artists, naturalists, scientists and travellers – all in pursuit of their passions and adventure, plus the freshest seafood, of course. Even those who “simply” love to fish, hike, ocean kayak or explore via guided eco tour, find it almost impossible to do so without experiencing at least some of the region's natural wonders and wilderness thrills. For whether one is an ecologist or anthropologist, an artist or a world traveller, the Great Bear Rainforest represents that rare travel opportunity: the chance to experience one of the few places on Earth where an incredibly diverse and unique mix of pristine ecosystems, exceptional wilderness opportunities and authentic, arts-rich indigenous cultures still exists.*

**R**enowned Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl became a household name seemingly overnight for his *Kon-Tiki* rafting expedition across the Pacific, from Peru to Polynesia, in 1947. Yet just six years earlier Heyerdahl had already intensively explored BC's central coast in a two-year effort to confirm the origins of the region's indigenous peoples. That early research eventually helped reveal many similarities between the Coast's First Nations peoples and the indigenous populations of far-removed Pacific islands – findings that would fuel all of Heyerdahl's legendary future explorations as well as his much-debated theories, including the

proposition that all indigenous peoples with access to the Pacific can trace their ancestry to a common source.

Of course, Heyerdahl was not the first non-native explorer to “discover” BC's central coast. In 1793 an intrepid 29-year-old Scotsman named Alexander Mackenzie, accompanied by seven French Canadian voyageurs and two First Nations porters, paddled into Dean Channel near present-day Bella Coola – a seemingly unremarkable event. However, the expedition's arrival marked the first complete crossing of North America to the Pacific, and before returning east Mackenzie scrawled a historic inscription on a nearby rock using a reddish mixture of bear grease and vermilion: *Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, 22nd July, 1793* (words later permanently inscribed by surveyors following in his footsteps).

Mackenzie could not have found a more spectacular spot to end his epic journey. The mist-draped coastline off the Dean Channel is lined with towering snow-crowned peaks, massive icefields and some of the world's longest fjords. Even today, it remains a remote, pristine place, where old-growth stands of cedar and spruce carpet the landscape, and streams filled with migrating salmon weave through valley basins, providing food for the Coast's most magnificent creatures: killer whales, eagles, wolves and bears, including the province's

unique “marine wolf” and mysterious white Spirit Bear, or Kermode. The local indigenous peoples' way of life may have changed significantly since Mackenzie's historic landing on the Coast and Heyerdahl's anthropological exploration of its misty fjords. But, without question, the same magical wonders that captivated both explorers still call to even the most casual of travellers today, most of whom consider themselves incredibly fortunate simply to step ashore here.

### **The Great Bear Rainforest**

The landscape northwest of Bella Coola is some of the most isolated in BC, including the Great Bear Rainforest, the largest contiguous tract of unspoiled temperate rainforest in the world. One of the most endangered forest-types on the planet, this 64,000sqkm/25,000sqmi wilderness expanse features some of the largest and oldest trees on Earth, several ancient First Nations cultural sites and thousands of species of plants, birds and animals, many of which are rare or unique to the region. Offshore, the ocean teems with killer whales, porpoises, humpback whales, seals, sea lions and dozens of seabird species, while the preserve's forests are filled with black-tailed deer, “marine” wolves and three species of bears: grizzly, black and Kermode, a rare, white-coated variation of the black bear sacred to B.C.'s First Nations, also known as the Spirit Bear. Indeed, the Kermode's main haunt,



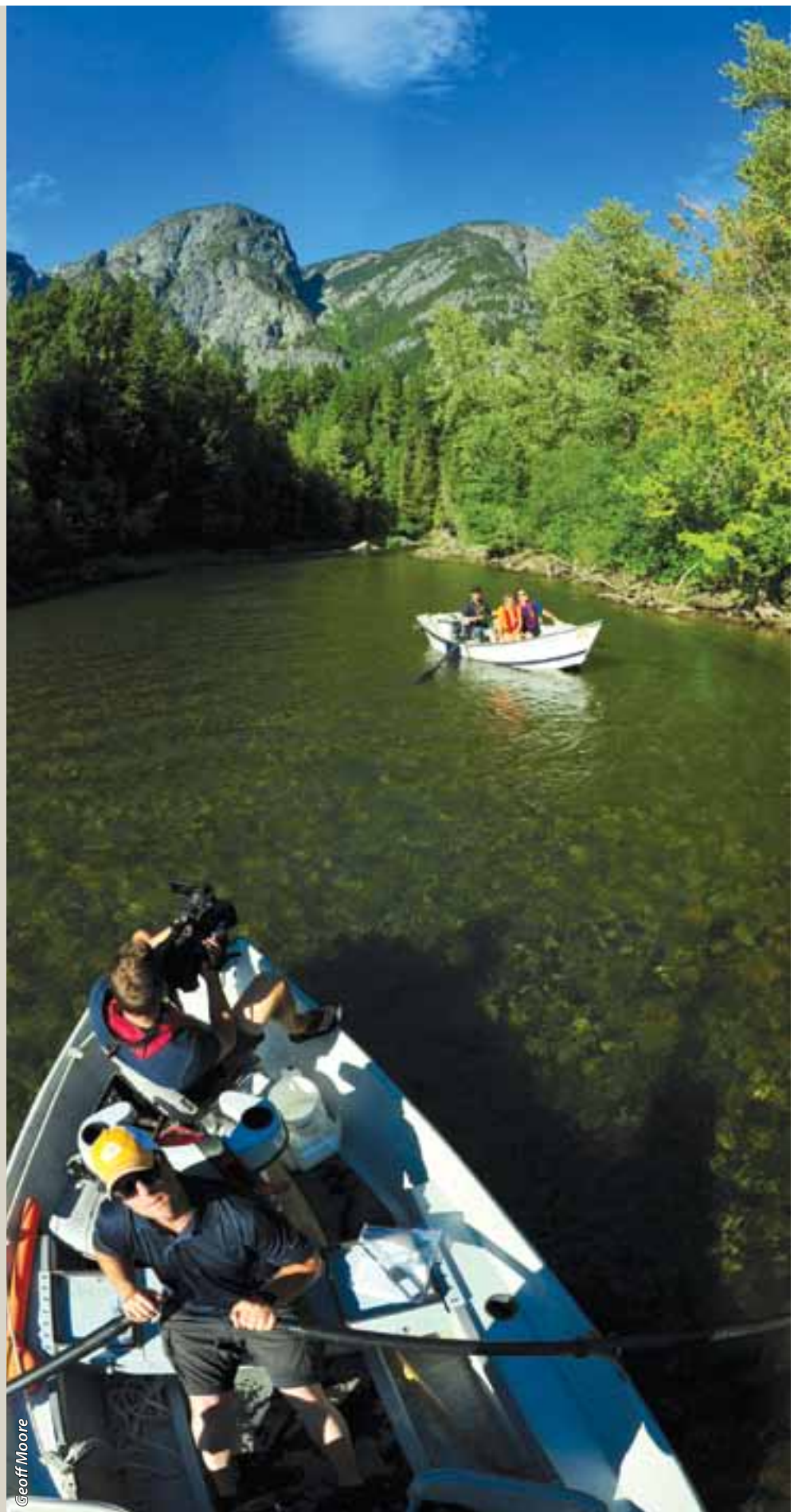
## What the Locals Say

“One of the things that is truly special about the Coast region is the depth of the authentic First Nations cultural experiences that awaits visitors. In Klemtu we have a youth performance group and they are so proud to share with guests their songs, dances and stories that have been passed down from generation to generation, for thousands of years.” ~ *Tim McGrady, general manager of Spirit Bear Lodge, Klemtu*

“I arrived in Rivers Inlet on a Grumman Goose float plane in 1982, amazed by the beauty of this fjord tucked away on B.C.’s central coast. Trolling by boat, I was taken to beaches where aboriginals had made middens of clam shells, to old canneries where the ghosts of the former workers seemed to linger, and to fish for mighty Chinook salmon. Today, it’s very much as it was all those years ago.” ~ *Barbara Kelly, owner and operator, Rivers Inlet Sportsman’s Club Fishing Lodge*

“My favourite coastal spot is up at Heckman Pass in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park when the cross-country ski trails are set. On a sunny day when the snow is perfect, the quiet of the winter wilderness, the animal tracks in and out of trees and the views of the Rainbow Mountains, can’t be beat.” ~ *Doug Baker, naturalist and hiking guide, Tweedsmuir Park Lodge*

“Bella Coola is definitely my favorite part of the entire Cariboo Chilcotin Coast. I first visited when I was five. By the time I was 15 I knew I wanted to move here and when I was 22 I did. It is a place of extremes; soaring mountain peaks, steep sides plummeting to the ocean, an abundance of wildlife with the biggest bears you have ever seen, rivers running thick with salmon and the bald eagles soaring above over waterfalls that charge down glistening rock faces. As an artist, it’s my biggest thrill and inspiration.” ~ *Tahirih Goffic, painter*



©Geoff Moore

Princess Royal Island, is a primordial expanse of lush wilderness accessible only by boat or air that few humans have entered, aside from the Tsimshian (*sim-she-an*), who once inhabited a coastal village here. Today however, eco-sensitive interpretative tours led by bear experts and other naturalists now offer unique touring options for kayakers and boaters hoping to catch a rare glimpse of this majestic animal.

The Great Bear's Fiordland Conservancy, a provincial marine park set deep in the inner channels northeast of Klemtu, is equally remote. Dotted with pristine beaches, including particularly picturesque stretches near Lady Douglas Island, the conservancy encompasses Kynoch and Mussel inlets (two glacially gouged fjords where sheer granite cliffs rise more than 1,000m/3,280ft) and Higgins Passage (an intricate waterway with traditional First Nations sites set amidst a multitude of maze-like islands, sinuous passageways and cascading waterfalls). Unforgettable sea kayaking and wildlife-viewing can also be experienced in the myriad of inlets, tiny coves and narrow passageways around Bella Coola, while to the south, just 10km/6mi west of Namu, the 123,000hec/303,940ac Hakai Luxvbalis (*looks-bal-ease*) Conservation Area offers some of the finest kayaking on the coast, with twisting passages, intriguing island clusters and white sandy beaches perfect for strolling and camping. Fishing enthusiasts who journey southwest of Hakai Luxvbalis, luxurious lodges and some of the largest chinook salmon in the world are found along Rivers Inlet and Knight Inlet – two of BC's most renowned sport-fishing



Michael Wigle

destinations. To the north, from Knight Inlet to Klemtu, more names associated with iconic fishing include Hakai Pass, Milbanke Sound and Shearwater. (Local coho are in the 9kg/20lb range, with consistent catches of chinook, pink, chum and sockeye; giant halibut weighing up to 91kg/200lb cruise the floors of each inlet, and ling cod weighing up to 27kg/59.5lb are caught near the reefs.)

It is also important to note that for centuries prior to the arrival of Europeans in the mid-1700s (when fur traders entered the area to harvest sea otter pelts), and well before a single European cast a rod in the waters of the Great Bear Rainforest, First Nations thrived along the central coast by living off land and

ocean and trading with tribes in the province's Interior.

As well, approximately two-thirds of the Coast's residents today are indigenous, as in Bella Coola, where the Nuxalk (*nu-halk*) are well known for their carvings, masks and paintings, displayed throughout the Bella Coola Valley. Equally fortunate for modern-day travellers is the fact that exploring the Great Bear Rainforest is now much easier than it was in the last quarter of the 18th century, when Mackenzie was paddled into the Dean Channel, or even in the early 1900s, when Heyerdahl sailed the central coast for his anthropological research. BC Ferries, for example, transports passengers and vehicles from Port Hardy on northern

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## Festivals & Events

**Tweedsmuir Ski Marathon** A 25km/15mi Nordic challenge set in the scenic Rainbow Range. **Tweedsmuir Provincial Park.** *March 21*

**Bella Coola Farmers Market** Get your fresh local produce, honey, homemade goodies and seafood. Quonset Hut, Hwy. 20, 6km east of **Bella Coola.** *Sundays June to September*

**30<sup>th</sup> Bella Coola Rodeo** Competitors from far and wide compete in popular rodeo events, plus the infamous cow-patty bingo (if the cow drops a patty on your square, you win). Fairgrounds, **Hagensborg.** *June 27-28*

**16<sup>th</sup> Bella Coola Music Festival** Performances in rock, roots, blues, world, folk and other genres at this family-friendly, multicultural event – plus crafts, workshops, food and children’s events. Fairgrounds, **Hagensborg.** *July 18-19*

**7<sup>th</sup> BC Outdoors Magazine Fishing Derby** Contestants troll for coho and chinook and jig for halibut – with fabulous prizes for the biggest catch. **Shearwater.** *July 24-27*

**Valley Ridge Riders Gymkhanas** Equestrian gymkhana series, kicked off on Bella Coola Rodeo weekend. Snootli Creek Park, **Bella Coola Valley.** *Summer/monthly events*

**Nuxalk Potlatches** Traditional stories, songs, dances and ancient readings, plus guided wildlife, cultural and hiking tours. **Various locations.** *Summer*

**Ocean Falls Fishing Derby** Featuring dinner, live music, tall tales and biggest-catch prizes, including \$500 for first place. **Ocean Falls.** *August 29*

**Bella Coola Valley Fall Fair** Vintage country- fair-style fun, with train rides for the wee ones, horseshoe and ring toss challenges, bingo and logger sports. Axe-throwing, anyone? Fairgrounds, **Hagensborg.** *September 6*



Vancouver Island to the Coast each summer, navigating a series of dramatic fjords to dock at smaller communities en route, such as Bella Bella, McLoughlin Bay, Shearwater, Klemtu, Ocean Falls and Bella Coola. Passengers can then continue their Discovery Coast Circle Tour from Bella Coola via Hwy. 20, up "The Hill" and across the Chilcotin Plateau to the Cariboo and beyond.

Accessing the central coast from the east by road is an equally novel experience, with Hwy. 20 leading out of Heckman Pass and down the historic Hill, a 30km/19mi descent featuring hairpin turns, switchbacks and grades of up to 18 per cent. (The road is not as dangerous as it sounds, though; it is generally quite wide, narrowing only on the hairpins, with good sight lines.) Whether journeying east from the Coast or approaching from the east down the infamous Hill, coastal travellers also find easy access to Tweedsmuir Provincial Park. This rugged 980,000hec/2,421,632ac expanse is a recreational magnet for outdoor


lovers, with top-notch fishing, hiking, heli-skiing, camping and wilderness horseback riding, plus the Turner Lake Chain canoe circuit and Canada's third-highest free-falling waterfall, Hunlen Falls, which plunges 260m/853ft from the northern end of Turner Lake into a cloud of spray before entering the Atnarko River. Tweedsmuir also boasts stunning terrain, notably the multi-hued peaks of its Rainbow Range, an astonishing spectrum of reds, oranges, yellows and lavenders created by heavily mineralized volcanic lavas and sands. The weathering effects of glaciers on these volcanic mountains, combined with the warm and wet influence of the Pacific, have in turn generated lush alpine meadows and a tremendous abundance of wildflowers. (Note: Tweedsmuir is a true wilderness park; visitors need to be experienced backcountry adventurers or employ the services of a professional guide.)

Heading out west beyond Tweedsmuir, Hwy. 20 threads through the Bella Coola Valley by shadowing the "grease trail,"

the ancient First Nations trade route followed by Alexander Mackenzie on his way to the Pacific in 1793. Home to the Nuxalk First Nation, the Bella Coola Valley was an important link in this trading corridor, where the furs, obsidian and leather goods of the province's Interior First Nations were exchanged for the Coast First Nations' salmon and eulachon oil – the latter obtained from the rendered fat of the small herring-like eulachon (*oo-lick-an*) and valued for its calorie and vitamin content.


Today, the Bella Coola Valley boasts two main towns, located 17km/10.5mi apart at the west end of Hwy. 20: Hagensborg, a community settled by Norwegian Lutherans from Minnesota, and Bella Coola, the area's service hub. This stretch of the valley also features ancient petroglyphs, historic hiking trails, a salmon hatchery, art galleries specializing in West Coast native art and outdoor-adventure companies offering

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“Fans and Followers”



“Gotta see me one of those Spirit Bears – so beautiful, and I love the native legends about them. Maybe next year.”  
–*Debbie Strange*

“Was at Shearwater Resort last year and caught the biggest halibut known to man (well, the biggest I’ve ever seen, and landed. lol) – great folks and even better fishing and scenery.”  
–*Gerry Logan*

“The heli-skiing in the Coast Mountains is epic. My sister and her husband came from Australia last year and they haven’t stopped talking about it. Next visit we want to do a summer kayak trip somewhere in this beautiful area.”  
–*Linda Brink*

“Amazing kayaking photo at Calvert Island; another great reason B.C. doesn’t need oil tankers on the Coast.”  
–*Graham Henderson*

“Great shot of spawning salmon underwater – *really, really* incredible. Thanks for sharing.”  
–*Toque and Canoe*

“We lived near Tweedsmuir and the Rainbow Mountains and enjoyed hiking and cross country skiing in the area when the kids were young. Always enjoyed driving through there while going down ‘The Hill’ to Bella Coola, too. What a beautiful park and tribute.”  
–*Craig Lowery*

“BC is so wild and beautiful. How can I get to see those amazing places on the Coast around Klemtu? Definitely on my list.”  
–*Anne Farabee*

“I’d love to share some of the photos I took while on my best vacation ever – in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast.” Being from the Netherlands, I am so thrilled to have experienced the Canada of my childhood dreams.”  
–*Marco Kolleppel*



Michael Wigle



grizzly bear tours, eco river-drifts and aerial sightseeing excursions. As well, the valley is the hub of a regional farming revival spearheaded by the Bella Coola Community Supported Agriculture Project, including an immensely popular Sunday farmers' market where, June to September, visitors mingle with locals to purchase regional specialties such as "new" heritage fruits and veggies, honey, homemade jams and jellies and outstanding arts and crafts. Local farms also welcome travellers for specialty tastings and educational tours, and, as throughout the Coast, foodies can sample world-class spot prawns, Dungeness crab, halibut, Pacific cod, several species of salmon and other local seafoods.

### Hagensborg

In 1894, some 100 Norwegian colonists journeyed from Minnesota to the Bella Coola Valley and founded a settlement called Hagensborg, located on Hwy. 20 just 16km/10mi east of Bella Coola. With its long fjords snaking to the sea, the striking landscape around the new community reminded the settlers of their Norwegian homeland, and before long the region's first non-native farming, lumber and fishing industries were up and running, followed by the town's first school, which opened in a large communal tent in 1895.

Today, travellers can still catch a glimpse of Hagensborg life in the 1800s by touring the town's Norwegian Heritage House (also the valley's visitor centre). Built at the turn of the 20th century by settler Andrew Svisdahl, the site is a late-1800s time capsule furnished in traditional Norwegian fashion and displaying the household tools of more than a century ago. Augsburg United Church, built in 1904 as a Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church, is another local historic building worth exploring, and one where parishioners are still welcomed – alongside a cemetery that poignantly memorializes the history of those who journeyed so far to realize their dreams of a new life. The local hiking trails also offer a sense of the valley's profound impact on its early settlers, including excellent vistas of the valley and Nusatsum Mountain from tiny Lost Lake's picnic site (accessed

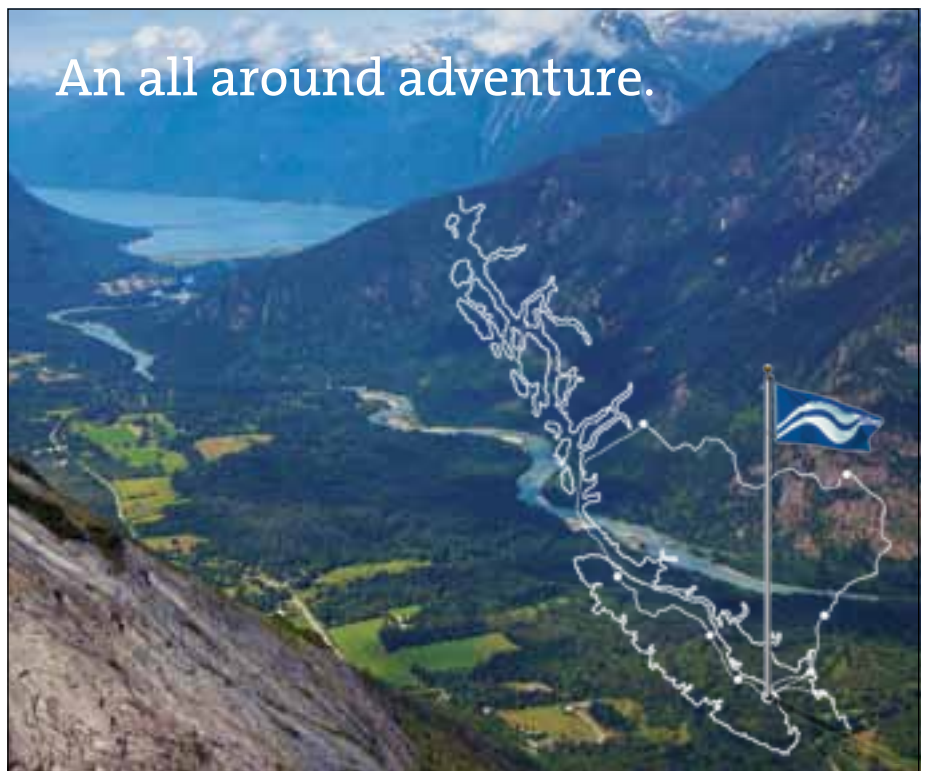
by following the Lost Lake Trail on the north side of the Bella Coola River), and the well-marked wheelchair-accessible Saloompt Interpretive Trail's scenic meanderings alongside the Bella Coola River to an old-growth forest, picnic tables and benches. Bella Coola Airport, just outside Hagensborg, provides daily, scheduled flights daily to and from Vancouver and charters to local glaciers, fishing areas and coastal destinations.

### Bella Coola

Cradled on the western edge of the valley, Bella Coola is a community of 900 or so residents, with a thriving economy based on fishing, logging, tourism and the supplying of services to the area's tiny outer settlements. Its bracing mountain air, glacier-fed rivers, wild mountain streams and abundant wildlife attract a steady stream of naturalists, artists, explorers and photographers, many of whom find themselves captivated by the town's eclectic collection of fishing and pleasure boats, cannery sites and tidal flats. The town's history as a Hudson's Bay fur-trading post and

the western terminus of Alexander Mackenzie's epic 1793 trek to the West Coast is also reflected in historic buildings such as the Kopas Store, currently popular for its folksy ambience and diverse selection of BC books, First Nations jewellery and giftware; other art galleries and gift shops can also be explored downtown.

In addition, the Bella Coola harbour serves as the grand entrance to the world-renowned 64,000sqkm/24,710sqmi Great Bear Rainforest, and is the only port between Vancouver and Prince Rupert that provides road access to the BC Interior. Until the late 1860s, the harbour was also the heart of the Nuxalk First Nation's traditional territories. But when smallpox decimated the population, those who survived gathered on lands closer to the mouth of the river and its Hudson's Bay post – an area that now comprises the non-reserve part of the community. Art history buffs can delve into this chronol-



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ogy with a guided tour of the Nuxalk Nation's impressive petroglyph site: ancient rock carvings illustrating Nuxalk culture and mythical beliefs. Also worth a visit is the modern-day Nuxalk community of 4 Mile and its school, an innovative, three-dimensional work of art designed in the traditional longhouse style, with a series of totem poles arrayed at the school's entrance (the school is located just a few minutes east of Bella Coola on Hwy. 20).

Just 5 km west of town, the Clayton Falls Recreation Site is the only oceanfront park in the Bella Coola area as well as a gathering place for salmon in major spawning years, with waterfalls accessible from the road along a short walking trail. Other local points of interest include Snootli Creek Park's meandering nature trails off Hwy. 20, adjacent to Walker Island Park and featuring an ancient cedar grove with an almost impermeable forest canopy of massive, interlocking cedar branches. Walkers on these "easy" trails stay relatively dry even when it rains.

### Namu

At the confluence of Burke Channel

and Fitz Hugh Sound, 95km/59mi southwest of Bella Coola, the village of Namu – a Heiltsuk (*hel-sic*) First Nations word meaning "whirlwind" – stands as a stark reminder of past successes and misplaced optimism. Between the 1930s and 1980s, when BC Packers operated a cannery here, Namu was a major hub for commercial fishing along the central coast and boasted a population of up to 400 cannery workers, fish processors, maintenance personnel and their families. However, high transportation costs and low fish prices in the 1980s forced a shift, from canning to fish processing, and Namu fish were soon being shipped south to Vancouver and west to Japan for canning.

In the 1990s, BC Packers sold the cannery, and an attempt was made to establish a hotel and resort on the site, with no success. Today Namu is largely a crumbling ghost town, though it is still explored and used as a stopover point by coastal travellers and fishers. Because of its ancient shell midden (a mound containing shells, animal bones and other refuse indicating human settlement in the past), Namu

also remains a continuing source of curiosity for archaeologists, who have discovered evidence here of cultures dating back nearly 10,000 years. In fact, Namu is considered one of the earliest radiocarbon-dated sites on the central BC coast.

### Bella Bella

The large eagle head painted on its Native Cultural Centre marks the fishing community of Bella Bella, located on Campbell Island about 3km/2mi north of McLoughlin Bay and the BC Ferries dock. Also known as Waglisla, the town is the former site of the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort McLoughlin, (established here in 1833 – and the ancestral home of the Heiltsuk First Nation. With a population of 1,400), Bella Bella is also the largest First Nations community on BC's west coast. Services include a bank, police station, the island's only hospital and pharmacy and the community's only general store.

### Shearwater

Some 60 full-time residents live in Shearwater, located on Denny Island just 5km/3mi from Bella Bella by



Kyle Breckenridge

water. Originally built for use by an anti-submarine bomber-reconnaissance unit in 1941, the town site was purchased and developed into a full-service marina and fishing resort when that unit disbanded in 1944 – and all that remains of the original air force base is the hangar, airstrip and a few bunkers. Today though, there is also a B&B, resort lodgings, fishing-charter operators, moorage for pleasure boaters, a grocery store, post office and regular water-taxi service to Bella Bella, all of which help support the community’s excellent eco-adventure tours and its major economic asset: sport fishing. For with its calm, protected waters on all sides, Shearwater is home to all five species of salmon, including local chinook topping 32kg/70lb and coho reaching 9kg/20lb, in addition to abundant local bottom fish such as ling cod, red snapper, rockfish, and halibut weighing up to 91kg/200lb.

**Hakai Pass**

South of Bella Bella, the exceptionally scenic waterways of Hakai Pass are known internationally for their rare diversity of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and for the sport fishing that results. Anglers find some of the biggest catches on the Coast here: huge runs of chinook, coho, sockeye, chum and pink salmon. Fishers can also drop a line for halibut, snapper and ling cod, while wildlife viewers can capture on film orcas, humpbacks, grey whales, dolphins and eagles migrating through the pass alongside sea lions and seals, and, onshore, deer and BC’s genetically unique “marine” wolves. Understandably, resorts and floating lodges here host excellent guided wildlife-viewing tours as well as fishing packages, with accommodations ranging from rustic to luxurious. Equally noteworthy is the local

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Hakai Institute's world-class ecological research and education centre, known for its innovative field programs, satellite facilities and initiatives dedicated to increasing scientists' understanding of the region's hydrography, geology and ecology, including the long-term measurement of environmental change and the testing of theories to explain the Hakai's extraordinarily productive ecosystems.

### **Rivers Inlet**

Rivers Inlet, a scenic fjord 125km/78mi southwest of Bella Coola and 65km/40mi north Vancouver Island, is about 45km/28mi in length from its head at the community of Rivers Inlet, a logging and fishing settlement and home of the Wuikinuxv (*O-we-keeno*) first nation. Named by George Vancouver when first charted in 1792, the inlet today boasts several world-renowned fishing resorts, catering to sportfishing enthusiasts from around the globe. Eco-lodges welcome bear viewing fans and avid photographers. Dawsons Landing, located in a protected bay near the entrance to Rivers Inlet, has hosted fishermen, cruisers, scientists, and pleasure and commercial craft, for more than 55 years. Daily scheduled float plane service connects with Port Hardy. Dawson's Landing is the only location between Port Hardy and Bella Bella where travellers will find fuel, a general store, post office, liquor store and rental cabin accommodations.

### **Ocean Falls**

Ocean Falls is often cited for its abundance of rain, some 4,390mm/172in annually. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, this community is sometimes referred to as the Land of the Rain People – after the Heiltsuk, the First Nations peoples who have inhabited the coastal region surrounding Ocean Falls for more than 9,000 years. Accessible only by private boat, BC Ferries or float plane, Ocean Falls is also a remote community, one that curves, situated around the waterfall of the same name that churns over the cliffs from Link Lake directly into Cousins Inlet, 88km/55mi northwest of Bella Coola.

In fact, it was this easy access to fresh water that, in 1912, prompted the largest

pulp and paper mill in the province to be built here, with workers brought in from Japan, China and East India to meet the demand for local Sitka spruce in the manufacture of World War I and II fighter planes. In turn, the mill in its heyday supported a thriving town with a population of close to 4,000, its own school system, an orchestra, a musical and dramatic society, a hospital, one of the province's largest hotels and a swimming pool where several champions trained before the closure of the mill in 1980. (The town's swimming club sent seven swimmers to the Olympic Games between 1948 and the 1960s, including resident Ralph Hutton, who won silver in the 400-metre freestyle at the 1968 Mexico City Games; as well, the club won the Canadian National Men's Championship four years running between 1962 and 1965.)

Today, Ocean Falls has excellent hiking, wildlife viewing and freshwater and saltwater fishing. Its town centre also supports a small residential community and is a popular stop for boaters and BC Ferries travellers, with a good-sized government dock, fresh water for boating traffic and plenty of intriguing nooks and crannies to explore downtown. Accommodation is also available, though due to the much smaller ferry now servicing Ocean Falls, *early* reservations are highly recommended. And take note: as the ferry – or other watercraft – nears the dock, travellers get an up-close and striking look at the impressive town centre's massive, now-deteriorating hotel, other businesses along its main street as well as the town's large hydroelectric dam. One can't help but wonder what it must have been like to live here during the Falls' heyday.

### Klemtu

Klemtu is an isolated community located in a pristine cove on Swindle Island, 228km/142mi northwest of Bella Coola within the Great Bear Rainforest preserve. The village is also on the doorstep of Princess Royal Island, home of the legendary white Spirit Bear, the Kermode. Equally noteworthy is the fact that Klemtu's population of 420 is composed of two First Nations groups, that speak completely different languages: the Kitasoo (*kit-ah-soo*), the southernmost tribe of the Tsimshian First Nation, and the Xai'xais (*hay-hace*), the northerly branch of the Heiltsuk First Nation. The reason for this linguistic juxtaposition is that, by 1875, the population of the two groups had declined so precipitously due to BC's smallpox epidemic that its survivors joined together to establish a settlement nearer the region's main shipping routes. The new community underwrote its fledgling economy with earnings from cutting cordwood for coastal steamers, for which Klemtu became a refuelling stop.

Today, Klemtu's key economic driver is fishing,

and most residents live along the waterfront and its wooden boardwalk – the longest in North America when it was built in the 1960s. Commercial activities here are centered around the public Transport Canada wharf, where services include a general store, cafe, post office, community health clinic and modern fuel facility (with a full range of marine and auto fuels). But the most important community hub is Klemtu's monumental Big House. Constructed of red cedar and emblazoned with the village's clan emblems (raven, eagle, wolf and killer whale), the facility is used for celebrations, traditional dances and memorials that allow residents to reconnect with their past and bring ancient traditions alive.

In addition, the landscape surrounding Klemtu offers incredible scenery and superb wildlife-viewing, fishing and kayaking, with experienced paddlers bringing their own equipment to explore a labyrinth of inland fjords. A local First Nations touring company operates the stunning, modern Spirit Bear Lodge to visitors and is offering cultural, eco- and wildlife-viewing tours of Princess Royal Island and Fiordland Conservancy marine park, where kayakers visit with a hereditary chief as they ply the ocean waters and learn the coastal story of creation. Swindle Island is inaccessible by road, check the BC Ferries website for current schedules. Pacific Coastal Airlines also offers convenient flights to Klemtu from Vancouver, Port Hardy and Campbell River (via Bella Bella). ♦

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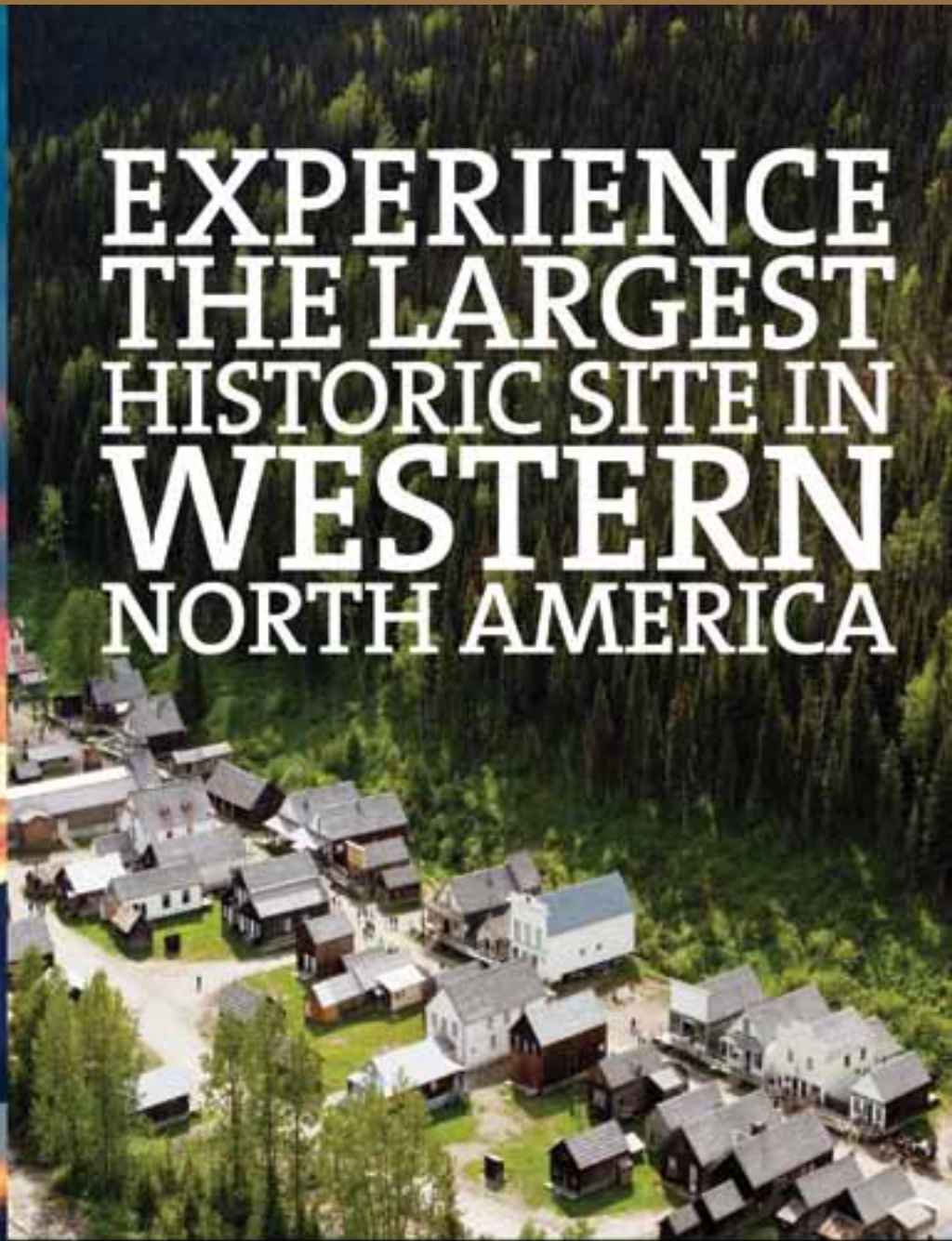
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### 2. Tatla Lake - Anahim Lake

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### 3. Anahim Lake - Bella Coola

Total Distance : 132 km

Leaving Anahim Lake you travel about 40 minutes on a well maintained gravel road entering Tweedsmuir Provincial Park and climbing

through sub-alpine meadows to the summit of Heckman Pass. Descending from sky to sea, down what is affectionately known as 'The Hill', a drop of over 5,000 feet brings you to the valley floor and the humid rainforest of the west coast. Following the rivers of the valley bottom you will exit Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, passing the community of Hagensborg to your terminus of Bella Coola. Gateway to the Great Bear Rainforest, Bella Coola offers a veritable cornucopia of outdoor adventure activities.



*Things to see & do: Farwell Canyon, Junction Sheep Range Park, Guest Ranches and Rodeos, Historic Lodges, Hiking Trails, Flightseeing, Hunlen Falls, Fly Fishing, Heli Hiking and Heli Skiing, Horse Pack Trips, Ocean Excursions, Grizzly Bear and Wildlife Viewing.*

## Pursuit of the Gold Rush

**Route includes: Highway & Backroad Travel**

Total Distance: 980 km

### 1. Lillooet – Hat Creek Ranch

**100 Mile House – Williams Lake**

Distance: 270 km

Head north from Lillooet on Hwy 99, passing beautiful Pavilion Lake on the way to the intersection with Hwy. 97 and Hat Creek Ranch. Turn north on Hwy. 97 passing Clinton and 100 Mile House on the way toward Williams Lake.

### 2. Williams Lake – Quesnel – Wells - Barkerville

Distance: 204 km

Go north on Hwy. 97 toward Quesnel, passing Xat'sull Heritage Village at Soda Creek, and McLeese Lake along the way. At Quesnel, drive north on Hwy. 97 about 5 km to the junction of Hwy. 26. Head east

on Hwy. 26 toward Wells and Barkerville, passing heritage markers and Cottonwood House Historic Site.

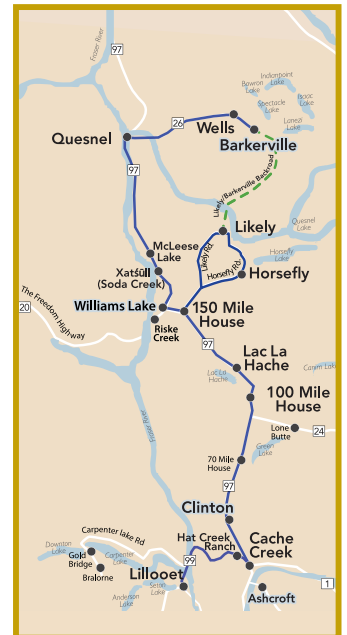
### 3. Barkerville – (Seasonal Backroad; Ghost Lake – Likely – Horsefly) – 150 Mile House – Lac la Hache – Cache Creek

Distance: 381 km

From Barkerville head west on Hwy. 26. After 1.5 km turn right onto Bowron Lake Park Road and after roughly 400 m turn right again onto Cunningham Pass/ 3100 Road. After 40 km cross the Cariboo River and follow the road for another 20 km to Ghost Lake Recreation Site on the left. Another 15 km the road reaches the Cameron Ridge Trail and then passes Maeford Lake on the way towards Cariboo Lake where it becomes Cariboo Lake Road/6400 Road. This road stays on the left side of Cariboo Lake until it reaches

Keithley Creek Road. Turn left towards Likely. About 2.5 km behind Likely turn sharply left onto Horsefly-Likely Road that leads along the western shore of Quesnel Lake. After Mitchell Bay Recreation Site continue left on the same road that becomes Horsefly-Quesnel Road near Horsefly. In Horsefly, head southwest onto Horsefly Road and pass Miocene and Dugan Lake on the way south to 150 Mile House. At 150 Mile House turn southeast onto Highway 97 which now takes you south past Lac la Hache, 100 Mile House and toward Cache Creek.

*Things to see & do: Lillooet's First Nations Tours, Jade Walk and Ft. Berens Winery, canoe Pavilion Lake, Hat Creek Ranch, Clinton Museum, 108 Mile Historic Site, Williams Lake mountain biking trails, Xat'sull Heritage Village, Quesnel Riverfront Trail, Cottonwood House Historic Site, Wells/Barkerville trail system,*



*Barkerville Historic Town, Ghost Lake Rec Site & Waterfalls, Cameron Ridge Trails, Cedar City Mining Museum, Horsefly salmon spawning channel, Historic 150 Mile Schoolhouse, Lac la Hache Provincial Park.*





**Merritt to Chilliwack • 1¼ hrs**  
**Merritt to West Kelowna • 1¼ hrs**  
**Merritt to Kamloops • ¾ hr**



# Explore GOLD COUNTRY



## MERRITT FESTIVALS:

### MAY-OCTOBER

Merritt Stock Car Races  
Nicola Valley Farmers' Market

### JUNE

Aboriginal Day  
Merritt Country Run

### JULY

Art Walk  
Canada Day Celebrations  
Show and Shine

### AUGUST

Ambassador Program

### SEPTEMBER

Nicola Valley Pro Rodeo

### OCTOBER

Merritt Centennials Hockey  
Pacific Forest Rally

### NOVEMBER

Merritt Country Christmas  
Santa Parade

### DECEMBER

City of Merritt's Free Annual  
New Year's Eve Event

### JANUARY

Men's and Women's Curling Bonspiel

## PLUS!

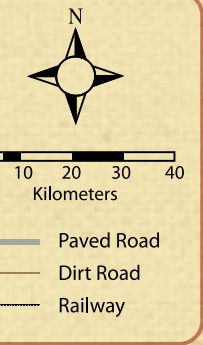
### GOLD COUNTRY 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL GEOCACHING EVENT

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September 4-7, 2015

*Participate in this modern day  
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To Kelowna  
and Banff



To Kelowna







Geoff Moore

Cariboo Hwy. 97





Michael Wigle



Bella Coola Archives



Cailin Cousins



Quesnel & District Museum and Archives



Brad Kasselmann/coastphoto.com



Bella Coola Archives



For thousands of years, the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast has been the ancestral home of several different yet interdependent aboriginal societies. Tribal groups of the region include the Tsilhqot'in (*tseelh-coht-eeen*), whose traditional territory is the high-altitude plateau of the Chilcotin (*chil-ko-tin*); the St'át'imc (*stat-lee-um*), from southwest of the Fraser; the Carrier, who occupied the sub-boreal northern area of the Cariboo Chilcotin, and the Secwepemc (*shi-huep-muh-k*), whose historical lands lie east of the Fraser River. On the Pacific coast, the major First Nations groups are the Nuxalk (*nu-halk*) of the Bella Coola Valley, the Tsimshian (*sim-she-an*) of the outer coast and the Heiltsuk (*hel-sic*) of the coastal area near Bella Bella.

Although little of their centuries-long history of habitation in the region has been recorded, all of these First Nations played a well-documented and essential role in the province's development, including providing canoes, food, guides, translators and information to early explorers and European settlers in the 1700s through 1800s. Explorer Alexander Mackenzie, for example, could not have completed his historic 1793 trek if local indigenous peoples had not directed him along the Nuxalk-Carrier Grease Trail, from the northern Cariboo to the shores of the Pacific near Bella Coola. The route was also used for centuries by coastal natives to trade valuable eulachon oil with the

province's Interior tribes. Distilled from the small, herring-like eulachon fish, the oil was transported in cedar boxes, and the trail got its name from the oil that dripped from the boxes en route.

#### Fur Trading and Gold

In the early 1800s, fur-trading companies built the first forts in the region to facilitate trade with local bands. Prior to this, First Nations in the BC Interior participated in the fur trade by bartering pelts with natives on the Coast, who, in turn, traded them to Europeans arriving by sea. After the forts were established, local First Nations then brought their furs directly to the trading posts to bargain for goods and supplies.

However, the start of the gold rush and subsequent influx of European settlement in the region signalled the end of the fur-trade era, and by the mid-1800s relations between the two cultures were greatly altered. For as more and more land was used for settlement, farming, logging and mining by new Canadians, it became increasingly hard for First Nations to maintain their traditional life based upon subsistence use of the land. Smallpox epidemics and other European diseases devastated the native population, resulting in a further loss of control over the majority of their traditional lands. Still, there was surprisingly little bloodshed. The few conflicts that did occur were short-lived, and several Chilcotin communities were

## Highlights

**Capture a BC-only “marine” wolf** and rare Spirit Bear on film by taking a Kitasoo/Xai'xais (*kit-ab-soo-hay-hace*) First Nations tour of the Central Coast's Great Bear Rainforest.

**Embark on a historical adventure** to a site first inhabited by First Nations 5,000 years ago. The Tuckkwiowhum (*tuck-wee-ohm*) Heritage Interpretative Village, near Boston Bar, with cedar-bark summer lodges, sweat houses, a smoke house, food caches, earth ovens and pit house.

**Jet boat the northern Fraser** as guides share their traditional First Nations knowledge of medicinal plants and local lore, and navigate past hoodoos and rapids to explore ancient village sites, pictographs and petroglyphs.

**Usher in the New Year with a St'át'imc powwow** in Lillooet. Festivities usually highlight traditional grass- and hoop-dancing plus hand-drumming competitions.

**Experience the culture of the Xat'süll community** and take part in an educational tour of Xat'süll Heritage Village on the bank of the Fraser River at one of their monthly cultural events during the summer.





Michael Bednar

eventually named after local chiefs, including Anahim Lake, Alexis Creek and the Nemiah Valley. Local First Nations were also involved in the early days of the region's key industries, particularly in ranching in the Chilcotin and southern Cariboo, where native horsemanship and wilderness survival skills were highly prized.

### First Nations Today

Many Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Fraser Canyon First Nations continue to work in ranching and remain key participants on the local rodeo circuit, particularly at the Anahim Lake Stampede and Bella Coola and Redstone rodeos. Modern-day aboriginal groups also remain highly involved in the region's fishing, logging, transportation and tourism industries. In fact, BC's aboriginal tourism sector is the most sophisticated of any of the province's aboriginal-driven tourism industries, with huge growth potential. One such local success, for example, is the award-winning Xat'sull (*hat-sull*) Heritage Village, located just north of Williams Lake on a grassy bench above the Fraser River canyon. Here, members of the Secwepemc, or Shuswap, First Nation, share storytelling by village elders, cleansing sweat-lodge ceremonies, educational wilderness walks, salmon lunches and overnight accommodation under the stars in pit houses and teepees. (Contact Xat'sull ahead of time for reservations, to ensure a complete, traditional experience.)

Also near Williams Lake, but in a completely different landscape, jet boats journey over rapids and past bizarre hoodoo formations to explore ancient village sites, 8,000- to 10,000-year-old pictographs and petroglyphs, native fishing spots and abandoned mining sites, with aboriginal guides sharing traditional First Nations practices involving medicinal plants, flora, fauna and local lore. And in the Chilcotin: on the last weekend of July the Nemiah Powwow features a colourful display of regalia and dancing, just one of several powwows occurring locally throughout the year, while the Xeni Gwet'in (*honey-ko-teen*) host an annual summer gathering where elders and youth come together to teach and learn traditional games, stories and hunting and gathering skills.

At Bella Bella, the Heiltsuk Cultural Education Centre is the place to delve into the research and preservation of the language and culture of the Heiltsuk, who, along with other coastal peoples such as the Kitasoo (*kit-ah-soo*) and Xai'xais (*hay-hace*) at the village of Klemtu on Swindle Island, grew rich and powerful on the bounty of the sea. In the Thorsen Creek Valley near Bella Coola, ancient petroglyphs honouring the power and mystery of nature are still visible on rock faces near waterfalls and caves, with guided tours now offered by the Nuxalk. As well, Bella Coola's Acwsalcta (*ex-sals-ta*) grade school is a showcase for another sector of the indigenous arts, including a magnificent totem pole carved by three students and one of the school's teachers; erected in 2002, it is the first Nuxalk totem pole to be raised onsite here in 38 years. Or, if indigenous fine art is of interest, plan a visit to Bella Coola's Petroglyph Gallery, for works by world-famous Silyas "Art" Saunders and his son Skip. The Petroglyph Gallery also sells prints, paintings, carvings, clothing and other artwork and gifts by both Nuxalk and other First Nations artists, as well



as gallery staff, can arrange workshop visits with renowned local carver and hereditary chief Noel Pootlass.

Meanwhile, hikers with historical interests can traverse the Nuxalk-Carrier Grease Trail, also known as the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail. Three weeks are required to navigate the entire route, but various sections can be accessed for shorter jaunts; the scenic 80km/50mi portion across Tweedsmuir Provincial Park reportedly takes less than a week. For more detailed trail information, refer to the *In the Steps of Alexander Mackenzie*, a heritage trail guidebook, available at local bookstores and some visitor centres. As well, some 100km/62mi northwest of Bella Coola, in the wilds of the Great Bear Rainforest, Kitasoo and Xai'xais First Nations guides lead multi-day boat and kayak tours of this spectacular, remote preserve, complete with lodge accommodations.

In the southern Chilcotin, no fewer than 11 different communities make up the St'át'imc First Nation, whose traditional territories were located in and around an ancient gathering place now known as Lillooet. Here today, Xwisten (*hoyshten*) Experience Tours offers award-winning guided excursions that include walks along the banks of Fraser to view



“fishing rocks” and the traditional wind-dried method of preserving salmon, as well as guided explorations of the extensive Xwisten archaeological site’s 80 pit houses, dating back thousands of years. As well, the neighbouring Cayoose Creek Band offers interpretive walks of the beautifully restored Lower Seton spawning channel, while just five minutes from downtown Lillooet is the site of a traditional *s7istken* (*sheshken*), or pit house, built by the T’it’q’et

(*tlee-ti-cut*). Constructed with only earth and timber, such structures once housed up to 20 people and featured two entrances: one on ground level, one in the roof (which also released smoke from cooking fires). Also not to be missed is the Seton Lake Band’s Kaoham Shuttle: a travelling window into the past and a convenient way to view local wildlife. The train runs Fridays (with a scheduled double-run), skirting the shores of Seton Lake past numerous historical sites, including a First Nations cemetery precariously located between the tracks and the crystalline shores of the lake. In the northern Chilcotin, the Nazko lands are known for celebrated Carrier First Nation artists working in leather (buckskin and moose hide) and beadwork, watercolour, wood, stained glass and cross-stitch. ♦

## Going to a Powwow?

Attending a powwow is an opportunity to share a unique and memorable First Nations experience. Watch for highway signboards and local event postings about upcoming opportunities during your next visit to the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Fraser Canyon. The positive energy of a powwow rejuvenates and inspires, and all are welcome. Visitors are asked only to be respectful of this time-honoured spiritual celebration and to experience First Nations traditions with an open heart and mind.

### Tips

- Listen to the host and follow instructions
- Stand and remove head coverings during grand entry, flag, invocation and closing ceremonies
- Request permission before taking photographs
- Do not record drumming without the consent of the head singer
- Refer to the dancers’ clothing as “regalia”; it is not a costume
- Refrain from touching the dancers’ regalia
- Do not turn down an invitation to participate, particularly an invitation from an elder
- Note that no alcohol or drugs are permitted

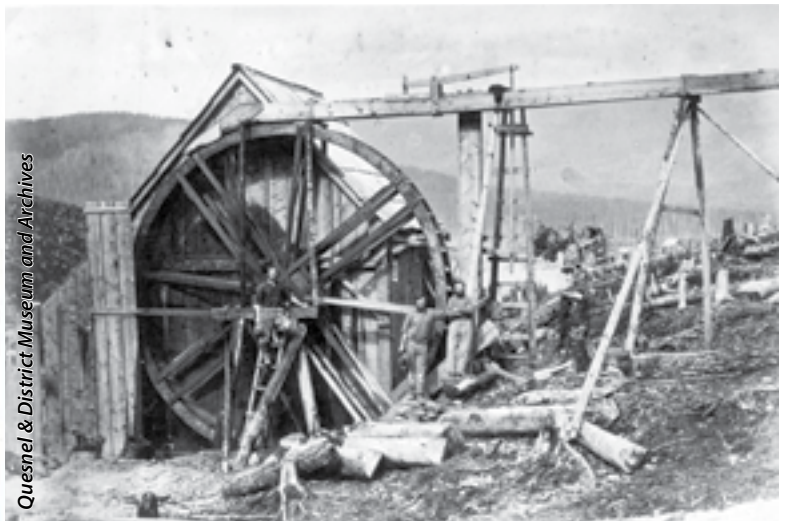
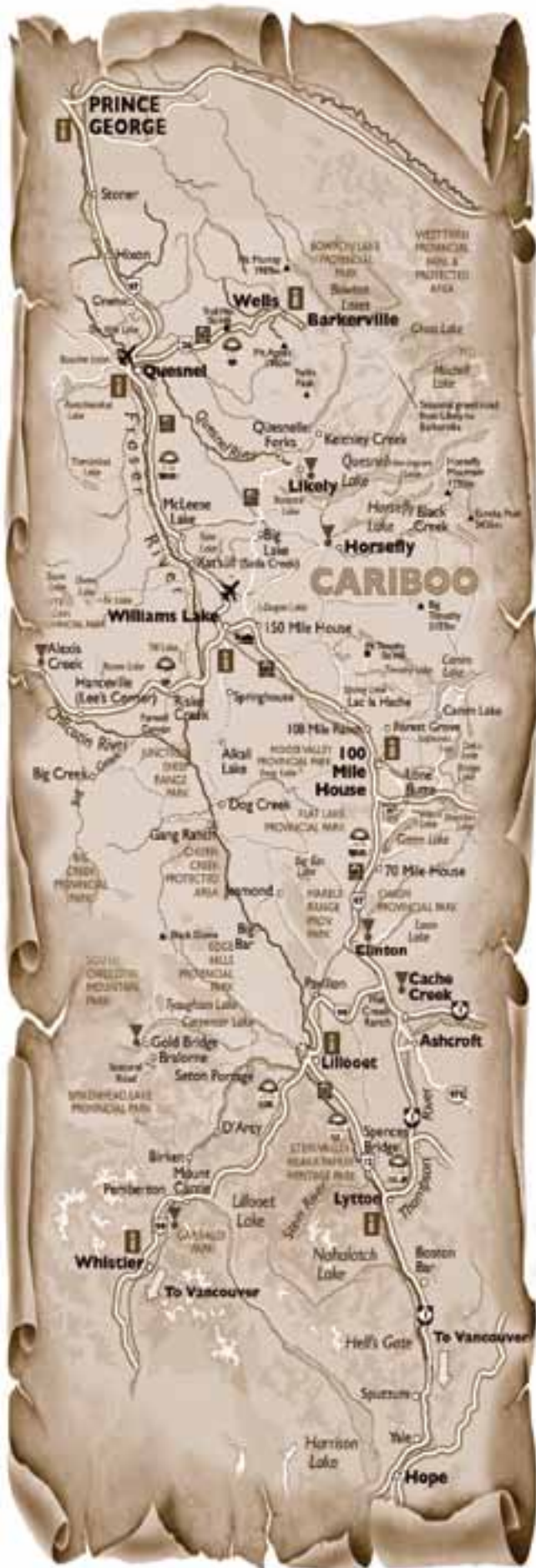




**Cultural Tours & Workshops**  
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 250.989.2311







Quesnel & District Museum and Archives



Tom Ryan/Destination British Columbia



Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin Archives



Marcie Down





Thomas Drasdauskis

Just a little more than 150 years ago, the future of BC shifted irrevocably when, on August 17, 1862, prospector Billy Barker struck gold at Williams Creek in the northern Cariboo. Gold fever spread like an epidemic as news of Barker's big strike filtered out, and hordes of gold-crazed fortune seekers from around the world descended on this remote wilderness. The wood-planked town of Barkerville grew rapidly to join the "towns" of Richfield and Camerontown. Mining crews toiled around the clock to haul golden ore from the earth, and by 1865 a major wagon road had been carved through the Cariboo's rugged terrain to connect the southern part of the province with the goldfields. Barkerville's population ballooned to 10,000, and suddenly it was one of the largest settlements in western Canada – the largest community west of Chicago and north of San Francisco.

Many of those early miners and fortune hunters were Chinese immigrants, who worked white prospectors' abandoned mines and tailings by washing sand and gravel from rocks that were then neatly piled on the Fraser River's shores. (Known as "Chinese rocks," these stacks are still visible today.) In fact, by the mid-1860s, thousands of Chinese were living in Barkerville and many of the region's other gold rush towns, including Stanley, Van Winkle, Quesnel, Antler, Quesnelle Forks and Lillooet, where Chinese miners alone took millions

out of Cayoosh Creek. Mining was not these immigrants' only labour, either. Chinese entrepreneurs also operated corner stores, laundries and lodging houses, and worked as cooks for others or as owners of the province's original "Chinese restaurants." The latter were eventually established even in remote BC communities, and along with the province's Chinese-run general stores are now a cultural reference point for historians tracking small-town life in BC.

In the Chilcotin Mountains, another gold rush followed in the 1930s as the Bralorne-Pioneer Mine near Gold Bridge became the richest gold claim in Canada. Bralorne can still be visited today, along with those in Wells, once a company town of the Cariboo Gold Quartz Mine. Indeed, the historic "Gold Rush Trail" has many sites where travellers can stop, explore and get a feel for what it was like in those heady years, including many communities with historical connections to the gold-rush era. Some for example, began as roadhouses, where stagecoaches stopped so horses could be fed and watered and passengers could rest overnight.

Today, one of the era's last surviving Barnard Express stagecoaches is displayed in 100 Mile House. Clinton, which celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2013, showcases its museum in a colourful red-brick building that once served as a schoolhouse and later as a courthouse.

At the 108 Mile Ranch Heritage Site, pioneer buildings include a 1908 log barn built to house a herd of 200 Clydesdale horses. The former gold rush supply centre of Quesnel hosts Billy Barker Days, a four-day July festival commemorating the region's most famous gold seeker. The Gold Rush Trail's terminus is the restored heritage town of Barkerville, a Canadian National Historic Site where guided tours bring the lore of the gold rush to life, with period interpreters roaming the streets dressed as historical characters and Judge Matthew Begbie (known as the "hanging judge") hands out frontier justice. Visitors can also pan for gold, sample regional foods at local eateries, be entertained by the antics of the Theatre Royal's live musicals and overnight in a local hotel or B&B. ♦

## Highlights

**Gussy up for the fancy-dress Clinton Annual Ball**, the longest continually running event of its kind in North America. The dance kicks off Clinton's Western Heritage Week on the Victoria Day weekend.

**Visit one of the last remaining roadhouses.** Cottonwood House once provided provisions to those travelling the Cariboo Wagon Road. Today, this BC Heritage Site provides guided tours, carriage rides and the chance to explore its 1800s-era buildings.





Queensel & District Museum and Archives



Bella Coola Archives



Pioneer Log Homes



Bella Coola Archives



Amy Thacker



Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin Archives



Geoff Moore

The region's commercial logging industry began in the Cariboo in the 1860s – with sawmills producing lumber for gold-rush boom towns. However, it could be argued that forestry has been around much longer on the central coast, for this is where BC's First Nations developed a system for peeling planks from still-standing giant cedars to construct their "longhouses" (examples of these "culturally modified trees" can be seen today around Klemtu and the Bella Coola Valley). Today, local industry resource extraction companies are leaders in innovation and environmentally sustainable practises.

In terms of value-added industries, the region's highly successful log-home building industry also creates employment and stable economics for the region. Movie stars, international politicians and Internet moguls have all commissioned custom log homes from local log-home builders. In fact, products from the region's many log home companies – such as Pioneer Log Homes, featured on TV's *Timber Kings* and *Carver Kings* shows – dot the globe; the world's largest "complete log structure," a 114,000sqft dream home for example is owned by a Colorado publishing and Internet multimillionaire, is a \$28 million Cariboo success story.

Abundant high-grade spruce, pine and fir products also make the region one

of the biggest lumber-producing areas in Canada. And although infestations of the mountain pine beetle have had a significant impact on the industry, imaginative ways have been developed to utilize the resulting "blue" or "denim" pine. As for sustainable forestry practices overall, the region also boasts the largest biomass power plant in North America – the Williams Lake Power Plant, which consumes more than 544,310 tonnes of local sawmill wood waste to generating 67 megawatts of electricity a year.

As well, it's important to note that mining jumpstarted the rush to explore BC's Interior – with the discovery of gold in the Cariboo in the 1800s. Modern-day gold prospectors can still live the dream, too: panning for nuggets in creeks and streams throughout the region. Gold Bridge, near Lillooet, is a particular favourite with the amateur pan-and-swish crowd. Numerous regional museums also offer fascinating ways to relive the storied past of local mining and forestry industries now with excellent archives and exhibits that vividly capture the pioneering spirit of those early days.

Of course, mining extraction has changed significantly since Billy Barker struck pay dirt in 1862. Today, some of the world's largest open-pit mines are now found in the region. This includes Taseko's Gibraltar copper mine near McLeese Lake, Canada's second-largest, and the Mt. Polley gold mine near Likely,

where an estimated one million ounces of gold is still to be extracted. As well, more gold has recently been found in the Chilcotin Mountains' Camelsfoot Range, while the Bralorne Mine was re-opened in 2011. Undeveloped gold placer-mining claims also still exist along the Fraser River and throughout the Cariboo and gold-panning adventure tours can be found near Barkerville and in Quesnel.

Want to learn more? Travellers are invited to tour working mines and forestry operations after checking in with the Chamber of Commerce and visitor centre in each community for current touring schedules. Avid rock hounds in search of jade and other semi-precious stones can also explore the South Chilcotin, and Lillooet, in particular – home of BC's first jade mines. ♦

## Highlights

**Walk the Walk.** A series of stunning jade boulders mark key stopping points on Lillooet's "Jade Walk" – perfect for strolling while exploring downtown shops and the town's superb museum.

**Hike historic mining trails** and forest Service roads near Likely, where the old Bullion Pit Mine is an astonishing manmade canyon well worth exploring. The nearby Quesnelle Forks ghost town is a great daytrip.













Rocky Mountaineer



Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin Archives



Quesnel & District Museum and Archives



Rocky Mountaineer



Quesnel & District Museum and Archives



Steve Harkies/CCCTA





**B**C-bred cowboys are said to combine a Mexican vaquero's skills, equipment and clothes, a U.S. frontiersman's grit and resourcefulness, a First Nations' respect for nature and a British gentleman's manners and sense of law and order – all topped off with a cowboy's unique brand of humour. The description may sound more like that of a mythical figure than real-life flesh and blood, but there is no doubt that the North American cowboy – as a romantic icon – is interwoven within the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Fraser Canyon's history and culture.

The first white settlers spread across the region in the 1860s, when cowboys worked as “drovers,” driving herds of cattle north from the U.S. to supply miners in the goldfields around Barkerville. Some of these hardy souls quickly realized it made more sense to raise cattle closer to market and established great sprawling ranches on the grassy rangelands near the Fraser River. Where more than one third of BC's beef cattle are raised in this area today.

Most of the drovers and cowboys in the region's frontier days were also First Nation, many of whom were related to Caucasian ranchers through marriage. The natives were superb horsemen and knew the territory better than any outsider, and both ranchers and natives spoke Chinook (a First Nations trade language perfected during fur-trade

times). Unlike in most other ranching areas in North America, BC's natives were also treated as equals and key partners in the cattle industry. The same holds true today.

Ranchers struggled in the years after the gold rush faded, but the industry was reborn when railway tracks were laid in 1919, giving Ranch owners in the Cariboo and Chilcotin easier access to heavily populated southern markets and. Communities such as Williams Lake, then a sleepy backwater, also suddenly boomed when the Pacific Great Eastern Railway (now CN Rail) established a local train station. Seemingly overnight it became a central shipping point, with stockyards that could hold up to 2,400 head of cattle at a time.

Today, that historic train station in Williams Lake houses a delightful art gallery – and ranching continues to thrive in the Cariboo Chilcotin. But it's a tough business and the cowboys who work these ranches, like their frontier forebearers, are a hardy breed with a mantle of freedom and independence barely diminished with time. The cowboy's aura of romance has only grown in recent years, too, with the increasing popularity of cowboy poetry and music – showcased throughout the region at festivals organized by BC's Cowboy Heritage Society and celebrated, along with te cosboy lifestyle, in several TV programs and

books, including those of local cowboy Rich Hobson.

As for what is thought to be the first formal rodeo in BC, it was an impromptu event staged in Williams Lake by local cowboys showcasing their horsemanship to celebrate the construction of the railroad in 1919. Today, the Williams Lake Stampede is the cornerstone of the region's thriving rodeo and festival circuit, attracting thousands of western buffs to watch professional competitors from Canada, the U.S. and as far away as Australia. ♦

## Highlights

BC's early history was carved out of the wilderness by thousands of hard working cowboys. Visit the **BC Cowboy Hall of Fame** at the **Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin** in Williams Lake, where memories of these iconic figures are on display and their stories shared – alongside those of B.C.'s living cowboy legends.

**All Aboard!** Travel the rails between Whistler and Jasper, with an overnight in Quesnel, on the Rocky Mountaineer's “Rainforest to Gold Rush” route – for stunning views of coastal rainforest, desert landscapes, ranch lands.





Gordon Baron



Gina Myhill Jones



David Jacobson



Quesnel & District Museum and Archives



Gordon Baron



Geoff Moore

From Ashcroft in the south to north of Quesnel and west into the Chilcotin wilderness, BC's "Land without Limits" is the province's go-to destination for rodeos, rustic guest ranches and resort-style luxury. It's also cattle country, *real* cattle country, where riding enthusiasts can immerse themselves in the local cowboy culture in unique ways – guided by experienced cowhands who are more than happy to share their appreciation of this iconic way of life. Travellers in the Cariboo Chilcotin can bunk at a working ranch as an aspiring cowhand and experience hands-on riding and roping, branding and herding, or sign up for a horse-whispering workshop and practise "horse language" – to forge the ultimate bond between man and animal. A 14-day expedition into the mountains of Itcha Ilgachuz Provincial Park leads to an archaeological site near an obsidian quarry of special significance to the Carrier people. Other treks include guiding herds from winter feedlots to summer pastures (or back again in the fall), and days spent riding the Tchaikazan-Yohetta Valley Loop or the Chilcotin's Potato Range that morph into trailside lake retreats by dusk, with tents pitched in secluded meadows and fat trout reeled in for the supper fry pan.

In fact the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast is home to more than half of the province's guest ranches, ranging from those that provide gourmet restaurants,

swimming pools, hot tubs, full-service spas and the full glamping experience ("designer" camping) to those offering a more rustic, traditional Canadian experience featuring the stuff cowboy dreams are made of: guitars and cowboy songs and tall tales around a campfire, bunking down in an old-fashioned log cabin or sleeping under the stars in a snug bedroll and waking at dawn to the howl of a distant coyote and the aroma of coffee, baked beans and bacon crisping over an open flame. Or, here's your chance to relax with a massage after a long day's ride, to catch a rodeo, to videotape the skills and courage of both riders and animals – to treat your sweetheart to a distinctively western glamping experience. No matter what your wild west dream is, the region's ranch hands are experts at matching horse to rider, at ensuring both novices and experts are fitted with the 'right' in-the-saddle getaway – from family friendly, low-impact trail rides through aspen and jack-pine forests to multi-hour saddle treks featuring arid, sagebrush-covered vistas stretching as far as the eye can see.

For those keen to learn more about cowboy history, a visit to the Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin in Williams Lake is another must. Exhibits here are dedicated to preserving and honouring BC cowboys and cowgirls of the past and present, including how cowboys and cattlemen tamed BC's

Wild West. The museum also houses the BC Cowboy Hall of Fame, and its annual Hall of Fame inauguration (held at the Williams Lake Indoor Rodeo in April) is an opportunity to meet BC's ranching and rodeo pioneers. For a more current take on cowboy culture,



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## Highlights

**Trail ride on horseback** across alpine meadows near Anahim Lake, in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park's remote Rainbow Range, or hook up with an experienced guide for a pack trip into this incredibly beautiful mountain paradise.

**Dust off your stetson, boots and bolo tie** for unique rodeo events throughout the region, including the Bella Coola Rodeo's Grand Finale Bullarama and the Williams Lake Stampede's raucous Wild Cow Milking.

**Escape the city for an action-packed, working-ranch getaway.** Offered by a several seasonal Chilcotin operators, these multiday escapes are a unique opportunity to learn how to rope, pack a horse, herd cattle, ride the range and generally help out. Be ready for camp cook-offs and to live a little – or a lot.







Jun Yanagisawa/Tyax Adventures

the big, outdoor Williams Lake Stampede in July is a sanctioned ProRodeo event showcasing bareback, saddle-bronc and bull riding, team roping, steer wrestling and barrel-racing events that draw contestants and spectators from around the world.

BC Rodeo Association-sponsored events can also be found throughout the region, including local rodeos staged in 100 Mile House, Clinton, Ashcroft, Bella Coola, Williams Lake, Anahim Lake, Interlakes, Redstone and Quesnel – with each rodeo reflecting the spirit of that community, and offering its own special twist on the traditional rodeo format. The Quesnel rodeo is an example of this, complemented by the city's Billy Barker Days, for which townsfolk parade about in their finest 1860s garb while enjoying festival activities. Bella Coola's annual attraction tempts all comers to try their luck at cow patty bingo. The communities of Anahim Lake, Nemiah and Redstone champion a series of First Nations rodeo events. Children are the stars of spring's Little Britches Rodeo in 100 Mile House (featuring such entertaining highlights as mutton busting, goat tying and dummy roping). Clinton's May extravaganza features a full-on Western Heritage Week, with cowboy poetry readings and western musical performances and an old-time ball.

The rodeo season which kicks off in Williams Lake in April with indoor events and wraps up in September as Quesnel hosts the year-end BC Rodeo Association Finals. All season long, rodeo dances are also alive and well throughout the region, showcasing traditional western music and those famous cowboy manners. Rest assured, the fun doesn't end when the sun goes down. ♦

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Williams Lake Artwalk/Laureen Carruthers

## Highlights

**Pick up 108 Mile Ranch photographer Chris Harris's 2009 *Spirit in the Grass: The Cariboo-Chilcotin's Forgotten Landscape*.** The award-winning tome showcases the region's rare and diverse grasslands, which contain 30 per cent of its endangered plant and animal species. Harris's unique "straw-bale" studio is set amid a stand of aspens in a birdwatching conservancy.

**Order a custom-made classical guitar** from one of Canada's top luthiers, at Tatlayoko Lake in the Chilcotin. Guitar maker Fritz Mueller is just one of several local, talented artisans located just off and along Hwy. 20.

**Photograph totem poles** and other cultural landmarks – including ancient Nuxalk First Nation (*nu-halk*) petroglyphs – in Bella Coola, a community dubbed "the friendly village."



romerobanjoes.com



Gold Country Communities Society



Thomas Drasdauskis



Michael Bednar





Chris Harris

*It is a land of striking contrasts... a land that drew me like a magnet into its soul."* Author Richmond P. Hobson wrote those words in the first installment of his classic trilogy, 1978's *Grass Beyond the Mountains: Discovering the Last Great Frontier on the North American Continent* – words that mirror how the landscape of this vast region and why this is so often reflected in the region's culture and the works of local artists.

Of course, First Nations compositions have been sung and danced around local campfires for thousands of years, and, along with their totems, beadwork and other arts, they often reflect this region's powerful sense of place. Then in 1904, Emily Carr roamed the region by "cowpony" and was inspired to paint several landscapes and to write: "I can never love the Cariboo enough for all she gave me." Touring the region in 1914 the Group of Seven's A.Y. Jackson was equally infatuated, returning in the 1940s to produce works now displayed in galleries worldwide. Modern-day painter Mark Hobson has also long been inspired by the Chilcotin landscape and central coast locations such as Calvert Island, which he painted to raise awareness about keeping the coastline pristine for generations to come. To this end, he and more than 50 of Canada's most celebrated artists, including painters, poets and writers, published a book titled *Canada's Raincoast at Risk: Art for an Oil-Free Coast*.

Modern day art and nature lovers will want to experience the region's many galleries, including the Quesnel Art Gallery, one of central BC's hidden gems, and the city's ARTrium, featuring many works of award-winning artists in the region. Sometimes galleries are also works of art in their own right, such as the Central Cariboo Arts Centre, which houses a number of artisan groups in a decommissioned fire hall, and the Williams Lake Station House Gallery, a lovingly restored 1920s railway station showcasing pottery, weaving and other visual arts. Similarly noteworthy is the Williams Lake Tourism Discovery Centre, a lodge-style construction features a massive 52ft/15.8m floor-to-ceiling western red cedar harvested in Bella Coola as its centre post, the tree's 10ft/3m-diameter flared root still intact. The centre also showcases local art such as the towering folk-art-style sculpture *So Much to Do* and three 17ft/5.18m murals, just a few of many displayed throughout this "Mural Capital of the Cariboo Chilcotin" and part of the August to September Artwalk highlighting all mediums of artistic expression. Murals depicting historical figures and pioneer life are also displayed on buildings in 100 Mile House.

Another arts and culture highlight is the town of Wells, a renowned artist retreat with studios and galleries housed in colourfully painted heritage buildings and a celebrated art school where

vacationers can enroll in folk-art and music classes. The town's restored Sunset Theatre also offers a host of professional music, film and theatre retreats, and is in itself a remarkable story. Built in 1934, it showed movies, hosted town hall meetings and dances and, in the 1950s, was used as a morgue. And on the first weekend in August Wells hosts its very popular four-day ArtsWells Festival of all Things Art, hosts performances such as *Cariboo Buckeye* by Quesnel native Matthew Payne – about an 1860s cattle drive – that is equal parts magic and mystery; musicians and talent from all other artistic disciplines are also on display at the community event, including workshops with nationally recognized artists.

Meanwhile, Barkerville's Theatre Royal features costumed interpreters so convincing they create the illusion of travelling back the 1860s. The Studio Theatre Society in Williams Lake has staged live theatre (October to June) for the past 60 years. Horsefly's Arts on the Fly Festival presents music, dance, food and fun in equal measure, while *Clinton's War* is a weeklong costume pageant dedicated to re-creating the Middle Ages "as they ought to have been." As well the Cariboo is also home to "Camel" Dave Howell, who performs at festivals throughout the West, as does Frank Gleeson, the "Fastest Cowboy Poet in the West" and official cowboy poet of Williams Lake. ♦













John Wellburn



Miriam Schilling



Geoff Moore



John Wellburn



Brad McGuire



John Housser



**M**any in the North American mountain-biking community consider this region the “unofficial mountain biking capital of Canada,” with unlimited riding for leisure bikers and adventure-seeking free riders. The terrain and quality trail systems offer distinct, unique experiences that encompass river valleys, rugged canyons, logging roads, steeps, ramps and single-track ridges. It’s possible to spend an entire summer here without setting a wheel in the same place twice. Indeed, Red Bull’s 2012 feature film *Where the Trail Ends* showcases the world’s top free-rides, including James Doerfling of Williams Lake, in search of virgin terrain in five countries around the globe – including the canyon walls of the Cariboo Chilcotin’s Fraser and Chilcotin rivers.

Quesnel biking buffs call “Pins” route a “flowy” ride, with amazing views of Baker Creek and the hoodoos that dot the valley floor. This includes the Quesnel Adventure Skills Bike Park which has a freestyle section, pump track, kid’s area and features that challenge riders of all skill levels. The Wells-Barkerville area offers some of the most extraordinary trails in BC, from gentle boardwalk trails through quiet wetlands to day-long mountain expeditions in stunning alpine terrain. As well, *Bike* magazine refers to Williams Lake as North America’s “Shangri-La of

mountain biking.” The 200-plus tracks to trails around the city offer the choice of tackling technical loops; or “Aflo,” the Lake City’s most popular trail due to its awesome, flowy banked turns, or hours of exploring on many easy-riding trails. The city’s downtown Boitanio Bike Park covers more than 4hec/10ac and is the largest of its kind in BC’s Interior, with six major jump lines, flow trails, log work and a pump track and drop zone.

The 100 Mile House area has hundreds of kilometres of marked and unmarked backcountry trails criss-crossing the plateau, with trails accessible around 108 Mile Ranch and from downtown. Trails beginning at Centennial Park take mountain bikers up a ski hill, and provide easy access to routes in the nearby hills. On the 99 Mile trail network south of town, riders can opt to stay on the trails or venture off onto single track for more amazing riding.

In the South Chilcotin, Spruce Lake has epic grassland riding through alpine and sub-alpine meadows and skirting freshwater lakes. The classic 26km/16mi single-track Gun Creek Route gains elevation through a conifer forest mixed with aspen and cottonwood. Also popular are the South Tyaughton Lake’s 28km/17mi Taylor-Pearson loop and the 44km/27mi High Trail Loop into Windy Pass. Adventurous backcountry mountain-bikers can also opt for

## Highlights

**Ice climbers come from far and wide** to tackle the thrilling frozen challenges of Marble Canyon, including one waterfall that freezes solid in mid-winter. It’s officially known as Crown Lake Falls, but to climbers it’s “Icy BC.” Relatively easy access is available off Hwy. 99, just north of Lillooet.

**Hike or bike the Spruce Lake Protected Area**, just 10km/6.2mi west of Gold Bridge. This backcountry preserve boasts a remarkable 150km/98mi network of trails catering to bikers, mountain bikers and horseback riders.

**Plan a waterfall hiking tour in the South Cariboo** where several beautiful cascades can be accessed via moderately easy trails. Visit the 100 Mile House visitor centre for details.

**Hiking and walking tours of the trail network in the Bella Coola Valley** are a great way to exercise while enjoying the magnificent beauty of this serene rainforest playground.

**Trails galore!** Visit the Tourism Discovery Centre and biking hub at Williams Lake to learn more about the 300km/187mi of trails available for all skill levels in the surrounding hills and valleys of the city.





John Wellburn

Williams Lake



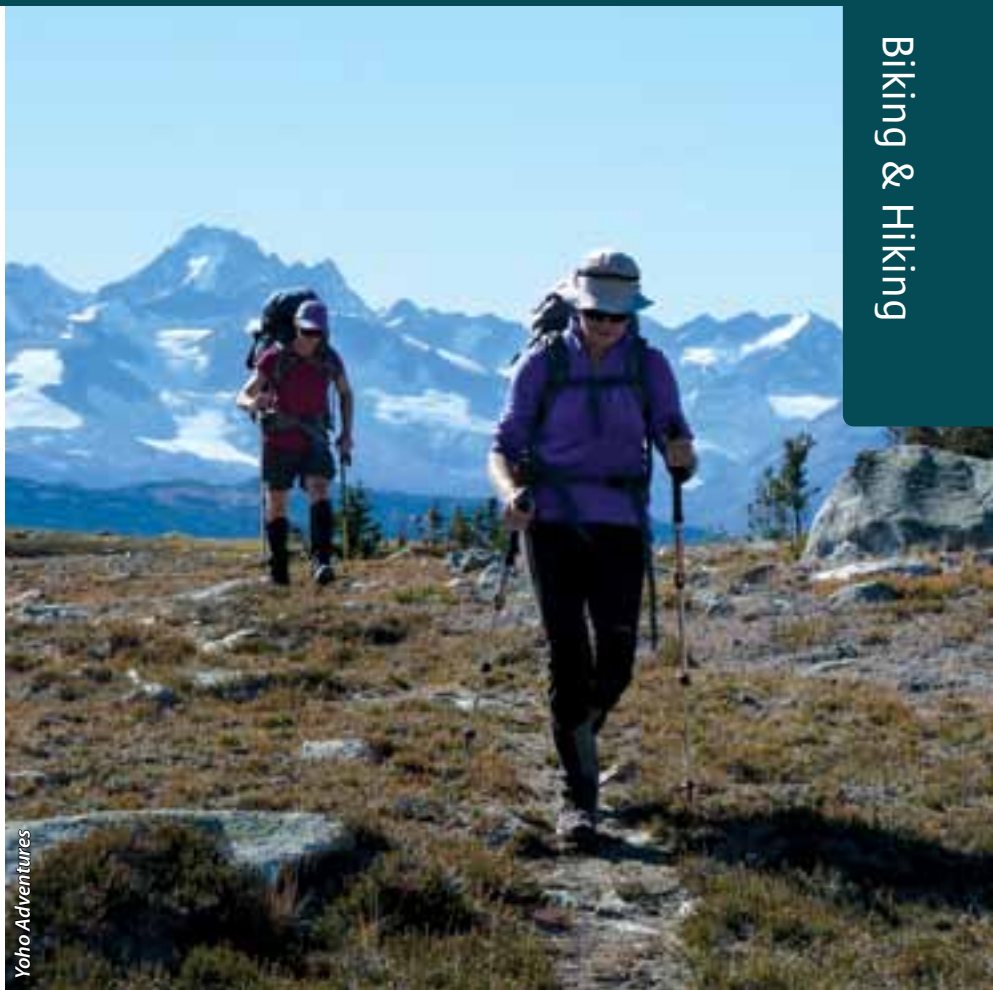
float plane and helicopter entries or packhorse-assisted and guided tours.

In the central coast region, the Snooka Trail System sports leisurely riding through second-growth rainforest, with awesome alpine views the reward for reaching the network's Purgatory Lookout. A series of trails between Bella Coola and Hagensborg offers various levels of difficulty. The East Loop Trail is an easy-grade circle route of 5.5km/3mi, with only a 50m/164ft elevation gain; the West Trail is more challenging, with an elevation gain of 500m/1640ft over this 3.8km/2.4mi one-way trek. These trails also link to other wilderness routes that lead deeper into the Bella Coola Valley backcountry.

The Cariboo Mountain Bike Consortium (Ride the Cariboo) actively promotes all of the mountain biking trails in and around Wells, Quesnel, Williams Lake and 100 Mile House. Given the range of trails suitable for all skill levels around these communities, most riders feel as if they've arrived in biking paradise. (See page 112 for biking sector websites).

This region is also a delight for hikers and walkers. In the Cariboo, Lillooet is home base for many scenic hiking trails, that feature historic connections to the gold-rush era. Amateur geologists use topographic quadrangle maps (topos) in the Marble Range near Clinton, an area noted for limestone karsts, wooded groves and alpine ridges. The 11.3km/7mi Sepa Lakes Trail near 108 Mile Ranch meanders past bays and lagoons filled with waterfowl. Canim Lake offers three majestic waterfalls and Whale Lake boasts good fishing at the end of a 4km/2.5mi hiking trail.

Family-friendly hikes include Williams Lake's popular River Valley Trail and Quesnel's delightful Riverfront Trail. The Mount Agnes Trail network near Barkerville follows the original Cariboo Wagon Road to wildflower-strewn alpine meadows below Summit Rock. In the Chilcotin, the 12km/7.5mi Tchaikazan-Yohetta Trail connects the Tchaikazan and Yohetta valleys via Spectrum Pass and picture-perfect Dorothy Lake. Hikers with a high fitness level can tackle the 420km/261mi Nuxalk-Carrier



Yoho Adventures

Grease/Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, which generally requires 25 to 30 days to complete.

Meanwhile, urban-area climbers are discovering the region's untrammelled local mountaineering scene. Hot spots include Williams Lake, where the Esler Bluffs boast 44 routes, Hunlen Falls is generating serious excitement with the rope-and-rack set thanks to its heart-pumping routes, bouldering, and single-pitch climbs ranging in difficulty from "no sweat" (5.6) to "sweat and nothing but" (5.11+). Bella Coola boasts such classics as the nine-pitch Airport Wall (5.9-10+).

Popular heli-assisted hikes and climbs can also be arranged by many local operators. Mountaineers come from around the world to tackle the 3,000m/9,842ft-plus peaks of the Coast Range, including 4,016m/13,176ft Mt. Waddington, BC's highest peak. Ice climbers seek out the frozen Crown Lake Falls at Marble Canyon Provincial

Park, where popular routes include Car Wrecker Gully and the spectacular five-pitch Tokkum Pole. Ice climbing adventures are also common west of Lillooet along the D'Arcy-Anderson Lake Road, which stretches 33km/21mi along the west side of Anderson Lake from Seton Portage.

In an ongoing bid to expand wheelchair-accessible options in the Cariboo, two new trails were added to the region in 2014. The 99 Mile Accessible Trail winds through verdant forest and features four viewpoints, one overlooking a wetland and another providing a broad view of 100 Mile House and Stephenson Lake and ends at the Nordic Beanstalk cabin site. The other extensive wheelchair-accessible trail is recently completed at Hallis Lake near Quesnel. Extending 760m/5,280ft and featuring a packed, crushed gravel surface, the Hallis Lake Low-Mobility Trail tracks through the woods down to a lookout with a bench on the shore of Hallis Lake before looping back to the Hallis Lake Cross Country Ski Lodge. ♦





Elke Schlotmann



Thomas Drasdauskis



Thomas Drasdauskis



Thomas Drasdauskis



Cael Cook



Julia Haseloff



Gordon Barron



Thomas Drasdauskis





Michael Wigle

Zodiac tours of wild Pacific estuaries, birding in a rare grassland ecosystem, snorkelling with salmon, 4x4 tours in a land of mountain goats – plus backcountry pack-horse treks, canoe safaris and much, much more. The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Fraser Canyon is like a wildlife preserve without cages, featuring a constantly changing menagerie. From Cariboo mountain goats to coastal orcas and Chilcotin bighorn sheep, the abundance and diversity of wildlife in the region makes for one of the greatest outdoor shows on earth.

Yet exactly how, where and when does one find all those moose and caribou? Is spotting a grizzly foraging along a riverbank a matter of luck? Is it dangerous? The region's eco-tour guides, outfitters and naturalists address such questions and ensure everyone has a good time, with minimum risk to humans, wildlife and habitat. These highly experienced, certified guides also provide expertise on where and when to find specific species, viewing options that help ensure the ideal experience for each guest and guidance on a broad range of accommodation and guiding options.

This is a place where wildlife safaris feature luxurious waterfront lodges and the only drive-by traffic is an endless parade of eagles, wolves, dolphins and whales. Local biologists lead eco-raft adventures on the Bella Coola and Atnarko

ivers where songbirds congregate and otter, mink, fox and deer forage. Amateur and professional ornithologists join birdwatching tours into the Cariboo Mountains, home to kingfishers, hawks, owls, warblers and woodpeckers, while self-guided birders wander Scout Island Bird Sanctuary at Williams Lake in search of rare white pelicans, swans and songbirds. Alpine mule trekking is another popular low-impact option for exploring game trails blazed by caribou, mountain goats and wolves.

In the Chilcotin, the wild and remote Yohetta Wilderness area not only shelters mountain goats, bighorn sheep, bobcats and wolverines, but also one of the last remaining wild horse herds in Canada. The southern Cariboo around Lillooet is desert country. Etched by the wind, scorched by the sun, this is a land of rattlesnakes and prairie dogs, where eagles soar in search of prey.

BC is also rated one of the planet's top three grizzly-viewing destinations, with significant grizzly populations native to the central Coast, the Chilcotin Mountains and the northeastern Cariboo. Certified bear experts lead tours of these areas' rugged fjords and inlets, grassy estuaries and riverbanks, the grizzly (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) and black bear's (*Ursus americanus*) natural habitat – while detailing the bears social hierarchy and body language. Viewing options range from roadside sightings and

alpine excursions to fully guided single and multi-day river drifts to photograph grizzlies dining on salmon. As well, the Coast's Great Bear Rainforest is also the only place in the world where the legendary white Kermode, or spirit bear, can be found. ♦

## Highlights

**B.C.'s legendary Kermode, or spirit bear**, is found only on B.C.'s central and north coast, where operators such as Spirit Bear Lodge lead authentic cultural journeys in search of the rare white bear.

**Commune with your inner fish** at August's Salmon in the Canyon, where the Lillooet Naturalist Society and local First Nations celebrate nature and the importance of salmon in the lives of aboriginal people.

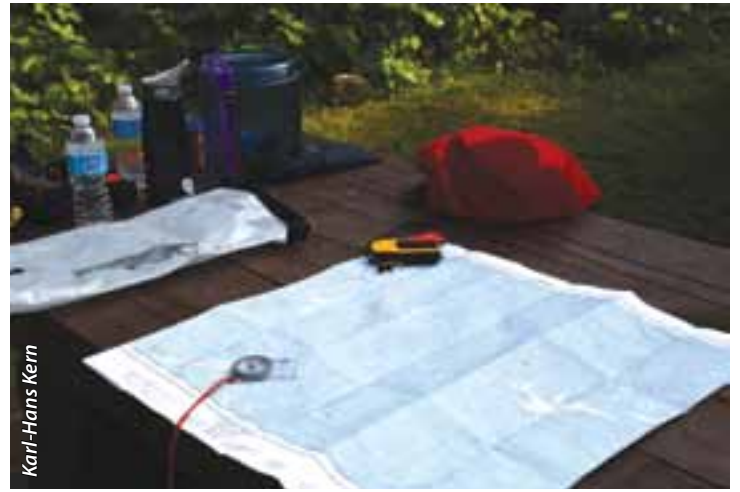
**Kayak the Hakai Luxvbalis Conservancy**, BC's largest marine park and a 123,000-hect/304,000-acre expanse of lagoons and reversing tidal rapids teeming with marine life.

**Birding? Break out the binoculars at the Bella Coola Estuary**; the Chilcotin's Chilanko Marsh Wildlife Management Area; and Scout Island in Williams Lake, and the Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary at 100 Mile House.





Brad McGuire



Karl-Hans Kern



Gordon Baron



Geoff Moore



Karl-Hans Kern



Quesnel & District Museum and Archives



Kent Bernadet



Whether adventurers prefer the high-tech flexibility of the latest tenting gear or roadtripping via luxury RV with all the comforts of home, the four distinct sub-regions of the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Fraser Canyon offer some of B.C.'s most stunningly scenic and ecologically unique landscapes – plus a tantalizing roster of experiences en route. (See page 60 for examples of the regions immensely popular Driving Tours.)

At the heart of Nuxalk (*nu-halk*) and Carrier First Nations territory in the Coast Mountain range is Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, a vast, rugged preserve boasting four distinct vegetation zones, two vehicle access sites and remote wilderness camping. Along the central coast's 15,000km/9,320mi of pristine shoreline, several ecological preserves and conservancies encompass no less than six marine parks, and at Hagensborg in the Bella Coola Valley, a local tour operator maintains a nature-conservancy trail for RV guests, ensuring that the valley's wildlife-rich terrain is accessible to explorers of all ages and physical abilities.

Bull Canyon, on the banks of the Chilcotin River, features shallow caves off a riverside interpretive trail, while at Ts'yl-os (*sigh-loss*) Provincial Park – a postcard-perfect oasis of mountains, glaciers, alpine meadows and waterfalls – two tranquil backcountry campgrounds

offer sweeping vistas of Chilko Lake, the largest high-elevation freshwater lake in Canada. The west Chilcotin's Nimpo and Anahim lakes are filled with rainbow trout, and popular guided flight-seeing tours are coordinated through local RV parks and fishing lodges to Hunlen Falls, the Monarch Icefields, the Rainbow Mountains and other stunning sites. The Puntzi Lake area also offers camping; alternatively, nature lovers can set up at a forestry campsite or mingle with anglers at fishing resort RV campsites and cabins. Excellent camping and recreational options are also available at Green Lake in the Cariboo northeast of 70 Mile House, where crystal-clear summer waters ensure idyllic swimming and water sports. A Lac la Hache, beach access is available at both private and provincial campgrounds off Hwy. 97.

For tranquility parks are tucked away near Lone Butte at Hathaway Lake – as well as east of Williams Lake on Horsefly and Quesnel lakes. In fact, some 65 private and public campgrounds and RV parks are found throughout the region, including east of Quesnel near Wells and Barkerville. At Bowron Lake Provincial Park campsites offer dramatic views of the Cariboo Mountains, with canoe and kayak rentals available to tackle one of the world's top canoe circuits. Guided backcountry experiences are also offered by outfitters on the Bowron's frozen lakes in winter, plus year-round float plane fly-in adventure services.

Geocaching is another great way to uncover "hidden" wilderness vistas while touring, with adventurers using GPS devices to find hidden containers called "geocaches"; (geocachers, then share their adventures online). One such cache – a metal cylinder with a logbook and pencil enclosed – is hidden at Clayton Falls near Bella Coola. In Likely, a "cacher" has stashed "treasures fit for a kid" in a location where trappers once gathered and historic machinery is now displayed. Perhaps the most creative geocaches, though, are those found through Gold Country's GeoTourism program – featuring caches in Lillooet and throughout the South Cariboo. In the West Chilcotin, the new Freedom Highway series of caches is also popular with enthusiasts. ♦

## Highlights

**Cool down at Lac la Hache**, which offers provincial and private campsites in a superb setting. Perfect for swimming and boating – and for walking an interpretive trail featuring a section of the historic Cariboo Wagon Road.

**Park the RV on the shores of Anahim Lake in the Chilcotin**, then unpack the fishing rods – the local trout answer to any call.





Eric Berger



Geoff Moore



Eric Berger



Eric Berger



Geoff Moore



Geoff Moore





Eric Berger

There is no better way to enjoy the visual delights of the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Fraser Canyon than from the seat of a touring motorcycle. All the sights and scents of the road, the feel of the wind and the look of the sky become clear and immediate as you motor access the countryside. Ranking high on the list of attractions for motorcyclists is the huge diversity of landscapes. The topography ranges from forested lake country to golden, rolling grasslands to red-rock canyons and twisted hoodoos, and the vistas are awesome, with plunging cliffs, immense cloud banks and long descents into river-lined valleys. As an added bonus, many roads have pullouts where you can pause for a few moments and take it all in.

Each route offers something different. Dramatic scenery takes centre stage on Hwy. 1, where the cliff-hugging road twists through the Fraser Canyon past sheer rock walls and along perilous ledges jutting hundreds of metres above the thundering Fraser River. Meanwhile, in the South Cariboo, Hwy. 24 (The Fishing Highway) bisects a rustic tableau of old homesteads, meadows and wooden Russell fences while providing access to more than 100 lakes, superb fishing and a host of guest ranches and lakeside resorts where you can chill after a long day on the blacktop. Hwy. 26 in the North Cariboo runs a tight-turning course that features spruce-scented air

from Quesnel to Barkerville as it winds past a restored Gold Rush roadhouse and the historical curiosities of Mexican Hill, Robber's Roost, Blessing's Grave and Devil's Canyon. In contrast, Hwy. 20 cuts a lonely line through big-sky country, from Williams Lake across the Chilcotin Plateau all the way to Bella Coola on the West Coast. Dotted with small communities, old-fashioned general stores and panoramic vistas, the road stretches 457km/284mi without a single traffic light.

Bikers will also revel in this region's lack of traffic. Once off the main arteries, the lanes empty out and there are few RVs or trucks to slow you down. Even sweeter, the roads curve like giant snakes as they cut through the wilderness, imparting a sense of righteous flow to a ride. In fact, in many places you are more likely to see wild animals – black bears, deer, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, eagles and trumpeter swans – than vehicles. Dual sports enthusiasts also delight in the extensive network of gravel roads that lead into the backcountry to connect with remote lakes, glittering waterfalls and brooding mountain peaks. There will be little or no automobile traffic on these rib-rattling roads, but plenty of hairpin turns, scenic climbs and time for peaceful reverie.

Wherever you choose to ride you will also experience unusual sights and sounds such, as sharing a river crossing

with nothing but cowboys and softly nickering horses on the Big Bar Ferry, along with unique opportunities such as the chance to take a float plane tour of Mt. Waddington, (the highest peak in the Coast Range), and the massive Homathko Icefield. You will also meet friendly locals who gladly offer directions and impart tips on such things as the best lake for landing rainbow trout or the best place to enjoy a cappuccino. They may also direct you to such unpublicized gems such as the Bear's Paw Café in Wells, a cosy diner that garners rave reviews, or the Log Cabin Pub, a classic biker bar in the town of Spences Bridge where a sign posted above the front door reads, "Please leave your hurry at the door – our goal is to slow you down." ♦

## Highlights

**Dual Sport** The gravel surface "Hurley River Road" connects Lillooet to Pemberton via the Bridge River Valley. Usually open 'seasonally' from June – October, It's a ride through the wild you will never forget and the scenery is breathtaking!

**Highway 12**, is a twisty asphalt treasure, its "low" traffic route that connects the Trans-Canada Hwy 1 at Lytton with Lillooet and Hwy 99. Arid air and scent of sage accent this semi-desert ride.





## Highlights

The Cariboo and Chilcotin are known for their **healthy populations of mule deer, moose and bear**. Whatever the needs of the outdoor adventurer, skilled and experienced outfitters provide a host of backcountry adventure options to suit your needs.

**Fish for all species of salmon, huge halibut, giant prawns and more on the Central Coast**, widely considered by seasoned anglers as the best saltwater fishing area found anywhere in the world! Many world class fishing lodges in this area offer an abundance of fish in un-crowded waters — the experience of a lifetime!

**Plan a fly-in, or horse-pack hunting trip.** The Chilcotin offers outstanding fishing and hunting opportunities that can be explored on your own, or perhaps best experienced in the company of seasoned local guides and outfitters. Tall tales shared at no extra charge.

**Trout fishing is amazing April through September throughout this vast region**, while autumn's spectacular salmon migration in streams and rivers is also a sight to behold. **Plan a visit to one of several hatcheries around the region.**







Michael Bechner

**D**o you seek feisty fish and big game? Fishing and hunting are more than casual experiences here. It's a way of life, part of our culture and that many enjoy sharing with others. Imagine fishing a new interior lake or a new spot along the central coast every day for the rest of your life; or, during hunting seasons, trekking into the wilderness with the aid of experienced guides to harvest mule deer, moose, California bighorn sheep, mountain goat, black bear, cougar, lynx, bobcat, wolf or coyote. In addition, the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast sound fishing and hunting practices are designed to produce results for hunters and fishers alike.

This is a place where certified guides and outfitters are as knowledgeable about wildlife habitats and conservation as they are about big-game tracking and bear-attack prevention. Some local guides are First Nations, and all have an intimate relationship with the landscape and its wildlife. Wilderness skills and knowledge of local species and habitat are based on an understanding of the complexities of the natural world and represent a special opportunity for visitors to experience the region and its wildlife in profound ways.

To maximize both hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast, visitors to BC must access the services of the region's

experienced, highly knowledgeable guides and outfitters, who subscribe to the highest environmental and wildlife conservation standards. Throughout the region, services and accommodations from full-service, luxury four-season lodges with all the amenities, to rough-and-ready backcountry camps catering to outdoor adventurers yearning for genuine BC wilderness hunting and fishing experiences.

### Feisty Fish

Fishing is not just a pastime here, it's a passion. The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast boasts more than 8,000 lakes and 17,000km/10,563mi of rivers and streams famous for rod-bending rainbow trout, cunning cutthroat and steel-hearted steelhead. The nutrient rich waters of the rugged Pacific coast yield succulent salmon, enormous halibut, prawns and buckets of fresh-and-lively Dungeness crab and several varieties of shrimp. While staying at a remote resort, a boutique property or a luxury offshore ocean floating camp, travellers can still be just a few minutes away from exceptional angling waters.

The Cariboo's unlimited expanse of rivers and lakes also includes a stretch of road from Little Fort (at the eastern border of the Cariboo on the Yellowhead Highway 5) to 93 Mile House (at the western terminus of Highway 24), a route enthusiastically referred to in

angling circles as "The Fishing Highway". Spring-fed Sheridan Lake is stocked annually and is famous for its rainbow trout up to 9kg/20lb. Bridge Lake is close by, with numerous bays and islands and crystal-clear waters teeming with rainbow and lake trout (char), kokanee

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and burbot. With 100-plus lakes typically within an hour's drive of one another, the Interlakes area really is a fishing paradise. Check annual stocking reports for recent updates.

Meanwhile, fly fishing enthusiasts congregate on the Horsefly River, a nursery for three-quarters of the rainbow trout found in nearby Quesnel Lake. In the fall its waters swell with millions of sockeye and chinook salmon en route to their spawning grounds. Near Quesnel, cattails and bullrushes line the banks of jewel-like Dragon Lake, filled with trophy trout.

In the Chilcotin, Charlotte Lake, at the foothills of the spectacular Coast Mountains, is renowned for its trophy-sized rainbow trout. Fly fishing is king at nearby Nimpo Lake, where charter air services offer many fly-in options to neighbouring lodges and remote fishing camps. Then there's the legendary Blackwater River, renowned for its gentle, canoe-friendly grade and numerous insect hatches feeding prolific populations of trout, whitefish and squawfish. Rainbow trout and Dolly Varden churn up the cerulean-blue waters of the Chilko River where it leads out of massive Chilko Lake, as pretty as it is productive. Locals know to concentrate on the creek mouths where trout gather for their evening meal and sometimes become one. Puntzi Lake is also a popular, easily accessible lake that provides fishing for the whole family.

The Coast region is also crisscrossed by lakes and streams, though it is the salt waters that bring travellers and nature lovers to this ecologically diverse part of the world. Here, the salmon rules, and numerous lodges and camps, from budget to luxury high-end, cater to an international clientele of fly-in customers dreaming of "the big one." These fishing expeditions often begin in the town of Bella Coola, and venture out to the many inlets and islands. BC Ferries and Pacific Coastal Airlines make the central coast highly accessible to all.

Though it may look like an obscure stretch of shoreline on a map of BC, the Great Bear Rainforest boasts names that fishing enthusiasts from around the



Lori Bowden

world speak of with reverence; Rivers Inlet, and Hakai Pass, where millions of salmon make first landfall after battling northern Pacific currents in search of their natal streams. Along the way, these salmon pass some of the most famous fishing holes on the coast; including Odlum Point, the Gap and Barney Point, where gentle back eddies provide rest and feeding areas for salmon and outstanding fishing opportunities for anglers and orcas alike. Steelhead hunters – "fishing" is too tame a word to describe the landing of these pugnacious sea-run trout – are equally well rewarded by a pilgrimage to the Dean River, better known as "steelhead central." Some outfitters on the river provide a base camp for exciting expeditions, known to be gloriously full of fish and mercifully free of bugs.

### Big Game

This land without limits provides no shortage of wildlife and hunting experiences. Outfitters in the region provide a range of hunting excursions depending on the game species, terrain and season.

Catering to the abilities of every level, outfitters offer a wide range of accommodations and limit group sizes. Passion for wildlife, conservation, and a strong connection to the land are an integral part of the cultural thread woven throughout this region. Many family operations are also multi-generational, providing rare insights on much more than wildlife – pioneers, history, ranching, culture, cuisine and more. Hearty meals cooked in camp kitchens or over the open fire offer warm comfort at days' end.

Hunters join outfitters with exclusive guide territories where they can choose their own method of travel – ATV, horseback, 4x4, riverboat, old-fashioned "foot" and even snowmobile in the Blackwater River region. Find regional information by visiting BC's guide and outfitter websites (see page 112). Choose a season that best suits your hunting or fishing style. No matter your choice, we offer the landscape, wildlife and expertise that will make your ultimate fishing and hunting experiences unforgettable. ♦













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Karl-Hans Kern



Michael Bednar



Karl-Hans Kern



Echo Valley Ranch & Spa



Geoff Moore



Thomas Drasdauskis



**W**ater sports, spa escapes and golf – welcome to a refreshing, idyllic summer in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Fraser Canyon. With the highest concentration of lakes and rivers in Canada, it's no surprise the region is a haven for swimmers, water skiers, wake boarders, canoeists – in fact, anyone who loves to hop into a boat or play in the water. The South Cariboo's Green Lake, for example, is particularly popular with swimmers and water skiers. The consistent afternoon thermals on the Chilcotin's Tatlayoko Lake lure sailors and windsurfers. Ocean kayakers paddle with whales and dolphins in the protected waters off Bella Coola, Shearwater and Klemtu. White-knuckle rafters and kayakers can pick and choose from a multitude of top whitewater routes in the Fraser Canyon, Cariboo and Chilcotin, while canoeists flock to the world-renowned Bowron Lake Canoe Circuit, one of North America's most spectacular wilderness-lake adventures.

In a region is renowned for the diversity and expanse of its wilderness, growing numbers of unique and luxurious day spas and wellness centres are also found. One working ranch specializes in custom therapeutic, assessment and spa services. Another valley site takes guests on a journey to the Far East, with authentic Thai spa treatments, several remote retreats offer specialty yoga, fitness and healing escapes. Travellers

can also rejuvenate at community day spas with specialties from around the world: from Japanese Sumishi to Thai stem massage to Indian Ayurveda, and combined with yoga, fitness and nutritional programs. Numerous inns, remote lodges and resorts also offer massage services and a variety of wellness and fitness programs – all designed to keeping mind and body in balance, including on the road.

Imagine your perfect golf experience in a natural setting of sage and rolling hills, where fairways extend into contoured canyons with water accents and greens run true with spectacular views. Well, imagine no more. Three championship 18-hole courses will delight you and your pocketbook. with The Stan Leonard-designed 108 Golf Resort boasts 6,800 yards of tree-lined fairways and rolling greens that both inspire and challenge. The scenic Williams Lake Golf & Tennis Club's 6,272-yard layout, set against the rolling Cariboo hills, plays out over rolling terrain with amazing views of both the lake and the city's downtown core. The 6,340-yard Quesnel Golf Course, straddling a former heritage orchard, is a valley-based design with a wide-open front-nine and shorter but demanding back to hone that swing. Unique family-friendly nine-hole courses are found throughout the region, too. Try your luck at Coyote Rock, a First Nations-developed course above Hwy. 97 overlooking the south end of

Williams Lake; at Cache Creek's desert-gem Semlin Valley Golf Course, or at the Lillooet Sheep Pasture Golf Course, where golfers receive a free mulligan if their shot is blocked by sheep. ♦

## Highlights

**Unwind at an urban day spa** and wellness facility, or escape to one of the region's wilderness guest ranch for a unique, off-the-beaten-track massage, spa and yoga experience.

**Soar into the sky at Lime Mountain**, where the hang-gliding conditions are some of the best in North America.

**Take a paddler's dream vacation** on the world-renowned Bowron Lake Canoe Circuit, one of the most unique, scenic and pristine wilderness experiences in the world.

**Tee up on golf courses** in Quesnel, Williams Lake, Cache Creek and 100 Mile House, all within a 2.5-hour drive of each other; and, for a fun twist on the game, stroll the fairways near Lillooet while dodging sheep.

**Windsurf or kiteboard Tatlayoko Lake.** The word "Tatlayoko" is derived from the local Chilcotin language, and means "lake of big winds" – what it's all about for windsurfers and kayakers.





Amy Thacker



Gordon Baron



Chris Harris



Chris Harris

## Highlights

**Rally round a communal table** for organic pasture-to-plate steak or artisan sausages. Chilcotin ranches continue to pioneer humane livestock management and sustainable ranching practises that replenish grazing lands while protecting wildlife and habitats.

**Sample the best poutine west of Quebec**, plus mouth-watering deli-style Montreal smoked-meat sandwiches, home-made baked goods and maple-syrup-flavoured coffee at the Sugar Shack, a unique roadside café on Hwy. 97 near 70 Mile House.

**Shop for farm-fresh fruits and vegetables** at roadside stands along Hwy. 97. Spences Bridge is known for its legendary tomatoes, melons and apples heralding from the Widow Smith days.

**Reminiscent of the original Barkerville Brewery** and Brewery Hotel of the 1860s, today's **Barkerville Brewing Company** utilizes local ingredients unique to the Cariboo in their award winning brews. Each bottle pays homage to this historic region sharing stories on the labels.



Bred Kasselmann/coastphoto.com





**F**armers and specialty producers along the Fraser Canyon and in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast welcome the chance to share with roadtrippers the art, science and dedication involved in raising livestock and growing crops, including their efforts to maintain sustainable farm and ranch ecosystems featuring healthy soils and free-range pasture lands.

The South Cariboo is young in terms of grape production, for example. But the vines at Fort Berens Estate Winery in Lillooet dig deep into soil enriched by 150 years of melon, tomato and alfalfa production – a factor, perhaps, in why the winery continues to make the headlines. Since 2012 the BC vineyard has won many gold, silver and bronze medals at international competitions, including gold medals in 2012, 2013 and 2014 at the prestigious Los Angeles International Wine and Spirits Competition. Most recently, the Lillooet area has evolved into a hotbed for hop growers who are helping fuel the rise of BC's burgeoning craft-beer industry. In 2013, the organic hops grown by Lillooet's Bitterbine Hop Company were used by Vancouver's Powell Street Craft Brewery to produce the Canadian Brewing Awards' Beer of the Year. The presence of local hop farms also enables BC brewers to craft new, trend-setting products such as "fresh-hopped" beer, made by adding hops to brews within 24 hours of harvest.

Back stories such as these are important to those with discerning palates, and for consumers increasingly aware that local, sustainably grown foods are vital to health and well-being and for reducing the environmental impact of long-distance shipping and the need for food stabilizers and other preservatives. The Chilcotin River Valley, guests can overnight on a 1,600hec/3,954ac property serving home-grown organic produce as well as grass-fed meats processed in the ranch's own abattoir. First Nations rodeos and powwows such as the Tillicum Society's in Quesnel are a chance to nibble fresh, hot bannock and slurp hooshum, a traditional aboriginal "ice-cream" made from Soopolallie berries. Also in the North Cariboo, organic producers entice with the uniquely sweet taste of birch syrup tapped fresh from the tree, including a novel birch syrup BBQ sauce, and the historic town of Barkerville serves dishes re-created from the 1800s.

The central Cariboo features such delicacies as the Marguerite and Soda Creek areas' sweet corn on the cob. From July through October, don't miss the unique experience of the Cariboo Corn Maze at the Australian Ranch on Hwy. 97.

The fresh culinary perspective gained in exploring regional flavours is further honed with visits to agricultural fairs and festivals. At Quesnel's Fall Fair the

ambience is rambunctious (those chili and beer-can chicken competitions are fierce), while August's South Cariboo Garlic Festival in Lac la Hache sees both serious and casual foodies lining up for garlic poutine, panini and gyoza against a backdrop of family fun, live music and a Master Garlic Chef Cook-Off. Many local fairs also showcase youth 4-H competitions highlighting the rewards of raising livestock and growing crops while acquiring life skills.

Local restaurants and eateries are similarly diverse, from popular food chains along Gold Rush Trail routes to sophisticated dining options scattered throughout the region, where tempting meals are lovingly made with, of course, fresh, indigenous ingredients. As well, many communities host weekly farmers markets, often with local arts and crafts showcased. At the Bella Coola market, for instance, travellers can stock up on fresh produce and sample regional specialties such as honey, giant prawns, Dungeness crab and salmon; gourmands can keep their eyes peeled for farm-gate offerings of sweet Walla Walla onions, Russian red garlic and sun-loving Kentucky wonder yellow beans. Other operators in the region, including B&Bs, open their barn doors so visitors can appreciate the fine art of "farming with the season" while sampling and purchasing local delicacies. Several also offer "Bed and Bale" for those travelling with equine companions. ♦





Rich Prohaska



Steve Ogle



Ted Holkoff



Maureen Wasilief



Thomas Drasdauskis



Thomas Drasdauskis



Thomas Drasdauskis



One of Canada's finest attributes is the fact that it has four *distinct* seasons, a reality particularly important in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast, where we aim to please visitors no matter when they visit. Still, in winter the air is spectacularly fresh, the sunsets magical, and no other region in B.C. offers the same rolling hills, backcountry lakes, forests, resorts and ranches, brilliant sunshine, deep-powder snow – or choice of cold weather activities.

Heli-skiing, sleigh rides, snowshoeing and ice fishing are all in abundance here. Nordic and downhill skiing, snowmobiling, pond hockey, tobogganing, dogsledding and curling simply make winter *the* time to get outside and have fun in our wild backyard, where the snow is dry and deep, skies clear and blue, and the winter activities seemingly endless.

Love skiing? Take your pick, from a wealth of groomed Nordic trails and backcountry skiing options, to family-focused downhill, snowshoeing and the most awesome deep-powder heli-skiing in the world. Don't forget the ice skates, either. Fun skating parties are a way of life here when lakes freeze and pond hockey games begin, visitors are always welcome.

Ice climbing? It's park-and-climb at Marble Canyon Provincial Park in the

Pavilion Mountain Range near Lillooet, where the roadside icefalls are some of the most thrilling and accessible in western Canada. Snowmobiling? Sled-hounds flock here from across North America for the wide-open spaces, abundant hill-climbs and extensive trail networks, some of them linking historic towns that are scattered about the region like gold nuggets.

Imagine yourself ensconced aboard a fur-covered sled, powered by a team of huskies as it glides through the forest and over frozen lakes. The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Fraser Canyon is unique in offering amateur mushers the chance to experience sled dog travel – arguably the most exhilarating way to experience the backcountry. Add to this list winter camping, kicking back in a snow-banked hot tub and swapping stories around a crackling fire at a cozy lodge, and it's easy to understand why this region claims to have it all.

At one time, when the snow was deep, the only way to get around the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast was via sled dog. Today, this unique way of travel has been revived not just at the competitive level but as a truly memorable interactive experience for visitors, and both amateur and experienced mushers can now answer the call of the wild with a range of guided tours, one-on-one mushing workshops and multiday dogsledding adventures. Specialty

options have also emerged, with some outfitters boasting Inuit-only sled dogs and others swearing by the legendary Alaskan malamute. The Gold Rush Trail Sled Dog Mail Run, held every January, and is popular for those with their own dog team, sees participants are issued special hand-cancelled envelopes of mail in Quesnel that they swear an oath to deliver to the town of Wells, 100km/62mi away along a route that traces the historic Cariboo Wagon Road. The emphasis is on fun and fellowship, but first prize still counts for bragging rights at the local pub.

Nordic skiers and backcountry aficionados find peace and tranquility here as well. As Rob Bernhardt, president of B.C.'s Nordic Ski Society puts it, "Everything about this region, from the stable weather and ideal snow conditions to the vibrant culture and stunning natural environment, makes it ideal for its Nordic activities." It helps, too, that meticulously groomed trails are maintained by resorts, clubs and communities in pretty much any direction a skier might choose to point those ski poles. Novice Nordic skiers can easily cover the 8km/5mi route between Wells and Barkerville, for example, plus other trails that loop through the area. Mount Agnes, near Barkerville, features 23km/14mi of trails leading through heavily forested countryside. Hallis Lake outside Quesnel is renowned for its vistas and viewpoints, while an





## Highlights

**Experience awesome ice fishing** at Raven Lake in the east Chilcotin, with water so clear you can see into your fishing hole as fish swim by – or get hooked.

**Glide through the glittering powder of the Coast Mountains.** Several heli-skiing operations fly onto spectacular mountain glaciers, for skiing that is unmatched anywhere in the world.

**Join foodies on the Wells Gourmet Ski Tour.** Each pit-sop serves different ethnic cuisine: Russian borscht, Spanish tapas, Indian masala chapati wraps and more. Prizes are awarded for best ancestral attire and goofiest costume. The shindig ends at the Bear's Paw Café, with Scandinavian dessert and international beverages.

**Dash through the snow in a horse-drawn sleigh** – at Barkerville Historic Town's Old-Fashioned Christmas Celebration. Yuletide revellers experience a throwback Christmas while jingling down mainstreet behind a team of Clydesdales.

**Practise your mushing skills** with multi-day or hourly dogsledding packages. Learn the basics of “mushing culture,” how to navigate a team of yelping huskies and how not to get tossed in a snowbank.





bridgerivervalley.ca

hour south near Williams Lake, the lure is the 28km/17.5mi of groomed trails at Bull Mountain – some of them dog friendly and evening-lit.

Near 100 Mile House in the south Cariboo, the pole-and-push crowd get particularly stoked about the area's enormous 150km/93mi trail inventory, including sections for night skiing. The gold-rush-themed Cariboo Marathon, staged by the 100 Mile Nordic Club, comes replete with 50km/31mi, 30km/18.5mi, 20km/12.5mi and 10km/6mi events. The Clinton Snow Jockey Club maintains 60km/37mi of marked trails also suitable for hiking and biking in summer, while the Mt. Timothy Ski Area, a family-friendly downhill destination east of Lac la Hache, has groomed Nordic trails.

It's the region's many mountains and soft, dry powder that draw heli-skiers from all over the world. These alpine daredevils inhabit a world of absolute stillness, a place of virgin beauty and dramatic settings where nothing exists but thousands of vertical feet of the finest skiing on earth. The sport of heli-skiing was, in fact, invented in the Cariboo Mountains by mountaineering legend Hans Gmoser, known as the "Father of Heli-skiing," and the central coast and the southern Chilcotin Mountains beckon still: these world-renowned heli-skiing destinations boast 3,000m/9,850ft peaks that receive as much as 15m/49ft of snow annually.

Local Cariboo outfitters keep everyone fit with multiday hut-to-hut tours of the Bowron Lake canoe circuit, where the lakes' frozen surfaces are broken only by the speckled tracks of foxes, hares and ever-wary timber wolves. In the Chilcotin, Tatla Lake features 40km/25mi of groomed trails plus January's Tatla Lake Ski Challenge and Fun Day (the latter comes with an outdoor

barbecue and enough good cheer to warm even the coldest winter day). Nearby Nimpo Lake's wilderness lodges serve as a perfect base camp for ski touring in the wilds of Itcha Ilgachuz Provincial Park. And for those who believe slow and easy wins the day, low-cost snowshoeing guarantees backcountry winter-trail access to anyone capable of putting one foot in front of the other, wherever there's a patch of snow.

For many winter buffs, snow exists simply for snowmobiling. The result: sledders trek by trail across untracked wilderness, though throughout the region, including up and down mountainous terrain notorious for adrenaline-rush hill-climbing (along with adherence to responsible sledding guidelines, of course). Excitement is also growing with the development of the Gold Rush Snowmobile Trail, a thrill-packed work in progress that, when completed, will offer 350km/217mi of stunningly picturesque and well-signed touring from Clinton to Barkerville. (Check first with local clubs and visitor centres for trail updates and amenities en route, before heading out.) Meanwhile, Gold Bridge and Bralorne in the Bridge River Valley have long been popular snowmobile havens, with the Mineshaft Pub sledder central for many events. Favourite rides in this area include the Lone Goat Trail and Slim Creek, where the distance travelled is limited only by the amount of fuel carried.

For some, ice fishing is cold comfort. However, hauling a fat rainbow trout out of a hole in a frozen lake warms an avid fisher's blood. Need a little pointing in the right direction? Area outfitters may offer all-inclusive ice-fishing adventures with cozy accommodations, portable shelters, and whopper tales at no extra charge. ♦





Thomas Drasciuskis

Bowron Lake Provincial Park







# Directory

## Fraser Canyon



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TF: 1-877-395-2777

W: www.ramanda.com

E: ramada100mile@shawcable.com



# Regional Tourism Information



B.C visitor centres offer friendly, professionally trained staff with local knowledge of attractions, activities, events and current seasonal road travel to help you make informed travel plans. They can also assist with accommodation and sightseeing tour bookings.

## Hope Visitor Centre

919 Water Avenue, Hope  
P: 604-869-2021  
E: vc@hopebc.ca  
W: www.hopebc.ca

## Lytton Visitor Centre

400 Fraser Street, Lytton  
P: 250-455-2523  
E: visitorcentre@lyttonchamber.com  
W: www.lyttonchamber.com

## Lillooet Visitor Centre

790 Main Street, Lillooet  
P: 1-250-256-4308  
E: lillmuseum@cablelan.net  
W: www.lillooetbc.ca

## 100 Mile House Visitor Centre

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E: info@southcaribootourism.com  
W: www.southcaribootourism.com

## Williams Lake Visitor Centre

1660 South Broadway, Williams Lake  
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E: visitors@telus.net  
W: www.tourismwilliamslake.com

## Quesnel Visitor Centre

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E: qvisitor@quesnelbc.com  
W: www.tourismquesnel.com

## Wells Visitor Centre

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W: www.wellsbc.com

## Neighboring Visitor Centres

### Kamloops Visitor Centre

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TF: 1-800-662-1994  
E: tourism@kamloopschamber.ca  
W: www.tourismkamloops.com

### Prince George Visitor Centre

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E: info@tourismpg.com  
W: www.tourismpg.com

### Port Hardy Visitor Centre

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E: phcc@cablerocket.com  
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## Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association

1-800-663-5885  
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www.Facebook.com/  
CaribooChilcotinCoast  
Twitter: @CarChiCoa  
www.youtube.com/theCCCTA

## Fraser Canyon

www.hopebc.ca  
www.historicyale.ca  
www.lytton.ca  
www.bostonbarbc.net  
www.goldrushtrail.ca  
www.travelthecanyon.com

## Cariboo

www.cariboord.bc.ca  
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www.tourismquesnel.com  
www.wellsbc.com  
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www.fishinghighway24.com

## Chilcotin

www.visitthewestchilcotin.com  
www.chilcotin.bc.ca

## Coast

www.bellacoola.ca  
www.ccrd-bc.ca

## Provincial

### Hello BC

Destination BC Consumer Website  
www.helloBC.com

### Aboriginal Tourism BC

www.aboriginalbc.com

## General Information

### Weather Info

www.weatheroffice.gc.ca

### BC Driving Conditions

www.drivebc.ca  
1-800-550-4997

### BC Wildfire Travel Advisories

www.bcwildfire.ca

### BC Provincial Park Info

www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks

## Camping & Touring Info

www.camping.bc.ca  
www.sitesandtrailsbc.ca  
www.campingrvbc.com  
www.travelbritishcolumbiacanada.com  
www.northtoalaska.com

## Fishing, Hunting, Wildlife Info

www.goabc.org  
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www.gofishbc.com  
www.bearaware.bc.ca/bears  
www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlife/

## More Activity-Specific Websites

www.ridethecariboo.com  
www.wellsbarkervilletrails.com  
www.marketplacebc.com  
www.rodeobc.com  
www.bcheritage.ca/cariboo  
www.GoldRushTrail.ca  
www.bcgeocaching.com  
www.geocaching.com  
www.bcguestbranches.com  
www.bcbackcountry.ca  
www.canadatrails.ca/bc



# Travel Information

## **International Visitors to Canada**

International visitors to Canada (not U.S. citizens or U.S. permanent residents) must carry a valid passport and, if required, a visa. Visit the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca) for a complete listing of countries whose citizens require visas to enter Canada. All other visitors should contact their Canadian consulate or embassy to learn what documents are required. To learn more about Canadian customs regulations, visit the Canada Border Services Agency website [www.cbsa.gc.ca](http://www.cbsa.gc.ca). or visit [www.goingtocanada.gc.ca](http://www.goingtocanada.gc.ca).

## **Bus Travel**

Greyhound offers scheduled services to communities along Hwy 97, with connections to cities and towns across North America.

[www.greyhound.ca](http://www.greyhound.ca) | 1-800-661-8747

## **Ferry Travel**

It is highly recommended reservations are made well in advance for travel on Inside Passage and Discovery Coast routes to Central Coast communities. Recent route and schedule changes may significantly impact your travel plans. Check with BC Ferries for current schedules.

[www.bcferries.ca](http://www.bcferries.ca) | TF: 1-888-223-3779

## **Rail Travel**

The Rocky Mountaineer's Rainforest to Gold Rush route travels from Whistler to Jasper, Alberta, through the historic Cariboo Gold Rush region, with an overnight stop in Quesnel.

[www.rockymountaineer.com](http://www.rockymountaineer.com) | TF: 1-877-460-3200

## **Air Travel**

Pacific Coastal Airlines services Williams Lake, Anahim Lake, Bella Coola, Bella Bella, Klemtu and Ocean Falls.

[www.pacificcoastal.com](http://www.pacificcoastal.com) | TF: 1-800-663-2872

Central Mountain Air services Quesnel and Williams Lake.

[www.flycma.com](http://www.flycma.com) | TF: 1-888-865-8585

## **Firearms in Canada**

For information regarding the importation of firearms to Canada, contact the Canadian Firearms Centre

TF: 1-800-731-4000 from anywhere in Canada or the U.S.

P: 1-506-624-5380 from other locations

[www.cfc-cafc.gc.ca](http://www.cfc-cafc.gc.ca).

## **Watercraft Regulations**

All Canadians *must* have proof of operator competency on board *at all times*. For more information visit Transport Canada's Office of Boating Safety online or call the safe boating line.

[www.tc.gc.ca](http://www.tc.gc.ca) | TF: 1-800-267-6687

## **Recreational Vehicle Operation**

Operators of recreational vehicles in B.C. are required to comply with evolving provincial regulations. To ensure you are aware of current updates and requirements in your area, review websites regularly.

[www.tti.gov.bc.ca/tourism/orv](http://www.tti.gov.bc.ca/tourism/orv) | TF: 1-250-356-0104

## **Visitor Info Booths**

### **Yale Tourist/Visitor Info Booth**

31187 Douglas Street, Yale

P: 604-863-2324

E: [info@historicyale.ca](mailto:info@historicyale.ca)

W: [www.historicyale.ca](http://www.historicyale.ca)

### **Gold Bridge Tourist / Visitor Info Booth**

104 Haylmore Ave, Gold Bridge

P: 1-250-238-2534

E: [bridgerivervalley@gmail.com](mailto:bridgerivervalley@gmail.com)

W: [www.bridgerivervalley.ca](http://www.bridgerivervalley.ca)

### **Cache Creek Tourist / Visitor Info Booth**

1270 Stage Road, Cache Creek

P: 1-888-457-7661 (TF)

E: [cachecreekinfo@telus.net](mailto:cachecreekinfo@telus.net)

### **Horsefly Tourist / Visitor Info Booth**

Jack Lynn Memorial Museum on Boswell Street

P: 1-250-620-0544 (seasonal) or 1-250-620-3440 (winter)

E: [land@horseflyrealty.ca](mailto:land@horseflyrealty.ca)

W: [www.horsefly.bc.ca](http://www.horsefly.bc.ca)

### **Likely Tourist / Visitor Info Booth**

Cedar Point Provincial Park, Likely

P: 1-250-790-2207 or 1-250-790-2459

E: [cedar52@telus.net](mailto:cedar52@telus.net)

W: [www.likely-bc.ca](http://www.likely-bc.ca)

### **Alexis Creek / Visitor Info Booth**

Hwy. 20 in Alexis Creek

P: 1-250-394-4900

(Seasonal: May – September)

### **Tatla Lake / Visitor Roadside Kiosk**

Hwy. 20, Tatla Lake

### **Nimpo Lake / Visitor Roadside Kiosk**

Hwy. 20, Nimpo Lake

### **Anahim Lake / Visitor Roadside Kiosk**

Hwy. 20, Anahim Lake

### **Bella Coola Tourist / Visitor Info Booth**

Norwegian Heritage House, 1881 Hwy. 20, Hagensborg

P: 1-866-799-5202 (TF) (seasonal: June – September)

E: [info@bellacoola.ca](mailto:info@bellacoola.ca)

W: [www.bellacoola.ca](http://www.bellacoola.ca)

## **Emergency Information**

Drive B.C. - Highway Information	1-800-550-4997
Emergency: Police, Fire, Ambulance	911*
Bella Coola Ambulance	1-800-461-9911
Bella Coola Police	1-250-799-5363
Poison Helpline	1-800-567-8911
Provincial Emergency Preparedness	1-800-663-3456
Report a Forest Fire	1-800-663-5555
Report All Poachers and Polluters	1-877-952-7277

(\*not accessible in remote backcountry areas, dial "0" for operator)





**Land, Sea, Air and Rail Routes**

- HIGHWAYS ———
- AIR ROUTES ———
- RAILWAY ·····
- FERRY ROUTE - - - - -

Kamloops	
190	185 Mile House
603	408 Anahim Lake
491	296 523 Barkerville
734	539 132 854 Bella Cooola
123	73 480 358 814 Clinton
364	189 424 317 500 241 Likely
171	178 585 474 719 310 345 Lillooet
426	310 437 86 570 262 226 387
906	211 96 426 230 363 331 489 340 Tetta Lake
398	52 219 209 403 166 120 270 119 323 Williams Lake
444	455 847 353 986 509 823 813 486 796 547 Jasper
170	504 771 860 905 296 553 290 601 675 476 810 Kelowna
83	112 520 408 853 43 281 87 322 423 204 525 271 Cache Creek
821	818 1223 963 1358 742 883 790 896 1125 906 416 810 783 Calgary
608	820 1227 818 1361 874 888 978 851 1131 812 300 896 889 254 Edmonton
827	232 858 186 883 404 280 818 122 482 241 377 718 444 788 742 Prince George
352	455 864 788 398 284 823 253 664 788 840 796 390 344 975 1181 798 Vancouver
286	326 714 862 848 234 475 130 818 817 388 741 810 216 818 1126 638 123 Whistler
406	680 1080 837 1230 818 857 664 770 988 781 280 483 876 120 418 882 845 783 Banff
458	574 878 854 1112 488 738 437 786 881 682 908 803 458 1088 1274 902 238 348 361 Seattle, WA

Distance in Kilometers

For more itinerary and route information visit [HelloBC.com](http://HelloBC.com) or [Landwithoutlimits.com](http://Landwithoutlimits.com)

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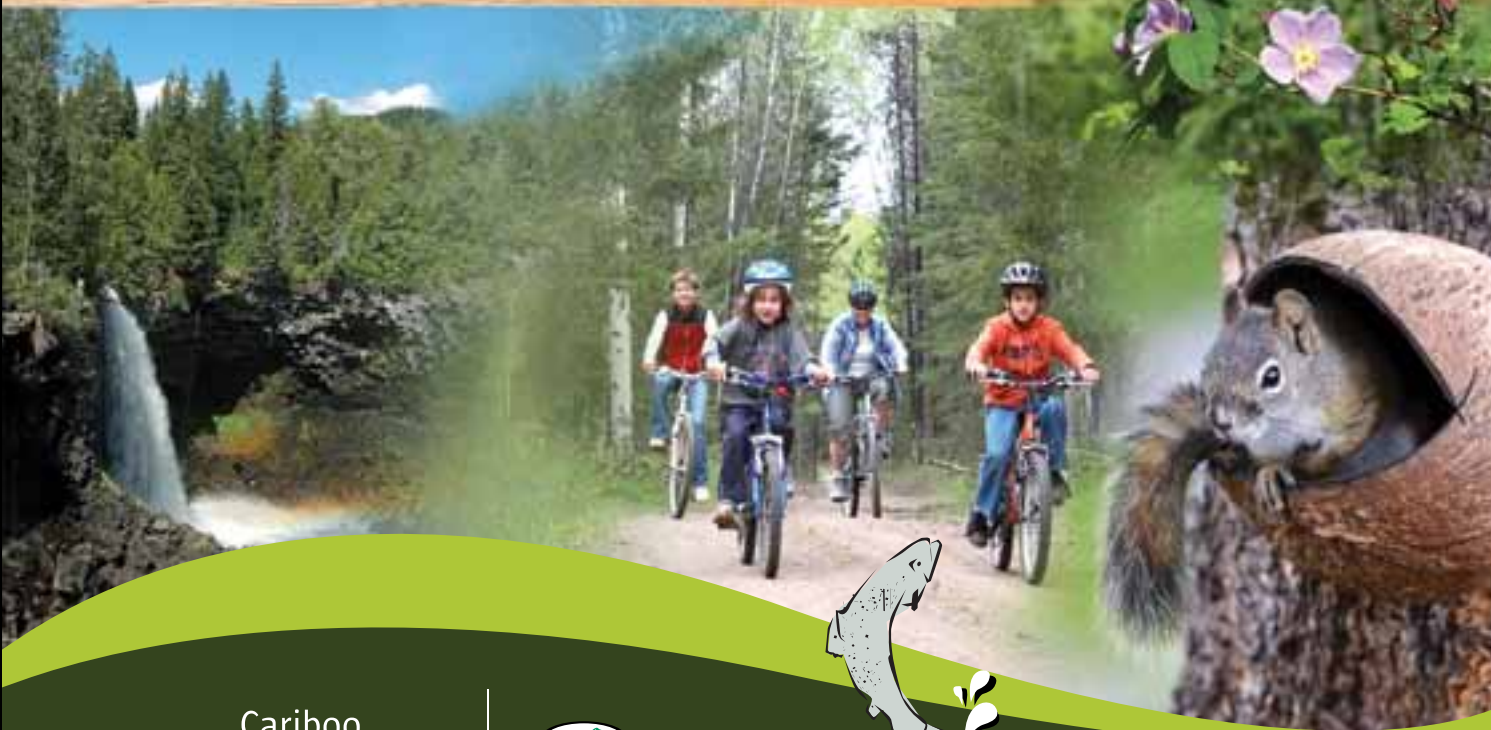
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**SouthCaribooTourism.ca**

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**Lillooet Museum & Visitor Centre**  
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May, June, Sept & Oct -  
Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 4pm  
[www.lillooetbc.ca](http://www.lillooetbc.ca) • (250) 256-4308

[WWW.LILLOOETBC.COM](http://WWW.LILLOOETBC.COM)

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[www.fortberens.com](http://www.fortberens.com)



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