

FARMLIVING

PIONEER FLEA TRAPPER

Alberta pioneer Arthur Douglas Gregson supplemented his income by collecting fleas off animal carcasses and shipping them to England around 1900. | **Page 32**



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CELEBRATE CANADA'S 150TH

Walk on the wild side in Yoho National Park

TALES FROM THE ROAD



ARLENE & ROBIN KARPAN

We could hear the roar and feel the spray as we gazed up at one of Canada's highest waterfalls, plunging 384 metres over a sheer cliff.

Fed by glacial meltwater high above, Takakkaw Falls is the most famous landmark of British Columbia's Yoho National Park, yet getting there is an easy 10-minute stroll from the end of the paved road.

Yoho is a Cree word expressing awe and wonder. While that describes many places in the Rockies, things here seem cranked up another notch, with numerous towering peaks, raging rivers and waterfalls galore and postcard views at every turn.

More than 400 kilometres of hiking trails lead into the rugged backcountry, yet a surprising number of natural wonders are easy to enjoy.

Chief among these is Yoho Valley Road to Takakkaw Falls.

Open late June to early October, this 14-kilometre road packs a lot of scenic places in a short distance. It starts with roadside pull-offs for views along the Kicking Horse River, designated a Canadian Heritage River for its stunning scenery, wealth of fossils, and its role in Canadian history when Kicking Horse Pass was chosen as the Canadian Pacific Railway's route across the Rockies.

Partway up the road, a viewpoint looks over the famous spiral tunnels where, in the early 1900s, the railway was not only cut into the solid rock of the mountain, but formed into a spiral to solve the problem of building a gradual grade on the valley's steep slopes.

We were fortunate to see a long train negotiating the spiral, a rather disconcerting sight at first glance. It looked as if one train was heading east into the tunnel, while another was heading west out of another tunnel 15 metres higher.

Everything is steep in Yoho. The road to Takakkaw Falls has switch-back turns that are so tight that large RVs and trailers aren't allowed. We saw some longer vehicles backing up the hill just to negotiate the tight corners.

While Takakkaw Falls may be the end of the road, for avid hikers it's just the beginning, with several breathtaking hikes into the jagged peaks, glaciers and more waterfalls.

The other must-do drive is the short road to Emerald Lake. At the



TOP: Emerald Lake is surrounded by mountain peaks.

ABOVE: Rocks for a natural bridge for hikers.

LEFT: Takakkaw Falls is one of Canada's highest waterfalls.

| ARLENE AND ROBIN KARPAN PHOTOS

first stop at Natural Bridge, the powerful swirling action of the Kicking Horse River has carved its way right through solid rock.

Picturesque Emerald Lake is surrounded by magnificent peaks, but what makes the setting special is the almost unreal colour of the water, a vivid greenish-turquoise blue.

Several short and long hikes start near the lake, but one walk that shouldn't be missed is the easy five-kilometre stroll around the

edge of the lake. It's amazing how the shades of colour in the water change depending on the time of day, the direction you face and light conditions.

Our favourite short hike (five km return) was the trail to Wapta Falls near the eastern end of the park to see the largest falls on the Kicking Horse River. The walk through thick forest eventually comes to a vantage point on a high bank where you look over the massive wall of water 30 metres high and 150

metres wide.

Optional paths lead down the slopes for a head-on view of the falls and the river.

A major Yoho claim to fame is the site of the Burgess Shale, a collection of ancient fossils more than 500 million years old that are so significant that they contributed to the understanding of evolution.

The fossils were preserved in sedimentary rock in an ancient sea long before the mountains were formed.

The park organizes guided hikes to the sites (some are quite strenuous), or you can see impressive samples at the park visitor centre in the townsite of Field on the Trans-Canada Highway.

All national parks are offering free admission during 2017 in celebration of Canada 150. For more information, visit www.pc.gc.ca.

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