

Total Days: 2-4, 456 km

THE FREEDOM HIGHWAY

WILLIAMS LAKE TO BELLA COOLA

The Freedom Highway, Highway 20, runs 456 kilometres from the inland city of Williams Lake to the coastal town of Bella Coola. This scenic, winding road rises from 945 metres on the Fraser River banks to 1585 metres in the Coast Mountains. The route is one of diverse landscape, ranging from grassy plateaus and rolling meadows, to picturesque canyons and high mountain peaks.

In August 1953, after having donated their time, energy, equipment and money to develop the last portion of Hwy 20, the residents of Bella Coola celebrated a new-found freedom and an access to the economic centre of Williams Lake. Prior to that time, the only way to or from Bella Coola was via a steep pack-horse trail that joined Hwy 20 at Anahim Lake.

An undisturbed land awaits those driving through the Chilcotin -wide open spaces, miles of rivers, crystal clear lakes, and distant snowy mountains.

DAY I

Distance: Williams Lake to Anahim Lake -316 km
(4 to 5 hours drive time)
Direction: East on Hwy 20

Points of Interest

Williams Lake

The Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin tells a colourful history of the area including the unique history of the Williams Lake Stampede (the Stampede is the end of June to the beginning of July). The Museum is also home of the BC Cowboy Hall of Fame. Birders should visit the Scout Island Nature Centre that overlooks a staging area for migrating waterfowl. Williams Lake is the commercial heart of the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and offers excellent accommodation and dining. Stop and take a break at the Williams Lake Tourism Discovery Centre. In addition to some excellent travel information, there are numerous displays and some wonderful pictures of the Cariboo area. Note: Gas up before leaving Williams Lake.

Upper Fraser River Canyon

A viewpoint 24.5 kilometres west of Williams Lake provides excellent view of the upper Fraser Canyon.

Riske Creek

This first small community you arrive at, Riske Creek is situated about 52 km (32 mi.) west of **Williams Lake**, and is the gateway to a vast number of adventures in the Chilcotin. Although the earliest activity in the area was trading, the 1860's saw cattle ranchers arrive. The village of Riske Creek is the site of one of the earliest ranches in the area owned by a Polish gentleman, L.W. Riskie.

Farwell Canyon

Take a side trip 15 km south of Riske Creek on Farwell Canyon Rd, to the 450 hectare Junction Sheep Range Park, home to 500 California Bighorn sheep. Continue a further 5 km to Farwell Canyon to view hoodoo rock formations and native pictographs.

Hanceville

(90.5 km west of Williams Lake)

Stop for a break at Lee's Corner, Hanceville, where a plaque describes Norman Lee's ill-fated 1889 cattle drive to Dawson City. The area surrounding Hanceville provides spectacular view and landscapes. Plunging canyons, rivers and sandstone and lava formations are just some of the natural attractions this area has to offer.

Ts'yl-os Provincial Park

Ts'yl-os (Pronounced "sigh-loss") Provincial Park was established in January of 1994 as a wilderness area set aside to protect vegetation, wildlife and fish habitats, cultural values, and special features. The diverse ecosystems in the park remain largely undisturbed by human activity, making this park an ecologically significant area in the province. Chilko Lake, the largest, natural high-elevation freshwater lake in Canada, dominates the park. The 233,240 ha park and Chilko Lake can be reached on a side trip down the Nemiah Valley Road from Hanceville.

Alexis Creek

(21.5 km west of Hanceville and 112 km west of Williams Lake)

Alexis Creek, named after Chief Alexis, chief of the Chilcotin Indians.

Services available are RCMP station, a Red Cross Station, church, British Columbia Forest Service office and school as well as post office, store and gas station.

Bull Canyon

(9 km west of Alexis Creek)

Bull Canyon Provincial Park, 9 km west of Alexis Creek, is a scenic spot by the Chilcotin River, with sheer rocks and caves. It was the site of an historic battle between the Tsilhqot'in and Secwepemc peoples.

Puntzi Lake

(45 km west of Bull Canyon)

A feeding ground for White pelicans in the spring and summer and Trumpeter swans from fall to freeze-up. Also known for its kokanee fishing.



Tatla Lake

(55 km west of Puntzi Lake, approximately the half-way point on Hwy 20,221 km from Williams Lake)

Offers food and other necessary supplies. Situated on the edge of the Chilcotin Plateau, this area provides access to wilderness fly-in lakes and rivers, Nordic ski trails and excellent mountain hikes. There are several resorts and guiding operations in the area.

Rainbow Range



The multicoloured 2,500 metre peaks are visible north of the highway. An ancient volcanic area, the Range is composed of lava and fragmented rock which, over time, has eroded to expose vivid hues of red, violet, yellow and lavender. Horseback and hiking pack trips are available in the area.

Anahim Lake

(95 km west of Tatla Lake)

Largest settlement in the west Chilcotin and home to the July Anahim Lake Rodeo. Anahim Lake, "The Gateway to the Back country," is 15 minutes drive west of Nimpo Lake along the Freedom Highway. Anahim Lake allows horse or hiking access to the three main mountain ranges of the area, the Itcha Range, the Ilgachuz Range and the multi-coloured Rainbow Mountains. Full tourist services. Nearby Anahim Mountain offers a bit of history plus a spectacular view of a pillared cone of volcanic rock; this is another site for obsidian, the important trading commodity for the Chilcotins as it was used extensively for weapon making



DAY 2

Distance: Anahim Lake to Bella Coola, 140 km
(2 to 3 hour drive time)
Direction: East on Hwy 20

Points of Interest

The Hill

Heckman Pass or "The Hill" is a notorious 43 kilometres of steep, winding road, with two major switchbacks –with a 15 kilometre stretch of 18 percent grade. This adventurous drive begins at Anahim Lake.
Note: Go easy on your brakes, it is recommended to use first and second gear.



Tweedsmuir Park

(36 km west of Anahim Lake)



Enter the Coastal area from the east and your first stop is British Columbia's largest Provincial Park, Tweedsmuir Park. An impressive gateway to the Coast, this great Park spans an area of 981,000 hectares/2,452,500 acres and is a visual display of flower-strewn meadows, dramatic waterfalls, pristine lakes and rivers, distant glacier-capped mountains and lush forests teeming with wildlife...truly a nature lover's dream.

To the South of the Freedom Highway (HWY. 20) is a hiking trail leading to Hunlen Falls. Well worth the overnight trek, the falls are a sheer 259 metre drop, transporting water from Turner Lake to the Hunlen Creek below. The northern area of the Park is characterized by its abundance of waterways, such as the Dean River, known as one of B.C.'s best fly-fishing areas. It is also from the northern region that travellers on the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail enter the Park. The Tanbark River, on the west side of Tweedsmuir Park, supports the largest population of Chinook salmon on the Central Coast.



Accommodations within Tweedsmuir Park range from campsites to a full service lodge.
Recreational opportunities include hiking, fishing, canoeing, horseback riding, cross-country

skiing and snowmobiling. If wildlife viewing is your quest, here you will find mountain goat, caribou, black bear, grizzly bear, moose and an extensive variety of birds.

Hagensborg

(32 km west of Tweedsmuir's west entrance)

During the late 1890s, Norwegian descendants chose this area as their new home base because the landscape resembled their homeland.



Bella Coola

(18.5 km west of Hagensborg)

Situated at the confluence of the Bella Coola River and the North Bentinck Arm, a Pacific Ocean inlet, Bella Coola is a veritable gateway to outdoor adventure activities. Bella Coola has an alluring history: the **First Nations Nuxalk people** (pronounced Nu-hawk) date back 10,000 years.

Discovery Coast Passage



Sail from Bella Coola through the beautiful Discovery Coast Passage to Port Hardy. Complete a circle trip with a drive down Vancouver Island. Contact BC Ferries for a full schedule and price list.

In Victoria or long distance from outside British Columbia

(250) 386-3431. Inside British Columbia and outside the Victoria area **1-888-BCFERRY** (1-888-223-3779). **Note:** Reservations are required.

**For More Information Contact:
The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association
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North America Toll Free: 1.800.663.5885**