



## Thompson Okanagan Hiking January, 2009

### Hiking in the Thompson

#### Wells Gray Park Clearwater

Wells Gray Provincial Park is laced with hiking trails, ranging in length from 1 to 15 miles (1.5 to 24 km) one way. The **Helmcken Falls Rim Trail** (easy; 5 miles/8 km return) leads from the Dawson Falls Campground on Clearwater Valley Rd and follows the rim of the falls for much of the way. The thunder of the falls grows louder as you approach them, gradually drowning out all other sounds. In winter this trail is open for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing for those who wish to see the falls covered with a thick mantle of ice.

Much of the park's topography is the result of glacial erosion and volcanic activity. One of the best hiking trails from which to observe this is the **Pyramid Mountain Trail** (moderate; 8 miles/13 km return), which leads to the summit of Pyramid Mountain, from where hikers enjoy spectacular views of the Premier Ranges across the north end of the park. The mountain itself exhibits fascinating volcanic characteristics. Geologists believe that Pyramid Mountain built up gradually beneath a thick glacial sheet as magma erupting beneath the ice was chilled and shattered into tiny fragments by cold water and ice. Over time, these fragments accumulated around the vent to form a mound-shaped structure.

Hikers looking for an opportunity to journey deeper into the park should follow the **Horseshoe Falls Trail** (strenuous; 21 miles/34 km return), which shares the Pyramid Mountain Trail and then continues beyond to Horseshoe Falls. Wilderness campsites are located at the 5-mile (8-km) point and at the top of Horseshoe Falls. The well-marked trailhead is located about 3.75 miles (6 km) north of the park entrance on the east side of Clearwater Valley Road.

Some of the best routes in the park feature lovely alpine hiking, with various huts to stop at along the way. (In winter, there is hut-to-hut skiing on these same trails.)

For additional information on Well Gray Park, go to:  
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/wells.html>

#### Mount Robson Provincial Park Valemount

Several challenging hikes are possible in Mount Robson Provincial Park, as well as many easy walking trips: there's a hike for every skill level here. If you want a two-day hike past glaciers and waterfalls, take the very well-known and popular **Berg Lake Trail** (moderate; 27 miles/44 km return). The trailhead is at the parking lot beside the Robson River, close to the visitors centre. The trail leads to Kinney Lake and the base of Mount Robson, skirts the lake, and enters a valley heavily dotted with spectacular waterfalls and more than 15 glaciers before reaching Berg Lake, at an elevation of 5,341 feet (1628 m).

From here the trail continues through Robson Pass into Jasper National Park. It's possible to make a loop via the Berg Lake and **Moose Rivers Trail**, a distance of about 65 miles (105 km), in approximately seven days. This route is particularly rigorous; only attempt it if you're a highly experienced backcountry hiker. (Note: The first half of the Berg Lake Trail as far as Kinney Lake is accessible by mountain bike. Some keeners have been known to bike to Kinney Lake and then hike to Berg Lake from there, making it back to the parking lot before sundown.)

Several other hikes are rewarding. The eastern portion of the park has trails ranging from easy to difficult. Some of the more challenging are **Mount Fitzwilliam** (moderate; 7.5 miles/12 km return to Rockingham Creek wilderness campground; 13.5 miles/22 km return to alpine lakes); **Moose River Route** (strenuous; 87 miles/140 km return; allow six days); **Fraser River Route** (strenuous; 30 miles/50 km return); and **Yellowhead Mountain Trail** (moderate; 10.5 miles/17 km return). The Mount Fitzwilliam Trail starts at Yellowhead Lake and continues for 4.4 miles (7 km) to the designated campsite at Rockingham Creek. An additional 4.3 miles (6.9 km) takes hikers up Fitzwilliam Creek to the wilderness campsite and several day-hike opportunities. All hikers should check with park staff regarding the condition of trails before starting off; hikers entering Jasper National Park must register with park officials beforehand.

For additional information on Mount Robson Provincial Park, go to:  
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/mtrobson.html>

### **Hamber Provincial Park**   **Valemount**

For the experienced backcountry hiker, **Hamber Provincial Park** offers extremely beautiful scenery in a wild and rugged locale. Tucked into the midpoint of Jasper National Park on the British Columbia-Alberta border, Hamber is accessible by foot only. (Hwy 93 in Alberta is the nearest highway.) There is a difficult 14-mile (22.5-km) hike in from Sunwapta Falls in Jasper, or you can reach the park by floatplane to **Fortress Lake**. At high elevation and with pristine wilderness, this park has excellent angling opportunities and is prime grizzly and black bear country.

For additional information on Hamber Provincial Park, go to:  
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/hamber.html>

### **Mount Terry Fox Provincial Park**   **Valemount**

A challenging 8-mile (13-km) round-trip hike in **Mount Terry Fox Provincial Park** leads into the alpine zone from its trailhead north of Valemount. Staggeringly impressive views are everywhere along this route. Mount Terry Fox is located 6 miles (10 km) north of Valemount off Hwy 5. It's best to visit **Trophy Mountain's** self-guided trail, 'To the Treeline and Beyond' (easy; 1.2 miles/2 km return) between the end of June and mid-August to see the wildflowers that carpet the subalpine meadows here. A lengthier hiking trail leads from the meadows to views of the Shuswap Highlands from Skyline Ridge (moderate; 7.5 miles/12 km return).

For additional information on Mount Terry Fox Provincial Park, go to:  
[http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/mt\\_terry.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/mt_terry.html)

# Hiking in the Okanagan, Similkameen, Shuswap and Boundary Country

The Okanagan's open terrain makes for ideal hiking, with little or no bushwhacking required. The parks mentioned below offer remoteness, breathtaking landscapes, and challenging outdoor adventure. Unless otherwise noted, these parks are open year-round.

## *Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park* Kelowna, Penticton

Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park (48 wilderness walk-in sites) is located on the east side of Okanagan Lake just opposite Peachland. There's no road access to the park, but secondary roads from Kelowna offer access to parking lots on the park's northeastern boundary. An alternative approach is from Penticton via Naramata on Chute Lake Road, a rough 15.5-mile (25-km) route to the south parking lot.

This park is well suited to backwoods camping. Wilderness campsites are located at Divide, Victor, and Baker Lakes and at Buchan Bay. From the north parking lot, follow **Golden Mile-Boulder Trail** (moderate; 2 miles/3.5 km) to the **Wildhorse Canyon Trail** (moderate; 3 miles/5 km) and finally the **Buchan Bay Trail** (easy; 1 mile/1.6 km) to reach the wilderness campsites at Buchan Bay. Wilderness campsites are located near the south parking lot. More sites are located at Divide Lake on Okanagan Mountain, reached via the **Divide Lake North Trail** (10 miles/16 km return) from the Rimrock Road parking lot, or via the **Mountain Goat Trail** (6 miles/10 km return) from the south parking lot. The campsites at Baker and Victor Lakes are reached by following the Baker Lake Trail (moderate; 2.5 miles/4 km return) from Divide Lake.

Hiking trails provide an excellent opportunity to ramble around and see unique plants and animal life in this semi-desert wilderness region. The lake and mountain views are good from the top of Okanagan Mountain, but wear sturdy footwear (this park is in rattlesnake country) and carry water between camping areas if you're hiking in summer. In addition to the backcountry campsites, facilities also include horse-loading ramps in the north and south parking lots, as well as marine campsites and mooring buoys on Okanagan Lake. Hike to the top of Okanagan Mountain on the **Divide Lake North Trail** (moderate; 10 miles/16 km return) from the Rimrock Rd parking lot for beautiful views of the lake to the west and the Monashees to the east, and check out the four archaeological sites in the park.

For additional information on Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park, go to <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/okanmtn.html>

## *Bear Creek Provincial Park* Kelowna

Bear Creek Provincial Park features a moderate 14-mile (24-km) hiking trail as well as a 6-mile (10-km) easygoing hiking trail. Trails begin from a common trailhead at the entrance to the park. Wear sturdy footwear because the prickly pear cacti on the more exposed rocky slopes of the upland region of the park can puncture skin even through clothing and running shoes. Rattlesnakes abound here. Visitors are asked to stay on the trails in Bear Creek Provincial Park. This area is a feast for the senses, with its expansive views of the lake and canyon; its scent of cottonwood, pine, and fir forests; and its splashes of colourful wildflowers. Bear Creek Provincial Park is located 5 miles (9 km) west of Kelowna on the west side of Okanagan Lake off Hwy 97.

For additional information on Bear Creek provincial Park, go to: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/bearcrk.html>

### *Monashee Provincial Park*    **Vernon, Lumby**

Monashee Provincial Park protects substantial stands of old growth cedar, spruce and hemlock. Lush green forests grace the valley bottoms and, in the spring, alpine meadows blossom with a colourful array of wildflowers. The park is also known for some of the oldest rock formations in western Canada. Peters and Margie Lakes sparkle beneath 2697 metre high Mount. Fosthall, the highest peak in the park and part of the rugged Monashee Range of snow-capped peaks that surround the park. Lucky visitors may get a glimpse of the rare mountain caribou or wolverine or the much more common mule deer, ground squirrels and pikas. This undeveloped mountain wilderness is a wonderful adventure for both experienced, backcountry hikers and willing beginners alike. 111 km north of Vernon. Take hwy #97 to Vernon, then go east on Hwy #6 from Vernon for 47 km, through Lumby to Cherryville. Turn north onto Sugar Lake Road and proceed 46 km until you reach the turnoff (km marker #22) to the park. Proceed on Spectrum Creek Road for 16 km to the park.

For additional information on Monashee Provincial Park, go to:

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

### *Nickel Plate Provincial Park*    **Princeton, Penticton**

Nickel Plate Provincial Park is another undeveloped wilderness area that hikers and cross-country skiers will find rewarding. Nearby Lookout Mountain rises above the Nickel Plate Lake region, studded with huge erratics (boulders deposited by receding glacial ice). There's soft camping on the lake's sandy beaches. Blueberries and other edible berries grow in the forested surroundings, as does Labrador tea, with its white blossoms and fuzz-backed leaves, used by Native Canadians and early settlers to make a relaxing drink. Nickel Plate is 18 miles (29 km) northeast of Hedley, near Apex Resort, and is accessed by a gravel road off Hwy 3A.

For additional information on Nickel Plate Provincial Park, go to:

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

### *Silver Star Provincial Park*    **Vernon**

**Silver Star Provincial Recreation Area**, 14 miles 22 (km) north of Vernon, is superb for winter activities, and is also a great place to visit in summer for hiking and nature rambling. In summer, Silver Star Mountain operates a chairlift for visitors to ascend to hiking trails in the subalpine zone with fabulous views of the Monashees in the north and east, the Shuswap Highlands in the north and west, and the Okanagan Plateau in the south.

Walking tours in the Okanagan include **Okanagan Valley International Peace Park** in Oliver and **Historic Vernon and Okanagan Landing** in Vernon. Maps are available from the Oliver Visitor Info Centre on Hwy 97, and Vernon Tourism on Hwy 97.

For additional information on Silver Star Provincial Park, go to:

[http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/silver\\_star.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/silver_star.html)

### *Cathedral Provincial Park*    **Princeton, Penticton, Osoyoos**

Cathedral Provincial Park, located 30 miles (48 km) southeast of Princeton off Hwy 3, is in the transition zone between the dense, wet forests of the Cascade Mountains and the arid, desert-like Okanagan Valley. This mountainous park presents a wealth of variety in its terrain, flora, and fauna, as well as hiking opportunities suitable for both the novice and the seasoned climber. The five major lakes in the heart of Cathedral are like azure gemstones, surrounded by jagged peaks

mantled with alpine and subalpine wildflowers. There are more than 230 plant species in the park, including over 20 that are rare in British Columbia. Fascinating rock formations with names like Smokey the Bear, the Devil's Woodpile, and Stone City make hiking in this park a thrilling adventure.

No water is available other than from lakes and streams as you cross the 20 miles (32 km) of hiking trails. You'll find overnight parking at the four trailheads and six info shelters, where detailed information on the park is displayed. Experienced, well-equipped hikers might want to tackle a section of the **Centennial Trail**, which runs about 250 miles (400 km) from Osoyoos all the way to Burnaby. Many other trails wind through the park at a higher elevation, most starting in the core area around **Quiniscoe Lake** and **Cathedral Lake Lodge** located on its' shores. All the trails are detailed in the park brochure available at the info shelters. Note: This road is closed to all but lodge and BC Parks vehicles. From Hwy 3 a rough gravel road skirts the north and most of the west boundary of the park. Access roads are not maintained.

For additional information on Cathedral Provincial Park, go to:

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

### **Herald Provincial Park** **Salmon Arm**

Head to Herald Provincial Park for some interesting hiking: two distinct topographical units (upland and flat delta) have created a great terrain; there are also Native Canadian pithouse depressions, or kekuli, in the area west of the creek, as well as some old Native cache pits. The park is located 14km east of the Trans-Canada Highway at Tappen, on the northwest shore of the Salmon Arm of Shuswap Lake.

For additional information on Herald Provincial Park, go to:

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

### **Roderick Haig-Brown Provincial Park** **Chase, Sorrento**

Roderick Haig-Brown Provincial Park has several beautiful walks and low-key hikes; the **Lower Trail System** provides access to viewing the salmon run along the Adams River. This 1,059 hectare park encompasses the entire length (11km) of the Adams River, the site of the largest sockeye salmon run on the West Coast. There's an excellent interpretive area that explains the whole phenomenal trek. A "dominant" run, which witnesses millions of salmon battling upstream to spawn, occurs every four years, followed by years of much smaller runs. The next dominant run will be in 2010, when the sockeye will be joined by chinook, coho and pink salmon. The exact dates of the late summer-early fall salmon run depend on temperature, rainfall and water levels. Many wild critters live in this park, among them bears, beavers, and river otters.

The park has an important heritage, as pictographs on canyons walls indicate the presence of First Nations people long before European settlement. Within the park are several cultural heritage sites, including archaeological sites that have uncovered evidence of large settlements and remnants of kekulis (pit houses). The park contains 26km of trails that are suitable for hiking and mountain biking in the summer, and for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter. You shouldn't miss the **Reinecker Creek** self-guided nature walk here, which leads to Margaret Falls. To get to Roderick Haig-Brown Provincial Park, travel east on Hwy 1 from Kamloops for 66 km to Monte Creek. Follow the signs north to Squilax. The park is about 5 km north of here.

For additional information on Roderick Haig Brown Provincial Park, go to:

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

## Gladstone Provincial Park Grand Forks

Gladstone is, perhaps, most well known for the vehicle accessible Texas Creek campground which was added to the park area in 1995 and provides excellent camping, picnicking and a safe swimming area. However, the park also has significant wilderness value. It provides a diversity of habitats in the Selkirk Foothills ecosection of the province that is found nowhere else. These include Kokanee spawning areas, winter range for deer and elk, and of particular importance, low elevation habitats and old growth cedar and hemlock forests. There are several short trails that lead from the campground to the lake. Christina Lake has a reputation as one of the warmest and clearest lakes in Canada. There are several pocket beaches that provide great opportunities for privacy and quiet moments. The Monashee Mountains surround the lake and it is a perfect backdrop for a variety of water-oriented recreational activities. Fishing for Kokanee, Rainbow Trout and Small-mouth Bass is popular. The protection of spawning areas in the park such as Sandner Creek is extremely important.

Two areas of the park have been zoned as Special Features: the pictographs on the east shore of Christina Lake and the Troy/Sandner Creek area at the north end of Christina Lake from 100 metres off-shore to one kilometre inland to protect the provincially significant spawning habitat for kokanee and rainbow trout and the area's importance for grizzly and black bear habitat during the fish spawn. Gladstone Park is located approximately 20 km northeast of Grand Forks on Hwy 3 at the north end of Christina Lake in the Monashee Mountains. The most common accesses to the park are via the Texas Creek campground and by boat from Christina Lake. The campground is 5 km east of Christina Lake on Hwy 3; turn onto East Lake Drive and follow 4 km to the 63 site campground at the end of the road. There is rough 4WD access to Xenia Lake 22 km up the North Fork Rd from Grand Forks to Miller Creek Rd; turn right and go about 4 km. Look for a small road on the left marked with a white deactivated road sign that leads to the lake. There is also access to the Mt. Gladstone trailhead from Hwy 3 and the abandoned CPR railway at Paulson, the Mt. Faith trailhead from the Burrell Forest Service Road, and Peter Lake from Dog Creek Road.

For additional information on Gladstone Provincial Park, go to:  
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/gladston.html>

## Regional Parks and Crown Land Trails

### Central Okanagan Peachland

**Hardy Falls Park** in Peachland is a cool oasis in what can sometimes be a hot landscape. A pleasant walking trail (easy; 2 miles/3 km return), complete with seven footbridges, leads to a splendid little waterfall hidden away at the head of a narrow canyon. The shade and the cool water attract a wide variety of wildlife as well as human visitors. In the spring, wildflowers brighten the canyon walls and the underbrush along the trail. Carp spawn in the creek and dippers nest in the cracks of the waterfall. In October, crimson kokanee dart among the riffles in the creek. Harry Hardy was one of the first orchardists in the Westbank area, and Hardy Falls Park is named in his honour. The park is adjacent to **Antlers Beach Park**, where you can head for a dip after your walk.

## [Kettle Valley Rail Trail/ Trans Canada Trail](#) Kelowna

The Kettle Valley Railway when it was completed in 1906, connected numerous small communities in southern BC, and featured many marvels of railroad construction as it wound through mountain passes, river gorges, valleys, rural communities, over numerous trestles and through tunnels. Today, the Kettle Valley Railway no longer operates, and many sections of the old rail bed are now being converted to hiking and cycling recreational uses. You can walk or hike as much or as little of the **Kettle Valley Railway Trail**, south of Kelowna, as you feel inclined to tackle. Stamina, more than conditioning, will determine if you complete the 15-mile (24-km) round trip between the trailheads on the Little White and Myra Forest Service Roads. As the trail follows an abandoned railbed, the grade is moderate. This was one of the more challenging sections of the route to engineer, and required 18 trestles and two tunnels. Washrooms are available at the trailheads as well as near the middle of Myra Canyon. Pack along water and wear sturdy shoes.

To reach the **Little White** trailhead, go south of Hwy 97 (also called Harvey St) in downtown Kelowna on Pandosy Street, east on K.L.O. road, then south on Spiers, June Springs, and Little White Forest Service Roads, all of which interconnect and lead to the railbed. To reach the Myra trailhead, travel east of Pandosy Street on K.L.O road to McCulloch Road, which joins the Myra Forest Service Road and leads to the railbed.

## [Shuswap North Okanagan](#) Sicamous

**Eagle River Nature Park**, about 7 miles (12 km) east of Sicamous, has 10 miles (16 km) of hiking and cross-country trails.

## [Boundary Country](#) Grand Forks, Midway, Greenwood

The **Midway Village Trailhead** ( on the Myers Creek Road just southeast of Midway) has nearly 6 miles (10 km) of easy to difficult hiking and biking trails from Midway to a scenic viewpoint on the international border.

The route to **Thimble Mount Viewpoint** (moderate; 9 miles/14 km return) is well groomed and perfectly suited for hiking, biking, and horseback riding, with an abandoned turn-of-the-century mine site in the area. To reach the trailhead, turn north off Hwy 3 between Greenwood and Grand Forks on BC Mine Road. The trailhead is located about 1.5 miles (2.5 km) on the east side of the road.

Aside from the parks mentioned above, the most interesting trail in the Boundary area has to be the abandoned Kettle Valley Railway itself. Bikers, hikers, and horseback riders can pick up the trail at Grand Forks, Greenwood, or Midway (all along Hwy 3) or at Rock Creek, Westbridge, or Beaverdell (all along Hwy 33). The **Kettle River Provincial Recreation Area** makes a good staging area. This 'rails-to-trails' route is for those who like difficulty measured in distance travelled rather than miles per second or wipeouts per trip. The trail is not formally managed, and doesn't have heart-stopping thrills or technically difficult riding, but your heart will beat a little faster crossing trestles nearly 200 feet (60 m) high (walk your bike).

The river's eastern bank can be explored for the remains of gold and silver mines, but keep a sharp eye out for old mine shafts and adits (horizontal entrances or passages). Wondering about the name? A kettle is a peculiar geological formation left over from the most recent ice age. These steep-sided depressions (also known as potholes) mark the ground where ice boulders were once trapped between rock.

For additional information on Kettle River Provincial Recreation Area, go to:  
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/kettle.html>

## South Okanagan Hiking Okanagan Falls, Oliver, Osoyoos

The Golden Mile Hiking Trail is an unimproved gravel trail that winds along the foothills of the west side of the valley, providing close encounters with fruit orchards and vineyards as well as outstanding vistas of Oliver and the surrounding valley and mountains.

The trail itself is about 6.5 kilometers long, though the return trip along the valley orchards adds another 3.5 kilometers. Expect the hike to take at least three hours. The trail is mountain bike friendly. A map and instructions can be obtained from the Tourism Office in the CPR Station, or from Tinhorn Creek Vineyards at the southern end of the trail.

Many forms of wildlife may be seen along the route. Deer, bears and even rattlesnakes live in the area. Please be cautious of wildlife along the route as well as the natural and man-made hazards along the trail, which traverses public and private roads, leased rangeland, and private property.

Park at Tinhorn Creek Vineyards, and follow the directions along rural roads past cherry, apricot, peach, apple and pear orchards, and along the edge of the driving range of renowned Fairview Mountain Golf Course. Continue up the road to the heritage townsite of Fairview and the kiosk that provides historical information about the early days of the South Okanagan valley.

The trail officially begins about a kilometer up Old Fairview Road from the old townsite. It turns to the south, crossing a small creek and opening up into grazing lands actively used by ranchers. This part of the trail is an old road that is now a two track path. Beautiful views open up to the Oliver area, Osoyoos, Mount Baldy and the Fairview Mountain Golf Course. Through the different seasons the patchwork of orchards in the valley floor shows the diversity of crops grown here.

Along this old road are the remains of many abandoned mine shafts and fence lines. A sign marks a 200 meter detour to the Stamp Mill ruins. At the mill site are the remains of the stone walls that were built over 100 years ago. This is a great place to have a picnic and listen to the birds.

The last leg of the hike leads out to the foothills behind the vineyards. The views here are fabulous! All of the vineyards along the Golden Mile and across to the desert lands along Black Sage Road are visible. Osoyoos is visible in the south and Oliver to the north.

If you are still energetic, turn south to Gehringer Bros. and Hester Creek wineries, otherwise continue down the hillside to the vineyards, where samples of nearly all of the varieties of grapes grown by Tinhorn Creek Vineyards are planted. Relax for a while on the front deck of the winery building, taking in the breathtaking panoramic views of the valley while enjoying a taste of some of the valley's finest wine.

Throughout the summer months, Tinhorn Creek Vineyards hosts a variety of outdoor musical performances in their 350 seat natural amphitheatre over looking the southern Okanagan Valley.