

Nicola Subdivision



Photo: Baillie Stewart

Site Identification

Nearest Community:
Merritt, B.C.

Geocache Location:
N 50°15.868'
W 121°06.975'

Altitude:
547m

Ownership:
Crown Land

Accuracy:
3 meters

Overall Difficulty: 1.5
Overall Terrain: 2

Access Information and Restrictions:

From Merritt City Centre follow Hwy 8 west, towards Spences Bridge for approx. 34.5 km until you reach FX Ranch Road. Turn left onto this road and follow for approx. 0.4 km to the pull out on the left. Site is approximately 29 km from Spences Bridge

Parking Advice:
Park well off the road.

For more information or to report a problem with this site please contact:

Gold Country Communities Society
PO. Box 933
Cache Creek, BC.,
VOK 1H0

Tel: 1-877-453-9467
email: info@exploregoldcountry.com

For more site pages go to:
www.goldtrail.com

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The Nicola Subdivision – Merritt to Spences Bridge (KVR)

The Nicola Subdivision was a rail line extending from Merritt to Spences Bridge as part of the once powerful Kettle Valley Railway.

When British Columbia entered Confederation and joined Canada in 1871, the new province was promised a railway that would run from sea to sea. It took another fourteen years for the Canadian Pacific Railway to arrive and it was quickly realized it didn't include any track that could take valuable ores being mined in the southern part of the province. The booming industry in the area required a means to get those materials, as well as fruit, grains, and cattle to the coast.

The Merritt area, with an abundance of cattle and newly discovered coal, was a prime location for a new line and in 1891, two railways received charters to build into the area. Backed by the CPR, the Nicola Valley Railway was to be built from the CPR mainline at Spences Bridge to Nicola, just north of Merritt. The Nicola, Kamloops & Similkameen Coal & Railway Company (NK&S) was founded to build from Kamloops, to Nicola, south to Princeton and then on to Osoyoos. Neither railway took hold and both charters lapsed.

In the early 1900s, William Hamilton Merritt revived the charter for the NK&S and started construction on the rail line. The CPR boosted the construction by leasing the charter in 1905.

Survey work on the new Kettle Valley Railway (KVR) began in 1910 from Midway to Penticton (Carmi division)

and Penticton to Merritt (Princeton division). In 1916, the Kettle Valley Railway opened on the Coquihalla Pass between Brodie and Hope meaning trains going through from the Kootenays would bypass Merritt by going through Brookmere. The Coquihalla line, however, proved unworkable with steep grades and enormous quantities of snow leading to frequent closures and detours of trains through Merritt and Spences Bridge to the CPR's mainline. The Coquihalla line was finally closed in 1959 and abandoned in 1961, meaning Merritt was finally on the southern mainline. With passenger traffic declining and competition from the major highways, the need for more rail lines diminished. The Merritt train station was abandoned in 1988 and in 1991 the rails between Spences Bridge and Penticton were pulled up.

At its prime the Nicola subdivision route from Merritt to Spences Bridge featured a 363 meter elevation change over a total distance of 61.8 km. Stations on this section include, Merritt, Coutlee, Coyle, Canford, Dot, Agate, Clapperton, and Spences Bridge.

Now part of a popular cycling and hiking trail, the Kettle Valley Railway's Nicola subdivision route passes through wide-open ranch lands, thick forests, and rocky terrain as it approaches Spences Bridge. Once the rail beds were removed rights reverted to the landowners so trail users must contact the various First Nation's bands and other landowners for permission to pass through.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Critchley, Darren (2012). *Touring the Kettle Valley Railway*. Retrieved 22 Jun. 2012 from <http://www.thekvr.com/nicola-subdivision.php>

Macek, Alan. (2005). *The early years of the CPR in BC*. Retrieved 22, Jun. 2012 from <http://canyon.alanmacek.com/index.php/>

Nicola_Kamloops_%26_Similkameen_Railway

Letterboxing Clues:

Under pile of sagebrush, next to barbed wire fence.