High in the Cariboo is one of the most spectacular views of ancient geological formations in British Columbia. The Marble Range was created some 500 million years ago and lies atop the southwest edge of the Cariboo Plateau. The geology is generally a mix of dolomite and limestone. The range runs a length of approximately 65 kilometers and is about 20 kilometers in width covering an area of more than 1200 kilometers.

The unusual looking limestone is known as karst topography. First recognized by renowned geographer, and the “father of karst geomorphology”, Jovan Cvijic named the formations for the Kras region of Slovenia where his scientific research of the unique geology first took place. The formations and landscape are the result of water action dissolving limestone, dolomite or marble. The geological process occurs over thousands of years creating unusual surfaces both above and below ground including caves, sinkholes, gorges, springs, disappearing and underground streams, and vertical shafts.

A magnificent view of the ancient geomorphology can be reached by traversing the trail that runs along Porcupine Creek through the canyon and up to Lime Ridge. The journey to the trail takes a scenic route along the border of Edge Hills Provincial Park and the trail proper follows the creek into Marble Range Provincial Park.

Once at the trailhead, the hike is a pleasant jaunt through the pine and mixed forest following the sweet sound of the creek below. Porcupine Creek flows south from the range and into Kelly Lake in Downing Provincial Park at the southern end of Edge Hills. The trail is rich with colourful wild flowers and a variety of wild berries. Much of the
flora once provided the Secwepemc people with an abundance of food, dyes and herbal medicines. Keep alert to the many animals that may be watching from the cover of the woods. Deer are plentiful. When the trail crosses the creek the path leads through a gully and eventually winds to the right to follow a steeper climb up to the ridge. The ridge exposes the hiker to the magnificent view of the range against a deep blue sky and the thick forest carpeting the valley. While many may choose to sit and absorb the remarkable geology, others may want to stroll the ridge in search of other views of the range and the valley below.

Be sure to take along binoculars, they will give you the opportunity to possibly sight a small herd of bighorn sheep. The range is a major migration path for these amazingly sure-footed creatures, as they navigate the steep cliffs and alpine landscape, moving from the Fraser River canyons into the nearby provincial parklands.

Be alert, as the alpine ridge is exposed to the elements and subject to changing weather conditions, often with strong winds. Also, there is little reprieve from the heat of the mid-day sun, so be sure to take along a hat and plenty of sunscreen and water. Regardless of the caveat, the hike and the views are well worth the trip to what feels like the top of the world. The Porcupine Creek Canyon trail takes one to a world where the scenic landscape is unparalleled. This magnificent ridge, with a splendid view of a unique and ancient geological wonder, reigns high above the Cariboo Plateau in the heart of Gold Country.

Letterboxing Clues:

Travel to trailhead parking lot. Walk up trail approximately 15 metres. Look right to juniper bush.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

1 See also "Marble Canyon", Gold Country GeoTourism Adventures, Field Guide Volume 1, 105.
2 Jovan Cvijic b. 1865 d. 1927; karst is the German term for the Kras region

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