

# *Air Highways*

Magazine of Open Skies



**The Alaska Highway**  
**Klondike Memories**  
**Canada's Yellowhead**  
**Columbia Valley to**  
**Icefields Parkway**  
**Rockies Romance**  
and more ...

**ROADS** *To Adventure*

# THE ALASKA HIGHWAY: A MARVEL

*There's a land where the mountains are nameless  
And the rivers all run, god knows where.  
There are lives that are erring and aimless  
And deaths that just hang by a hair.  
There are hardships that nobody reckons  
There are valleys unpeopled and still  
There's a land, how it beckons and beckons  
And I want to go back, and I will.  
Robert W. Service*

Imagine you are a time traveler. The year is 1942. The month is February - and our whole world is gripped by total war. For the moment, Axis forces hold the initiative, and for weeks following the Pearl Harbor disaster, every ship leaving North America's Pacific ports is threatened. The president's directive is clear: Furnish a supply route to the network of northern airfields - an overland route to supplement our air and sea lanes; one secure from attack." Approval comes swiftly, and the task begins, with end points set up by the military at Dawson Creek, BC. and Big Delta, Alaska. Overnight, the entire North mobilizes, as the rugged Trail of '42 rivals the famous Trail of '98 in worldwide focus. Those of us living in the Yukon at the time felt suddenly in the forefront of the action. What some called North America's

greatest construction project since the Panama Canal began as a marvel of mobility at the time. U.S. Authorities combed the entire coast, seeking available water transportation, creating a patchwork flotilla of yachts, cargo vessels, tugs fish boats and barges. This story is from the opening of a half hour commemorative video, written by Jerry W. Bird for the Canadian Government as a salute to the Alaska Highway's 50th Anniversary.

## **Land and sea bridge**

The Alaska Highway was also a massive sea-bridge, spanning the coastal fjords of the Inside Passage to historic Skagway, then over the White Pass by narrow-gauge railway to Whitehorse on the Yukon River, or up-coast to Valdez, Alaska,

near Anchorage. Inland, a 500-mile connection existed via rail and dirt road, from Edmonton to the staging point at Dawson Creek, BC. Mere dots on the map soon became feverish anthills of activity, as mountains of supplies and acres of equipment were stockpiled along the way. The fleet of paddle wheelers that plied the Yukon since the Gold Rush of the 1890s was pressed into service, since there were no real roads connecting the territory's main communities.

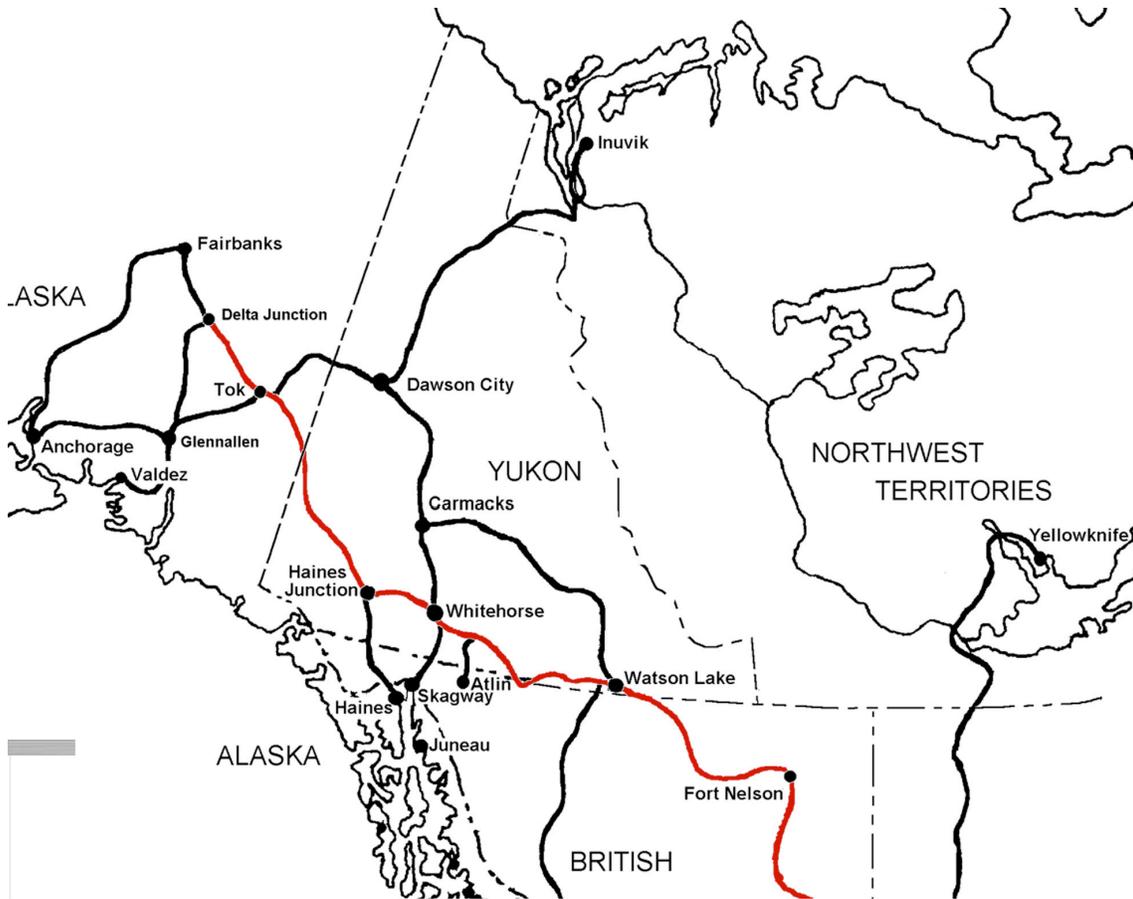
Brutal Climate: Reconnaissance, location work and a massive construction effort began simultaneously. By float plane, military aircraft, on foot, by pack horse, cat-train or dog sled - they traversed hundreds of miles in a few frantic months - up around, through and over some of the world's toughest terrain. The climate was brutal as anywhere on the globe. Elsdon Gladwin, first Canadian Army officer to drive the Pioneer Road described it to me.

"Those U.S. troops - I felt sorry for them to begin with - then was amazed at what they did. If you weren't there, you just couldn't understand it. I saw fellows so tired, they were ready to drop in their

tracks. It was rush-rush-rush! Fellows were doing 18 to 20 hours a day on bulldozers. One was up to his neck in ice water repairing timbers in subzero weather. God, I admired them! Most were southerners - they'd never experienced cold like that. And in the summer, it was mosquitoes - like they'd eat you right there, or pack you away to eat at home."



# OF WORLD WAR II ENGINEERING



In spite of muskeg, mountains and permafrost, the pace continued unabated. It was a partnership between army and civilian contractors of an unsurpassed scale -leading to the final breakthrough at Beaver Creek, near the Yukon-Alaska border. A formal ceremony at Soldiers Summit by Kluane Lake marked the event. The move by FDR earlier that year proved to be more than an eleventh hour decision. By December of '42, as convoys rolled up and down the Pioneer Road, forces of the Japanese Empire were already dug in on Alaska soil, preparing for the assault we all expected.

The preceding is from a half-hour documentary video, "Alaska Highway - the First 50 year," written by Editor Jerry W. Bird for the Alaska Highway's 50th Anniversary. This historic event was celebrated along the entire route, through British

Columbia, Yukon and Alaska. Thousands of veterans, both army and civilian workers who participated in building the "Trail of 42" plus others involved in upgrading the highway to its present status, joined the reunion. This world scale project helped create a vast air bridge to Russian Siberia and the Orient - the foun-



dition for today's Air Highway to the Pacific as envisioned by Grant MacConachie, and early bush pilot from Edmonton, who later founded Canadian Pacific Airlines. Many airport locations, such as Dawson Creek, Fort St. John and Whitehorse were mere dots on the map at the time. All of them are profiled in Air Highways Magazine. As a guide to the area's attractions, the Air Highways Supermap traces all routes by land, sea and air. This includes the Overland and Marine Highways to Alaska, the Cassiar, Klondike, Dempster and Mackenzie. Connecting airline routes and ferry routes are also

included.

Construction

## BACKGROUND

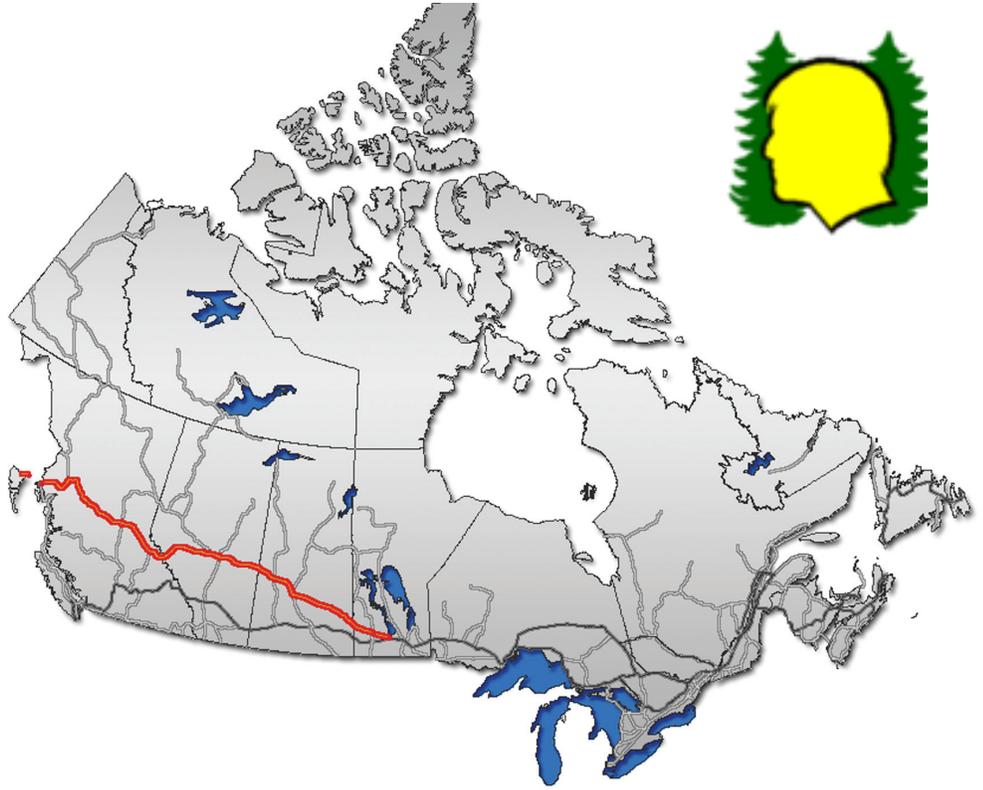
Proposals for a highway to Alaska originated in the 1920s. Donald MacDonald dreamed of an international highway spanning the United States, Canada and Russia. In order to promote the highway, Slim Williams originally travelled the proposed route by dog sled. Since much of the route would pass through Canada, support from the Canadian government was crucial. However, the Canadian government perceived no value in putting up the required funds to build the road, since the only part of Canada that would benefit was not more than a few thousand people in the Yukon.

# THE TRANS CANADA YELLOWHEAD

*“Come out O Little Mocassins  
and frolic on the snow  
Come out O tiny beaded feet  
and twinkle in the light  
I’ll play the old Red River reel,  
you used to love it so,  
Awake, O Little Mocassins  
and dance for me tonight.”*  
Robert W. Service

**I am the Yellowhead ...**  
by Jerry W. Bird

My vast domain spans half of Canada, the world’s second largest country, with ports facing three great oceans. I follow the trails of natives and voyageurs westward from Lake Winnipeg and the forks of three historic rivers to the misty \*Haida Gwa’ii, where British Columbia meets the North Pacific. Near majestic Mount Robson, Canada’s highest peak, my second branch meanders south via Kamloops to Hope, gateway to the Fraser Valley. Crossing me is a journey into history, with Indian encampments older than Egypt’s great pyramids, pristine national and provincial parks, ancient shrines and battle sites. Ethnic dances and pageants salute every facet of Canada’s heritage, and if you love the magic of serendipity, a new surprise awaits around each bend. If you find some parts



of the country a little “behind the times “ ... a popular Saskatchewan Tourism poster says, “Count yourself lucky. You’ve discovered the true Canada.”

## **Where to start?**

Get a copy of my official Road Map, or a reasonable facsimile? Stretch it out on the table or across the hood or your vehicle. Glancing from east to west, you’ll see that my eastern terminus is Winnipeg, Manitoba at the foot of two large lakes. Tracing my path westward, I parallel the North Saskatchewan River to Edmonton, and follow the Athabaska River into Jasper National Park, Canada’s Rocky Mountain playground. Further west near Mount Robson, I give motorists the option of heading directly west via Prince George, or south via Kamloops to the town of Hope at the entrance to the Fraser Valley and port of Vancouver. On these segments I follow the North Thompson, the

Mighty Fraser and Skeena Rivers. Canada’s Historic Route. To begin your journey down my pathway to pleasure, imagine your auto or RV is a time-capsule, as you cruise along this broad ribbon of Canadiana, in the wake of nomadic hunters, voyageurs, missionaries, traders, sod-busters, fortune-seekers and railroad builders. Before we dim the lights and start the movie, you’re curious to know how the name Yellowhead was derived -- right? In the 1870s, a roving Iroquois Metis guide, dubbed Tete Jaune for his golden locks, gave title to a mountain pass near Jasper House, and gained instant immortality. Fly-Drive Holidays are all the rage, in an age when time has become more valuable than money. You can fly the “Air Highways” to dozens of gateway airports from east to west, then take your pick of ground transport, be it an automobile, van or RV rental or Via Rail Canada’s Yellowhead- Skeena Route

# HIGHWAY: MANITOBA TO PACIFIC

to Prince Rupert.

A Taste of Canada. I appeal to nature lovers and adventurous souls with a taste for the finer things. So, get out the fishing rod, thermos jug and picnic basket! This great drive might easily be called a Great Canadian Taste Tour. Why? -- the Yellowhead crosses and parallels famous rivers and nameless streams, skirts many lakes great and small, visits orchards, ranches, farmers markets and unique dining spots. You can feast on Winnipeg Goldeye, rainbow trout, Pacific salmon, Alaska king crab, oysters, mussels and clams, prairie chicken, moose steak, buffalo burgers, award-winning Alberta beef and Okanagan wines. Add the world's finest cereal grains and 1001 varieties of ethnic fare -- how near to heaven can you get? And if you like to sing on long car trips, there's always a cinematic backdrop to enhance the performance; prairie skies, tumbleweed, moose pastures, rippling waterfalls and pristine mountain lakes. Can't you hear Rose Marie's "Indian Love Call" echoing in the distance? An Expanding Panorama. To those who cherish folklore and love to collect anecdotes of Canadian history, a trip along my ribbon of asphalt is a veritable feast. Each native or ethnic village, national park and historic site along my path tells its own story, of an event, place or special person who left his or her mark. All contributed to the fabric of Canada, Often it is the foreigners who see the treasure most clearly. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes compared Canada to an expanding flower; "Wherever you look you see some fresh petal unfolding." Sir Win-

ston Churchill spoke of Canadians, "There are no limits to the majestic future which lies before the mighty expanse of Canada, with its virile, aspiring, cultured and generous-hearted people." A Picture Perfect Tour My territory embracing the best of four great provinces is a Bonanza for photo lovers, be they shutterbugs or professionals. On discovering so many amazing photo ops - birds and wildlife, cultural treasures, glories of nature - big city activities - small town events -one could easily add a day or two to their travel agenda. Lucky you! What People Say About Yellowhead

"The way of yesterday's fur traders has become the way of today's smart travellers; no other route offers so many national and provincial parks."

## Manitoba Section

A number of trails are remembered in Canada's history books. The greatest of them all, the old Northwest Trail extending from Fort Garry to Edmonton Trail, and the Hudson's Bay Trail.

When the great buffalo hunt of 1840 was organized, no less than 1,210 Red River carts took the trail west from Fort Garry onto the southwest plains. It was truly the beginning of the Trans Canada

Yellowhead Highway as we know it today.

Beginning at the Forks, this trail was, for more than fifty years, the main artery of all the trails into the West. Historically speaking, the Trans Canada Yellowhead Highway is the way of the pioneers. One of the World's Greatest Drives.

It provides access to five National Parks, three National Historic Sites, and more than ninety Provincial Parks. No wonder the Trans Canada Yellowhead is known as the "Park to Park Highway"

The Trans Canada Yellowhead boasts excellent year-round road conditions, hundreds of kilometers of four-lane highway with wide shoulders and gentle mountain grades and contours. So it's easy to enjoy the drive, especially since the Yellowhead is the only highway that travels between the mountains instead of over them. That means lower fuel bills, less vehicle wear and tear, and spectacular scenery Of the five passes through the Rockies, the Yellowhead Pass is by far the most gentle.

Continued





## Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site

North America's oldest stone fur trading post stands as a lone sentinel on the Red River. Launch point for York Boat brigades, off to Hudson's Bay, Mackenzie or Athabaska Country, and Red River carts bound for Minnesota, it was a bastion of Empire. Plan to stay awhile - fresh bread's baking in the stone oven at Governor Simpson's Big House - dinner's on, and a magic lantern show is about to tell the fort's unique story.

It's a short drive to Portage La Prairie, Mile "0" on the Yellowhead Highway. Here, muscles of steel were needed to tote one's canoe overland. Today, Portage is a major food processing center, amidst some of the world's richest farmland. Lake Manitoba's beaches bring fond memories from my air force days. Macdonald Air force base, near Portage, was my hub of activities for several years as an RCAF weatherman --it was a fascinating area. I met a group from Southport at the Abbotsford Airshow and was pleased to learn that the city's other base is alive and thriving as a training and technical center. You'll hear much more about their projects in a future issue of Air Highways Magazine.

Wis, Minnesota/ Chicago, Illinois  
Charter Destinations

Canada: Victoria, British Columbia  
Caribbean: Montego Bay, Jamaica/  
Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic  
San Jose, Costa Rica / Varadero,

Cuba

Europe: London, UK / Frankfurt, Germany

Mexico: Acapulco,/ Cancun/ Cozumel/ Ixtapa/ Manzanillo/ \a

### Exploring Manitoba:

At Minnedosa, voted Manitoba's most beautiful town, a side trip leads to Riding Mountain National Park. In this "island of the prairies", buffalo roam and 500 species of wildlife thrive. Remember when we were kids, wolves used to whistle -- right? Well you can take wolf howling lessons here, but the Plains Indians' relationship with the buffalo is the top item on the agenda. Bathers can enjoy Clear Lake's sandy beach; those afoot and on horseback, can rove the meadows, aspen groves and evergreen forests on a network of trails. Steeped in the history of hearty voyageurs and European culture, Winnipeg's sleek skyline welcomes you to a landscape where massive herds of buffalo once roamed across the Prairies. For information, contact:

Tourism Winnipeg, 279 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2B4  
Ph: 204-943-1970, 1-800-665-0204 (Toll-free in North America)  
Fax: 204-942-4043

WpgInfo@Tourism.Winnipeg MB.Ca  
Winnipeg International Airshow please call for times  
74 Shamrock Drive, Winnipeg, Manitoba

### Portage la Prairie

Producing this particular profile will be a pleasant and enjoyable task, since I spent some

memorable times in the Portage la Prairie area, while stationed at Royal Canadian Air Force Base Macdonald, a few miles from the city. I will never forget the glorious summers at the lake and the electrical storms which filled the entire sky on short notice.

The Southport airbase, even closer to Portage, is still thriving with a variety of new commercial services. I get an update on Southport every few years when we participate in the North American Aerospace Show. Since our magazine just started profiling the many communities, attractions and historical locations along the Yellowhead Trans Canada Highway this summer, prior to our fall trip, it may take a few weeks to complete this page. However, you can expect the entire section to expand in size quickly. Jerry W. Bird, Editor

### Yorkton: Gateway to Saskatchewan and Riding Mountain National Park

Associate Editor Muguette Goufrani and I had the pleasure of meeting with Yorkton's amiable Mayor Phil De Vos at the Yellowhead Trans Canada Highways Association's 56th Convention in Sherwood Park, near Edmonton Alberta, and plan a visit to Yorkton and area during our mid September road show. That marathon event will span the entire Yellowhead Trans Canada Highway System, and continues eastward to Atlantic City, USA, where we're presenting Western Canada at a major travel industry conference.

What fond memories, sights and sounds are in store? Many are playing in the theatre of my mind, as it's the same route I took in my Chev coupe, upon leaving the Royal Canadian Air Force for the world of media. We'll be telling the story of

Yorkton from the visitor's perspective, enhancing the road maps, visiting the local airport for fly-in tourism possibilities and adding more links and data. For now, here are some contact names and brief notes of interest. There's much more on Yorkton's web site (listed below).

Provincial Parks Map

Tourism Attractions

Western Development Museum

Ravine Ecological Preserve

St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church

Three 18-hole Golf Courses

Jaycee Beach

Godfrey Dean Cultural Centre

Crafts: Prairie Rim Gallery and Avalon Studio

Painted Hand Casino

Yorkton Exhibition

#### Area Attractions

National Doukhobour Heritage

Village

Provincail Parks at Duck Mountain, Greenwater Lake and Good Spirit Lake

#### Alberta- BC Section

Yes Virginia, there is a Lloydminster, Sask, and a Lloydminster, Alberta living peacefully, side by side. That causes a kaffuffle when daylight saving time rolls around. The town's Antique Museum honors England's Barr Colonists, and when later on, you see an onion-shaped dome or giant Easter egg on the horizon, you know you're in Little Ukraine. Vegreville is home of the Ukrainian Pysanka Festival, with its fly-in breakfast and 3 solid days of food and fun.

At Elk Island National Park, a thatched-roof dacha houses the Ukrainian Folk Museum. There's a fenced preserve, where over 400 buffalo roam, sharing the rolling hills

and meadows with moose, mule deer and elk. Poplar, spruce, aspen and birch line a network of hiking trails, and the lakes and sloughs teem with waterfowl. Sandy Beach recreation area has a 9-hole golf course. Alberta's emblem came from the wild roses, which grew in this area along the old Victoria Trail. Poetry: Little Moccasins by Robert W. Service

Edmonton: City of Big Shoulders:  
How can one help but love a city that jump-started his career. For me it all began at the Edmonton Journal, one of Canada's great newspapers. No place I know has such energy, or capacity to seize the moment. Edmontonians have always been a cocky lot, from their sports dynasties and oil czars, to politics. Even the location is cocky -- perched regally on the North Saskatchewan cliffs; its Upper Level bridge reaching from Alberta's Legislature to the University area. And who else has the audacity to build a shopping Mecca that rates seven mentions in the Guinness Book of World Records? Speaking of highs and lows, Edmonton's river valley, from Old Fort Edmonton to the Conservatory and beyond, is a tourist destination all by itself; golf courses and picnic spots. Get out and stretch your legs; this is the largest greenbelt of any major Canadian city. Edmonton as a boomtown? -- its archives tell of fur traders, riverboats, a Klondike boom, a railway boom, a land rush, and black gold that blew things sky high in '47. Legendary bush pilots, who opened up the North live again at Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame. By the way, if you love to shop, or hanker for genuine Alberta Prime Rib -- there's no provincial tax. And if I recall the jingle, "Your credit is fine with Irving Kline." Beyond the outskirts is Lake Wabamun (try saying that with your mouth full), a popular camping spot. Edson and Hinton are major stops en route to Jasper National Park. Rocky Mountain House National Historic Park (side trip) Talk about thriving on competition; the first Rocky Mountain House was raised in 1799. Weeks later, a distant relative, James Bird, helped HBC erect a rival fort. Explorer David Thompson trekked to the Columbia

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River from here in 1807, and for generations Rocky was the Northwest's richest fur-producing area. The series of forts that stood on these hallowed grounds are remembered by two stone chimneys. Other exhibits include a York boat, Red River cart and fur press.

### **Jasper National Park**

I first experienced this Rocky Mountain playground by train, sprinting off for souvenirs during a station stop. Ever since it's always been on wheels. By car you can seize the moment, cooling off under a waterfall, standing bug-eyed at a viewpoint, or catching every photo op. Allow at least an extra day for this Rocky Mountain high. Why? --Jasper Park Lodge, the Whistlers, Punchbowl Falls, Pyramid Lake, Henry House, Jasper Lake, Skyline Trail and Pochontas for starters. My choices are Miette Hot Springs -- hottest water in the Canadian Rockies, and Maligne Lake, a portrait of serenity.

Our first lodging was a war surplus tent; the most recent was at Jasper Park Lodge, where the waiter brought dinner by bicycle. Near the mouth of Rocky River, a cairn marks Jasper House National Historic Site, where a supply post was built by the Northwest Company in 1813. The park is a wildlife sanctuary, where deer and antelope play, bighorn guard the peaks, and bears are everywhere. Allow at least an extra day in the Jasper area, and enjoy a Rocky Mountain high you'll never forget. British Columbia

### **Mount Robson**

Heading westward, you approach the Continental Divide and Mount Robson Provincial Park, home of the tallest peak in the Canadian Rockies. Near Tete Jaune Cache and Valley of a Thousand Falls, the Yellowhead develops a split personality; one branch swings south along the North Thompson and Skeena; the other ambles westward to the Fra-

ser-Nechako junction. The first BC community on our great Yellowhead drive is McBride, in the beautiful Robson Valley.

### **Prince George**

is a gateway to paradise for wilderness adventurers. Former Mayor John Backhouse beamed with pride when I mentioned The University of Northern BC., the city's newest newest prize. While tourism is booming, PG's economy is forest industry-based. Centrally located, it's a key junction for BC Rail's Cariboo Line and Via's Skeena Run.

At Vanderhoof, a side trip leads to Fort St. James, founded by Simon Fraser, the explorer in 1806. At Fort St. James National Historic Site, B.C.'s oldest inhabited community salutes its fur trading past. History lives on at this authentic Hudson's Bay Trading Post, with furs, trade goods, and staff in 1890s attire. One of the west's oldest fur warehouses, a clerk's residence and a fish cache remain.

From Vanderhoof to beyond Smithers, it's lake country -- Fraser, Burns, Babine, Rose, Bulkley, Kathlyn and Tyhee Lake to name a few. Smithers, in the heart of the fertile Bulkley Valley has taken on an Alpine theme, and Hazelton on the Upper Skeena is "Totem Pole Capital of the World."

At K'san Village, tribal houses feature paintings, screens and carved interior poles, and dancers perform Indian rituals. Historic sites dot this heartland of the Tsmishian, Kitsumkalum and Gitskan, where Emily Carr made many of her sketches.

Beyond Terrace, the Skeena, called River of Mists by the Gitskan, widens into a broad lake, meeting the Pacific at Port Edwards, site of the 1889 North Pacific Cannery

### **Prince Rupert**

I first saw Prince Rupert from the deck of The Princess Louise, a CPR ship that plied the Inside Passage to Alaska, just 64 km upcoast. The har-

bor was alive with canneries, fishing fleets, coastal ferries, deep-sea ships, and a huge grain elevator. Today, you can take the world's second steepest gondola ride, enjoy an archeological boat tour, or board BC Ferries' Queen of the North for a 15-hour cruise to Port Hardy on Vancouver Island. The Museum of Northern BC has totem pole carving on site, and 10,000 year old works of art. Outdoor activity abounds in some of the wildest country on the continent. Canada's Galapagos: So you think you've conquered the Yellowhead, right? ..Wrong!--- there's still a short trip by sea to the Haida Gwa'ii, our Western Mile "0." From ..Prince Rupert your voyage to the "Misty Islands" is a salty experience. These fog-..shrouded waters of the Haida Gwa'ii or Queen Charlotte Archipelago teem with finny ..fare -- salmon, herring, halibut, rockfish, mussels, crab, starfish, sea urchin, octopus. Armadas of Gray, Humpback and Killer Whales skip along the surface. Seabirds abound, and near Cape St. James, sea lions romp and play. Isolation from the mainland has given rise to a unique subspecies of wildlife. Gwa'ii Haanas National Park Preserve is also called South Moresby. Since the park has no roads or facilities, visitors must be self sufficient. Anthony Island's abandoned village, Ninstints, is a UN World Heritage site. There are over 500 archeological and historical Haida sites.

Now you've earned bragging rights: We hope your pictures turn out great, especially the wildlife scenes (nudge, nudge). As the sun sets on the Haida Gwa'ii, and your kayak rocks gently on the tide, we'll turn off today's movie and bid good-bye. If you take the trip, send us a postcard. We're sure you'll savor every moment -- and are likely to plan many happy returns!

Check our Air Highway Supermap:

Why not consider a ferry trip to Port Hardy on Vancouver Island and back to the mainland via Victoria or Nanaimo? Contact Yellowhead Highway Association, Edmonton: 403 426 5078, or the Canoe Network (705)-647-207

# GREAT DRIVES: THE LAND OF HOT



## Hot Springs Heaven

by Jerry W. Bird

The eternal icefields wear a “necklace of thermal springs”, fed from water trapped in fissures and caverns deep in the roots of the Rockies. Raging rivers, glutted by the seasonal runoff, churn and boil like some concoction from a giant soda fountain. Oh the joys of steamy, bubbly-hot, sulfur-scented waters; Solus Par Aqua (health by water) to the Romans; a sacred rite to Canada’s native peoples, and Shangri-La to we hot springs fanatics. Speaking of natural spas, the Kootenays have them in spades; Ainsworth, Halycon, Nakusp, Ram Creek and Wild Horse. Many of these natural spas along the Columbia Valley and Continental

Divide are so enticing, you’ll want to stop the car right there and take the plunge.

### **East Kootenays and Columbia Valley to Golden, Banff and Jasper.**

: You can relax at one of the local hot spring resort locations, such as Fairmont Hot Springs, which has four pools with an average temperature of 40 degrees Celsius or Radium Hot Springs, with two springs averaging 35 degrees, both north of Cranbrook on Highway 95. Nearby and hottest of all is Lussier Hot Springs near Canal Flats, whose waters hit a healthy 44 degrees. .Map of river and area below shows access via airports and highways..

### **Cranbrook**

(See latest Airport Plan) The hub city of British Columbia’s East

Kootenays is Cranbrook, located in a mountainous region where ranges and valleys run north to south. This geographic event affects the course of rivers and human development. The city has been a major rail center since the opening of the Crow’s Nest pass, and is home of the Canadian Museum of Rail Travel. Cranbrook is the largest community in the southeast corner of the province and acts as a major service center for the region. The city is close to several skiing areas. In

summer, those opportunities turn to hiking, fishing, climbing and camping as the surrounding mountains provide all the wilderness and scenic beauty imaginable. Its primary industries include forestry and mining.

Cranbrook Airport is the gateway to the East Kootenay tourist region and is served by both Canadian Regional Airlines and AirBC, with daily scheduled flights to Kamloops, Vancouver and Calgary. The airport also houses Horizon Air, offering charter services and flight training and Mountain High Helicopters, providing charter services for both business and pleasure travellers. Though less than 30 years old, the airport is nevertheless an essential part of the community, responsible for generating around \$40 million for the regional economy annually and sustaining several hundred jobs. One of the regions latest preoccupation is in the area of golf course development. There are now ten 18-hole and

# SPRINGS & FREEZING GLACIERS

a variety of 9-hole courses with an average distance between them of only 35 k, so several can be played in a few days. Destinations to note are Kimberley, Radium and Fairmont Hot Springs, each of which has two courses as well as awe-inspiring scenery.

## **A Rocky Mountain High**

A city of some 18,000 friendly people, Cranbrook is the largest community in the southeast corner of the province and acts as a major service centre for the region. Its own primary industries include forestry and mining while the region boasts a healthy tourism industry. Cranbrook is located in a picturesque, mountainous region where ranges and valleys run north and south, guiding the course of rivers and human development. In summer, golf, hiking, fishing, hunting and climbing are popular pursuits while, in winter, skiing in the surrounding mountains provide panoramic vistas and challenging runs.

Those interested in historical sights will enjoy the award-winning Canadian Museum of Rail Travel and the turn of the century Fort Steele Heritage Town, a “living history” town where over 60 homes and buildings have been restored or reconstructed to evoke the turn of the century. Then there’s Kimberley, north of Cranbrook on Highway 95A, where you could imagine yourself in Bavaria. Outdoor oompah bands play in “Der Platzl” - the central square-

where you can also hear the sounds of the world’s largest cuckoo clock.

## **Fort Steele**

Sam Steele of the Scarlet and Gold was a family icon. His saga of heroism and grit prompted my father, Don Bird, to leave his Seattle home, enlist in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and seek a Klondike posting. Shortly after arriving in Dawson City, a local beauty crossed Dad’s path, and the rest is history. While Commander Steele roved the entire west during a long and legendary career, his name remains at an historic site, near Cranbrook. An 1860s vintage mining town in the East Kootenays, Fort Steele tops any movie set for authenticity. Behind its walls is a steam railway, a working blacksmith shop, heritage homes, hotels, a newspaper and police barracks. Actors at The Wildhorse Theater and Music Hall relive the glory days when mining was a big time operation. When the CPR went South -- so did the town’s fortunes.

## **Kimberley: Cuckoos, Gingerbread and Lederhosen:**

Ach der leiber! -- did you know that Kimberley is known as Little Bavaria, and is Canada’s highest city. Small wonder -- you can get high just breath-

ing the air! With ski runs almost on the main drag, we found ample apres ski time to quaff frosty steins of German lager, gnosh on schnitzel, and sing along to an oom-pah-pah band. On the Platzl, accordionists stroll, midst a scene of gingerbread, gushing fountains, sidewalk cafes and footbridges. Happy Hans, who dwells inside the world’s largest cuckoo clock, pops out to yodel on cue. Stop and smell the flowers at Cominco Gardens, or hop aboard the Bavarian Mining Railway.

## **The Spirit Trail:**

Four mineral pools tumble down the hillside into the Lussier river at Whiteswan Hot Springs, near a lake of the same name. Many First Nations people made pilgrimages to these sacred waters via the Spirit Trail. At Canal Flats, your map shows two mighty rivers flowing side-by-side. Great lovers in Indian folklore, the Columbia and Kootenay Rivers were pledged to remain apart until completing their separate journeys.

To the K’tunaxa peoples, Columbia Lake’s shores were a Garden of Eden, where the Creator placed his first people. Today, it’s the site

of Fairmont Hot Springs, which boasts Canada’s largest natural hot pools, a lodge, and two golf courses. The original native bath house is open to visitors at no charge. Beyond Invermere and Lake Windermere, the road forks; route



95 heading north via The Bugaboos (of Heli-skiing fame) to Golden and Yoho National Park; route 93 becomes Banff-Windermere Parkway

**Kootemik-Radium Hot Springs**

Imagine if you can -- two million litres of hot, mineral-rich water gushing from the ground each day. That's a lot of Perrier! With healing powers reputed to relieve arthritis and a list of ailments as long as one's arm, a wily Medicine Man could have made a fortune selling it by the bottle.

Known as Kootemik to local Indians, whose legend of Nipika traces their origin, the springs were popularized in the 1890s. At Radium's Aquacourt, you can soak year-round in the steamy, odorless mineral water, or swim in two outdoor pools. The Lodge has an 18-hole golf course, campgrounds and shuttle-bus.

### **Of Marble and Paint Pots**

According to experts, Kootenay National Park is an ancient ocean floor. Over 70 million years ago, so they say, it was compressed, folded like a gigantic pretzel, and sculpted into what we call the Rocky Mountains. In 1920, Ottawa bigwigs dedicated the park in a move to preserve the canyon's mineral springs, and protect waterfalls along the highway. Landmarks on the Banff-Windermere Parkway include Sinclair and Marble Canyons, Vermilion Pass and the Fireweed Trail. Heard about The Paint Pots? Would you believe they're ponds of red, yellow and orange, just like a kiddies' coloring set? The pots are fed by oxide-bearing streams, and there's an endless supply. For ages untold, Indians mixed ochre from this site with fish oil or animal fat to decorate rocks, teepees -- and each other. Near Vermilion Pass, the Alberta-BC boundary marks the summit of the Continental Divide; rivers east of here drain to the Arctic Ocean or to far off Hudson's Bay; waters to the

west flow to the Pacific.

### **Banff to Jasper on the Icefields Parkway**

Banff Park's Castles and Caves

Imagine spending twelve festive days of Christmas in a fairyland castle! Truly unforgettable, when it's the Banff Springs Hotel. During many memorable stays, I learned of the hotel's hey day from band leader Louis Trono, who was on a first name basis with the Hollywood greats. As a return to elegance, the hotel offers a new \$12 million health spa, with cascading waterfalls, mineral whirlpools and Turkish baths. The Banff Springs is an Epicurean's delight and a golfer's challenge. The first tee-off, from high above the Bow River to its far shore, still gives me goose pimples.

### **Upper Hot Springs**

After skiing Mount Norquay, hiking Sundance Canyon, or fishing Lake Minnewanka, Sulphur Mountain's Upper Hot Springs is a Banff ritual -- hot plunge, icy shower, steam bath, blanket-wrap and massage. Loose as a noodle and ready to devour an ox -- is how one usually feels after that routine. A gondola nearby will whisk you to the summit for a sweeping view of the valley. Sundance Canyon Trail leads to The Cave and Basin National Historic Site, where like honeymooners for generations past, we gazed through a telescope at surrounding peaks. Clad in Rundlestone, like most Banff buildings, this site contains displays, a theater, and tours into the misty grotto, with its emerald pools, and warm sulfur water dripping down the cavern walls. Priceless Indian relics at nearby Luxton Museum are well worth seeing.

### **The Teahouse of Lake Louise**

If you really want to seize the moment, rent a canoe, or pedal your way to Bow Falls, Tunnel Mountain, or 101 equally delightful places. Heading north west from Banff,

one can cruise the Trans Canada via Sunshine Village to Lake Louise in a breeze. For a change of pace, however, take the old road (Hwy 1A) along the north bank of the Bow River via Johnston Canyon, with its ink pots and nature walks. Chateau Lake Louise is a jewel in an exquisite crown. Talk of beauty and serenity! -- when one's creative spark needs rekindling, the Chateau is my choice. You can paddle a canoe in a scene right out of Hiawatha, or take the alpine trail to a Tea House for granola cakes and wild berry tea. The azure lake far below gets even smaller, as you climb the corkscrew path. Breathe deeply folks -- it gets to be a challenge near the top. Guess who was left standing still by a German couple in their mid 80s?

### **Jasper Sunwapta Safari**

Louise is a hard gal to say good-bye to -- but not to worry -- there's more beauty ahead. The Ice fields Parkway ranks among the world's great highroads, with glaciers standing like 100 icy sentinels. Jasper National Park begins at The Columbia Ice fields, a marvel of nature with the largest mass of ice in the Rockies. A fleet of Snow coaches traverse the Athabaska glacier, looking from a distance like ants on a giant vanilla marshmallow sundae. This seventh wonder is part of a formation that blanketed Canada for a million years. The highway follows the Sunwapta River, joining its cousin the Athabaska at Sunwapta Falls. The hottest water on the entire drive (54°C) is at Miette Hot Springs, near Jasper Lake and Punchbowl Falls. Don't worry, it's cooled to a comfortable 39° in the swimming pool.

### **Air connections**

Take the Air Highway to Cranbrook or Calgary Airport, then rent a car for this journey to Hot Springs Heaven. You can do it in high style, at any of the resorts I've mentioned, or rough

it with a pup tent, Coleman stove and eiderdown. Glancing at a map, you'll spot many glaciers, mineral spas and place names we haven't had space to mention. All I can say is -- "don't miss this Great Canadian experience, with its hot springs and freezing glaciers."