

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES IN THE CARIBOO CHILCOTIN COAST

The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast region offers a wealth of off-the-beaten-track adventure. Explore the region's guest ranches, canyons and forest-backed coast by foot, horseback, kayak or canoe.

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Bowron Lake Canoe Circuit

The Bowron Lake Canoe Circuit is a classic wilderness experience. Paddle and hike along a 116-km/72-mi circuit of lakes, waterways and portages in the Cariboo Mountains near the heritage town of Barkerville. Dramatic and varied scenery, thick forests, wilderness camping and plenty of wildlife are all part of the adventure.

The number of paddlers allowed into the circuit is limited, so be sure to book campsites and a launch date with BC Parks' Discover Camping service.

Fishing the Lakes and Rivers

Take a rod and reel along Highway 24, or the Interlakes Highway. This winding country highway between Lone Butte and Little Fort leads to so many prime angling spots it's been dubbed the Fishing Highway. Pick from any of about a hundred lakes, all within an hour of each other, and cast away for prize trout and kokanee.

Southwest in Lillooet, don't miss the Xwisten Experience Tour to learn about traditional First Nations fishing techniques and sample some delectabe wind-dried salmon. The tour includes a visit to an extensive archaeological village site.

Hike to the Painted Chasm and the Rainbow Range

Chasm Provincial Park, just north of Clinton, is home to the Painted Chasm. This 8-km/5-mi-long, 300-m/984-ft-deep gorge boasts red, orange, pink and purple lava-layered walls. Hike through ponderosa pine forests for great views of the chasm, and watch for bighorn sheep on the canyon walls.

Equally colourful is the stunning Rainbow Range in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, BC's biggest provincial park at 981,000 ha/2.4 million ac. Follow the 7-km/4.3-mi Rainbow Range Trail to get a close-up view of these red, yellow, orange and lavender volcanic mountains

Chilcotin Packhorse Trip

Saddle up for days on the trail and nights by the campfire in the remote Chilcotin Mountains. This landscape of alpine, valley and canyon is best explored the old-fashioned way – by packhorse. Outfitters, such as Chilcotin Holidays Guest Ranch and Guide Outfitter, arrange treks along ancient game trails and First Nations' trading routes. Look for wildlife, including moose and bears, by day, and camp each night under starry skies.

108 Mile Ranch and Williams Lake Biking Trails

Swap four legs for two wheels to explore the 150-km/93-mi biking trail network

around 108 Mile Ranch. Ride through meadows and forests, past working cattle ranches, across creeks, around lakes (stop for a dip) and over rolling hills.

Ready for more? Williams Lake offers an extensive (more than 300 km/190 mi) and increasingly well-known network of trails. There is something here for all ability levels, including some serious challenges for advanced and expert riders.

Whitewater Rafting

Hang on for a wild whitewater ride on a Chilko or Chilcotin river rafting tour. This river system boasts North America's longest stretches of consistent class III and IV rapids, including the 22km/14mi of whitewater raging through Lava Canyon. Drift across ancient lava beds and past bizarre rock towers called hoodoos, watching the canyon rims for bighorn sheep, eagles, black bears and even grizzlies. Hyak River Rafting runs six-day, three-river trips starting with a flight from Vancouver to Chilko Lake.

Great Bear Rainforest

Be one of the few humans ever to spot a Kermode (Spirit) bear. This rare creature, a white-coated subspecies of black bear, is only found in the Great Bear Rainforest on BC's remote mid-coast. This area is home to some of the last intact temperate old-growth forest in the world, along with Orcas, humpback whales, eagles, sea lions, otters, porpoises, grizzly bears and black bears. To see it? Sail on BC Ferries' Discovery Coast Passage route to the village of Klemtu. Tour the area with Spirit Bear Lodge, run by the local Kitasoo/Xai'xais First Nation.

Kayaking BC's Mid-Coast

Kayak among the isolated coves, islets and inlets of the vast Hakai Luxvbalis
Conservancy Area, BC's largest protected marine area. Arrange for a "wet launch" from the BC Ferries – if conditions are right, the ship will slip kayakers right into the sea. Better yet, go with a guide: Batstar Adventure Tours arranges 5- to 10-day kayaking trips to the area, complete with a wet launch.

Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Transportation

The south Cariboo is a scenic four- to five-hour drive from Vancouver, or visitors can fly into Williams Lake or Quesnel in less than an hour. Several guest ranches also have airstrips for charter flights. Float planes serve remote coastal communities, and BC Ferries offers the Discovery Coast Passage route.