

**Rails & Trails**

**Skihist**

***The Cariboo Wagon Road***

**Site Identification**

**Nearest Community:**  
Lytton, B.C.

**Geocache Location:**  
N 50°15.173'  
W 121°30.543'

**Ownership:**  
Provincial Park

**Accuracy:**  
2 meters

**Overall Difficulty:** 1.5  
**Overall Terrain:** 1.5

**Access Information and  
Restrictions:**

From downtown Lytton drive approx.  
6 km towards Spences Bridge on Hwy 1.  
The turnoff for Skihist campground is  
on the right hand side. If arriving from  
Spences Bridge the turnoff is on the left.

**Parking Advice:**  
Park by the large restroom area. Do not  
block sani station.

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

Gold Country Communities Society  
PO. Box 933  
Cache Creek, BC.,  
V0K 1H0

Tel: 1-877-453-9467  
email: [info@exploregoldcountry.com](mailto:info@exploregoldcountry.com)

For more site pages go to:  
[www.goldtrail.com](http://www.goldtrail.com)

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**Photo: GCCS**

Prior to 1861, the only link to the Cariboo Gold Fields of British Columbia was a series of narrow trails traversing over mountains, along canyons and through valleys. Most of these trails were mostly created by First Nation People who used them to travel between villages located throughout the interior. Traveling these trails was limited to about four months of the year due to snow.

The Hudson's Bay Company had used a trail system from Fort Kamloops to Fort Yale, but this system was abandoned in 1858. Another Hudson's Bay trail still active at that time allowed travel between from Fort Kamloops and Fort Hope.

In 1858, Governor of the Crown Colony British Columbia, James Douglas, focused his attention on a finding another route from Port Douglas located at the North end of Harrison Lake using trails and a chain of lakes to Lillooet. The task was to upgrade and build short trails connecting the series of waterways to Lillooet. A company of 500 men completed construction of the mule /wagon trail between Port Douglas (Harrison Lake) and Lillooet with only some sections wide enough to support wagons in about a month's time. The overall length was 100 miles. Over time this route became too costly and cumbersome to ship goods and did not support the need to access the gold bearing sand bars along the Fraser River from Yale to Lytton. Another route had to be found.

A series of existing trails traversed the steep walls of the Fraser Canyon; however, none were suitable for carrying heavy loads of supplies up river. In 1862, Douglas proposed building an 18 foot wide wagon trail road from Yale to Barkerville, covering a distance of 400 miles. This road would navigate through the Fraser Canyon to Lytton, then on to Cook's Ferry (Spence's Bridge), before reaching

Barkerville. The new road was built in sections by various contractors for varying amounts of money and completed in fall of 1865. Narrow and in places hazardous, this new roadway made its way along the steep cliffs of the Fraser Canyon. Even with this liability, this new wagon road allowed stagecoaches and freight wagons from Vancouver to access the B.C. Interior / Cariboo regions. Part of this historic wagon road was preserved by the Provincial Government when the Skihist Provincial Park was established in 1956. This became an overnight stopping point for visitors travelling to and from the interior of B.C. on Highway 1. Skihist, named after Skihist Mountain located near the southern boundary of the Stein Valley, lies approximately 20 kilometers west of Lytton. The name comes from a Thompson Indian name that can be translated as 'great crack between rocks' or 'split rock.' This fine mountain was where the young First Nation people went to train for guardian spirit power.

As you are exploring this 150 year old road, take the time to imagine a BX Stagecoach down this 18 foot path. Picture this wagon loaded with supplies and people on a journey to the wilds of the Cariboo Gold Fields.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/skihist/>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fraser\\_Canyon\\_Gold\\_Rush](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fraser_Canyon_Gold_Rush)

#### **Letterboxing Clues:**

From restroom area follow trail on the left of outhouse for 60m. Turn left onto paved road and follow for 24m. Look for small pine trees on the left. Located at base of young fir.