

# Columbia Mountains

Represented by: Mt. Revelstoke and  
Glacier National Parks



Avalanche Pass, Glacier National Park

## IN THE LAND OF UP AND DOWN

...station and Hotel are within thirty minutes' walking distance of the Illecillewaet Glacier, from which, at the left, Sir Donald (10,808 ft.) rises a naked and abrupt pyramid....

*From an early CPR tourist brochure  
describing Glacier House amid the  
“Alps of North America”*



Mount Revelstoke National Park

### THE LAND:

A vertical world of narrow valleys and canyons squeezed between sheer mountain walls. This region has up to 23 metres of snowfall each year, triggering avalanches and spawning glaciers and icefields. In the north and central areas, the ranges are wild, jagged and spectacularly rugged, contrasting with the rounded tamer summits, forested to the top, that prevail in the south.

Hot springs are a feature of the major valleys.

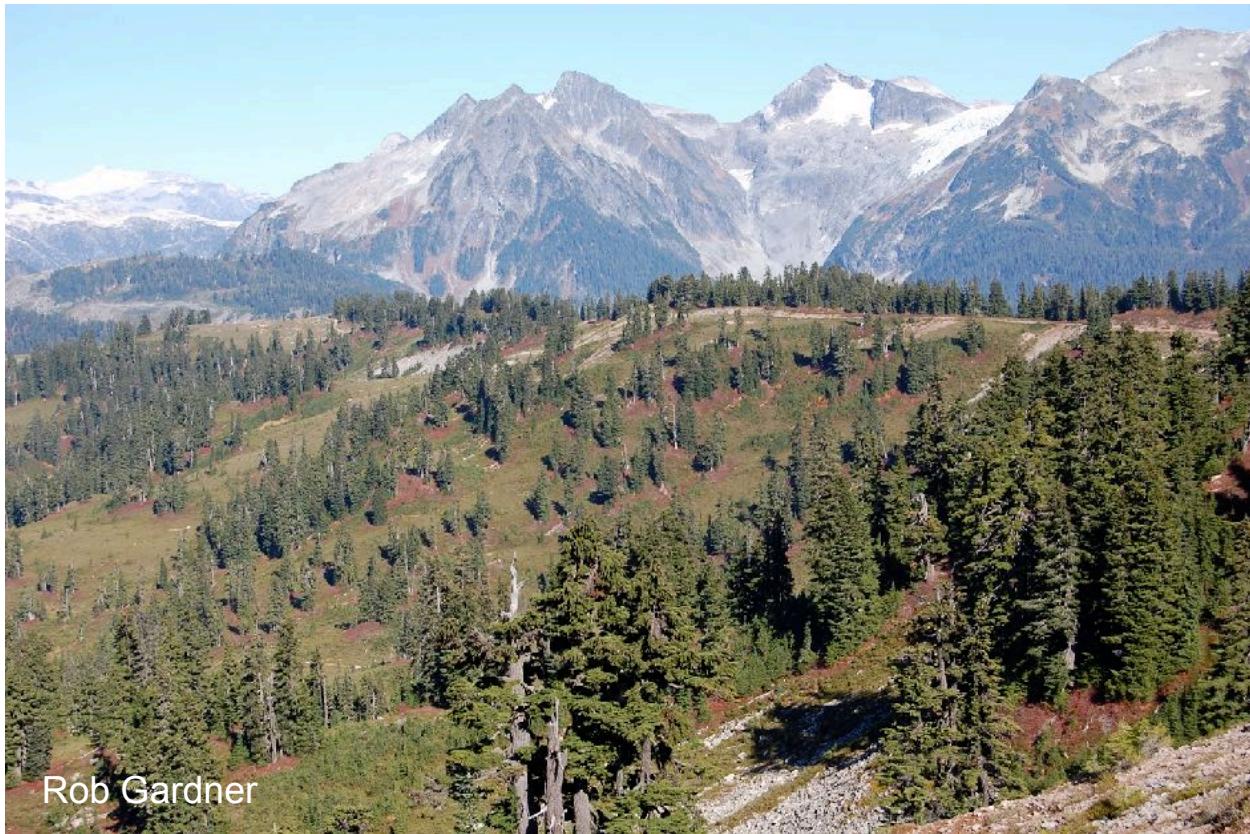
### VEGETATION:

This is interior rain forest country. The

region has the greatest diversity of coniferous tree species in Canada, and the productivity of its forests is surpassed only by the coastal rain forests.

At low to middle elevations are luxuriant forests of western red cedar and western hemlock. Alpine larch adds a splash of gold to the uniform green-black of the forest in autumn.

Above the wet forest, dense stands of Engelmann spruce, alpine fir and lodgepole pine predominate up to the alpine tundra. A brilliant palette of colour - Indian paintbrush, lupine, arnica and other species - paint the lush green alpine meadows with burning red, fiery orange, electric blue....



Rob Gardner

Mount Revelstoke National Park, shown here, protects spectacular alpine meadows. The steep and windy summit road has vistas down to the Columbia River, near the town of Revelstoke.



Rob Gardner



The Canadian Pacific Railway, now known as the CPKC, winds along a valley west of Cranbrook, BC.

### **Prominent Places**

Wells Gray and Bowron Lakes Provincial Parks

Roger's Pass

Kootenay and Columbia Rivers

Monashee and Selkirk Mountains

### **Major Land Uses**

Logging

Hydro-electric power

Tourism

Mining

### **Main Communities**

Revelstoke

Nelson

Cranbrook

Golden

### **Aboriginal Peoples**

### **Parks and Natural Areas**

Glacier National Park

Mt. Revelstoke National Park

### **Further Information**

## WILDLIFE:

Here is a region where large mammals are still plentiful and where visitors are afforded many fine opportunities for big-game viewing. Most of the mammals of the western mountains are found here. Grizzly and black bear forage on the lush vegetation of avalanche slopes; mountain goats can be seen on sheer cliffs while slightly less daring Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep graze on steep slopes. Mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk and moose share the forests with wolves and cougar and wolverine. Pikas, mantled ground squirrels, hoary marmots and lemmings forage in the alpine meadows. The mountain caribou is disappearing from the region as mature forests are cut.

## STATUS OF NATIONAL PARKS:

Two national parks represent this region, Glacier (1,349 km<sup>2</sup>) and Mount Revelstoke (260 km<sup>2</sup>).

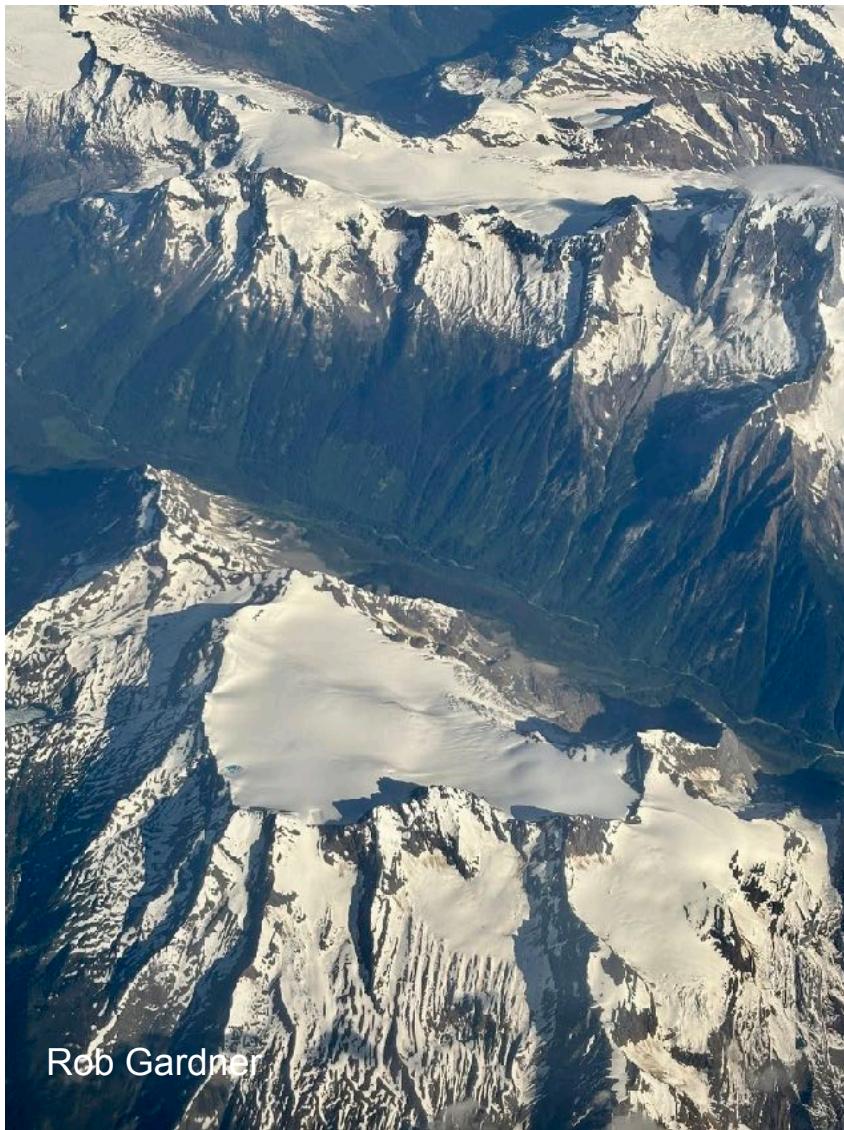
These parks preserve a sample of the rugged Columbia Mountains. The sharp peaks, avalanche-scarred slopes and sheets of perpetual ice and snow make these among the most rugged areas of western Canada. Over half of their area is above the tree line, a stark world of ice and rock. Heavy precipitation creates a lush forest of western red cedar and western hemlock in the valleys and feeding over 400 glaciers, some of which are visible from the highway. Plentiful snow and steep slopes combine to make these parks active avalanche areas. The many avalanche slopes provide excellent forage for both black and grizzly bears. Nakimu Cave in Glacier National Park, the second biggest cave system in Canada (next in size to Castleguard Cave in Banff National Park), is an underground fantasyland of “moon-milk”, black pools and hidden waterfalls.



Mount Revelstoke National Park

Glacier National Park was established around Rogers Pass in 1886, a year after the Canadian Pacific Railway line had crossed the pass. With access provided by the CPR line, the spectacular mountain scenery and fine opportunities for skiing and mountaineering in this area attracted wealthy visitors before the turn of the century. North American mountaineering had its beginnings in Glacier National Park, and Mt. Revelstoke is generally acknowledged as the birthplace of alpine skiing in Canada. Mount Revelstoke National Park was established in 1914 after a group of citizens, impressed with its alpine flowers and mountain scenery, lobbied the federal government to preserve the area.





Glaciers form near the mountain tops, where more than seven meters of snow falls every winter.



Prince George Tourism



Rob Gardner

The Columbia Mountains are well known for their challenging mountaineering routes. However, they are not as tall as the Rockies, and a more complex geological history means they do not have long straight valleys.

Imagine the low-lying clouds are actually glaciers, and you will have a good idea of what this area looked like during glacial times. Ice filled the valleys, while the steep mountain tops remained largely ice-free. This photo was taken just west of Radium, BC.



Rob Gardner



The major valleys have lakes formed by dams for hydro-electric power. All development brings trade-offs. In this case, the reservoirs have flooded some of the most productive forestry land. Kootenay Lake near Nelson, BC is pictured.

