



# **B.C.'S BEST FALL ROAD TRIPS**

*As the call of the beach fades  
with the last days of summer, fall is  
the perfect time for a road trip in B.C.  
Here are five of the province's best  
car-bound adventures*



Fall colours along Highway 95, southwest of Golden, B.C., on the west side of Yoho National Park.



BY RYAN STUART

# Hiking the Southwest Coast



Travel up the Sea to Sky Corridor and back down the Fraser Canyon for the ultimate hiker's road trip

Distracted driving takes on a different meaning along the Sea to Sky Highway. After people-watching my way through Vancouver's downtown streets, Stanley Park's 50 shades of green pulls my eyes from the road. Then it's the water and mountains from over the Lion's Gate Bridge. Before long, the highway tightropes between sea cliffs, turquoise waters and sprawling peaks as I head toward Squamish.

It only gets worse. Glaciers flash, black bears wave and the mountains don't stop until Lillooet. Then it's canyons, rivers and big trees all the way back to Vancouver. It's a loop drive that goes from sea to summit and back. But the roadside attractions have nothing on what lies a short walk away. Right from the highway, hiking trails reach deep into the candy bag and beyond to places that do far more than simply delight the eyes.

Strachan Mountain is a great example. Perched over Vancouver, the trailhead is only 25 minutes from downtown. From the Cypress Mountain ski area I stride purposefully along the Howe Sound Crest Trail, passing backpack-laden overnights. Soon the trail bursts from the forest into an alpine meadow. Here, I leave the well-trodden path for a faint route, leading straight up. When my quads start to burn, I look over my



shoulder and the views of Howe Sound, guarded by green mountains, inspire me higher. Eventually I reach the twin summits and absorb the panorama: Vancouver and the Strait of Georgia below, Vancouver Island to the west and the Coast Range peaks all around. They beg for me

to explore further, and so I do.

Over the next few days I will wander north along the Sea to Sky Highway, turn northwest onto the Duffey Lake Road and then swing back into Vancouver on the Trans Canada Highway. Within a few hours' walk of this grand loop of the southern Coast Range I can bag a summit, hug a giant tree, touch a glacier, follow a canyon and run through an alpine meadow.

First up is the nearby Stawamus Chief. The famous granite dome's sheer wall may look insurmountable from Squamish, but a natural staircase leads up its backside to three summits. It's an entertaining scramble up the occasional ladder to the top where acrophobes should stay back from the edge. The views over the Squamish estuary and valley to the glacier cloaked Tantalus Range and beyond explain why some locals make this hike a weekly mission.

The highway's "sky" aspect only becomes more pronounced closer to the resort town of Whistler. Brandywine Meadows is the most inspiring destination in the range. The route climbs quickly through forest into an expansive alpine basin that begs for rambling and yodeling. And even I, who prefers solitude to crowds, has no trouble finding ample space on the loop hike to Decker Tarn

on Blackcomb Mountain. Whisked to the alpine on chairlifts, the tourists fall away with every step into this airy playground of craggy summits and rugged glaciers.

Back on the Sea to Sky Highway heading north, it's a winding plunge into the Pemberton Valley. Then a pastoral ramble



**Distance:**  
570 kilometres

**Duration:**  
Three to five days

**Resources:**  
vancouvertrails.com;  
whistlerblackcomb.com;  
bcparks.ca; *Don't Waste Your Time In The BC Coast Mountains*, by Craig and Kathy Copeland; *103 Hikes in Southwestern British Columbia* by Jack Bryceland



The new Sea to Sky Gondola in Squamish offers quick access to some of the most scenic trails in town—check out the airy suspension bridge—with amazing views over Howe Sound. A trail leads to the top of the lift, if you prefer to earn your panoramas.



From Top: Cruising the Sea to Sky Highway; overlooking Harrison Lake; chilling out at Matier Glacier, Joffre Lakes.

under the watchful eye of imposing Mount Currie before the steady grind up the Duffey Lake Road into the cradle of mountains. It could be 10 degrees colder at the road's summit, near the trailhead to Joffre Lakes, the next must-do hike. The attraction here is not just the trio of ponds reflecting nature's cathedral, but the blue glacial ice clinging to a headwall at trail's end.

Continuing on the highway, the road itself is adventure enough as it narrows, swoops and carves toward Lillooet on the Fraser River. In the rainshadow of the mountains this is dry and hot country, polar opposite to the lush coast. I reserve the next hike, along the Stein Canyon, for fall when this area has cooled down. In moderate temperatures the trek, following the Stein River as it plunges and

rushes toward the confluence with the Fraser, is a gem. The river's constant presence prevents boredom. And a short way in it passes pictographs—and more await further along the trail.

From the Stein, the loop closes quickly: down the Fraser Canyon, past Hope and into the Fraser Valley. There are more mountains to climb here. Bear Mountain near Harrison Lake might be the best, with its expansive views across the Lower Mainland and deep into Cascades

across the valley. Or seek out giant trees in Cultus Lake Provincial Park, where a couple of trails lead to several massive Douglas fir.

Back on Mount Strachan, I descend beside the ski area toward Hollyburn Mountain, a lump of a peak that's still worth the detour. And then it's a beautiful old forest walk back to my car. In less than four hours I've been awed and entertained by a morsel of the Coast Range. Five more bites to come. 🐾

# Wildlife Viewing in the Rocky Mountain Trench



Embark on a car-safari through one of British Columbia's most biodiverse eco-zones

Standing on its banks in Invermere, it's hard to believe the Columbia River has nearly 2,000 kilometres to go before it reaches the Pacific Ocean. Here, near its headwaters in southeastern British Columbia, the river is in no rush. It slithers out of Lake Windermere slow enough that stand-up paddleboarders can chug upstream with little effort. And just downstream, it begins to meander across the flat valley in long switchbacks, dead-end channels and sidetrack marshes.

But while the river pokes along, the life it supports hurries about its business. On an easy canoe from Invermere to nearby Radium, we see plenty. Within a few kilometres we check off bald eagle, osprey, mule deer, mergansers, red-winged blackbirds and a half dozen different types of LBJs, or "little brown jobbies." This is the catchall for the birds I can't identify; usually, but not always brown and very common—due to my lack of birding skill. When we pull the canoes over for lunch, we spot bear and elk tracks in the mud. The work of beavers is everywhere.

Despite a major rail line and Highway 95 paralleling the river, this is wild country. Biologists consider the 180 kilometres between Columbia Lake and Golden as one of the longest wetlands in North America and vital to migrating birds.

Equally wild and wildlife-filled is the country to the south, east and west. The valley is part of the Rocky Mountain Trench, a hoed line between the Columbia and Rocky mountain ranges.



While they usually hang out on inaccessible rock faces, two mineral licks right off the Banff-Windermere Highway are a favourite for the area's mountain goats. It's one of the best places to spot the furry white herbivores.

The peaks rise to more than 3,300 metres, sucking huge snowfalls out of the sky and shadowing the valley below into near desert. National, provincial and regional parks protect a surprising diversity of ecosystems, everything from grasslands to inland

rainforest, alpine summits to valley-bottom marshes.

Taken together this is one of the most ecologically diverse and wildlife-rich regions in the province. And in the fall, with birds migrating and wildlife heading for lower elevations, it becomes even more so. Highways and backroads crisscross it all. Bottom line, the Rocky Mountain Trench is well suited to safari by car.

Cranbrook, with an international airport and the hub of the East Kootenays, makes an obvious starting point. The rolling mix of forest and grassland around town harbour perfect winter habitat for elk and deer, often spotted on the country roads cutting through ranch land and farm fields.

This area is also home to the endangered American badger. Only 400 remain in the wild in B.C. One of the better spots to see these animals is at Three Bars Ranch, a guest ranch on the St. Mary's River near Kimberley. White-tailed deer polka dot the ranch's pasture nightly and moose, elk and black bear are often seen near dawn and dusk.

The region's microclimates transition quickly while we continue on Highway 95A toward Kimberley. As the road climbs to the ever-growing mountains, the vegetation quickly changes from grass to lush forest at the Kimberley Nature Park. At 800 hectares on the edge of its namesake town, it's the largest municipal park in Canada. Its network of hiking and biking trails is home to black bear, moose and a variety of smaller critters and birds.

From here, 95A heads back out of the mountains, drying out again, before meeting up with the main highway for a 200-kilometre run to Golden. Along the way, backroads leap up narrow valleys toward wild places like Top of the World



**Distance:**

250 kilometres between Cranbrook and Golden, plus another 100 kilometres or more for detours

**Duration:**

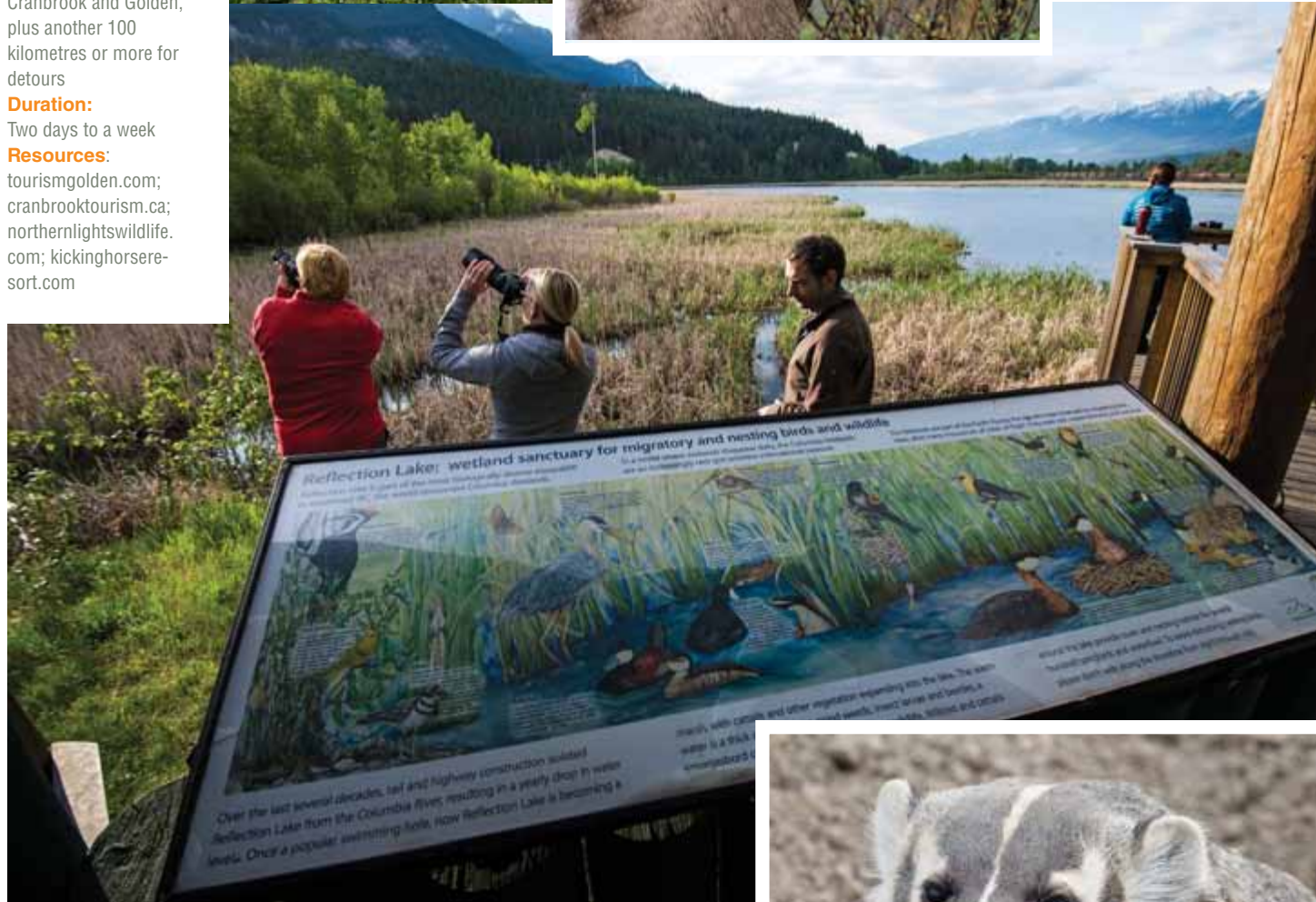
Two days to a week

**Resources:**

tourismgolden.com; cranbrooktourism.ca; northernlightswildlife.com; kickinghorseresort.com



From Top: Boo the grizzly bear; a big horn sheep; bird watching near Golden; an endangered American badger.



and Premier Lake provincial parks. Both have great sport fishing and Premier is an important wintering range for elk, white-tail and mule deer and bighorn sheep.

To the west, logging roads lead to the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy, a vast, wild and remote alpine wilderness. Wildlife, including grizzly bears, is abundant in the park, but it's an expedition just getting there.

Things get easier further north. Around the towns of Radium and Golden, bighorn sheep and mule deer make roadside attractions, even right in town, and grizzly bear and wolf sightings are almost a sure thing. Boo, the grizzly bear, lives in an eight-hectare enclosure at the base of

Kicking Horse Mountain Resort, near Golden. And at the Northern Lights Wildlife Wolf Centre, just north of town, anyone can walk with wolves (for a fee).

Their wild cousins aren't far away, either. The nearby national parks of Yoho and Kootenay are home to several wolf-packs and plenty of other animals in their vast and rarely trampled backcountry. The parks' wildlife is most commonly spotted from the highway, like we do after finishing our canoe.

We hop in the car and head to Kootenay National Park. From Radium, the road grinds up through an arid valley, lined

with sheep tracks. Like a magic portal, a red rock canyon delivers us into a verdant valley. We continue to climb toward the Alberta border beneath glacial capped peaks before we finally hit the continental divide. Along the way we spot black bear, white-tailed deer, mountain goats and bighorn sheep, all without getting out of the car. And I lose count of the LBJs within five minutes. 🐾



# Okanagan Wine Country



Home to hundreds of vineyards, B.C.'s Okanagan is Canada's best wine region. Savour these top picks for the ultimate wine-lover's road trip

Okanagan vintners have a pin on the world map as makers of fine wine. The region is also well known for incredible views, luscious orchards and idyllic lakes—all of which make it a popular road-trip destination for wine enthusiasts and nature-lovers alike.

With some of the biggest names in the viticulture industry and well-defined tasting routes from Kelowna to Osoyoos, one could easily wing-it through wine country and end up with a very satisfied palate. However, if undiscovered spots and intimate tastings are your flavour, take a journey to seek out small-scale producers. These boutique wineries allow you to meet the winemakers and get up-close and personal with the wine for a truly special experience. While there are many of these smaller venues tucked between the large estates, and more starting up every year, here are a few of our favourites.

Starting in Lakeview Heights, West Kelowna, follow the signs toward the organic, farm-gate winery of Rollingdale. Passing the owner's family home along the way, follow a path to an aluminum quonset-hut wine cellar. A tasting counter, a sample of available wines and rows of wine-filled barrels await inside. It's not uncommon to see the wine-maker and owner, Steve Dale, tasting directly from the barrels—this is, in fact, where they make the wine as well, in true *garagiste* style. Pours are healthy, conversation is plentiful and it's difficult to leave with just one bottle. Known for their pinot noir, Alsatian whites



and ice-wines, this family-operated winery offers a friendly, down to earth experience and is a great first stop in Kelowna.

Driving south on Highway 97, make your way to Summerland. There are plenty of scenic vineyards to choose from in this area, however, one unique spot beckons you into an industrial complex, home to the relatively new TH Wines. Owner Tyler Harlton takes a hands-on approach to wine making, and this is no figure of speech. From picking grapes, caring for vines and using a traditional grape press, the winemakers at TH Wines do it all by hand. This means only producing two or three barrels at a time, and thus a very rustic wine. Try the By Hand White 2013 or the "getting better by the day" viognier pinot gris 2013.

Continuing on through the town of Penticton, you'll begin your journey into the Naramata Bench region where you could—and should—spend all day. This meandering country road is home to some of the most renowned wineries in B.C., and taking nearly any side-street will unveil a new vineyard. You'll have to pick and choose, but ensure you include Kettle Valley Winery. Driving onto the property, with the garage door open and a basketball hoop in the driveway, you may feel like you've taken a wrong turn. Rest assured, this garage has been the tasting room for Kettle Valley since they started making wine almost 30 years ago. As one of the first winemakers in the region, they have stayed true to their roots, maintaining a home-style feel while making world-class wine. Notable varieties include blends such as Old Main Red and single grape varietals such as pinot noir, merlot, cabernet sauvignon and malbec. Their whites are solid too, including their original chardonnay.

Next stop is Blue Mountain Winery. Getting back on Highway 97 South you'll continue through the funky little town of Okanagan Falls and head up a winding arid road deep into the hills. Blue Mountain Winery is modest only in size—with



Tasting rooms in small wineries have varying hours of operation and/or open by appointment, especially in the off-season.

Autumn brings the Fall Wine Festival, and many local events are happening in the region (October 1 to 11; [thewinefestivals.com](http://thewinefestivals.com)). Tip for drivers: all wineries supply spittoons so you won't miss the fun.



stunning views of vineyards, mountains and sky for as far as you can see.

One of the more coveted wines in B.C., Blue Mountain varietals continually sell out early in the season. Maybe it's because they have a limited output or perhaps because the secluded location makes for an epic outing. More likely it's because they make amazing wine. Check their operating hours ahead of time and note that tastings are by appointment only, starting in mid-October. Try whatever you're lucky enough to find, as their stock is limited. If you see something from their reserve selection, buy it.

Once you've descended from Blue Mountain, Highway 97 becomes the famed route known as the Golden Mile, where nearly 25 wineries dot 21 kilometres of road. Many notable vineyards thrive here, including Osoyoos Larose, Black Hills and Burrowing Owl; it's an easy spot to stock up your supplies for the winter. While you could complete your journey at the end of the road in Osoyoos, take the extra 15 minutes along Highway 3 and head to Cawston for one last taste.

The Similkameen Valley is growing a reputation for its local wines, including the Orofino Winery. With a terrace and tasting room connected to the family home, this eco-friendly strawbale winery makes for the perfect break in a quiet part of B.C. While sipping wine and exploring the grounds, you'll get a taste of the owner's homestead, with soccer balls, bikes and a trampoline decorating the backyard as well as a harvest table and outdoor wooden oven. Try their award winning merlot-cabernet blend for a true flavour of this productive and scenic part of beautiful B.C. 🍷



**Distance:**

Kelowna to Cawston is 113 kilometres via Highway 97 and Highway 3

**Duration:**

One hour and 45 minutes on the main highways, wineries are often a five- to 15-minute drive off the main routes. Plan to spend at least one or two days in the area

**Resources:**

[bcwine.ca](http://bcwine.ca); [winebc.com](http://winebc.com)



From Top: The beautiful lake-side vineyards of Blue Mountain; the strawbale buildings of Orofino; the views in B.C.'s wine country rival those found anywhere in the world.





BY DESIREE MILLER



# Vancouver Island's Ancient Trees



Many of the trees mentioned here are found along old logging roads with no cellphone coverage, so make sure someone knows where you are going and you have a full tank of gas, a spare tire and a high-clearance vehicle.

B.C. is home to some of the largest, oldest and most impressive trees in the world, but many of them are not yet protected. Head off the beaten path for this adventurous road trip through Vancouver Island's ancient forests



found on the southwest coast of B.C. and the Pacific Northwest. Waterfalls, creeks, wildflowers and hiking trails make this a popular destination and an easy escape from the provincial capital into a wild wonderland.

Most people know about the magnificent trees of Cathedral Grove, and for good reason. It ranks up there with Redwood National Park as one of the most famous old growth forests in the world. However, there are plenty of other smaller but no less impressive ancient groves scattered all over Vancouver Island. Though some of the biggest and oldest trees on the planet exist in our backyard, many are unprotected and could someday be logged, making it all the more important to plan a road trip, go the extra mile and see these giants in person. Awe-inspiring and humbling, there are few experiences like it, and less than 10 percent of these classic giants remain. So grab a spare tire, head off the beaten path and go hug a tree. They need it. And so do we.

We're not going to sugarcoat it—it's a bumpy road ahead. You could easily stay on main highways and see some notable forests. But if you have the means to do so and want a jaw dropping experience, take the backroads. Many routes are rough and a little harder to access, but the encounter is that much more remarkable.

Ideally, having a vehicle with good ground-clearance will be the most comfortable, but don't let that detail stop you. Cars can make the trek, just go slow and be cautious.

Starting from Victoria, on the south end of Vancouver Island, head north on Highway 19 to Goldstream Provincial Park, just



outside of the city. Walking trails in this protected area lead into an ancient world of 600-year-old Douglas fir and western red cedar as well as numerous other species including western yew and hemlock, red alder, big leaf maple, black cottonwood and arbutus—which is exclusively

Bay Ecological Reserve, you will find the Mossy Maple Grove, a place the Ancient Tree Alliance calls "Canada's Mossiest Rainforest," and an enchanting woodland filled with old-growth big leaf maple. Here, you can walk through curtains of bright green moss and massive ferns draping over enormous trees, with some trunks measuring as wide as 2.5 metres in diameter. Unlike most old growth forests on the island, this one is comprised of deciduous, broadleaf trees and is nicknamed Fangorn Forest after the famous woods in J.R.R Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. The trees here are currently unprotected, set on a mix of private and Crown Land, and are in the traditional territory of the Cowichan people, who are part of the Hul'quami'num First Nations.

Head back toward Lake Cowichan and take a right turn onto the slow and winding Pacific Marine Road, also known as the Pacific Rim Circle Route, to Port Renfrew. This area has the greatest concentration of record-sized trees in Canada. Along this drive, if time and means allow,



you'll discover some of the largest trees in Canada (see sidebar). Whether you explore the logging roads or stay on course, make your way to Avatar Grove.

Thanks to committed individuals and the Ancient Forest Alliance, this magnificent forest is now protected and is the second-most popular grove in B.C. A small sign at the trailhead leads the way to centuries-old cedar, fir and some of the weirdest looking trees around. These big guys feature huge burrows and massive lumps including those on Canada's gnarliest cedar, which boasts with a four-metre-long burrow. With the help of the alliance and donors, a boardwalk has recently been built to allow better accessibility and to ultimately broaden awareness.

Not for the faint of heart, a twisting, three-hour drive from Port Renfrew will lead you to Walbran valley, home to Castle Grove, also known as Heaven on Earth. A utopia of majestic forestland, this area offers natural swimming pools, the Seven Steps to Heaven waterfall, interesting rock formations and is home to various species of birds and wildlife. It's also the most monumental growth of ancient cedar anywhere, including the legendary Castle Giant, measuring five me-

tres at the base and an estimated 1,200 years old. Sadly, the area is endangered and heavily threatened with logging.

Just north is the famous Carmanah Valley, which received widespread media coverage in the 1990s, when protesters stepped in to save the forest from large-scale logging. This valley is known as ground zero in the ancient forest movement and is now protected. It's the grandest ancient forest in the country.

For the committed, the journey can continue through backroads to Port Alberni before turning to Highways 4 and 19 to the iconic Cathedral Grove in Mac-Millan Provincial Park. (A slightly longer but more straightforward route would be to double back through Lake Cowichan on Highway 18, then head north through Nanaimo via Highway 19.) Cathedral Grove is a coveted tourist hot spot. With easy access right off the highway, it's a popular pit stop for locals and travellers on their way to Port Alberni and Tofino. While the park itself is protected, few are aware that Mount Horne right behind it is under threat. It's a natural extension of Cathedral Grove and yet another grand forest, but should it not receive recognition and protection could be lost to industry like so many forests before. 🌲

**Distance:**

The Pacific Rim Circle Route is 255 kilometres long, plus more for detours

**Duration:**

Avatar Grove and the trees along the Pacific Rim Circle Route can be viewed on a long day trip from Victoria, but two or three days will allow for more exploration. The trip to see Cathedral Grove or the Cheewhat Giant will require an additional day or two of travel

**Resources:**

ancientforestalliance.org; pacificmarinecircle route.com

**Ancient Tree Alliance**

Executive Director and co-founder Ken Wu started the Ancient Forest Alliance in 2010. Their goal is to educate, bring awareness and implement provincial legislation to protect and maintain the endangered old growth forests of B.C. The alliance worked tirelessly to protect the now popular Avatar Grove, which has become a second Cathedral Grove for B.C. For more information on the endangered forests, the alliance and how you can help, visit ancientforestalliance.org

**THE GIANTS**



**HARRIS CREEK SPRUCE**

Following the Pacific Rim Circle Route Road from Highway 18, around 35 kilometres from Lake Cowichan, the Harris Creek Spruce (73.5 metres high and 12.6 metres in circumference at the base) is the most easily accessed giant on the route—a boardwalk will lead you right to it.



**SAN JUAN SPRUCE**

Next up is the San Juan Spruce (62.5 metres high, 12 metres in circumference), which is Canada's largest sitka spruce, based on volume. It can be found about five kilometres up Len's Creek Main Road (at 9 Mile Junction off the Pacific Rim Circle Route Road) at a forest service campground. This is a semi-rough road to drive, but it's a great spot to picnic, explore and even pitch a tent if so inclined.



**RED CREEK FIR**

Going deeper into the forest, as the road gets progressively rougher, you'll find the Red Creek Fir (73.8 metres high, 13.3 metres in circumference)—the largest Douglas fir on the planet. This tree is estimated to be about 750 to 1,000 years old.



**BIG LONELY DOUG**

Big Lonely Doug (66 metres high, 12 metres in circumference) is the second-largest Douglas fir in Canada, and was just discovered in a clear cut last year. Presumably, a sympathetic logger let it be while cutting down all the other giants around it. Although Big Lonely Doug's lifeline was spared, exposure means it is under threat from erosion and strong winds.



**THE CHEEWHAT GIANT**

The Cheewhat Giant (56 metres high, 18.8 metres in circumference), a western red cedar in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, is the largest tree in Canada. Located several hours north from Lake Cowichan on challenging logging roads, access is difficult but the reward is tremendous.



Explore the spectacular sights of B.C.'s secluded northern half

# The Great Wild North

Vastness. At Prince George, the gateway to British Columbia's north, an almost inconceivable vastness will open up before you. Northern B.C. comprises 53 percent of the province, yet is home to only six percent of the population. It is an area larger than Spain, yet with only three major arteries on which to travel: the Yellowhead (16), Stewart-Cassiar (37) and Alaska (97) highways. Welcome to B.C.'s grandest road trip. You'll need at least a week.

With a regional population approaching six digits, Prince George is a bustling full-service industry city. In short: if you've forgotten it, buy or rent it here. And this is last stopover where such an overarching statement will be made. As you head northwest on Highway 16, there is a palpable metamorphosis. Rambling RVs, 18-wheelers and adventure-riding motorcyclists replace the day-trippers and commuters of the south. Distances are greater; nature consumes humanity. Towns make oddball efforts to define themselves against the enormity—you'll pass Vanderhoof, the "Geographic Centre of B.C.," and Houston, home to the "World's Largest Fly Fishing Rod."

Smithers, 370 kilometres from Prince George, is a fine lunch stop—if time permits, the Smithers Community Forest Trail network provides a pleasant leg-stretch. It's also the last place to sip a quality cup of coffee for a long while. Try local roaster Bugwood Bean—or there is a Starbucks, if you must.

At Kitwanga, 115 kilometres from Smithers, the North truly begins. Make a sharp right at the Petro-Canada—the last gas station for 237 kilometres—onto the Stewart-Cassiar Highway, B.C.'s loneliest road. By



the time you pass Cranberry Junction, 75 kilometres further on, there will be as many black bears as road-trippers.

Some years ago, Meziadin Junction housed a gas station, but now it's just a perpendicular intersection and a hut ransacked by grumpy bruins and winter winds. Turn west here, toward Stewart, and challenge yourself to keep eyes on the

road through one of the most scenic drives in the country. Winding between ice-crusting mountains, encased in evergreen and broadleaf trees and flanked by the productive Bear River—as well as the roadside and receding (but still impressive) Bear Glacier—65-kilometre-long Highway 37A is a destination in itself. The town of Stewart marks the terminus, picturesquely placed against the Portland Canal, a tentacle of ocean tracing the border between B.C. and Alaska.

Stewart is the only access point to the odd-duck hamlet of Hyder, Alaska. With just 87 people, Hyder dubs itself "the friendliest ghost town in Alaska." Stewart tourists pop over to photograph grizzlies from Fish Creek Wildlife Observation Platform and get Hyderized, a ritual involving a shot-glass of

150-proof grain alcohol. If you have a four-wheel-drive, the 37-kilometre haul-road to an epic viewpoint atop Salmon Glacier beckons—this is the largest road-accessed glacier in the world. Overnight in Stewart; Hyder has too many bears and not enough services to warrant more than an afternoon walkabout.

Ramble back to the increasingly rustic Highway 37. Bell II, named for a helicopter, is your next fuel-station, and, following a stretch of maintained gravel, the First Nations community of Iskut offers another service stop. At Dease Lake, make a left on Telegraph Creek Road for a hardy, 108-kilometre dirt route that skims past the Talhitan, Stikine and Tanzilla rivers on its way to Telegraph Creek (population 250). All-wheel-drive is your friend; a massive RV is not. One can easily while away a couple of days here in the traditional lands of the Talhitan First Nations. Rent a cabin at Up the Creek B&B (from \$85; reservations recommended). Peruse Gold Rush-era

buildings, view bears and sheep near the Grand Canyon of the Stikine, hire a flight-seeing tour from Telegraph Creek Airport and witness traditional lifestyles on the confluence of Telegraph Creek and the Stikine River. Lose yourself to the vastness to which you've now become accustomed.

Head back to Highway 37 at a slow-and-easy pace. It's a long one today. Buy a carving from the Bunce family in Jade City (population 35); producer of more than three-quarters of the world's nephrite jade. Peek into the ghost town of Centreville. Pose for a photo at the "Yukon: Larger Than Life" sign, then later at the Signpost Forest on Watson Lake—following a fuel-up and lunch at Junction 37 (Sally's Café is best), just a short skip past the 60th parallel. You'll be back in B.C. before you know it, cruising the Alaska Highway as it leads south. Safety note: bison roam the road in this area. They will not get out of your way, nor do they appreciate your presence. Photograph these 900-kilogram brutes at a distance or at your peril.

Your reward for today's 10-hour drive? Liard River Hot Springs Provincial Park, home of an *au naturel* hot springs to ease your road-weariness. Shrouded by boreal spruce, 52-degree volcanically-heated water seeps from the Earth and cools by 10 degrees or so as it runs atop riverstones. Camp on-site (\$26) or stay at Liard Hot Springs Lodge (rooms from \$130; campsites from \$20) and rejuvenate.

**Pack your passport—you'll need it for the worthy side-trip into Hyder, Alaska.**

Southward, Muncho Lake Provincial Park flaunts an emerald waterbody backed by the broken-glass peaks of the Rocky Mountains in their northernmost range. Further, through Northern Rocky Mountains Provincial Park, the highway gets downright treacherous, with loose gravel peppering hairpin turns and scenery that aims to distract. You'll arrive in Fort Nelson after dark—book a room at the Fort Nelson Hotel (\$99) or pull into Triple G Hideaway Campground & Family Restaurant (from \$20).

From Fort Nelson, it's a 800-kilometre cruise through the Peace River Valley to Prince George. Fort St. John, northern B.C.'s second-largest community, and Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway at Dawson Creek (via short detour) dot the route.

Quell your hunger back in Prince George with a steak dinner at North 54—routinely rated the best restaurant in the city. If your appetite for adventure remains unsatiated, however, there is 47 percent of the province yet to explore. 🐾

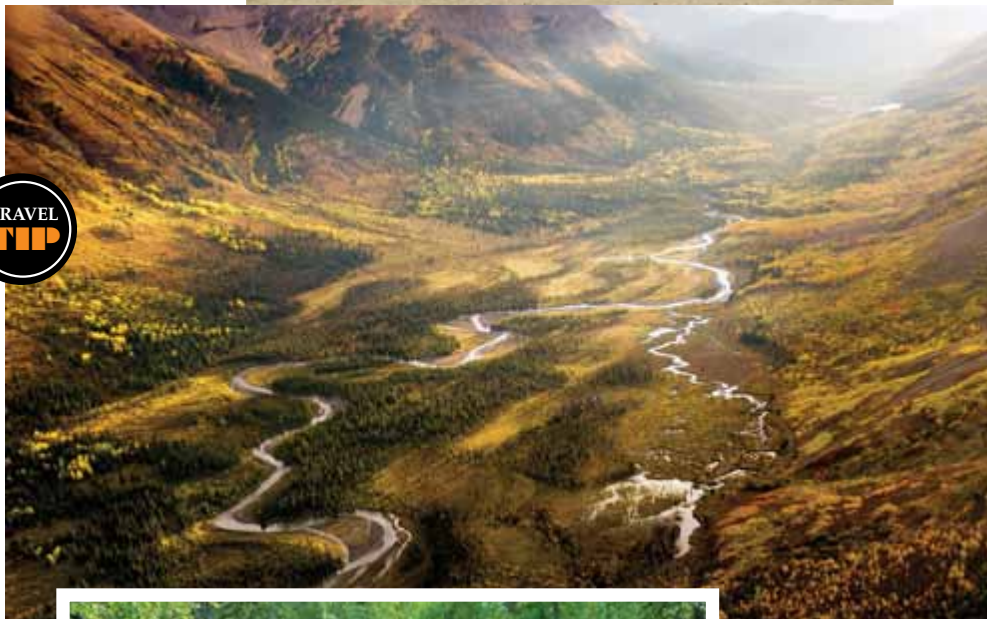
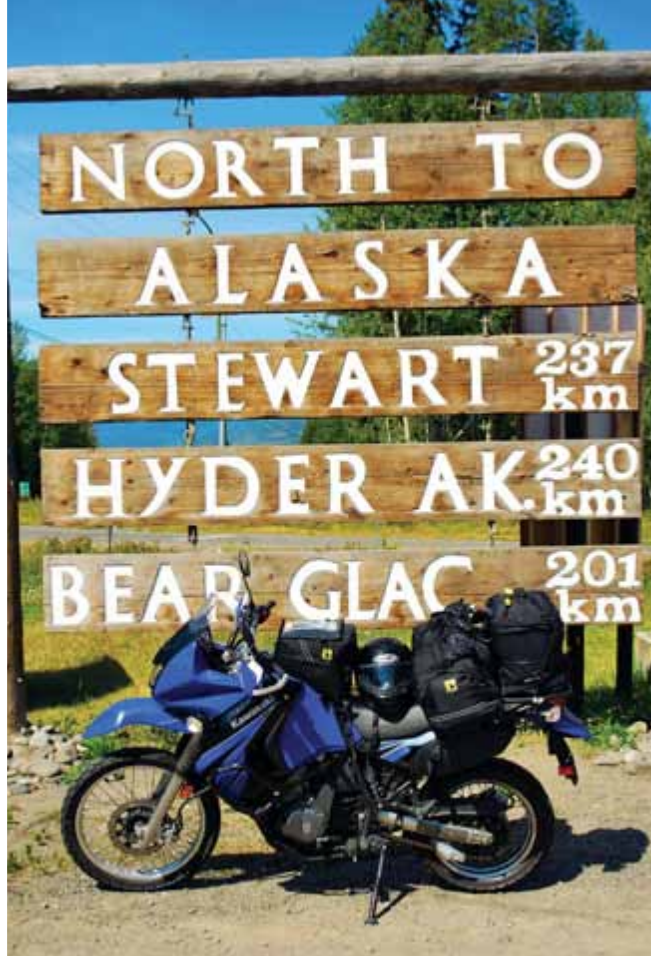


**Distance:** 2,900 kilometres (from Prince George)

**Duration:** Seven to 10 days

**Resources:** [tourismpg.com](http://tourismpg.com); [tourismsmithers.com](http://tourismsmithers.com); [districtofstewart.com](http://districtofstewart.com); [telegraphcreek.com](http://telegraphcreek.com); [bcparks.ca](http://bcparks.ca); [tourismnorthernrockies.ca](http://tourismnorthernrockies.ca)

**Weather:** Temperate days and cool nights—expect changing conditions throughout autumn: summer heat, frosty mornings, occasional downpours



From Top: The start of the Stewart-Cassiar Highway; the Grand Canyon of the Stikine; Liard River Hot Springs.