



# Skagit Valley

P R O V I N C I A L P A R K



**W**elcome Skagit Valley Provincial Park. Not only does the Skagit Valley have significant natural attributes, but it also has an interesting history of human activity. Historic routes through the valley are incorporated into present-day hiking trails. American archaeologists have identified pottery shards from the southern United States, which indicates the valley's use as a native trade route. The Skagit River Trail follows sections of this ancient route from the coast to the interior.

South Fraser

## Visitor Information

**Wilderness Ethics** – Skagit Valley Provincial Park is unique and beautiful. Preserve and protect our parkland by treating it with respect.

**Fires** – Be extremely careful with fire. Due to the fragility of the wilderness environment, fires are permitted only in the fire rings provided at each campsite. Place aluminium foil under your camp stoves and hibachis to protect the table surfaces.

### Park Regulations

- ▶ Under the *Park Act* regulations and for your safety, firearms are restricted in Skagit Valley Park. See BC Environment's *Hunting Regulations* for details.
- ▶ Flowers, trees, plants and rocks are part of the park's natural resources. Do not damage or remove them.
- ▶ Do not litter. Lakes and rivers are the source of drinking water. Biodegradable soaps and food scraps pollute the water.
- ▶ Camping is permitted in designated areas only: Silvertip and Ross Lake campgrounds and the horse camp.
- ▶ Keep pets on a leash at all time and do not take them to the beach or picnic areas. You are responsible for their behaviour and must dispose of their excrement.
- ▶ Motorized vessels are prohibited on the Skagit River. Personal watercraft (jet skis) use on Ross Lake and the Skagit River is prohibited.

**Safety** – Practice safe swimming and boating procedures. Never swim alone and always watch your children when they are in or near water. There are no lifeguards on duty at any time.

**Motor Vehicles** – Licensed motor vehicles are restricted to the main public access road, the campsite roads and the day-use parking areas. Unlicensed motor vehicles must not be operated in any park or recreation area. Keep tents and recreational vehicles on the designated pad to minimize damage to the campground.

**Wildlife Caution** – Never approach or feed wild animals as they can be dangerous. Bears are particularly unpredictable and extremely powerful animals and can cause serious injury. While the risk of attack is low, you can increase your safety by following some simple guidelines:

- ▶ Never approach any bear. Females with cubs are especially dangerous and protective.
- ▶ Do not cook or store food in your tent and keep your campsite clean.

- ▶ Do not burn or bury non-combustible refuse. Pack this refuse out if disposal facilities are not available. Animals which lose their fear of man and become accustomed to eating human food or garbage can be dangerous and may have to be destroyed.
- ▶ Be alert for bear tracks, trails or scats (droppings) and do not hike or camp where these are common. Make noise while hiking where these signs are found.
- ▶ If approached by a bear, do not make loud noises, throw things or move quickly. This will only provoke the bear. Remain clam and leave the area slowly.

More information about bears and other wild animals is available from the BC Environment's Conservation Officer Service.

## Facilities



There are two tent/vehicle campgrounds in the park: Silvertip with 43 units and Ross Lake Reservoir with 88 units. A group site is located across from the Ross Lake campground, close to the International Point day-use area. This site provides camping facilities for up to 50 people. Hozomeen Campground (in the US) provides 122 sites and a boat launch.



A horse camp with 11 sites designed for equestrian users is located near Whitworth Meadow.



A boat launch and swimming area have been developed at the International Point day-use area. Due to the fluctuating water levels, swimming and boating in the reservoir are usually only possible from late June to mid-September. An adventure playground is also located here.



Roadside pullouts are located throughout the valley, providing the only parking for river access.



## Natural History

The Skagit Valley lies 150 kilometres east of Vancouver in the Cascade Mountains. The Skagit River originates near Allison Pass in Manning Provincial Park and flows westerly into the Skagit Valley. Ross Lake Reservoir is located in the southern portion of the valley. The park encompasses 27,948 hectares of land and is influenced by both the moist coastal and the semi-arid interior weather systems. The rain shadow effect of the mountains limits the annual rainfall to half that of Hope. The diversity of ecosystems provides habitat for species of flora and fauna common to both the interior and coastal climates.

Trees native to this area include the Sitka spruce and broadleaf maple which occur more frequently closer to the coast. Ponderosa pine and trembling aspen, common to the interior of British Columbia, are found in meadows along the valley floor.

Many wildflowers, such as the red rhododendron, flourish in the valley. These beautiful shrubs extend into Manning Park's Rhododendron Flats but have not been discovered anywhere else on the mainland. Lupine, columbine, honeysuckle and wild rose are also common.

Some of the animals to watch for include deer, black bear, cougar, coyote, grey wolf, beaver, chipmunk and marten.

Over 200 species of birds frequent the area. These include the great blue heron and the kingfisher, which are often seen along the Skagit River and at Ross Lake Reservoir. Eagles, owls and migratory mountain bluebirds may be seen from the Silver/Skagit Road.

The Skagit River provides excellent fly fishing for rainbow trout and Dolly Varden char. Refer to BC Environment's *Synopsis of Regulations* for rules and guidelines before fishing.

## Human History

In 1858, Captain Walter de Lacy of the US Army founded a trail from Whatcom (Bellingham Bay) to the interior. This trail became known as the Whatcom Trail and followed the Skagit River and Snass Creek to the Dewdney Trail. Eventually the trail was no longer used because of the steep terrain. Today's Skagit River Trail follows a section of the Whatcom Trail between 26 Mile Bridge and Sumallo Grove.

Miners made use of parts of the Whatcom Trail from 1879 to 1880 as they travelled through the valley in search of gold at Ruby Creek, Washington. In 1910 Dan Greenwalt and W.A. Stevens from the US reported a gold strike near Steamboat (Shawatum) Mountain. Prospectors flocked to the area. Three town sites were constructed, boasting two hotels, three general stores, two restaurants, two barber shops, a rooming house, several residences, a real estate office, a sawmill, a newspaper mill, and a newspaper called

the *Hope-Steamboat Nugget*. In May 1911 it was reported that between 300 and 550 men were prospecting in the area. A Board of Trade was established and seven gold mining companies were incorporated. In June 1911 it was revealed that the area had been laced or salted with gold. In August of 1911 the Chief of the Dominion Geological Survey stated that Steamboat Mountain was on the edge of a coal formation, but there was no evidence of gold. Just before the bust, Greenwalt and Stevens sold their stock and made off with \$90,000. Steamboat became a ghost town.

One of the early settlers in the area was an English immigrant, Mr. Henry Robert Whitworth, who operated a 256-hectare cattle ranch from 1905 to 1909. He built a 10-room ranch house, outbuildings and a stable with lumber cleared from the land. Mr. Whitworth also purchased the Cawley Ranch which later became Chittenden Meadow. The Whitworths and their five daughters left the area due to illness.

In 1906 the Seattle City Light Company began work on the first dams across the Skagit River. By 1937 flooding from the Diablo, Gorge and Ross dams on the US side of the border had caused the Ross Lake Reservoir to approach the Canadian border. Plans for the "High Ross" dam indicated the Skagit Valley, on the Canadian side, would flood as far as Silvertip Campground. In 1941 the International Joint Committee approved the High Ross project, supporting the need for more power to aid the war effort. The project was delayed because the road which was required to clear the land was not constructed until 1946. Political delays over compensation for flooding the land continued to hold back the project. Eventually, Mr. "Curley" Chittenden was hired by the Seattle City Light Company to supervise the clearing of the land. He commenced work but after a period of time refused to continue the project and joined the fight to save the area. By 1967 a compensation agreement was reached. However, public opposition was growing strong. A group was formed called the ROSS committee (Run Out Skagit Spoilers) which was comprised of both American and Canadian citizens.

In 1968 the US National Park Service established the North Cascades National Park and the Ross Lake and Lake Chelan National Recreation Areas. In 1973 the government declared the Skagit Valley a provincial recreation area. The area became a provincial park in 1997. Although Ross Lake Reservoir is mainly in the US, it extends into British Columbia. In the summer months high water levels are maintained in order to permit water recreation. However, water levels may fluctuate at any time.

In 1984 the BC-Seattle agreement was formed committing BC Hydro to provide power to Seattle in return for not raising the water levels in the Skagit Valley. As a result of the agreement, the Skagit Environmental

Endowment Commission was established to administer an endowment fund devoted to improving the environmental qualities and recreation opportunities in the Skagit River drainage.

## Trails



### Chittenden Meadow Self-Guiding Interpretive Trail

Chittenden Bridge provides easy foot access to this beautiful meadow with its wild flowers, prairie grasses and ponderosa pine. This is a one-hour leisurely walk around this meadow.



### Skagit River Trail



Starting on the east side of 26 Mile Bridge, this easy trail is 14.5 kilometres long and takes 4 to 6 hours to hike. Following some of the most scenic stretches of the Skagit River, it passes through magnificent rhododendron groves that bloom in early-to-mid June. The trail leads to Manning Park's Sumallo Grove on Hwy 3 where hikers can either arrange a vehicle pick up, or make the return trip via the trail. The De Lacey Wilderness camp is 10.5 kilometres from 26 Mile Bridge.



### Skyline II Trail



This beautiful trail starts near Whitworth Meadow and traverses the Cascade Mountains into Manning Provincial Park. The elevation change is 1,310 metres. Mowich wilderness camp is located at kilometre 13. It is a further 12 kilometres to Strawberry Flats or 16.8 kilometres to Spruce Bay. Incredible views, peaks and wild flowers of the mid-summer season make this strenuous hike rewarding. Extensive trail work was completed in 1993.



### Centennial Trail



This section of the Centennial Trail follows the Silver/Skagit Road. Trail conditions vary. Care should be taken to stay on the trail. Trail access is via either the 26 Mile Bridge, Shawatum Bar or the Skyline II trailhead.



### Silverdaisy Trail



Silverdaisy Trail follows Silverdaisy Creek from near its junction with the Skagit River to the summit of Silverdaisy Mountain, a strenuous 10-kilometre hike. The trail then continues on to Cayuse Flats in Manning Park.

**Galene Lakes Trail** is unmaintained and in very poor condition and is not recommended for use.

**Note:** For your own safety and for the preservation of this wilderness area, stay on designated trails. Taking short cuts and trampling meadows destroys plant life and soil structure.

## Points of interest

Described here are points of interest and recreation opportunities found while travelling south along the Silver/Skagit Road. Signs showing distances from Hwy 1 are posted along the road.

### Kilometre 41 – Silvertip Campground

This 43-unit campground nestled along the Skagit River provides toilets, water, tables and firewood. Anglers may catch a rainbow trout from the waters adjacent to their campsite. Botanists and bird watchers will find many interesting species in this dry belt of the coastal Douglas-fir forest.

### Kilometre 42 – 26 Mile Bridge

A pleasant picnic and day-use area beside the river. The western side of the bridge marks the Skagit River trailhead.

### Kilometre 45 – Shawatum Bar

### Kilometre 46.5 – Rhododendron Bar

A parking area with river access.

### Kilometre 52.5 – Nepopekum

A parking area with a one-kilometre trail to the river.

### Kilometre 54 – Whitworth Meadow

(former site of Whitworth Ranch)

Today little remains of this early homestead. However, a visit to the meadow is worthwhile for its impressive views of Hozomeen and Shawatum mountains. Surrounding the Whitworth Meadow are many interesting habitats to explore, including open fields, wet meadows, sand bars, Douglas-fir and pine forest and beaver marsh.

### Kilometre 54 – Horse Camp

This 11-unit campground near Whitworth Meadow provides universal access facilities designed for equestrian users.

### Kilometre 55 – Skyline II Trail

This point marks the western trailhead of the Skyline II Trail. Leading to Lightening Lakes and Strawberry Flats in Manning Park, this hike provides spectacular views of Hozomeen Mountain and the sub-alpine meadows.

### Kilometre 58.2 – Chittenden Bar

A parking area with river access.

### Kilometre 58.7 – Chittenden Bridge and Meadow

This natural meadow was the site of one of the earliest homesteads in the Skagit Valley (circa 1883). It was eventually named after Curley Chittenden who was instrumental in saving the upper Skagit Valley from flooding.

### Kilometre 60 – Ross Lake Campground

An 88-unit campground along the shore of Ross Lake Reservoir provides water, tables, firewood, toilets and children's playground.

### Kilometre 60 – Ross Lake Group Campground

Situated near Ross Lake Campground, this facility offers tables, firewood, toilets, water, a shelter and limited parking. Reservations can be made through the Park Operator.

### Kilometre 60 – International Point Day-use Area

This day-use area includes picnic tables, boat launch and a swimming area.

### Kilometre 61 – Canada-US Border

Information on Ross Lake, Lake Chelan National Recreation Areas and the North Cascades National Park can be obtained immediately across the border at the Hozomeen Ranger Station. An extensive system of hiking trails and 19 boat-accessible campsites are just some of the services available in the North Cascades Park. Backcountry and marine campsite permits are available from the Ranger Station.

### Hozomeen Campground (US)

Toilets and water are provided at this 122-unit campground. A boat launch and hiking trails are located nearby.

### Other Recreational Activities

The Skagit River provides excellent sport fishing. A British Columbia fresh water angling license must be obtained prior to arriving at the park. These are available in the Hope and Silver Creek areas. Check the BC Environment's *Synopsis of Regulations* for further details. United States angling licenses are required for fishing south of the Canada-US border but must be purchased prior to entering Canada.

**Note:** The Skagit River is a dangerous river for canoeing, kayaking and rafting. These activities are discouraged due to several log jams and other natural hazards in the river.

## Commercial Facilities

There are no commercial facilities in the Skagit Valley that provide food, lodging, gas or any other goods or services. Visitors should be equipped with supplies and fuel before leaving Hope or Silver Creek for the Skagit Valley Provincial Park.

## How to Get to the Park

The Silver/Skagit Road, which joins Hwy 1 three kilometres west of Hope, provides access to the park. It is 37 kilometres from Hwy 1 to the entrance portal and a further 23 kilometres to Ross Lake Reservoir and the Canada-US border.

The Silver/Skagit Road is a well maintained, loose surface road that provides access to several active logging areas before the park entrance. Motorists are advised to drive with extreme caution and to use headlights at all times. Watch for wildlife and be aware of logging trucks and other industrial equipment. Extra caution should be taken after rain when road surfaces can become muddy and slippery.



## For More Information

BC Parks

<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks>



Ministry of Water, Land  
and Air Protection

