

HIKING/BIKING IN MERRITT AREA

Coquihalla Lakes: Just inside the southern boundary of BC Park's Coquihalla Summit Park, a nice little twin lakes paddle with a private campground & lodge is the Coquihalla Lakes, where both the Coquihalla and Coldwater Rivers have their sources. The Coldwater River runs north alongside the highway while the Coquihalla River Runs South towards Hope.

The south lake is a beautiful deep blue and appears to be the deeper lake. It is longer and narrower than the north lake which is more of a round large pond with marshy edges although it has some rather deep looking holes scattered over the lake bed, A short winding channel joins the two lakes and is a nice taste of marsh paddling. From the southern tip of the S lake to the northern edge of the N lake it is about 2- 2&1/2 kms. A leisurely round trip takes about 2-3 hours (longer if you stop to fish or spot tadpoles etc.).

There is a ramp suitable for the launching of small rowboats or canoes and no gas motors over 6 horsepower are allowed. Rentals are available for canoes, pedalos & rowboats. During the July long weekend, our kids (a bit young still for canoeing unsupervised) had a great time on the pedalos, taking them out to go walking on the logs & catch tadpoles.

Lake swimming starts in July and carries on to September. However due to the altitude the evenings can be cool. The north lake especially has lots of logs to walk on, and frogging/tadpole catching can be good.

The area around the lakes is home to beaver, brown bears, grizzly bears, cougars, deer, moose, lynx, many types of birds including eagles and hawks, loons, all sorts of ducks and geese and, of course wild rainbow trout in the lakes. You won't catch one every minute but when you do - look out! Average catch around 1-1&1/2lbs. Best with a fly rod in the Spring or Fall.

Biking - These lakes along with the lodge are situated on the the Trans Canada Trail which includes sections of the Kettle Valley Railroad. This is a very popular ride stretching from Hope in the west of the province to Nelson in the east. The best known sections are around Kelowna (the Mara Canyons) and from Penticton, **past the Coquihalla Lakes**, down the Coquihalla Canyon to Hope.

On any section you are likely to meet fellow cyclists from all over the world. For the true Mountain Bike afficionado the local mountains contain miles of mountain trails from the simple to the extreme.

Directions: Access is quick and simple from Vancouver, about 2 hours from downtown, through Hope and up the Coquihalla Highway(5) to Exit 228, all on 4 lane highways. The turnoff is just North of the toll booths but before the Coldwater Provincial Park turnoff.

Coming South from Merrit look for the sign & turn left. If you hit the toll booths you've just missed it.

You can easily see the lakes from the highway.

Merritt Info Center Trails: These trails are a fun short little ride to get your legs warmed up before tackling the big stuff on Iron Mtn. There is a great viewpoint at the top with a picnic table. I recommend taking the loop by starting left at the bottom.

Directions: The Merritt Tourist Information Center is located at the junction of Highway 5 and Highway 97C. The trailhead for the info center trails is located immediately behind the info center.

Kane Valley Trail: The Kane Valley area offers many trails and loops for beginner-level bikers to intermediate riders. In the winter months, the Kane Valley trails serve as XC ski slopes. Also every year, towards the end of June, the "Kane Valley Classic", a fun and low-key mountain bike race is held. Pick up an area map at the BC Ministry of Forest Office for more detailed information. Also on-sight maps and signs will help you stay on track.

Directions: From Merritt, take Hwy.#5 east towards Kelowna to Kane Valley Rd. Go up the long hill, and having passed its top, there'll soon be a sign for the Kane Valley XC ski trails. Turn right onto the gravel road and park at the parking lot, which is marked by a signpost.

Hill's Homestead Loop: is part of a new trail in the Nicola Nordic Ski Club trails in the the Kane Valley south of Merritt, BC.

Directions: Getting there ... The Kane Valley is centrally located on British Columbia's Coquihalla Highway network. The Valley lies 20 minutes south of Merritt, an hour west of Peachland and an hour north of Princeton.

The best winter access to the ski area is via the Kane Valley Road which joins Highway 5A/97C near Corbett Lake, 18 km south of Merritt.

Access to the skiing area is also possible from the western end of the Kane Valley Road near Kingsvale. Take exit 256 (Coldwater Road) on the Coquihalla Highway (Highway 5) and turn north towards Merritt along Coldwater Road until Kane Valley Road. Turn right.

The Swakum Mountain: allows you to ride fairly early in the year, since it is usually the first that is snow free and dry in spring. Swakum Ridge is for intermediate to advanced bikers, starting off with jumps, and so on, reminding you off what is typical to north shore rides. Parts of the trail are through trees, and you'll cross the road several times. After the second crossing there are some cut offs, leading you down. The trail ends at the 6 km sign on the road where you came up..

Directions: From Merritt, take Hwy #5A (NOT the Coquihalla Hwy) towards Kamloops. Pass the Ministry of Forests building, and immediately after that, take the next road (gravel) left which is not signed (that's the Swakum Mtn. Road). Stay on this road to a culvert, and after the culvert the road is paved. It crosses under the Coquihalla Hwy, turning back to gravel and then starting to climb. Look for signs stating the distance from the highway. At the 11 km sign, you'll cross a cattle guard and come to a clearing on the right side of the road. A double track trail takes off from there; the bike trail is marked with ribbons.

The Notch: It starts off at the parking lot at the meadows and follows the Cow Trail for some time, before taking off at a well marked intersection. There's a steady climb to the top, with a fast single track descent. The notch itself is a rock chute that drops about 2 feet at the start of the descent. Part of the climb has been named the Bair Blitch; you'll figure out why. You can ride the Notch in reverse direction, i.e. heading up Inside Passage, and then ride down, however it's not worth it. Total distance is about 6.5 km.

Jp Cool: This trail starts at the 3rd cattle guard, i.e. where Cow Trail comes out. A very fun twisty single track, intermediate technical level. At the end, you can take Sanchez back to the road, or Rock Garden back to the parking area. Total distance is about 3 km.

Rock Garden / Bent Tree: This trail starts off where it meets with Sanchez and JP Cool. First, there's a rocky climb, and later it passes below a bent tree--you're where the name comes from. Try the teeter-totter (advice from the local experts). Technical difficulty for intermediate riders; the trail comes out at the meadows. The trail distance is about 2.5 km, and can be ridden in either direction.

Directions: In Merritt, at the junction Voght St. and Nicola Ave. (use the 7-eleven as a landmark), go south on Voght St and cross the bridge over Coldwater River. Turn left onto Mid Day Valley Road, which will turn into gravel at some point. You'll pass two cattle guards, and about 300m after the second one, you'll come to the meadows, where you park. There are trails going in several directions. You are there.

Too Much Info: is a newer trail that is now being added onto with other side trails that offer a higher difficulty of riding. The trail is built in such a manner that it can be ridden quite easily uphill, but it is bermed out and can be ridden downhill for an excellent ride. The Godey Creek Connector and Ursa Major branch off from Too Much Info. At the summit of the trail there is a bench under a big tree which is a nice spot to have a snack and prepare for the descent. The trail includes "The Big Easy" a ten foot tall log ride that is as wide as a sidewalk. It is quite the experience

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98: Is a great downhill/freeride trail. It has some steep sections and some challenging stunts to keep advanced riders off of their seats. It was the first all mountain trails built in Merritt. However it is still a great ride.

Directions: From 7-11 in Merritt take Nicola Ave. south (7-11 will be on the right) to the Coquihalla towards Vancouver. Travel along the highway for 10 minutes and take the Comstock Road exit. Follow this road under the highway. The road turns to gravel. Stay left at the first fork. Another road will join from the left, just continue on straight though. At the next fork there is a log structure on the side of the road, go left here. This road takes you to the top of Iron Mountain. Close to the summit there is a road to the left, this will take you to a radio tower and the trailhead for "Hornet". Staying right will take you to another radio tower for the "98" and "99" trailheads. Going down the "99" trail will bring you to "Treats".

Coco Bonk: A cross-country rider's scenic paradise. Open grasslands and rangeland

Directions: On Highway 97c going out of Merritt. The Lundbom Lake turnoff is 5km past the tourist info center towards Kelowna. Once on the Lundbom lake road drive 5km to the first and only left hand turn immediately before the cattle guard at Lundbomb lake. Drive 50m up this road and park. To start, ride down the double track, cross a cattle guard, and follow the winding road along Hamilton Lake. Take the first major road to your right and up the draw, you should see trail markers soon. Near the end of the trail stay on the main road until you reach Tent Lake. The trail ends further along the Lundbomb Lake Road.

Cow Trail: Starting from the parking lot at the meadows, you follow a road for the first 0.5 km, before heading off left. This is a well marked trail, single and double track, with a technical rating for beginners. It meets with the end of Notch, Inside Passage, and JP Cool, so there are also lots of options for the more advanced riders. It can be ridden in both directions. The total distance is about 3.5 km.

JP Cool: It starts at the 3rd cattle guard, i.e. where Cow Trail comes out. A very fun twisty single track; intermediate technical level. At the end, you can take Sanchez back to the road, or Rock Garden back to the parking area. The total distance is about 3 km.

Sanchez: Sanchez trail takes you to the end of JP Cool. A very fun, twisty single track through a burned area. It ends up on a road; go left and climb back up to the main road.

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Hornet: is one of the newer trails on Iron Mountain. It offers a rapid decent all the way down to the Tourist Information Center in Merritt, where you can grab an ice cream after the ride.

Directions: from 7-11 in Merritt take Nicola Ave. south (7-11 will be on the right) to the Coquihalla towards Vancouver. Travel along the highway for 10 minutes and take the Comstock Road exit. Follow this road under the highway. The road turns to gravel. Stay left at the first fork. Another road will join from the left, just continue on straight though. At the next fork there is a log structure on the side of the road, go left here. This road takes you to the top of Iron Mountain. Close to the summit there is a road to the left, this will take you to a radio tower and the trailhead for "Hornet". Staying right will take you to another radio tower for the "98" and "99" trailheads. Going down the "99" trail will bring you to "Treats".