

Road Trip: The Chilcotin Highway “BC’s Highway 20”

Part 1

Williams Lake to Alexis Creek

113.7 km | 2 hours



This first leg of the highway will take you up some steep switchbacks onto the Chilcotin Plateau and follows the contours of the valley along the sides of the Desous Mountain. This part of the region is steeped in Tsilhqot'in First Nation History, as well as the settler traditions of ranching and guide outfitting. Be prepared to be blown away by not only the abundant wildlife but also the vastness of this ever-changing landscape

[Williams Lake:](#) Williams Lake is the hub city of the Cariboo region. It's also a mountain biking mecca that serves up some of BC's best backcountry biking on Westsyde Ridge, Desous Mountain, and Fox Mountain. The River Valley Trail also offers a 12 km gravel trail down to the Fraser River that's great for walking, running, mountain biking and horseback riding. For nature and wildlife addicts, Scout Island houses a nature sanctuary with a beach, picnic grounds and a wide variety of small animals and birds. If history interests you, Williams Lake has a rich First Nations history and it is named after Chief William of the Secwepemc First Nation. Also, because Williams Lake is in the heart of Cowboy Country, it hosts a famous rodeo, the [Williams Lake Stampede](#), every year in July, drawing rodeo buffs from all over the world. We highly encourage you to take a

day and have a look around and stop into the [BC Cowboy Hall of Fame](#), located in the Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin, which is open daily and offers an interesting insight into the lives and histories of the regions' cowboy past. Williams Lake provides a gateway to other day trips and circle-routes such as the [Gold Rush Trail](#) or a continuation of bear-viewing opportunities from the [Great Bear Rainforest Loop](#).

From Williams Lake, take Highway BC-20W.

[Suggested Stops:](#)

[Riske Creek](#): The tiny community of Riske Creek, named after a Polish pioneer who settled there in the 1860s, is the gateway to a range of outdoor adventures along Highway 20.

[The Historic Chilcotin Lodge](#)—a hunting lodge built in 1940—offers gourmet meals, comfortable yet rustic accommodations, plus a gift store and tea house to relax before your journey continues.

[Junction Sheep Range Park](#) & Farwell Canyon: Located at the confluence of the Fraser and Chilcotin Rivers, Farwell Canyon is home to Canada's largest population of bighorn sheep, which range in the park and are often seen scaling the steep cliffs and hoodoos. From the Highway at Riske Creek, turn left onto Farwell Canyon Road and follow it approximately 21 km to the park.

Farwell Canyon hike: From the park entrance, you can see several trails that lead down into the canyon. Most of the trails are moderate for hiking and require sturdy footwear and a small backpack of snacks and water as the trails can take you quite a way (~2-3 hours). Not recommended for people who aren't fit.

[Overnight Options:](#)

[Big Creek Lodge](#): If you are looking for more luxurious accommodations, book a night or two at the 4-star Big Creek Lodge. Fully equipped rooms, cabins, and food service, the Lodge offers the authentic Chilcotin experience with trail riding, cattle work, fishing, hiking, cowboy skills such as roping, and much more. Directions: Just before reaching Riske Creek, turn left on Farwell Canyon Road and follow it for approximately 83 km (approximately 2 hours) to 7793 Witte Road. Farwell Canyon Road turns into Fletcher Lake Road, then back into Farwell Canyon Road, and eventually into Witte Road. Stay left for most of the way and, once you are on Witte Road, keep an eye out for the sign that leads to the Lodge, which instructs you to keep right for the last 4 km of road.

[Alexis Creek](#): Tsilhqot'in (*tseelh-coht-eeen*) —an Indigenous people who live between the Fraser River and the Coast Mountains. Named after Chief Alexis of the Chilcotin, the small community of Alexis Creek is a service centre for the East Chilcotin Region. It's a good idea to stop here, or at nearby Redstone for gas and supplies as the stations along the highway begin to dwindle.

Part 2

Alexis Creek to Anahim Lake

205 km / 3 hours 49 min



This section of the highway is characterized by winding rivers and cerulean lakes bordered by dense forests and surrounded by distant snow-covered peaks. It also contains some of the most compelling backcountry parks and playgrounds in all of Canada.

Suggested Stops & Overnight Accommodations:

[Bull Canyon Provincial Park](#): Located in a gorgeous canyon along the azure Chilcotin River, Bull Canyon offers a 20-vehicle accessible campground with full services from May 15th to September 15th. If you need to stretch your legs, hike around the 2km Chilcotin River Interpretive Trail, which highlights protected archaeological sites (please do not disturb) and displays the diverse array of plant life in the area. Fishing on the

river is also permitted with an appropriate angling license and obeying fishing restrictions in certain sections of the river.

[KiNiKiNiK Lodge, Restaurant & Store](#): Situated in Redstone between the Chilancoh and Chilcotin Rivers, right on Hwy 20, you cannot miss the beautiful timber-framed, modern designed KiNiKiNiK! For a true pasture to plate experience, stop and sample the cuisine made with locally provided organic meats and vegetables.

[Redstone and Puntzi Lake](#): Redstone is a small first nations community 36km/22mi west of Alexis Creek where the Redstone Store is a key stop for fuel and supplies on your Hwy 20 Road Trip. 24Km further on Hwy 20 and 11 km off the Hwy at Chilanko Forks, awaits Puntzi lake where biking and hiking trails, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hunting and birdwatching are plentiful. Several Fishing resorts and serviced RV campsites are located on the Lake including [Barney's Lakeside Resort](#) and [Woodlands Fishin Resort!](#) Or venture further north to Chezacut Wilderness & Ranch Adventures.

[Tatla Lake](#): Located on the western edge of the Chilcotin grasslands, 108 km/67 mi west of Alexis Creek, Tatla Lake is where Irish settler Robert Graham started the area's ranching legacy. The Graham Inn is available for overnight accommodation, as is the [Tatla Lake Manor](#).

[Kleena Kleene](#): is a tiny settlement just 61km/38mi west of Tatla Lake. Nearby Clearwater Lake is a departure point for float plane trips into remote fishing lakes and rivers and for exploring the regions Alpine Wilderness. Overnight accommodation options are plentiful including [Clearwater Lake Lodge](#), and [Terra Nostra Guest Ranch](#).

[Atnarko Lodge Charlotte Lake](#): An iconic Canadian experience, the lakefront lodge contains 3 rooms with private bathrooms, a full-size kitchen and home-style Swiss cooking. Relax and recharge in cozy accommodations, with hiking trails, a sandy beach and woodfire hot tub right outside your door in a perfect location for wildlife viewing, canoeing, fishing, flightseeing and more.

[Nimpo Lake](#): Known as 'the float plane capital of British Columbia', Nimpo Lake is a major launch point for flightseeing tours and fly-in fishing to the West Chilcotin's pristine wilderness lakes and rivers. From here, adventurers can access isolated cabins nestled in scenery that is unmatched for its dramatic setting or enjoy all that Nimpo Lake itself has to offer including terrific rainbow trout fishing, day-hikes, bird-watching and other wildlife viewing right from [Nimpo Lake Resort](#), [Retreat Wilderness Inn](#), [Stewart's Lodge & Tweedsmuir Air](#), also offering flight-seeing tours of Tweedsmuir Park and it's magnificent Hunlen Falls, access to over 25 air only access lakes or custom adventures in the rugged backcountry such as [Nuk Tessli](#).

[Anahim Lake](#): Located deep in the heart of the Carrier First Nation territory, Anahim Lake is the eastern gateway to the southern side of Tweedsmuir Provincial Park and is known for excellent fishing, vast and virtually untouched wilderness, and some spectacular nearby ice fields and waterfalls. With a heavy dose of First Nations history permeating the region, the town has some must-see historic sites, such as the culla culla houses at Natsadalia Point on Anahim Lake, which offer great insight into the way of life of the indigenous

people of the region. Recommended accommodation includes [Anahim Lake Resort & RV Park](#), [Eagle's Nest Resort](#), [Red Cariboo Resort](#) & [Red Cariboo Apartments](#).

Part 3

Anahim Lake to Bella Coola

135 km & 2 hours 22 mins



Turner Lake, South Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, BC | Kari Medig

Perhaps the most exciting stretch of Highway 20 begins at Anahim Lake, which acts as the gateway to the Rainbow Range of coastal mountains and BC's largest provincial park, Tweedsmuir. Once past Tweedsmuir, the long, and often hair-raising, road down into the Bella Coola valley and Great Bear Rainforest begins.

Suggested Stops:

[Tweedsmuir Provincial Park](#): Easily accessible via Highway 20, Tweedsmuir is the transition zone from the Interior Plateau into the Rainbow Range and Coast Mountain Range and, as a result, it provides some of the most dramatic scenery in North America. The Rainbow Range gets its name from its multicoloured volcanic peaks and the day hike in to see them is well-known to be a long-time favourite of park visitors. Hunlen Falls, one of the other highlights of the park, plunges 855 ft into the Atnarko River and can be seen on many flightseeing tours in the area, including [Tweedsmuir Air Services](#), and is also an easy 20-minute hike in from Turner Lake. In addition to endless hiking trails found throughout the park, there is also a world-renowned multi-day, seven-lake canoe trip (the Turner Lake Chain) that begins at Turner Lake and excellent fishing opportunities in the Bella Coola, Atnarko, and Dean Rivers. With close to 40 campsites in the park, both in the backcountry and along the highway, there is always a place for park goers to bunk down while enjoying the park. If you have the time, plan to spend several days exploring and staying in the park. There is so much territory to explore and such a wide array of

wildlife and sights that you may never want to leave!

If you are excited to explore Tweedsmuir for a few days, but prefer to stay in a lodge, [Tweedsmuir Park Lodge](#) is located right in the heart of the park!

Heckman Pass Summit: As you leave Tweedsmuir Provincial Park and are preparing to come down “The Hill” into Bella Coola, take a few minutes to stop in at the Heckman Summit and have a boo at the valley beyond. Looking down the valley, you can see the point where the boreal forest gives way to the coastal rainforest in the valley below and the ocean stretches out beyond the mountains.

All that’s left is to descend into the valley into the [Great Bear Rainforest](#), a 15,000 km stretch of pristine shoreline, ecological preserves, and ample opportunities to view coastal vistas and wildlife.