



Kootenay Lakes' East Shore Back Country & Front Country Trails Inventory

The Purcell Mountains are a roughly 300-mile-long mountain range extending across southeastern British Columbia, from near the town of Golden, BC, and into northwestern Montana and northern Idaho. In the United States, the Purcells are considered to be a subrange of the Rocky Mountains, but in Canada they are considered to be separate range. The Canadian Purcells lie between the Canadian Rockies to the east and the Selkirks to the west. They are bounded immediately by the Columbia Trench on the east, and the basin of Kootenay Lake on the west.

Oliver Lake

This is a small site located in a scenic alpine basin with a shallow lake. There is a short trail on the east side of the road to the shallow lake. Access can also be gained to the surrounding ridges. Be sure to enjoy the rock built trail which takes you around the lake.

Driving Directions: From the community of Crawford Bay, head south 8km on Highway 3A, and then turn left on Oliver Rd. just past the Gray Creek Store. Follow this road for 300 meters and then turn right, crossing Gray Creek. Follow this road, now called Anderson road, for 1.3 km, staying left at the junction. Follow the main Gray Creek Pass FSR 15.0 km to the campsite.



Haystack Mountain

Access: Sanca Creek Road, 17.6 km gravel road from Hwy 3A to trailhead. A 2wd vehicle could be okay with careful driving, but high clearance is better, particularly for the last 2 kilometers.

Rating: Easy to the small, marshy, but scenic lakes below Haystack Mountain. Moderate to challenging up to the peak, depending on your route. A number of decaying log bridges across waterways along the lower part of the trail may be challenging for some hikers.

Hiking Time: 4 hours return to lakes, 5- 6 hours return to saddle below Haystack peak, 6-8 hours return to summit. Distance to summit 4.5 km, elevation gain 1010 meters.

Driving: Kilometer 0 is at Sanca Creek Road, just north of Sanca Creek Bridge. This good gravel road follows the Sanca Creek ravine deep into the Purcell range, and the main road is fairly obvious. Keep straight at 2.8 km, stay left at 9.5 km, and proceed straight at 9.8 km (where a 10 km sign may be visible.) At 14 km keep right, where the road is signposted for Haystack. At 15.6 km the road turns right, crosses a bridge, and becomes steeper and rougher. Reach the trailhead parking at km 17.6 (1673 meters elevation). Be sure to sign in at the trailhead, to encourage forestry and BC Parks to continue to maintain the trail.

The mountain peak dominating the view east from the parking area is not Haystack, but Craig Peak. Haystack does not become visible until you are very close to the lakes.

Hiking: The trail, leading you generally NE through fir forest, is distinct though rocky and narrow in places, with a moderate ascent and some rock-hopping and log balancing across small waterways. There is a lovely wooden bridge across Sanca Creek after about 10 minutes' hiking. About halfway up the trail you will cross the boundary into Kianuko Provincial Park. The trail becomes steeper. After about 1 ½ hours' hiking, you will reach the first lake. Some hikers will be happy to picnic here and then return. You may wish to wander along farther, to the right side of the first lake, or north towards Haystack Mountain on the left side through the marshy meadows.

For a more exciting hike you will want to ascend to the peak of Haystack Mountain, or at least to the saddle to the left (west) of the peak. One way is to make your way straight towards the saddle and find a route up one of the grassy chutes. These are steeper than they look and require using hands as well as feet to climb. You may find yourself

partway up and then wish you hadn't started. However for the strong and adventurous, this will be the quickest route.

A safer, easier route is available, and also leads through beautiful scenery that chute-scramblers will miss. Follow the path to the left of the first lake, aiming north towards the Haystack saddle. The path meanders gently through marshy meadows. Before you quite reach the end of the meadows, go left (west) into the trees, so that you are now traveling roughly parallel to the long western ridge that leads up to the Haystack saddle. You may find a flagged trail, but if not you will still get there. After a short jaunt through the trees you will re-emerge into more meadow areas with a small creek trickling towards the basin that you just left. Continue to travel parallel to the ridge. By now you should be able to locate the low point of the ridge, a distinct notch that is at the top of a rocky chute. You may be able to follow a flagged route all along this section to the rocky chute. Be aware: another rough trail has been flagged that will also get you up on the ridge, but for the best and most travelled route, aim farther along towards the notch, and keep going generally west. Towards the end of this easy, fairly level walk (just 10 to 15 minutes from the lake) you will find yourself facing a formidable looking wall straight ahead (west). To your right (north), find a large cairn near the bottom of the avalanche of rocks cascading down from the notch. A well used, flagged, switchbacking trail leads steeply upwards on the right side of the rocky chute. Once up on the ridge, just follow it back (east) through somewhat steep but pleasant sub-alpine terrain towards the saddle. From the broad, grassy saddle, there are satisfying views of the lakes below and the surrounding peaks. A further 40-50 minute scramble up the black heap of chunky rocks that form Haystack's peak will bring you to fabulous 360 degree views at 2683 metres elevation. Watch out for loose, unstable rock.

A note: There is often a large amount of run-off on the lower Haystack trail in the spring, resulting in sections of the trail turning into creeks and some of the many bridges being washed away or damaged. The general wetness of the area also promotes healthy populations of mosquitoes. For these reasons, locals advise that the optimal time to visit Haystack is usually in the second half of summer or in the autumn, when the mosquitoes have subsided, the water has stopped raging, and park or forestry staff have had time to do some repairs. These conditions will of course vary from year to year.

The Sphinx

(From lower parking lot - 17 km round trip with about 1400 m elevation gain. Total hiking time 7 hrs.)

From Gray Creek head east up Oliver Rd to Gray Creek Pass FS which was in excellent conditions. Park at 7 km and follow smaller logging road.

After 2hrs moderate hiking time you will reach the pass. At the pass the trail is left, over a little bridge. The summit can be reached at 3.5 hours moderate hiking time.

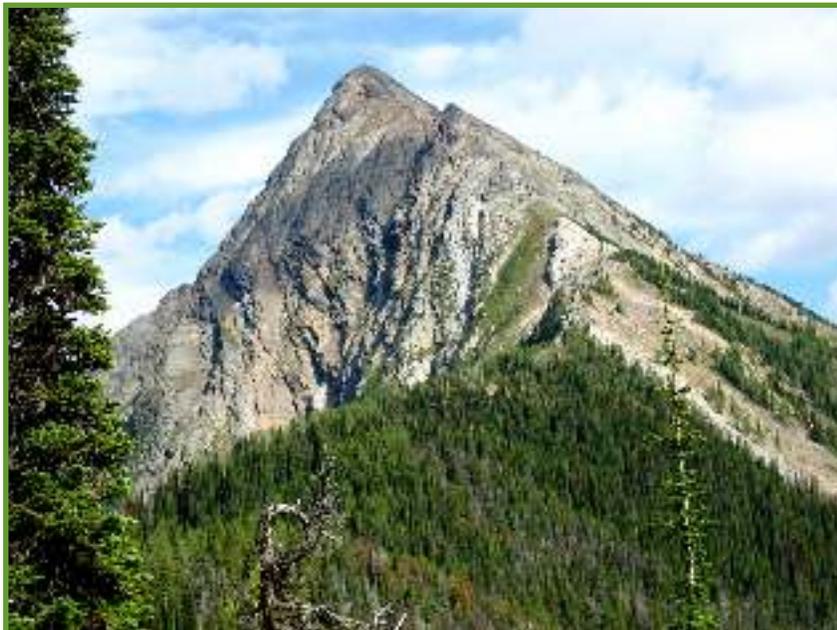
The weather and views are great, overlooking Kootenay Lake, Purcell Mountains, Selkirk Range, Darkwood Conservancy.

Mount Loki (Round trip 7.5hrs moving time)

Turn up the well signed Portman Creek Road (waypoint provided), and make your way to the PARKING waypoint - this is a decent 2wd logging road. I camped right at the trailhead. The trail starts out steep gaining 2000' in the first .8 miles. Here you have a choice between the Ridge Trail (left) and the Traverse (right).

Mount Loki is pretty high for the area - 9090 feet, prominent from just about anywhere, there is no bushwacking, no technical difficulty getting to the top, and the views are pretty awesome, so there is no wonder it is popular.

The road is in good shape, and the trail - built by volunteers - is also in good shape apart from a 200 meter section that is covered with avalanche debris.



Mt Loki

Plaid Lake Trail & Mount Crawford

(Near the summit of Crawford Mountain – 4 hours to all day, return)

Plaid Lake is located near Crawford Bay. To reach this Ministry of Forests trail you'll need a high ground clearance vehicle, preferably a 4x4. In Crawford Bay, turn off Hwy 3A at the School onto Wadds Road and keep left, proceeding past the refuse site and up the gravel Forest Service Road. Keep left at the first major junction at about 8 km. and then left again on to Spring Creek Road. From here the road climbs steeply for about five km. to the trail-head parking area. Stay on the most used road and follow the Plaid Lake Trail signs. It's about a 4.5 km. hike to Plaid Lake. The trail climbs along a razorback ridge and presents spectacular views of Crawford Bay and Kootenay Lake. From the ridge summit you can scramble up to the top of Mount Crawford, from where Golden Eagles can often be spotted. The trail dips down from the ridge into a lovely alpine meadow and then on to Plaid Lake, which teems with small and hungry Eastern Brook Trout. Snow stays late and comes early to Plaid Lake, so enquire locally about conditions before starting out.



Plaid Lake

Starship Lookout (data needed)

Thanksgiving Ridge (data needed)

Cannabis Lake

Access: High-Clearance vehicles, 4WD in mud or snow conditions, 16.5 km on gravel roads, 3485 ft. elevation gain on road from km.0 at Crawford Bay Transfer Station.

Rating: easy to moderate, total hiking elevation gain 1200 ft.

Needed: guide or good route-finding skills, map & compass, GPS unit

Hiking time- to Cannabis Ridge, 2 hours, to Cannabis Lake 2.5 to 3 hours one way.

For access to Cannabis Lake trailhead, the Crawford Bay Transfer Station is Kilometer 0 on the Crawford Creek Forestry Road.

Proceed East, passing the Hooker Creek junction at 5.4 km (stay left), the Spring Creek Road turnoff to the Plaid Lake/Mount Crawford trailhead at 6.6 km (stay right), an unnamed junction at 7 km (stay left on rough road), another unnamed junction at 10 km (stay right), a junction at 11 km (stay left) and finally to km 16 where vehicles can be parked at the last switchback. Since the turnaround at the end of the road at km 16.5 has limited space, (at 6,057 ft. elevation), you might choose to walk this 500 metres if there are more than 2 vehicles with your group. From the end of the road, make your way uphill about 250 metres, keeping to the right side of the cut block, and locate the flagged trailhead. Time from km 0 to trailhead is about 2 hours. The trail is fairly well defined but a GPS device with map and/or topo map (50,000:1) and compass are needed to avoid getting lost unless you have a guide. It is recommended to have all of the above.

After an hour of hiking, enter a large burn area resulting from a forest fire about 10 years ago. Here the trail is less apparent or missing, and your route is defined by the ridge heading west then curving towards the north. Climb to the highest point on the ridge (about 7,200ft) where Cannabis Lake may be seen steeply below to the east, total hiking time to this point about 2 hours. Many officially named peaks can be observed including Loki, Old Tom, Sphinx, Crawford. From here you can proceed generally northwest for a few minutes and then safely descend the 500 feet to Cannabis Lake; however you need to be prepared for some scrambling, bushwhacking, and boulder-hopping. The lake is situated in a lovely alpine meadow and well worth a closer visit. A 700' climb from the lake up the west ridge (this is very steep & challenging) yields an amazing view of Plaid Lake (straight down a thousand feet or so) from the narrow ridge top that separates the two lake basins.

Pebble Beach

Drive: Follow Eastman Ave. through the small town of Riondel, and continue along the North Riondel Road 3.2 km to Tam O'Shanter Creek. Here the road changes from pavement to gravel. Set your odometer to zero. You will drive past the turnoff for Chatter Creek Road on your right at .8 km. Look for the sign for Pebble Beach on your left at 2.6 km. There is a parking area for 3-4 cars.

Hike: It's about 1.5 km down to the beach on a well travelled trail. After 2-3 minutes you will cross a right-of-way or skid trail that is much wider than the foot trail, slanting down to the right. Resist the temptation to follow it. Continue on the narrow, boot-beaten track. The trail for the most part descends gradually, traversing back and forth across the hillside, with some nice views on the top section and beautiful big trees lower down. Reach the beach within 30 – 45 minutes. There is a picnic table, an outhouse, and some nice rocky outcrops to explore. Allow an hour to hike back up if you have children tired out with swimming and rock collecting.

Lockhart Creek Trail

(day trip or up to 2 days return to Baker Lake)

Lockhart Creek is located near Boswell. This trail departs from Highway 3A on the north side of the creek at Lockhart Provincial Park. It follows the creek, climbing through a magnificent grove of old growth forest and on 15 km. through a wilderness valley up to the ridge line at 7000' before dropping down to Baker Lake on the eastern slope of the Purcells. The lower 7 km. of the trail is well maintained, though some windfall may be encountered. Baker Lake offers good fishing but mosquitoes can be ferocious there! Non-hikers can also have a great time, spending the day at the Provincial Park on the highway. It offers forested campsites, picnic tables, toilets, a sandy beach, and fishing at the creek mouth.

Front Country Trails

Crawford Bay Peninsula, Provincial Park, Wetlands & Golf Course Trails

Pilot Light House Trail



(½ to 1 hour return)

Near Kootenay Bay. This short trail leads to an historic lighthouse, built in 1907. To get there, turn south on Pilot Bay Road from the Kootenay Bay ferry landing. At 4.5 km. there's a small blue and white trail sign on the right, just before the road ends. It's an short but somewhat steep 10-15 minute walk on a broad, well-maintained trail that meanders through a cool, mossy forest, leading to expansive views of the lake from the lighthouse. There is also a picnic table and outhouse for your convenience. You can also explore further south along the rocky peninsula. There are no fires allowed here and no water or other amenities. Maintained by Friends of West Kootenay Parks.

Pilot Bay Provincial Marine Park Lake Shore Trail, Sawmill Bay, Boomers Landing, Cape Horn



(from 1½ to 2 hours return, to all day)

Near Kootenay Bay. This popular trail offers land access to Pilot Bay Marine Park, with campsites, picnic tables, fire pits and toilets. Drive south on Pilot Bay Road from the Kootenay Bay Ferry Landing. At 3 km., watch for the small Pilot Bay Park sign; turn left and park. The trail climbs in the first ten minutes by granite cliffs and huge scented pines, then descends through cool forests. Take the fork to the right about five minutes past the second wooden bridge to reach the campsite. Keep left to find a pebbled beach with a huge view south down the lake, and the Lake shore Trail, if you wish to continue towards the end of the peninsula (a full day's hike).

Boomers Landing (top) to Boomers Beach



May require a vehicle drop at Pilot Bay Parking Lot. Drive 3.5 km along the Pilot Bay Forestry Road, with a high clearance vehicle. A 4WD vehicle may be required in wet conditions. Follow trail down through forest ponds and old growth trees. Trail forks at footbridge after 20 min hiking. Turn right and descend through the park (1 hr 15min) past a prominent VP to the boomers landing beach. The hike up from the beach to the VP is a common interest.

Boomers Landing (top) to Upper Levels, East West Trail



Drive 3.5 km along the Pilot Bay Forestry Road, with a high clearance vehicle. A 4WD vehicle may be required in wet conditions. Follow trail down through forest ponds and old growth trees. Trail forks at footbridge after 20 min hiking turn left after bridge. The upper levels trail descends for 30 min and then crosses the East/West Trail. You can go right and connect to the Lakeshore Trail and the park further on. You can go left and connect to the East Shore (or Homestead) Trail. Continuing straight down the Upper Levels Trail will bring you to McDonald Beach and the Lake Shore Trail.

East Shore (or Homestead) Trail



From the East/West and Cortiana Trail this trail goes north for about 1.5hrs hiking time. The trail connects to an old logging road. Head left and up to cross Crystal Creek (one of the few reliable creeks on the peninsula) Walking the road for 10 min will bring you to two short trail sections which gives the final elevation gain back to the Pilot FSR. The trail hub is 500m to the left left.

Cortiana and Cape Horn Trail (private)



The Landowners who manage the property this trail crosses has allowed unhindered access to this and the cape horn trail for generations. Continued access will require strong relationship development.

Summit VP Trail



DRIVE TO THE TRAIL HUB Drive 3.5 km along the Pilot Bay Forestry Road, with a high clearance vehicle. A 4WD vehicle may be required in wet conditions. Enjoy a 30 minute hike up to the Height of Land viewpoint and return.

Height of Land, William Fraser



From the top of the Summit Trail the Height of Land Trail begins. This is the top featured MTB Trail on the peninsula. Traveling north this cross country trail has many forest and viewpoint features. The trail becomes a road for 300m and passes McGregor Lake before connecting to the next segment. Trail Crosses the North Spur logging rd and becomes the William Fraser Trail. After a beautiful NW viewpoint the trail descends to connect with the Top of the Woodlot Trail. Follow the trail where there will be a bypass option. Continue on the Woodlot for wet, slippery rocks and roots or turn left on the easier bypass trail and check out the Will Fraser VP Trail before reconnecting to the Woodlot Trail and delivering you to Peters Rd. in Crawford Bay.

Woodlot Trail, Will Fraser Viewpoint Trail



(from bottom) From Peters Road/ Highway 3a corner travel 500 meters to the beginning of the trail at the second corner of Peters road. Follow the Woodlot Trail up for 20 min where the trail will fork. Stay left to continue on the Woodlot Trail and Height of Land. Stay right up the VP Trail for 20 min. At the next trail fork stay left and continue to the upper Woodlot trail or turn right to climb to the top of Fraser Hill. Many beautiful viewpoints including Kokanee Glacier.

Crawford Bay Wetland Trail and Creekside Trail



From Peters Road/ Highway 3a corner travel 350 meters to the beginning of the trail at the first corner of Peters road. Hike or ride into the wetlands path and go straight at the fork in the trail. Travel 100 meters and cross the boardwalk, another ,check out the beaver dam on your right, soon you are at the west beach. Turn left and follow the shoreline east, cross over the southern trail at the beginning of the airstrip and 1.5 kms you are at the east beach and it's parking lot.

Loops and Bridges Trail (Kokanee Springs Resort)



From the resorts vehicle entrance on Woolgar Rd. you can park on the other side of the bridge. This loop is best enjoyed in a counter-clockwise direction. Nice wide undulating trail offer a lovely family forest adventure. Interpretive plaques offer information on local flora and fauna. The loop does incorporate a service rd. (follow signs) which takes you to the eastern section of the loop. Continuing north along the side of the golf greens you cross a number of bridges before a steep descent to creek level. Opportunities to view wildlife such as eagles, deer, spawning fish, herons and the occasional bear are numerous. The trail passes a small wetland before bringing you back up to Woolgar Rd.

Trans Canada Trail ‘off HWY’ Trail



Accessed from the north travel 2 min up Weasel Creek FSR and park under the power lines. Hike or ride south through two new segments connecting to the original road c.1918. After 2 km the route goes down to the highway via a new winding trail segment to HWY 3A in Gray Creek where there is a highway pullout/parking. This trail can also be done from the south end.