

# Old Coach Trail

Radium Hot Springs to Dry Gulch, BC

## Trail Guide

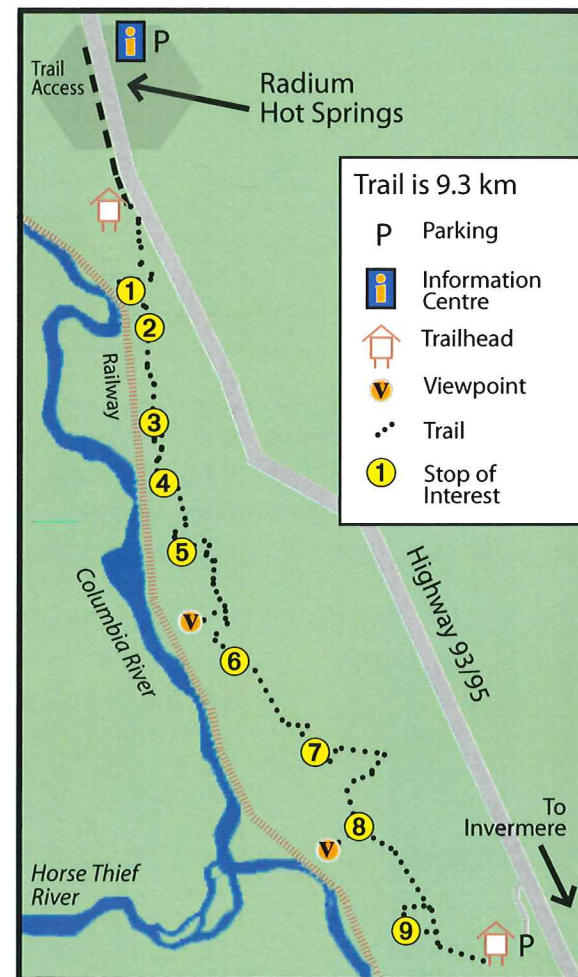
The Old Coach Trail is a 9 km walking or bicycling route that runs between Radium Hot Springs and Dry Gulch. This historic route was traveled by Model Ts in the 1920s. The trail winds along the bench lands above the river, with spectacular views of the wetlands below. For thousands of years, this valley has provided living space and a movement corridor for many species of animals – including humans.

**Please note that motorized use is not permitted on the Old Coach Trail.**

## Access

**Radium Hot Springs Trailhead** • Park at the Visitor Information Centre at the southern edge of Radium Village. Cross to the west side of Hwy 93/95 on the crosswalk and follow the trail signs to the north trailhead kiosk.

**Dry Gulch Trailhead** • Drive 5.6 kms south from the south edge of Radium to Dry Gulch. If coming from points south, drive 7.2 km north from the traffic lights at the Invermere Crossroads to Dry Gulch. Then turn west off Highway 93/95 opposite Eacrett Road and park beside the south trailhead kiosk.



## Trail Etiquette

### Please tread lightly

- Stay on the trail
- No motorized vehicles
- Cyclists please yield to pedestrians
- Keep your pet on a leash and clean up after it

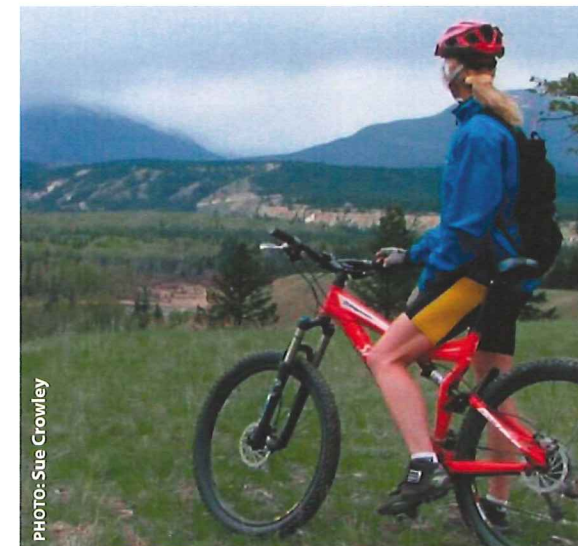
### Leave no trace

- Do not pick plants
- Pack out your litter
- No open fires

### Keep them wild

- This trail is on the edge of wilderness and shared with bears, coyotes, cougar and bighorn sheep
- Stay clear of wild animals
- Do not feed wildlife

### Use at your own risk



## What are Greenways?

More than trails, Greenways are corridors of green space that connect communities to each other and to the land. They protect sensitive ecosystems and wildlife habitat, as well as provide “green” non-motorized trails for people to access and learn about these areas.

## Nearby Places to Visit

**Radium Hot Springs and Kootenay National Park Information Centre** • Located on the south side of town. Check out the displays on Fish, First Nations and Fire.

**Sinclair Creek Greenway** • Learn about stream restoration and Kokanee salmon. Access from Forster’s Landing Road at the north end of Radium.

**Redstreak Restoration Trail** • Tells the story of restoring landscapes through prescribed fire. Trail head at Redstreak Campground day use area in Kootenay National Park.

## Working Together

The Old Coach Trail was restored thanks to the efforts of local residents, contractors and agencies. This work included removing old cars and metal debris from dump sites along the route, trail bed rehabilitation and improving public access.

The Old Coach Trail is made possible through the collaboration of: BC Conservation Corps, BC Ministry of Environment, BC Parks, BC Transportation and Infrastructure, Columbia Basin Trust, Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance, Columbia Valley Community Foundation, Kootenay Savings, Mark Kingsbury Foundation, Parks Canada, Real Estate Foundation of BC, Regional District of East Kootenay, Tembec, Tourism Radium, Village of Radium Hot Springs.



# Take a trip down the Old Coach Trail...

The Upper Columbia Valley provides diverse habitats and a movement corridor for many species of wildlife, as well as humans. In the early days, people came by sternwheeler, horse-drawn stage and rail. By the 1920s, Model Ts rattled along rough tracks like the Old Coach Trail. It was more of a 'motor coach' route than a 'stage coach' route, since the main stage line ran further inland.

Today, you can walk or cycle along this 9 kilometre greenway. The suggested direction is from north to south beginning at the south edge of Radium Hot Springs and ending at Dry Gulch. Follow the map in this brochure and the numbered posts along the trail which indicate stops of interest. There is an interpretive kiosk at each end of the trail.

## 1 Glacial Lake Windermere

You are standing at the ancient shoreline of Glacial Lake Windermere. Swollen with water from retreating glaciers, it filled the valley 11,000 years ago. As the lake drained away, rivers and streams cut through the lake deposits creating the landforms we see today – like the hoodoos, and deposits of clay, sand and gravel in the cut banks along this trail.

## 2 You are in Bighorn Country

This grassy hillside is a perfect winter hangout for Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep. Here the sheep can forage for grasses, lick for minerals along the bank and climb the hoodoos to escape predators. From October to June, you may see bighorn sheep. Please keep a respectful distance.



PHOTO: Ross MacDonald

## 3 Too Many Trees

This crowded forest is a legacy of 70 years of fire suppression. The open forests and grasslands favoured by many species of wildlife are getting rarer. For example, bighorn sheep prefer open habitats so they can detect predators and find grass to eat. Today, prescribed fire is being used to restore fire-maintained ecosystems in the Columbia Valley.

## 4 Wetland Engineers

Take a look over the bank at the work of two very different engineers...

Human engineers pushed the first rail line down the valley in 1914. Prior to this, goods and people were moved by sternwheelers. Today, this rail line is used to haul coal from mines in the Crowsnest Pass area north to the main CPR line at Golden.

The beaver is also an engineer, second only to humans for being able to modify its environment. Ponds created by beaver dams provide important wetland habitat for other species.

## 5 Early Settlers

Valley bottoms not only provide habitat for wildlife, but attracted settlers as well. The ranch on the island across the river was originally owned by the De Crispigny family. The tall log building operated as a dairy in the early 1900s. It was accessible only by sternwheeler.

## 6 Meet Douglas

Meet the Douglas fir. As these firs age, they develop a thick fire-resistant bark. In the past surface fires swept along these benches every 5 to 30 years. They burned off the young trees and shrubs, leaving the thick-barked veterans. The result: big trees and lots of open space. Today, this type of forest is rare, due to decades of fire suppression.

## 7 Christmas Tree Farm

The first settlers were lured here by cheap land and rumours of gold. Later, forestry and tourism became more important. Here you are in the midst of an old Christmas tree farm. Can you find a stump with tree-like limbs growing from it? The trees were cut and pruned so that many trees could be harvested from a single trunk without killing the original tree.

## 8 Grasslands

Grassy meadows like this are special places. In BC, grasslands cover less than 1% of the province yet contains 30% of its species at risk – like the bighorn sheep, the badger and the long-billed curlew.

Grasslands are also fragile. Scars on the slope behind you show the impacts of ATV and motorbike use. Today it is more important than ever to conserve the grasslands that remain.

A short walk west takes you to scenic valley vista.



PHOTO: Nick Berzins



PHOTO: Ross MacDonald

## 9 The Wetlands Mosaic

Turn right here for a short loop walk to a spectacular wetlands overlook.

Here, you get a bird's eye view of the meandering river with its many ponds and channels. These watery habitats along with a mix of wet meadows, shrub lands and cottonwood forests provide outstanding habitat for wildlife. The wetlands are a major stop-over for migratory birds and also provide homes and a travel corridor for deer, elk, moose and bear. To protect this habitat, the Columbia River Wetlands were designated as a Wildlife Management Area in 1996.

To the west are the Purcell Mountains, the Rockies to the east and the fault-line of the Rocky Mountain Trench is sandwiched in-between. Across the river, you can see the Horse Thief Creek Hoodoos; glacial deposits of silt, sand and clay carved into pillars by rain water. The forces of mountain building, faulting and glaciation have created the view we see today.

COLUMBIA RIVER



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