

Community Trails and Tours

GUIDE TO VANDERHOOF



www.vanderhoof.ca

Vanderhoof Community Trail

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Downtown Core |  Parks & Green Spaces |
|  Hospital |  Motorbike Trail |
|  Fire Hall |  Museum |
|  Police Station |  Personal Watercraft |
|  Airport |  Picnic Area |
|  ATV Trail |  Playground |
|  Baseball |  Post Office |
|  Biking Trail |  Public Telephone |
|  Boating |  Public Washroom |
|  Camping |  Recycling Centre |
|  Canoeing |  Restaurant |
|  Community Garden |  Running Track |
|  Cross-country Skiing Trail |  RV Camping |
|  Kenney Dam |  Sani-Dump |
|  Dog Path |  Float Plane Dock |
|  Fishing |  Sheltered Picnic Area |
|  Fitness Equipment |  Shopping |
|  Garbage Disposal |  Snowboarding |
|  Gas Station |  Snowmobiling Trail |
|  Golfing |  Snowshoeing Trail |
|  Grocery Store |  Spray Park |
|  Hiking Trail |  Stable |
|  Horse Riding |  Swimming |
|  Ice Fishing |  Tennis Courts |
|  Ice Skating |  Wading Area |
|  Kayaking |  Walking Trail |
|  Laundromat |  Waterskiing |
|  Library |  Wheelchair Access |
|  Lodging |  Wildlife Viewing |
|  Mechanic Shop |  Interpretive Kiosk |
| |  Interpretive Trail Sign |

VANDERHOOF COMMUNITY TRAILS

The Vanderhoof Community Trail system is a network of walking trails around and through the community. The trail network is an ever expanding project. New sections of the trail are added each year, so be sure to contact the **Vanderhoof Visitor Centre** for up-to-date information.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is for the enjoyment of all residents and visitors to the Nechako Valley. This guide provides suggested tours and trails to enjoy in our community. There are points of interesting facts along the way to add to the experience, by learning about the natural history of our area. Couple this Tour Guide with the Nature Guide to the Nechako Valley for a complete experience.

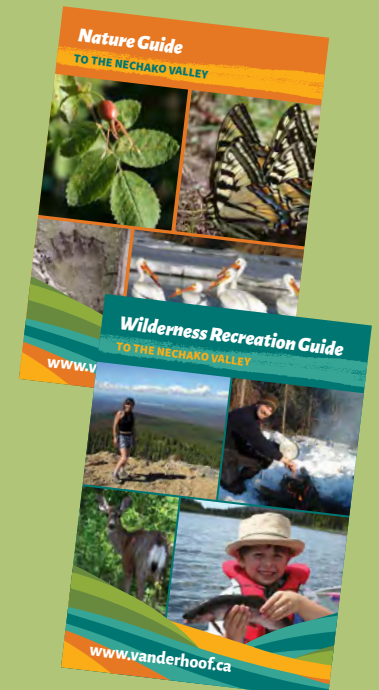
For more information on the topics covered in this guide, please contact the Vanderhoof Visitor Centre.

Other useful guides for our community and area include:

Nature Guide of the Nechako Valley
Wilderness Recreation Guide to the Nechako Valley

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Vanderhoof Community Trails

TRAIL SYSTEM

The Vanderhoof Community Trail system is a complete loop through Vanderhoof, passing by rivers, parks, wetlands, forests and residential areas. See wildlife big and small — squirrels to swans, deer to butterflies, osprey to frogs. Pick up a **Nature Guide** to learn more about the natural history of the Nechako Valley!

THE TRAILS

There are four separate interpretive nature trails along the Vanderhoof Community Trail, each with its own unique part of history. The individual trail cards are on the pages that follow. If starting at the Vanderhoof Museum, the trails are:

- Heritage Nature Trail
- Stoney Creek Nature Trail
- Riverside Nature Trail
- WL McLeod Nature Trail

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

Along the way, be sure to visit the larger interpretive signs at the

- Peter Rodseth Memorial Park
- Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre
- Vanderhoof Community Garden
- Highway 16 Park

WHAT TO BRING

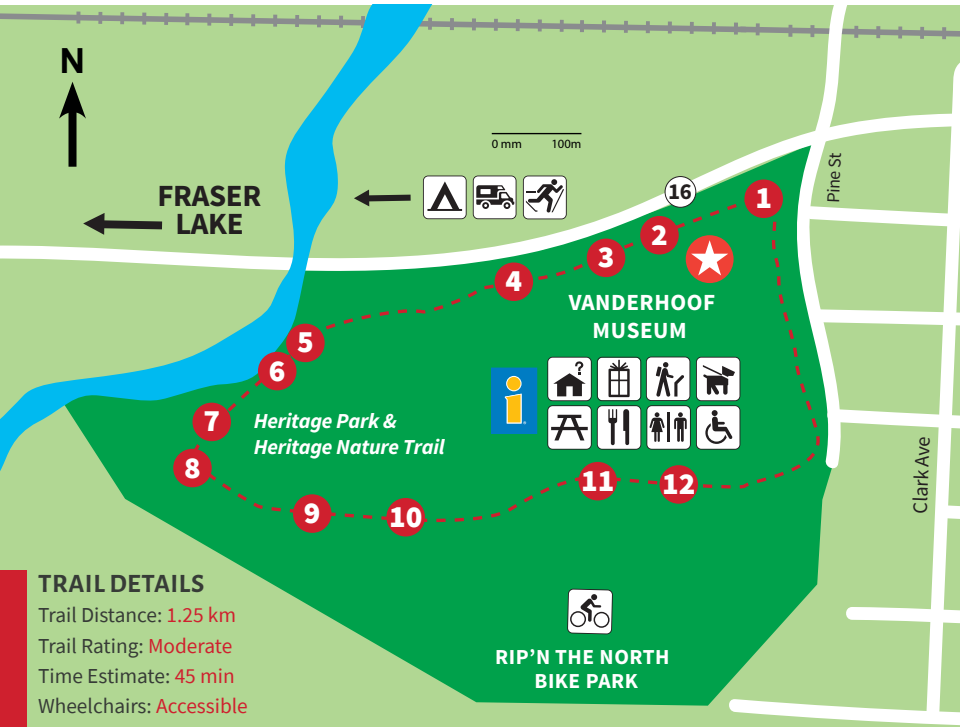
We want everyone to have a fun time on our trails, and we want you to be safe! Be prepared when you set out for you day, even if it is just a short walk — conditions can change. Please ensure you have:

- a map
- a plan and to let someone know your plan
- water and food
- sunscreen, hat, sweater (prepare for the weather)
- camera, phone etc.
- ID books and guides
- Dogs on leash

If you do run into trouble, call 911.



Heritage Nature Trail @ VanderhoofMuseum



TRAIL DETAILS

Trail Distance: 1.25 km

Trail Rating: Moderate

Time Estimate: 45 min

Wheelchairs: Accessible

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

This well groomed, wide, moderate elevation, gravel trail runs through the forest behind the Vanderhoof Museum site. The trail is a loop, starting and ending at the parking lot. Along the way visitors will enjoy a look-out spot onto Stoney Creek, wildflowers, mixed deciduous and conifer forest as well as seeing and hearing birds and other wildlife. This trail is appropriate for families and is wheelchair accessible.

HOW TO GET THERE

Coming from the east, drive on Highway 16 and left onto Pine Street (across from the Kal Tire). From the west, the museum site is on the right at the Welcome to Vanderhoof hillside sign. There is ample RV parking in the parking lot behind the Vanderhoof Museum.

HERITAGE NATURE TRAIL

POINTS OF INTEREST

- 1 Vanderhoof Museum, Heritage Park and Trail:** The Heritage Park and Trail are situated on the Vanderhoof Museum site. The museum is home to numerous historic buildings and artifacts that tell the story of Vanderhoof from the early 1900s.
- 2 Heritage Park:** Climb the hill to the gazebo to overlook the Heritage Park. Displays on the heritage of this area, including a caboose you can walk through, are located within this park.
- 3 Bat Box:** Bats eat flying insects such as mosquitoes. These bat boxes have been placed in and around the community to help increase the population of bats.
- 4 Mixed Forest:** Birch, alder, and spruce trees are the dominant tree species within this mixed stand forest that extends from the low flat floodplain and rises up the valley wall. Keep note how the proportion of deciduous to coniferous trees changes as you walk along the trail.
- 5 Stoney Creek:** This location on Stoney Creek was traditionally utilized extensively as a fishing camp for Saik'uz First Nation.
- 6 Moose and Deer:** Look for evidence, such as scat and tracks, of moose and deer along this trail. Moose are the largest member of the deer family in North America, and inhabit forests, rivers and wetlands.
- 7 Stop, Look and Listen:** Stop here and listen for birds and other sounds in the forest. Then look around you at the diversity of wildflowers and plants in the forest understory. You may be surprised!
- 8 Valley Wall:** This hill is the outer southern valley wall of the Nechako River. The valley was formed by glaciers over 10,000 years ago.
- 9 Bedrock Outcropping:** Notice the thin layer of soil above this bedrock outcropping. This thin soil layer supports the lush understory of this area. For the keen-sighted, look closely at the rock outcropping to see if you are able to make out the face shapes. This site was once a quarry.
- 10 Paper Trees:** White birch, or paper birch, is known for its peeling bark that has been used over the centuries by First Nations for building canoes. Look for these trees in this forest.
- 11 Mountain Biking Trails:** The Rip'n the North Bike Club operates a bike park that is located at the top of the valley wall. Trails leading down from the bike park to the Heritage Nature Trail are used by mountain bikers of all skill levels. Ask at the Visitor Centre for more information.
- 12 Understory Vegetation:** Shrubs, grasses, berries, and flowers grow within the understory of the tall deciduous and coniferous trees. Understory plant species provide food for large mammals like bear and moose, habitat for birds and insects, and medicines and food for humans.



Stoney Creek Nature Trail

STONEY CREEK NATURE TRAIL POINTS OF INTEREST



HABITAT RESTORATION

Look for boulders and logs that have been added along the banks of Stoney Creek. These create habitat for fish and stabilize the river banks. Learn more about the history of Stoney Creek and the work being done on it by reading the signs at the Douglas Street end of the trail.

TRAIL DETAILS

Trail Distance: 775 m
Trail Rating: **Easy**
Time Estimate: 30 min
Wheelchairs: **Accessible**

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

This well groomed, wide, gravel trail follows Stoney Creek to the confluence with the Nechako River. This area has a long history and is important traditional lands of Saik'uz First Nation. Read the signs along the trail to learn more about the history and flora and fauna of this area, with additional signs at the ★.

HOW TO GET THERE

You can park at either end of this trail. This trail is easily accessible by foot from the Vanderhoof Museum (across the highway). Note that parking from the Douglas St. access is private property, so please park close to the trail head.

- Railroad Tracks:** This is one of the last stretches of the Grandtrunk Railway to be completed in 1914, just before the grand opening of the trans-Canada line in Fort Fraser. The rail line has trains passing nearly every hour transporting lumber, fuels and commercial goods.
- Stop and Look. Fish Habitat!:** Stoney Creek is roughly 15km long and flows out of Nulki Lake, Saik'uz First Nation, south of Vanderhoof. Take a few minutes to gaze over the railing and watch for small fish (located near the water's edge or just under the water's surface) to large trout (in the darker deep areas) below the bridge. Fish use floating and submerged plants, rocks, and fallen trees as shelter from predators (birds and larger fish) and from fast flowing water.
- Duckweed:** Aquatic plants are important for fish, birds and invertebrates. Duckweed floats on the water's surface and is highly efficient at purifying the water, and can act as overhead cover for fish and a landing pad for dragonflies and other invertebrates. If duckweed becomes too abundant it can take over other aquatic plants, and lead to oxygen depletion for fish.
- McIntosh Trail:** Enjoy this 2km off-shoot trail on private property to beautiful views of the Nechako River. **Please respect private property!**
- Amphibians:** Amphibians are cold-blooded animals that regulate their body temperature using the sun. The Western toad and the wood frog are the only amphibians species found in northern BC. Toads prefer drier areas, while frogs can be seen in the water.
- Floodplains:** That area a river fills when it breaches its banks is the floodplain. This area, which is often flat and low-lying, has nutrient rich soils that make good agricultural lands.
- Invasive Species:** Invasive species are organisms that are introduced to an area where their natural predators and pathogens do not exist. Invasive species often take over an area and reduce the number of native plants or animals, which can cause harm. There are over 20 listed invasive plant species in BC, several of which grow along this trail, including Canada thistle and oxeye daisy.
- Wild Foods:** Many plants that grow in the Nechako area have provided food and medicine for First Nations for centuries. Useful plants you may see on this trail include black twinberry, wild rose, alder, yarrow and soapberry. Refer to *Plants and Medicines of Sophie Thomas* for more information.
- Cottonwoods:** Named because of the cottony seeds they produce, black cottonwood trees are widespread across North America. They grow along river banks, gravel bars and low lying areas. They are a deciduous tree (lose their leaves in the fall), and produce buds in the spring that contain a sticky substance that can be used as an ointment for cuts or as a glue.



Riverside Nature Trail

RIVERSIDE NATURE TRAIL POINTS OF INTEREST



Across the river from Riverside Park is the Peter Rodseth Memorial Park. Enjoy your lunch at these picnic tables made by Peter and gaze over the beautiful Nechako River. An interpretive sign is there that talks to the history of the river.



TRAIL DETAILS

Trail Distance: 1.35 km
Trail Rating: Easy
Time Estimate: 45 min
Wheelchairs: Accessible

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

This easy, gravel trail runs along the beautiful Nechako River from the Migratory Bird Sanctuary observation tower in Riverside Park to the WL McLeod wetland 1,350 m downstream. Along the way visitors will enjoy stopping at look-outs on the river, meandering through the forest, and seeing and hearing birds and other wildlife. This trail is appropriate for families and is wheelchair accessible. Like all trails, please keep dogs on a leash.

HOW TO GET THERE

Drive north along Burrard Avenue and turn left into Riverside Park.

- 1 Nechako River Kiosk:** The Nechako River is home to over 20 species of fish including the endangered Nechako white sturgeon, Chinook and sockeye salmon, as well as many species of birds, mammals, invertebrates and plants. Walk the trail to find out more!
- 2 Migratory Bird Sanctuary - Observation Tower:** Climb the stairs to the top of the viewing tower to look over this nationally recognized stopping ground for migrating Canada Geese, swans and many duck species, during their lengthy migration to and from their breeding grounds farther north.
- 3 Deciduous Trees:** Black cottonwood are the dominant deciduous trees species along the river.
- 4 Sturgeon Spawning Habitat:** Nechako white sturgeon spawn in this section of the Nechako River. Learn more at the Conservation Centre!
- 5 History of Bridge:** The first, single-lane, bridge built in this location was in 1916. It was replaced in 1948. This bridge was built in 1990.
- 6 Bat Box:** Bats eat flying insects such as mosquitoes. These bat boxes are here to help increase the number of bats in our community.
- 7 Nest Box:** These nesting boxes provide important habitat for migratory birds such as goldeneye during the breeding season. In winter, the boxes are home for different species of birds and small mammals.
- 8 Bank Stability:** The banks of all rivers continually erode due to the flowing water, however plants and trees with their roots growing along the banks can slow the natural process of erosion.
- 9 Stop and Listen:** Stop here and close your eyes and listen. Count the number of nature sounds you hear from this spot in one minute. You may be surprised!
- 10 Understory Vegetation:** Shrubs, grasses, berries, and trees grow within the understory of the tall deciduous and coniferous trees. Understory plant species provide food for large mammals like bear and moose, as well as habitat for birds and insects.
- 11 Conifer Trees:** Spruce is the dominant conifer species in this woodland. Conifer trees are more abundant farther away from the river's edge as they prefer drier soil compared to deciduous trees.
- 12 River Habitat:** The fastest part of the river is called the thalweg and is often too fast for fish. The river's edge and in particular side channels provide a slower area for young salmon and other fish to live and grow. Bald eagles enjoy a meal of decaying salmon in the early fall after the Chinook and sockeye salmon runs are over.
- 13 Mammals:** Small mammals, such as mice, squirrels and rabbits, hide among the fallen trees and sandy banks of the Nechako River; additionally, bear, moose and deer can be seen along this trail at different times of the year.



WL McLeod Wetland



TRAIL DETAILS

Trail Distance: 300 m

Trail Rating: Easy

Time Estimate: 15 min

Wheelchairs: Accessible

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

The WL McLeod Wetland is a naturally low lying area that used to be a side channel of the Nechako River. Over the past 40 years this area has transformed into a wetland. Wetland plants, invertebrates and birds use this urban wetland as their home.

Starting at the ★ to view the wetland from the viewing platform and kiosk, then continue down the trail to (1) where you can get a close-up look of the plants, bugs and soil of this wetland. Continue to connect with the Riverside Nature Trail to loop back.

HOW TO GET THERE

Drive north on Burrard Avenue and turn right at Victoria Street. Park at the WL McLeod Wetland viewing platform.

Walking along either the Riverside Nature Trail or the WL McLeod Wetland Trail will lead you straight to the lovely and welcoming **Vanderhoof Community Garden**.

Members of the garden not only tend their vegetables and flowers, but also mentor, share and learn from each other.



WL MCLEOD WETLAND TRAIL POINTS OF INTEREST

- 1 Wetland Invertebrates:** Invertebrates have no backbone and include insects, worms, molluscs, and spiders. Wetlands are full of invertebrates. Look for dragonflies flying in the air, and worms, backswimmers and mosquito larvae in the water.
- 2 Wetland Plants and Birds:** A number of bird species can be seen in this wetland each spring and summer. Sedges, horsetails and cattails are common plants that are found along the edges of wetlands. They provide excellent habitat for many bird species including warblers, sparrows, swallows, yellowlegs, and most commonly, red-winged blackbirds. Male red-winged blackbirds are known for their distinctive call and jet black body with bright red wing stripes.
- 3 River Habitat:** Along the river's edge, marsh type wetlands can form. At this location, the emergent vegetation in the side channels and back eddies provide a slower area for young salmon and other fish to live and grow. Bald eagles enjoy a meal of decaying salmon in the early fall after the Chinook and sockeye salmon runs are over.
- 4 Mammals:** Small mammals, such as mice, squirrels and rabbits, hide among the fallen trees and sandy banks of the Nechako River and the thick vegetation of the WL McLeod Wetland. Additionally, bear, moose and deer can be seen along this trail at different times of year.

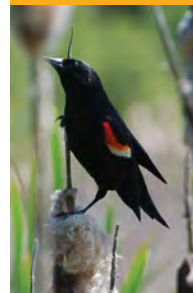
WL MCLEOD WETLAND KIOSK:

WHAT IS A WETLAND?

A **wetland** is a transition zone between open water and land. Wetlands form when organic material accumulates and specific species of plants, trees, mosses and algae establish. The different wetland ecosystems are defined by their location and water supply. The common wetland ecosystems in this region include fens, bogs, swamps and marshes. Each is important for wildlife.

Fens are the typical wetland like WL McLeod Wetland, and are home to a great diversity of animals and plants. Fens get their water from groundwater and runoff sources. **Bogs** have very acidic soil and are only fed by rainfall. As a result few plant species grow in bogs. Beaver activity on small streams often flood tree stands and create **swamps**. **Marshes** form at the edge of lakes and rivers.

How did it get its name? This wetland, which lies on the property of the school that bears his name, is a dedication to WL (Bill) McLeod as an outstanding person, naturalist, teacher and mentor.



Nechako White Sturgeon

NECHAKO WHITE STURGEON CONSERVATION CENTRE SELF-GUIDED TOUR

Follow the story of **Unel'tsoo** the sturgeon, on this self-guided tour around the Conservation Centre that outlines Nechako white sturgeon history, biology, ecology, and conservation.

- 1 History:** Sturgeon are pre-historic animals, and Nechako white sturgeon have been in this watershed for at least 10,000 years. Over the past 200 years, the environment and pressures on Nechako white sturgeon habitat and population have resulted in the population becoming listed as endangered under the Species at Risk Act. This sign introduces us to the Nechako white sturgeon.
- 2 Sturgeon Carving:** Created by Terrace carver Joerg Jung, this spruce carving shows the flow of a very large swimming Nechako white sturgeon. Looking from the tail, can you imagine swimming behind her and following her in her travels?
- 3 Education Signs:** The Nechako white sturgeon population is dangerously low and it is known that survival during the first 40 days of life up to the first year is low enough that the population cannot be sustained. This series of signs provides facts about Nechako white sturgeon habitat, biology, ecology and conservation, and how human actions within the Nechako watershed, from land-use to fish culture and conservation, impact sturgeon. What can you do to support recovery?
- 4 Wheel of Life:** Spin the Wheel of Life to see if you can live to 100 years old. This game is a fun and interactive way to learn about sturgeon survival and threats at each life stage.
- 5 Measure Up Sturgeon:** Sturgeon are huge fish. Stand next to this painting and see how you measure up - are you as tall as a 15 year old sturgeon? Learn the parts of a sturgeon and how its shape gives us clues as to how it eats, moves and lives.
- 6 Life Cycle Carving:** Sturgeon have a very different life cycle compared to more familiar species such as salmon. Sturgeon are long-lived and spawn multiple times in their lifetime. Follow the journey from egg to adult and around again, and the pressures as well as supports on this species at every life stage. Where do you fit in?



TRAIL DETAILS

Trail Distance: <100 m
Trail Rating: Easy
Time Estimate: 30 min
Wheelchairs: Accessible

HOW TO GET THERE

Drive north along Burrard Avenue and turn right into Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre (access before the bridge).

TOUR DESCRIPTION

Guided tours are available year-round at the Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre at set times, however you can walk around the outside of the Centre anytime of year and read through the many interpretive signs available to the public. **Self-guided tour brochures** are located at the main entrance (1), and the guide leads you around the different points of interest. The interpretive materials highlight the important work of the **Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative** on the endangered Nechako white sturgeon, one of the largest freshwater fish species in North America.

We encourage you to use this as community space and spend an afternoon, have your lunch at the picnic tables, and learn how you can be part of Nechako white sturgeon recovery.



Kid-Friendly Stops



CHILDREN-FRIENDLY LOCATION DESCRIPTIONS

- 1 Ferland Spray Park:** Located right in town the playground, spray park and picnic area, with public washroom make an ideal place for families to stop and cool-off. Also in the summer months, find the **Vanderhoof Farmers' Market** at Ferland park on Thursdays!
- 2 Riverside Park and Campground:** The largest park in Vanderhoof, Riverside Park has it all: covered picnic area, large playground for all ages, beach for wading, a large field to play and run, beach volleyball nets, and a walking/biking loop path. Take a walk on the Riverside Nature Trail too! The kids love the paths through the campground, the playground and nature trail. Sani-dump is on-site. Open seasonally.
- 3 Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre:** This facility is one of a kind in the north. The Nechako White Sturgeon is an endangered species, and the conservation centre was built to support their recovery. Take a guided or self-guided tour of the facility year round, and you may even be able to see a live sturgeon up close!
- 4 Recreation Hot-spot:** This area of town is the centre for athletics. Enjoy the running track, sport fields and tennis courts, next to the curling rink, ice arena, and Aquatic Centre. Across the street have fun at the skateboard park and baseball diamonds.
- 5 Vanderhoof Public Library:** You can sign-out and return books from anywhere in the province using your BC One Library Card. There is a wonderful play area for young children. Computers and internet available for public use.
- 6 YMCA - Integris Community Centre:** Daily activities and camps at the YMCA!
- 7 Stoney Creek Nature Trail:** The Stoney Creek Nature Trail is a gravelled, wide path that is perfect for riding a bike or pushing a stroller. Enjoy the foot bridge over Stoney Creek, and even try catching a fish!
- 8 Vanderhoof Museum:** Kids love to explore the old buildings at the museum. Restored to look like a 1920s village, the boardwalks, buildings and train caboose are kid favourites. And the kids will love pie and ice cream at the **OK Café!** Open seasonally.
- 9 Rip'n the North Bike Park:** Built for the novice to pro-rider, this bike park will entertain your child for hours, maybe even days. The jumps, slopes, downhill trails and mountain biking trails make this a must stop for any family looking for a place to rip up the dirt! Open in the winter for fatbikes too!
- 10 Greer Creek Falls:** A spectacular sight for the whole family. Drive on gravel roads to take this moderate walk to Greer Creek Falls and be dazzled by the falls and dense forest. Ask at the Visitor Centre for the **Wilderness Recreation Guide** to get you there.



History & Culture Tour

DETAILS

Total Distance: 1.0 km

Path: Sidewalk

Time Estimate: 0.75 hr

Wheelchairs: Accessible

TOUR DESCRIPTION

Take a walk through Vanderhoof and get an “up close” look at the buildings and spaces that were influential in the development and formation of the community. This walk takes you through the downtown core, which has been the main strip for commerce since the mid-1920s. Many buildings and facades are the original and each has a story. Then take a drive to the Vanderhoof Museum for an in-depth look into our local history.

Visit the Vanderhoof Museum to purchase your copy of *As the River Flows: Life Along the Nechako River*, that detail the stories behind many of the buildings in Vanderhoof.



HISTORY AND CULTURE TOUR

LOCATION DESCRIPTIONS

- The Vanderhoof Inn:** Known by many names by as many owners, this building has a very interesting history. Although building fires were unfortunately common in the early part of the 1900s, this building burnt down not once, but twice in its 100 year history.
- The Post Office:** The Post Office has moved many times in Vanderhoof's history. At first mail arrived by foot or horseback from Quesnel and the office was located on the Telegraph Trail. In 1914 after the railway was open, a second Post Office was opened in town south of the tracks, and over the course of 40 years moved three times ending up in this location in 1953.
- Cozy Corner Pizzeria:** This building is one of the originals built in 1916, and moved to this location in 1920, it was home to Nechako Drug Store as well as Ice Cream Parlour. This restaurant showcases a series of historic photos of Vanderhoof.
- Vanderhoof Department Store:** This store has been a staple in this community for nearly five decades. The fashions inside have kept up with the times, yet the building has remained relatively unchanged since its construction around 1920.
- North Country Inn:** The office building of the North Country Inn was the home of Herbert Vanderhoof. Vanderhoof came from the USA to plan the community, yet his plan did not hold. He died before the community was incorporated in 1926. Vanderhoof means 'of the farm' in Dutch.
- Anglican Church:** This little church has stood on this corner since 1932. The charming interior and stained glass work has made this church a wonderful place of worship as well as a sought after venue for hundreds of weddings over the years.
- The Reid Hotel:** This large building was moved here by hand in the mid-1920s from its construction site south of the railway tracks - the original location of Vanderhoof's downtown. Frequent flooding at the original site caused the move from south of the tracks.
- Grand Reo Theatre:** Once a parlour, a merchant shop and now a movie theatre, this building has stood at this corner with its original facade for 90 years. A true landmark of the community.
- Service Canada:** Step into this building to view a spectacular wooden sculpture built by late local artist Peter Rodseth. This massive piece portrays the history and culture of the area.
- Vanderhoof Museum:** A place to step back in time and learn about the life and history of the people of Vanderhoof. The museum is located on a culturally significant location for Saik'uz First Nation. The museum take visitors through our history highlighting First Nation traditions, the early settlers, and some of our most famous residents including Rich Hobson and Mary John Sr.



Bird Watching Hot Spots

BIRD WATCHING HOT SPOT DESCRIPTIONS

Visit one of the many lakes in the area for more great bird watching opportunities!



DETAILS

Starting Point: **Riverside Park off of Burrard Street**
 Total Distance: **20.0 km**
 Roads: **Paved and Gravel**
 Time Estimate: **2.0 hr**

TOUR DESCRIPTION

The Nechako Valley in general is a great place to see birds. Thousands of Canada Geese and swans migrate through Vanderhoof each fall and spring. This loop tour is an example of where to start your birdwatching expedition. Be sure to let your sense of adventure take you to different places in the area, or ask at the Visitor Centre. This tour starts at the Nechako River and takes you to agricultural fields, forest stands and back again on paved and gravel roads. Go at dawn or dusk to see a different assortment of birds, including owls.

1 Nechako Migratory Bird Sanctuary: Home to thousands of Canada Geese each spring and fall, this migratory bird sanctuary at Riverside Park is a haven for a wide diversity of birds - including if you are lucky American Pelicans. All summer see Eagles in the tree-tops, or Osprey and Belted Kingfishers diving for trout. Take a walk along the Vanderhoof Community Trails system to see many more birds including songbirds, as well as some mammals too.

2 Ponds and fields along Northside Road: Turning right after the bridge, drive slowly along Northside Road. There are many ponds on either side of the road that offer a great view of shore birds and ducks. Keep an eye on the fence posts, power lines and open fields to get a glimpse of a gliding Northern Harrier, or a Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawk or Merlin watching the fields for movement. Further along Northside Road is one of the last remaining dairy farms in the region. Here in the fall, you will find hundreds of Trumpeter Swans.

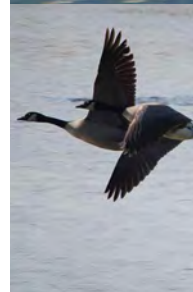
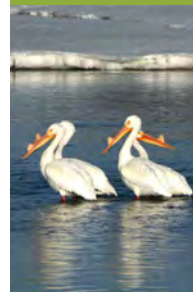
3 Waterlily Lake Trail: This trail is a big part of Vanderhoof's history and great for wildlife. Take a walk into the forest along the marked trail. Listen for songbirds, woodpeckers and grouse. Return here in the evening and spend some time calling out an owl (see below).

4 Snell Road: Stop your car at the culvert crossing on Snell Road. The creek below is Murray Creek, a salmon bearing stream and part of the Murray Creek Rehabilitation Project. Look for a variety of duck species here during spring and fall migration, and in the summer as some pairs remain here to breed. You may also spot Mountain Bluebirds, Cedar Waxwings and more.

5 Peter Rodseth Memorial Park: On a warm summer day five species of swallow can be seen from this riverbank viewing area. These birds come to this location each spring and stay for the summer to hatch their clutches. This spot is also a photographer's dream during the start of river melt and the Trumpeter and Tundra swan spring migration.

How to Call Out an Owl: You may not see an owl on your first attempt, but be patient. The reward of spotting an owl is worth it!

- 1 Although owls can be seen during the day, they are more active at night. Arrive at dusk. Wear high visibility clothing for safety.
- 2 Bring a flashlight and a recording of an owl call (find a good App).
- 3 Mimic an owl call or play the recording.
- 4 Wait quietly for several minutes - call again. Repeat about 5 times.
- 5 If you hear fluttering in the trees or a return owl call, turn on your flashlight and point it into the high branches of the trees. Look for a reflection of the owl's eyes.
- 6 Repeat this procedure at a number of locations for best results.



Guide to Animal Signs

TRACKS

Animal tracks can be found in dirt, mud, sand and snow, making them visible any time of year.

Scan the ground when you go for a walk, and you will be surprised by how many animal tracks you will find. The shape and size of the track can tell you the species, as well as what the animal was doing. A good ID guidebook is essential if you are serious about making precise identifications.

THE END PRODUCT

You can identify an animal by what it leaves behind - droppings, or scat. Ungulates, rabbits and grouse leave solid pellets — **the size of the pellet indicates the size of the animal.**

Bear and other large mammals leave piles. Bear scat often contains berry seeds.

When searching for bats or owls, you can look at the base of a tree for their scat - it will be a small tight packet with bits of fur and bone.

- (1) Rabbit, hair and squirrel tracks have two small front feet followed by two larger back feet.
- (2) Ungulate tracks have two long oval shaped toes. When the animal is running or is in soft mud, the toes will be more spread apart. The size of the track indicates which species: moose ~15cm long; elk ~12cm long; deer ~9cm long.
- (3) To tell bear tracks apart, look at the claw marks. Grizzly bear tracks have distinct and long claw marks, while black bear claw marks are less noticeable. This is a grizzly bear track in the mud.
- (4) Cattle in this area range in fields and forested areas. Don't mistake their 'patty' for that of a bear's. A cattle patty is very large, lumpy and full of grass.
- (5) Bear dropping often have berries. The food content will vary depending on the time of year and the availability of food.

Ocean minerals are important **nutrients found in northern forests.** **Migrating salmon** travel to the Nechako River to spawn each fall. After spawning they die and mammals, such as **bear, eat the decaying fish.** The carcasses are dragged from the river and the **nutrients are released into the soil.**



TREE HOUSES

Many animals use trees for food and shelter.

Look for woodpecker holes in deciduous trees like aspen and cottonwoods, and conifer trees such as pine. Woodpeckers use these holes to find insects to eat. The small hollow cavities left behind make excellent homes for small songbirds, like Northern Creepers. Larger cavities are used by some duck species or owls, as well as small mammals like squirrels.

Deer, elk and moose, along with other animals, feed on forest plants and shrubs year round. Ungulate teeth make diagonal cuts on plant stalks. Look for neatly pruned shrubs and you will know a deer, elk or moose had been by.

Moose and deer will rub their antlers on trees to scratch, which can take off a strip of bark leaving a scar on the tree.

Beavers cut down trees near rivers and wetlands to make dams to flood areas for them to build their lodge.



Pick up the Nature Guide for more tips and facts about the local area.





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