

Mountain biking on the Seven Summits Trail in Rossland.



TRIP IDEAS

NELSON, ROSSLAND AND FERNIE IN THE KOOTENAY ROCKIES

Looking for some high altitude downtime? Visit Nelson, Rossland and Fernie in the Kootenay Rockies for mountain biking, hiking, whitewater river rafting, and soaking in the energy of mountain towns.

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Nelson

Nelson is a popular stop on the edge of Kootenay Lake. Bursting with craft shops, galleries and heritage buildings, Nelson is also a gateway to gorgeous hikes in the surrounding mountains.

For an easy day out, head for the trails in lakeside Kokanee Creek Provincial Park. For more challenge, tackle an alpine route in Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park. Post-hike, relax at Ainsworth Hot Springs, where warm mineral waters flow through a horseshoe-shaped cave dripping with stalagmites.

On summer Saturdays the place to be is Nelson's Cottonwood Falls Market. Set in Cottonwood Falls Park, a city park complete with a waterfall, this outdoor market offers everything from woodworking crafts to home baking, live music and organic food.

Organic, local fare is also a feature of Nelson restaurants, from the free-trade organic coffee at Oso Negro to the wholesome muffins at the Kootenay Bakery. Redfish Grill is a top choice for burgers, curries and fusion fare. Pizza connoisseurs will appreciate the made-from-scratch pies at Thor's Pizza – especially the Apollo's Harvest Pizza; it's loaded with fresh local veggies and roasted garlic.

Thor's is just a few blocks from the Dancing Bear Inn, one of the many nice places to stay in Nelson. It's a hostel, but with private rooms, hardwood floors and duvets, it takes budget travel up a notch.

Rossland

Mountain biking is a popular summer sport in Rossland (located about an hour southwest of Nelson). Miles of old wagon roads, pack trails and rail beds, including the legendary Seven Summits Trail, create one of Canada's leading fat tire destinations.

After a day on the trail, relax in the hot tub, sauna or spa at Rossland's Prestige Mountain Inn. Top eats include the globe-trotting curries and pastas at Gypsy at Red, and breakfast on the Alpine Grind's valley-view deck.

Fernie

The historic mining town of Fernie is east of Rossland. It's become a major outdoors destination without losing its small town vibe, and features Victorian brick heritage buildings in a mountain setting. In summer, visit Fernie for hiking, biking, and especially rafting. On a hot summer day, nothing beats shooting the class IV rapids through the Elk River Canyon. In cooler weather, bike the 610m/2,000ft of vertical at Fernie Alpine Resort.

There is a wealth of great places to eat and drink in town. Some top picks include the fresh sauces and whole wheat crusts at the homey Elk Valley Pizza Shop, and the California rolls at local sushi favourite Yamagoya. On weekends, ride the chairlift for a cold beer on the deck of the mountain-top Lost Boys Café. Another fun option? Take a tour of the Fernie Brewing Company, a local craft brewery making such offbeat drafts as huckleberry wheat and Belgian white ale.

If staying overnight, enjoy a mountain-view condo near the lifts at The Lizard Creek Lodge to relax and enjoy the spa and outdoor pool.

Transportation

West Kootenay Regional Airport in Castlegar (about twenty-five minutes from Nelson) and the Canadian Rockies International Airport in Cranbrook both have direct flights of about 90 minutes from Vancouver, or 50 minutes from Calgary. Canadian Rockies International Airport also has connections from many US cities via Salt Lake City. Nelson, Rossland and Fernie are each about 8 to 10 hours by road from Vancouver and just under 4 hours from Spokane, Washington.



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