



BC Parks photo

## TRIP IDEAS

# FAMILY-FRIENDLY PARKS IN BC

BC Parks celebrated its 100th birthday in 2011. Get the family together, pack a picnic and discover nearly a thousand provincial green spaces, offering ocean beaches, freshwater lakes and rivers, ancient forests and mountain meadows.

Reserve a campsite and start planning and packing now for a fun-filled family vacation.

For more great Trip Ideas visit [HelloBC.com](http://HelloBC.com)

## Cowichan River Provincial Park

On Vancouver Island, drive an hour south of Nanaimo or north of Victoria to Duncan in the Cowichan Valley, home to the Cowichan River – one of BC's top fishing rivers. Stop at the Duncan Farmers' Market and pick up some local treats to enjoy at nearby Cowichan River Provincial Park's grassy picnic areas.

Make for Stoltz Pool Campground, where the day-use area and beach is popular for swimming, tubing, canoeing and kayaking. Paths lead to nearby Marie Canyon and 66-Mile Trestle day sites where the Trans Canada Trail awaits. Everyone gets to explore at their own speed along this former logging rail bed that has now been restored as a multi-use recreational route that links the Pacific Ocean with the Arctic and Atlantic coasts. Look way down from wooden trestle bridges that span the Cowichan River's canyon, the perfect place to snap a family photo.

Explore gentle riverside trails popular with anglers young and old. Bring along a fly rod, as Cowichan River trout and salmon make impressive catches. In BC a fishing license is required but kids 16 and under fish for free. From late summer through fall, watch for spawning salmon migrating upstream past Skutz Falls.

## Coquihalla Canyon Provincial Park

From Vancouver, drive two hours east to Hope in the Vancouver, Coast and Mountains region. Follow signs to the Coquihalla Highway and nearby Coquihalla Canyon Provincial Park (open April to October). Take a break at the Hope Visitor Centre and Museum to discover the town's links with frontier history, from Aboriginal culture to Hollywood stars: "Rambo" was filmed in the Othello Tunnels, four railway tunnels that are the Coquihalla Canyon Provincial Park's main attraction.

Follow the riverside pathway to the Othello tunnels, built a century ago when trains hauled ore and passengers to the coast from BC's eastern mountain ranges. Faced with the challenge of squeezing through the narrow canyon, it's easy to see why this is still the most expensive mile of rail bed ever built in North America.

Neither smoky nor claustrophobic, these domed tunnels are linked by two bridges spanning the canyon gorge. Bring a flashlight and make sure to hold hands in the longest passage where sunlight all but vanishes.

Spend an hour or two walking through the tunnels then backtrack back to the parking lot. For a more strenuous (but still enjoyable) route back, continue past the tunnels to the Hope-Nicola Valley Trailhead, a historic cattle drive route that loops back to the parking lot; at the highest point watch for a sitting area and historic plaque.

## Wasa Lake Provincial Park

From Cranbrook in the Kootenay Rockies, drive 30 minutes north to find one of BC's warmest swimming lakes, with the Canadian Rockies for a backdrop. Wasa Lake Provincial Park's well-spaced campsites are laid out with RVs in mind.

When temperatures soar, Wasa Lake's beaches, picnic areas and campgrounds spell relief. Take the kids and a good book to the beach where an adventure playground will keep the little ones entertained.

Just as rewarding is a day trip to nearby Fort Steele Heritage Town, where the family can wander the historic gold-rush-era town with interpreters in period costume; climb the water tower, pan for gold or meet the team of giant Clydesdale horses.

One sure way to get around and appreciate the geological forces that shaped the Rockies is on the 8-km/5-mi wheelchair-accessible Wasa Lions Way paved path that circles around the long, shallow lake.

## E.C. Manning Provincial Park

Drive three hours east of Vancouver beside the Fraser and Similkameen rivers to E.C. Manning Provincial Park, site of one of BC Parks' most easily reached mountain peaks and one of the few areas with direct access to alpine meadows. Gas up and shop in Hope or Princeton, Manning Park's western and eastern gateways. Turn in at the Lightning Lake campground to start the adventure.

Save time and energy by driving 13km/8mi uphill from the campground to Cascade Lookout. With little legs in mind, park at nearby Blackwall Peak, put water and snacks in a backpack then head into the alpine meadows along Paintbrush Trail. Picnic in wildflower meadows in July and August and try spotting the North Cascade peaks like Frosty Mountain. Scramble up a fire-spotting tower for an eagle's-eye view into Washington State.