

Stoyoma

SITE #120301

GC1V20G

Written & Researched by Aline Lachapelle

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Merritt, V1K 1B8
 Geocache Location: N 49°58.423'
 W 121°13.387'
 Accuracy: 4 meters
 Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page
 UTM: East 0627410;
 North 5537221 10U
 Geocache altitude: 1,827 m./5,994 ft.
 Overall difficulty: 1.5
 Terrain difficulty: 2 (road in 4)
 (1=easiest; 5=hardest)
 Date Established: n/a
 Ownership: Crown Land
 Access: • Gravel Road
 • Seasonal
 • 4x4 Vehicle accessible
 • *Detailed access information on next page.*

For more information or to report a problem with this site please contact:
 Gold Country Communities Society
 P.O. Box 933 Cache Creek, B.C. V0K 1H0
 Tel: 1-877-453-9467
 email: info@exploregoldcountry.com

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One of the most rewarding adventures in the Merritt area is a trip up to Stoyoma Mountain. For many people, it begins by driving down into the Nicola Valley from Highway 97C and spotting a seemingly out-of-place and often snowcapped peak. Once the descent into town is complete, the mountain is no longer visible. But if curiosity gets the best of you and you want to get an up-close look, then you will have to plan for a visit to the Cabin Lake Forest Recreation Site in the summer months of July, August and September.

It is fascinating to watch the ecosystems change as the bunchgrass and Ponderosa pine dominated sites found along the Nicola River gradually shift to a more closed, Douglas-fir forest with scattered aspen and cottonwood trees along Spius Creek. At the higher elevation spruce and sub-alpine fir forests emerge as the road gets steeper and the elevation reaches up to 1,800 m near Cabin Lake, where the forest begins to transition to alpine.

The last 3.5 km before the recreation site at Cabin Lake is not suitable for a low clearance, two wheel drive, camper-carrying or trailer-pulling vehicle, but can be driven in a 4x4 or on an ATV. Please note that other than driving on the Cabin Lake Road, there is no motor vehicle access allowed above 1,800 m in order to protect the sensitive alpine flora and fauna from the impacts of heavy ATV and dirt bike use.

The recreation site is small, with fire rings and picnic tables, and is found just past where the road reaches an old collapsed cabin near the shore of the lake. This is a perfect spot to make a base camp for any further exploring around the challenging terrain of Stoyoma Mountain or just enjoy the relaxing setting next to the crystal clear water of Cabin Lake.

From Cabin Lake, the view is impressive, but in order to take in the most spectacular scenery, a trek up one of the ridges is recommended. There are several routes to choose from, including a



longer day hike to the top of Stoyoma Mountain (2,282 m), accessed via the ridge that heads north above the Cabin Lake Road. A shorter scramble up the scree slope directly across the lake from the recreation site shore is a little less strenuous option with just as fantastic views from the top. Since there are not established trails along either ridge route, it is wise to have a topo map and compass to navigate safely, as well as suitable hiking footwear. If a ridge scramble is not your forté, there is also an established hiking trail that takes off from the most southern end of Cabin Lake and heads west for nearly 3 km through the forest, eventually ending up below where an old water bomber plane crashed. Remnants of the wreckage are visible north of the trail on the slope, according to the description of this “Heather Basin Trail” in Murphy Shewchuk’s “Coquihalla Trips and Trails” book.

Along with the incredible scenery of lush vegetation and colorful wildflowers, pikas, marmots and mountain goats are just a few of the animals that can be found

near Stoyoma Mountain, making the scree slopes and alpine meadows their home. Pikas are small rodent-like mammals more closely related to rabbits that live on the scree slopes year-round. They are able to survive winters without hibernating by collecting grass and sedge cuttings throughout the summer and setting them out to cure in the sun. These cured cuttings are then stored by the pikas for consumption in winter, just as a farmer would store hay to provide his animals with nourishment throughout the winter. Marmots share the same territory with the pikas, though marmots are much larger and are otherwise known as “whistlers” because of their shrill alarm call. A visit to Cabin Lake on a sunny day will almost guarantee one to see at least a marmot or pika, but spotting a mountain goat, with its white coat, black horns, and nimble ability to scale vertical rocky slopes, is a rare and exciting experience. The alpine meadows and tarns found atop the ridges surrounding Cabin Lake make the perfect habitat for these shy, hoofed animals.

Detailed access information:

- From Hwy #8 use Petit Creek Road and then Prospect Creek Forest Service Road (FSR).
- At ~3 km keep right, then stay left, at ~24 km over cattle guard go left over bridge.
- Take next left onto Prospect Miner Creek FSR for ~11 km then go right.
- At ~0.8 km keep right, then keep left another ~0.5 km and then ~1.5 km go right.
- If you are not in a good 4x4 vehicle and experienced in the back country, park here.
- The remaining 3.5 km of road is 4x4, quad, bike or foot access ONLY.
- Cabin Lake recreation site will provide a base arrival area.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

- Eder, T., & Pattie, D. (2001). *Mammals of British Columbia*. Edmonton, AB: Lone Pine Publishing.
- Mussio, R., Mussio, W., & Stainton-Mussio, P. (2008). *Thompson Okanagan BC Backroad Mapbook Outdoor Recreation Guide 1st Ed*. Mussio Ventures Ltd.
- Parish, R., Coupe, R., & Lloyd, D. (1996). *Plants of Southern Interior British Columbia*. Edmonton, AB: Lone Pine Publishing.
- Shewchuk, M. (2007). *Coquihalla Trips and Trails: A Guide to BC's North Cascade Mountains and Nicola Valley, Revised Edition*. Fitzhenry and Whiteside Ltd.
- Whitaker, J. (1996). *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mammals*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.