

## Trails

Note: Elevation changes, distances and recommended times are approximate, and describe one-way hiking.

**Rainbow Range Trail** (7 kilometres; 300 metres elevation change; 2–3 hours). The trail starts in a lodgepole pine forest and climbs gradually through stands of whitebark pine and alpine fir to a small alpine lake. From here, experienced hikers can explore almost unlimited terrain. The trail offers excellent views of the Rainbow Range.

**Octopus Lake Trail** (14 kilometres; 5–6 hours). This almost-level trail starts at the Rainbow Range Trailhead. It immediately crosses East Branch Creek and turns west, traversing through stands of pine and open meadows before crossing the middle two forks of Young Creek. Caution: these creeks are wide and can be fast-flowing. Undo your pack belt and use a hiking pole for support. As you reach Octopus Lake, a short access trail leads to a campsite located on the north shore. Approximately three kilometres further, the Octopus Lake Trail intersects the Tweedsmuir Trail. A horse camp is located near the intersection.

**Crystal Lake Trail** (20 kilometres; 1,000 metres elevation change; 7–8 hours). This trail diverges from the Octopus Lake Trail about three kilometres west of the Rainbow Range Trailhead. It climbs easily to a small alpine plateau and then drops toward the middle fork of Young Creek and Lester's Camp. From here the trail is cairned, and climbs slowly to a wide-open ridge leading to Crystal Lake. Woodland caribou are often seen in this area. From Crystal Lake the trail enters Boyd Pass and descends 300 metres on switchbacks to the Mackenzie Valley, and after a creek crossing, joins the Mackenzie Heritage/Grease Trail. The Rainbow Cabin is located one kilometre to the south. It is small and has no sleeping platforms, so bring a tent.

**Capoose Trail** (12 kilometres; 5–6 hours). Heading west from Octopus Lake, the trail winds easily through a beautiful subalpine valley, flanked by the Rainbow Range to the north and the Capoose Range to the south. It meets the Mackenzie Heritage/Grease Trail after passing Sitkatapa Lake.

### Tweedsmuir Trail/Route

This was originally laid out in 1937 to commemorate Lord Tweedsmuir's historic visit to the area. The northern section of the trail is much more popular than the southern, unmaintained route.

- ▶ **Trail from Rainbow Cabin to Octopus Lake:** (9 kilometres; 300 metres elevation change; 3–4 hours). The trail starts just south of the Rainbow Cabin, and climbs southward through a mixed forest. Cross two small creeks then follow cairns marking the trail as it climbs into the pass; this is wide open alpine country and visitors often spot caribou or marmots. Climb onto the terraces and wide open ridges for spectacular 360-degree views. From the pass the trail drops down and reaches the Octopus Lake junction after 10 kilometres.

- ▶ **Route from Octopus Lake to Mosher Creek**  
**Trailhead:** (21 kilometres; 300 metres elevation gain if heading south; 1,700 metres elevation gain if starting from the highway; 1–2 days, not maintained). From Octopus Lake the route travels south across the Capoose Valley, skirting several small lakes and ponds and then climbs steeply up to Deception Pass (this makes a good day hike from Octopus Lake or access to ridge-walking on the Capoose Range). Below the pass the route is unmaintained and therefore rougher and difficult to follow. It traverses the slope south of Bear Camp Creek then descends on steep switchbacks to the Bella Coola Valley at Mosher Creek.

### Mackenzie Heritage/Grease Trail

In addition to being a historic Nuxalk and Carrier First Nations trading route used to transport oolichan grease from the Coast into the Interior, this was the route used by Alexander Mackenzie on his 1793 expedition to the Pacific. The 300-kilometre trail starts near Quesnel; only its most scenic and popular section is described here.

- ▶ **Tanya Lakes to Rainbow Cabin** (24 kilometres; 300 metres elevation gain; 1 day). Float plane charters into Tanya Lakes are available from Nimpo Lake. One kilometre from the southwest end of Tanya Lake is a traditional fish camp, which is still used today by aboriginal people. The trail ascends southward through pine forests and large grassy meadows, eventually crossing Kohasganko Creek. After this the trail crosses the creek several more times, ascending very gradually for approximately 12 kilometres to the cabin. The lush subalpine meadows are flanked by rainbow coloured mountains
- ▶ **Rainbow Cabin to Highway 20** (33 kilometres; 400 metres elevation gain from cabin to Mackenzie Pass; 1,700 metres elevation gain if starting from highway; 2 days). This section of the Mackenzie Heritage Trail starts at the Rainbow Cabin and travels southwest to the Bella Coola Valley. There are two creek crossings before the long climb through heavy forest; the trail reaches open alpine near Mackenzie Pass. (Note: on NTS map sheet 93 D/9 the pass is incorrectly located; it is 1.5 kilometres south of Mount Mackenzie). This peak, with its black volcanic cliffs and brilliant rainbow colours dominates the landscape. Cairns mark the trail as it descends from Mackenzie Pass through open alpine, passing a series of lakes and meadows before reaching the Fish Lake Campsite. This section of the trail features superb views of the Capoose Range, Thunder Mountain and the Coast Range. From Fish Lake the trail continues its descent to Burnt Bridge Creek. At this point the trail ascends to Hump Lake then descends steeply to Hwy 20 in the Bella Coola Valley. This section of trail is not recommended for horses.

## Backcountry Recreation

In the Rainbow Range, hikers and horseback riders can enjoy long, rambling alpine and subalpine trails with lots of options for loop tours. The park is a true wilderness, so visitors must be completely self-sufficient and experienced in backcountry navigation. This is grizzly country; keep a scrupulously clean camp, and look out for bear sign as you travel. Trail markings are frequently difficult to see, and the ground is often wet and boggy; use good boots and gaiters. There are many unbridged creeks to cross. The depth of water can be dangerously high in the spring, so it is best to hike the Rainbow Range during late summer. Trails and campsites suitable for horses are marked on the map.

## Visitor Information

- ▶ Grizzly and black bears are common throughout the park. Keep a clean campsite and use food caches where available or hang food 4 metres up and 1 metre out from tree trunks. Make noise as you travel in bushy areas.
- ▶ Camp in designated campsites only. Use a portable stove for cooking. Avoid the use of fire. If you must have a fire, keep it small and use existing fire rings. All plants, animals and rocks are part of the park's heritage. Do not damage or remove them.
- ▶ Boil or purify drinking water.
- ▶ Horseback riders: keep trailheads free of hay and manure. Pack in weed-free grain or pellets.
- ▶ Firearms are prohibited except during hunting season. However, much of the Rainbow Range is closed to hunting; please consult the regulations.
- ▶ Do not forget insect repellent!

## Maps

Topographic maps of the park are a must. Refer to map numbers: 1:50,000 - 93C/12, C/5 and 93D/8, D/9  
1:250,000 - 93C and 93D

## For More Information

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



Ministry of Water, Land  
and Air Protection



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Tweedsmuir  
(South)

## PROVINCIAL PARK Rainbow Range Trails



Welcome. This ancient volcanic range of mountains is called "Tsitsut!" in the Carrier dialect, meaning painted mountains. Its alpine areas are decorated with a spectrum of red, orange, yellow and lavender lava rock. The mountains and wide, glacial valleys provide ideal habitat for caribou, wolf, mountain goat and grizzly bear.

Most people start at the Rainbow Range Trailhead, which is 35 kilometres west of Anahim Lake on Hwy 20 (350 kilometres west of Williams Lake). The road is paved except the section from Anahim Lake down to Atnarko Campground.

Cariboo/Chilcotin/Coast