

JOURNEY INTO THE WILD

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CANADA

KOOTENAYROCKIES.COM

BY **KAITLYN FORDE**
& WHERE WRITERS

KARI MEDIG PHOTO: ROCKWALL TRAIL
KOOTENAY NATIONAL PARK

In the southeast corner of British Columbia west of Banff National Park, the Rockies' jagged peaks rise in parallel with the Purcell, Selkirk and Monashee ranges. Valley waterways between have enabled human settlement for millennia. Around every turn, scenic terrain and charming towns await exploration.

Each community in the Kootenay Rockies has a unique story. On your journey, you'll discover beautiful vistas and meet interesting people. Whether you're trekking national park trails or pursuing Main Street shops, you will enjoy your stay.

To access the Kootenay Rockies, drive the TransCanada Hwy or Hwy 93S over the Continental Divide to mountain adventures, heritage experiences, resorts and lovely towns.

BANFF TO GOLDEN 139 km/86 mi

YOH0 NATIONAL PARK

Enter Yoho National Park (250-343-6783) to see breathtaking lakes and waterfalls. Takakkaw Falls, off Yoho Valley Rd., is one of Canada's highest. Wapta Falls, just west of Field, is worth the 30-minute access hike for its impressive width.

With over 400 km of trails, this Yoho is a hiker's paradise. Traverse valley bottoms, verdant forests and rise above the tree-line to awesome views. Step back in time at quarries that contain 500-million-year-old invertebrate fossils at the Burgess Shale World Heritage Site. Access is by tour only (Parks Canada 1-877-737-3783; Burgess Shale Geoscience Foundation 1-800-343-3006).

See the Natural Rock Bridge en route to lovely Emerald Lake via Emerald Lake Rd. A 5 km/3 mi trail circles the lake and a short trail leads to the Hamilton Falls. At Emerald Lake Lodge (1-800-663-6336) views, dining and boat rentals await.

TOWN OF GOLDEN

West of Yoho lays the quaint town of Golden. The town's deep history and its many adventure activities on land and water make it a must-stop destination on the road westward. Golden thrives by being surrounded by the highest concentration of national parks in the world; there are six in its vicinity.

The first Swiss mountain guides settled in Golden in 1899; today the town's reminiscent vibe and early 1900s architecture has unaffected charm. Downtown boasts the impressive Kicking Horse Pedestrian Bridge, North America's longest freestanding timber river crossing. Also downtown are artisanal shops and restaurants, and Spirit Square that hosts summer concerts and Wednesday farmer's markets.

Being close to so many national parks, Golden is naturally an outdoor oasis. Call Golden Gillies for a guided fishing tour (1-250-344-1217) or go it alone on one of the area's many lakes and rivers. Obtain a fishing license at Service B.C. (1-250-344-7550).

The Columbia Wetlands comprises 15,000 hectares of biologically rich wildlife and bird watching habitat. Try a guided river eco-tour aboard a 10-person luxury cataraft with Columbia Wetlands Adventures (1-888-244-7117). Canoe, kayak, and paddleboard rentals are available for a self-guided experience.

For adrenaline junkies, activities range from paragliding to heli-hiking. Road accessed Mount 7 Summit offers internationally acclaimed paragliding and downhill biking, while local ACMG-certified guides arrange mountaineering trips to Rogers Pass and Bugaboo National Park. Take a learn-to-climb course at Dogtooth indoor climbing gym (1-250-344-6444) to practice.

Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH) (1-800-661-0252) offers unforgettable backcountry experiences at remote lodges with modern amenities that are accessible only by helicopter. Their guided tours for day-visitors and overnight guests include heli-hiking, ziplining, and climbs on North America's longest via ferrata route. Marvel at the suspension bridge that hangs 600m/1968 ft over the valley!

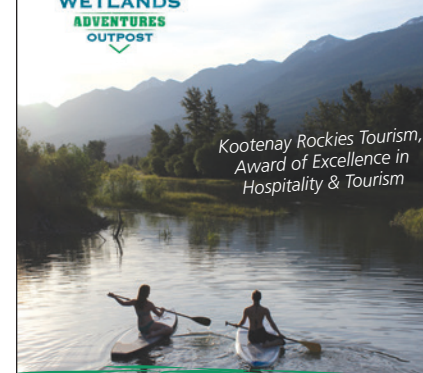
The Golden Triangle (Golden-Radium-Lake Louise-Golden) is a celebrated route for serious road bikers, while mountain bikers find thrills on Golden's Moonraker, Mountain Shadow and CBT trails. Bike shops offer rentals and maps.

Lift-assisted downhill biking is offered at Kicking Horse Mountain Resort (1-250-439-5425). Here the sightseeing gondola rises to Eagle's Eye restaurant (Canada's highest), summit hiking trails and via ferrata climbing. Ride the chairlift to an interpretive tour at the Grizzly Bear Refuge where 'Boo' resides.

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KARI MEDIG PHOTO: MORRISSY RIDGE NEAR FERNIE

Just south of town, Rocky Mountain Riders (1-877-950-7533) rents ATVs for trail riding. Just east of town, Kicking Horse River rapids from mild to wild are popular for rafting. The Upper and Middle Canyons are whitewater favourites, while heli-rafting is offered on the Lower Canyon. Experience the adventure with one of Golden's river guides (tourismgolden.com/rafting). Guided stand-up paddleboard and inflatable kayak tours are also available.

Golf anyone? The Golden Golf Club (1-866-727-7222) offers 18 holes and mountain scenery.

Events

Jun-Aug Summer Kicks free concerts in Spirit Sq
Jul 17-18 Golden 24 24-hour mountain biking race
Jul 12-13 Trans BC 6 Day Enduro Mtn Bike Race
Jul 21-23 Western Open Downhill Bike Race
Jul 29-30 BC Enduro Series East bike race
Jul 28-Aug 6 Willi X-Country Challenge paragliding
Sept 22-24 Golden Ultra trail running race

BANFF TO CRANBROOK 279 km/173 mi

KOOTENAY NATIONAL PARK

Travel the 106-km/65-mi Banff-Windermere Highway (Hwy 93 S), from Hwy 1 in Banff through the Kootenay National Park to Radium Hot Springs. Watch for wildlife (that is often abundant) and enjoy the beautiful views. The park is a startling array of contrasts of towering summits, hanging glaciers, narrow chasms, forested valleys, arid grasslands and its notable hot springs.

Short and rewarding hikes in Kootenay National Park are Fireweed Loop, Marble Canyon and the Paint Pots. Historic 1923 Kootenay Park Lodge (1-250-434-9648) offers respite en route for snacks, shopping or a meal.

VILLAGE OF RADIIUM HOT SPRINGS

The lovely village of Radium, at Kootenay Park's southern entrance, is known for its Radium Hot Springs Mineral Pools (1-800-767-1611). Set in the red cliffs of Sinclair Canyon just inside the park boundary are the huge hot pool, hot plunge pool, 25m/82 ft cool pool and Pleiades Spa & Wellness.

Find information on activities and town amenities at the Radium Hot Springs Visitor Centre (1-888-347-9331) on Main St. Lodging, shops and restaurants line Radium's two main streets. Watch for the town's resident herd of bighorn sheep.

Radium is home to excellent golf courses. The Radium Golf Group offers 18-hole championship and resort courses (1-800-667-6444), par 3 courses in Edgewater and Spur Valley are nearby, and there's mini-golf in town. Kootenay River Runners (1-250-347-9210) offers whitewater rafting adventures and family floats on the Kootenay River, Kicking Horse River and Toby Creek.

Radium area short hikes include Olive Lake, Valley View and Juniper Trail. Suggested mountain biking routes include Sinclair Creek Trail and Old Coach Trails. Pick-up the Columbia Valley Bike Trail Map at the visitor centre, and test your skills at Radium's Pump and Jump Track. Local recreation sites and TrailsBC.ca have ideas for ATViing and dirt biking. Round out your Radium vacation with horseback riding, fishing, camping, canoeing and kayaking.

Events

June 17 Brits Best Car Show
June 23-24 Radium Days loggers, music, market
July-Aug Fridays 4-9 pm Music & Market on Main
Sept 15 Columbia Valley Show and Shine classic cars
Nov 3-5 Headbanger Festival bighorn sheep learning

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INVERMERE-ON-THE-LAKE

This friendly town 20 minutes south of Radium is on the bank of one of the region's warmest lakes, Lake Windermere. Enjoy Kinsman Beach and James Chabot Park beach where Columbia River Paddle (1-250-342-7397) rents boats.

Shops and restaurants line Invermere's main street. Artym Gallery (1-250-342-7566) is a worthwhile stop with works of 65 Canadian artists, original paintings, sculptures and handmade jewellery. The gallery provides worldwide shipping with guaranteed safe arrival, and exhibits that include:

June 24 Angela Morgan whimsical people
July 1-6 Canada 150 Exhibition with Sandy Graves
July 7-13 Maya Eventov flower/landscape canvases
July 14-20 Brian Porter electric coloured mammals
July 21-27 Min Ma & Bayot Heer paintings/jewellery
Aug 11-17 Cameron Bird & Andrew Kiss plein air art
Aug 18-24 Client Photos Become Artist Creations
Aug 25-31 Various Artists floral paintings

West of Invermere, Panorama Mountain Resort (1-800-663-2929) offers golfing, mini-golf, tennis, walking trails, and chairlift assisted downhill biking and sightseeing. South of Invermere, Fairmont Hot Springs (1-800-663-4979) is home to huge mineral pools, three golf courses, mini-golf, horse-back riding and an RV resort.

CITIES OF CRANBROOK & KIMBERLEY

These cities 20 minutes apart straddle the Purcell and Rocky mountains; cycle the paved Rails to Trails pathway between the two. The area boasts many parks with hiking and biking trails, warm water lakes with beaches (try Wasa Lake), several golf courses, whitewater rafting and 100-foot high St. Mary Falls. Get travel advice at Cranbrook Visitor Centre (1-250-489-5261) on Hwy 3/95 at the north end of town, and Kimberley Visitor Centre (1-778-481-1891) by the Platzl parking area.

Cranbrook is the largest city in the Kootenays, the go-to location for shopping where options range from locally owned stores to box-store outlets. Its Western Financial Place (1-250-489-0267) offers an ice arena, squash/racquetball court and aquatic centre with huge wave pool, waterslide and hot tub. A major attraction is The Cranbrook History Centre (1-250-489-3918) that includes the Canadian Museum of Rail Travel. Their collection of 28 heritage rail cars is the largest in North America; see elegant Royal Alexandra Hall, an early 1900s banquet venue from Winnipeg's CP Railway hotel.

The city of Kimberley is a former mining town that has recreated itself as a compelling tourist destination. Attractions include the Underground Mining Railway (250-427-7365) that interprets the Sul-

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Ivan Mine and Powerhouse, the pedestrian Platzl with Canada's largest freestanding cuckoo clock and Spirit Rock Climbing Centre (1-250-427-7200). Picnic and stroll at Cominco Gardens, carpeted with 45,000 flowers. Howard Street summer farmer's market runs Thursday evenings; enjoy arts celebrations on the first Saturday of the month.

Between Kimberley and Cranbrook is St. Eugene Golf Resort & Casino (1-866-292-2020). This Spanish colonial-style hotel built in 1910 as a First Nations residential school offers riverside golf, a pool, spa, Ktunaxa Interpretive Centre and St. Eugene Smokehouse. Also near the two cities is Fort Steele Heritage Town (1-250-417-6000), a recreated late 1800s gold mining boomtown with historic buildings, steam train rides, livestock demonstrations and Wildhorse Theatre shows. Fishing anyone? Call Ultimate West Flyfishing (1-800-779-8338) for your best chance at catching trout.

Events

Jun 10-11 WASA Triathlon

Jul 8-9 Kimberley Medieval Festival

Jul 15 Kimberley Pipe Band Tattoo with Ceilidh dance

Jul 21-23 JulyFest sports, family fun and music

Jul 28-29 Motor Mountain Nationals

Aug 11 Arts on the Edge Gala

Aug 19-20 Black Spur Ultra Relay Race

Sept 16-17 Six in the Stix Biking Festival



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KARI MEDIG PHOTO: FLY FISHING ON THE BULL RIVER

CRANBROOK TO ELKFORD 161 km/100 mi

CITY OF FERNIE

Surrounded by mountains and founded in 1898 as hub for mining and forestry, Fernie is a historic town 96 km/60 mi west of Cranbrook with residents passionate about mountain culture. Visitor Information Centres are downtown (1-250-423-7016) and on Hwy 3 northeast of town (1-250-423-6868).

Fernie's 2nd Ave is the heart of downtown and a treasure of 100-year-old brick and stone architecture including the grand 1909 courthouse. Take a self-guided walking tour (guided tours run weekends), and discover unique eateries (many with patios) and shops. At Fernie Museum, *This is our Fernie* (1-250-423-7016) displays a century of hardships and achievements. If you like beer, Fernie Brewing Company (1-250-423-7797) offers microbrew samples. Sweets enthusiasts love Beanpod Chocolate (1-778-519-5008) where items are made from cacao beans on century-old machines.

Sparkling Elk River waters wind through town and provide opportunity for rafting float trips and whitewater adventures. Walking trails line its banks. Fernie RV Resort (1-844-343-2233) is alongside the river, and the adjacent Fernie Golf & Country Club (1-250-423-7773) touches its shore. The Elk River and other area rivers and lakes are renowned for fly-fishing, SUP tours, canoeing and kayaking.

Hiking routes near Fernie include an easy two-hour waterfall stroll to Fairy Creek Falls and the iconic full day Heiko's Trail over mountain passes. Mountain bike enthusiasts can choose from over 100 singletrack trails, including chairlift accessed Bike Park and Dirt Jump & Skills Park. Local sport shops like Gear Hub (1-250-423-5555) rent bikes.

At Fernie Alpine Resort (1-250-423-4655), ride the chairlift to spectacular Elk Valley views, hiking and downhill mountain biking. Book a tour at the treetop Aerial Park playground with mini ziplines, or join a guided hike, kids camp or biking clinic.

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Events

June 24 Fernie Lucky 7s x-c mountain biking fun
July 1 Canada 150 Festival market and fireworks
July 2 King of the Castle trail running race
July 10-13 Future Links Golf Championship
July 29 Elk Valley Ultra 50 km trail running
Aug 11-13 Wapiti Music Festival, Children's Festival, Highline 100 Road Bike Ride and Classic Car Show
Sept 2-3 WAM BAM Dirt Jump Jam, Tears & Gears Mountain Duathlon and Lions Demo Derby
Sept 14-17 Chautauqua Heritage Festival
Oct 1 Fernie Half Marathon, Relay & 10K

TOWNS OF SPARWOOD & ELKFORD

West of Fernie is Sparwood. Officially formed in 1966, it began as a late 1890s railway stop and exporter of ship spars. Elkford, founded in 1971, was created to house miners working north of Sparwood. Both towns are situated in the midst of the mountains and are gateways for outdoor adventure. Travellers find helpful guidance at the Sparwood Visitor Centre (1-250-425-2423), located by Hwy 3 beside a picnic site and the Terex Titan, world's largest dump truck for 25 years. Elkford Visitor Centre (1-250-865-4015) is in town on Fording Dr.

Sparwood coal mine tours (1 pm; Tues, Wed and Thurs; July and Aug) connect participants with Sparwood's roots. The tour interprets one of Can-

ada's largest open pit mines and explains how lands are being reclaimed by plants and wildlife; contact Sparwood Visitor Centre to reserve. Right in town are the The Michel Natal Sparwood Heritage Society Museum (1-250-425-6443) and large history-theme murals painted on local buildings.

Enjoy a 9-hole round at Sparwood Golf Course (1-250-425-2612) or Mountain Meadows Golf Course (1-250-865-7413) in Elkford. The Sparwood Recreation and Leisure Centre (1-250-425-0552) offers swimming, squash, racquetball and a weight room. Recreation seekers are also hosted at Elkford Aquatic and Recreation Centres' (1-250-865-4012/4017) swimming pool, hot tub, sauna, ice arena, curling sheets and tennis courts.

North of Elkford, Elk Lakes Provincial Parks is a haven for hiking, biking and other outdoor pursuits. ATV trails are outside of the park, while the Elk River boast world-class fly-fishing. Want to tent or RV? Elkford Municipal Campground (250-865-4019) has showers, free firewood and a cookhouse.

Events

June 4 Elkford Triathlon
June 8-11 Sparwood Coal Miner Days festival
June 30-Jul 2 Elkford Wildcat Days
June 30-Sept 1, Fri 4-7 pm Sparwood Market