# Crown of the Continent: The Living Heritage







top a snow-dusted peak in October, a friend and I hear an elk bugle. Scanning meadows below with binoculars, I spot instead a silver-tipped grizzly bear, flexing its massive shoulder hump to excavate glacier lilies. "This is his place," my friend says. "He owns this country." Indeed, while we have eliminated grizzlies in so many places, a robust population freely roams the Crown of the Continent, from mountaintops and plunging valleys to fescue prairies and cedar rain forests.

Think of these magnificent bears as wary sentinel of change. For millennia they watched over people who honored their power. The Ktunaxa called to the bear spirit for guidance and protection, while Blackfoot traditions tell of the Medicine Grizzly who rescues and nourishes a young boy. Explorers David Thompson, Meriwether Lewis, and William Clark learned the ancient wisdom of mutual respect the hard way. After several violent confrontations, provoked by nonlethal musket fire, en route to these mountains, Lewis determined to live and let live: "I find that the curiossity of our party is pretty well satisfyed with rispect to this anamal."

From their silent perches, grizzlies witnessed the first trains cross Crowsnest and Marias Passes, followed by settlers to populate the Rocky Mountain Trench, and Flathead and Elk Valleys. By the turn of the 20th century, the bear's outlook dimmed as wildlife was slaughtered across the continent. Here, however, grizzlies persevered into a new era of wildlife restoration, wilderness designation, and cross-border stewardship. Today, they are a source of fierce local pride and the namesake of many businesses and festivals.

As the great silvertip disappears into the forest that bright October afternoon, I am the observer, humble and grateful that such a place may yet be found.

— Steve Thompson, writer, Whitefish, MT

## LOCATION AND VISITOR INFORMATION

**REGIONAL AIRPORTS Calgary International Airport** Calgary, Alberta yyc.com **Glacier Park International** Airport FCA/GPI Kalispell, Montana

Lethbridge Airport YQL Lethbridge, Alberta lethbridgeairport.ca Missoula International Airport

Missoula, Montana

flymissoula.com

Airport **GTF** 

flygtf.com

-builder-train

Great Falls, Montana

iflyglacier.com

Canadian Rockies International Airport YXC Cranbrook, British Columbia flycanadianrockies.com **Great Falls International** 

Amtrak Empire Builder (stations in Whitefish, East Glacier Park, and West amtrak.com/empire



**TOURISM RESOURCES** Travel Alberta travelalberta.com

visitmt.com

Kootenay Rockies Tourism kootenayrockies.com Alberta SouthWest Regional Alliance albertasouthwest.com Montana Office of Tourism

**Glacier Country Travel Information** glaciermt.com **Central Montana Travel Information** centralmontana.com

**Southwest Montana Travel Information** southwestmt.com Kalispell Convention & Visitors

destinationmissoula.org

discoverkalispell.com Whitefish Convention and Visitors Bureau explorewhitefish.com **Destination Missoula Convention & Visitors** 

Visit crownofthecontinent.natgeotourism.com to learn more about the Crown of the Continent and this spectacular landscape.

## FIRST PEOPLES, TWO COUNTRIES

Despite an international line and national policies that divided families and toppled traditional governance, the first peoples of the Crown of the Continent have maintained cultural ties, languages, and inter-tribal cooperation across borders. Historically, tribal territories shifted and overlapped, but at European contact the region was dominated by three linguistic groups. Long the great warriors of the eastern slopes, the Blackfoot Confederacy includes the Piikani, Siksika, and Blood/Kainai Nations in Alberta and the Blackfeet Nation in Montana. On the west side are the mountain bands of the Ktunaxa Nation in British Columbia and the Ksanka/Kootenai in Montana. Farther south, the Interior Salish people, including the Bitterroot Salish and Pend d'Oreille, are closely related to other Salish-speaking nations in British Columbia, Washington, and Idaho. All of these nations and tribes invite visitors to their powwows, museums, and interpretive centers.

**Blackfoot Confederacy / Niitsitapi** These are the traditional territories of the Blackfoot, going back thousands of years. All of this is sacred; lakes and rivers, the forest. the prairie, the mountains where our people go for vision quests. The water starts from this place and flows to the ocean from our land. Today, the biggest issue for the Blackfoot nations is clean drinking water and our legal water rights. We continue to negotiate with the government to protect our water. We understand that we ultimately are responsible for the protection of our territory, water, and

the retention of our language and culture.

- Earl Old Person, Chief of the Blackfeet

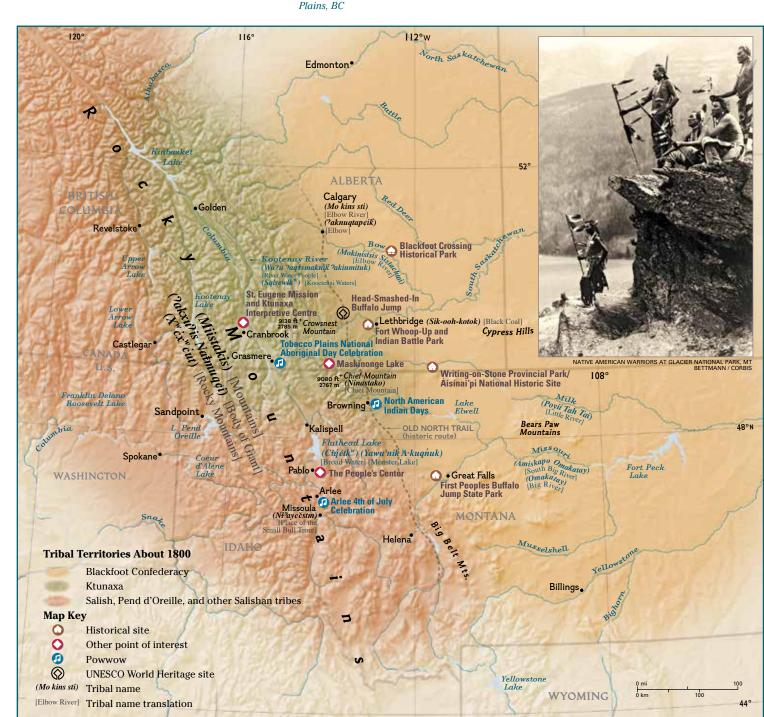
Ktunaxa / Ksanka / Kootenai Our language is unrelated to any language in the world. Maybe that's because our traditional territory in these mountains is so remote. Fewer than 50 people still speak fluent Ktunaxa. We made a dictionary and work with Kootenai elders in Montana to save our language from extinction. At the time of creation, we were given our language and this territory to care for. We are still negotiating a treaty with Canada and British Columbia for rights to our ancestral homeland and to protect the

water. Our language and our land go together.

Séliš (Salish) / Qlispé (Pend d'Oreille) Our tribes, the easternmost in the Salish language family, occupied most of central and western Montana, northern Idaho, and eastern Washington. In the traditional way of life, we moved across this vast area gathering. hunting, and fishing the abundant and varied plants and animals. We still practice these traditional ways as we strive to keep our critically endangered language alive. Today, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes integrate our cultural values and heritage into an advanced program of environmental and natural resource management on the Flathead Reservation and throughout our

aboriginal territories for the benefit of future generations. – Tony Incashola, Salish-Pend d'Oreille Culture nittee and Clayton Matt, Natural Resource Director and Member of Salish Tribe

Special places are still revered and should be respected by all. High on many ridges are the rock shelter remains of vision quest sites, many that face Chief Mountain—the Blackfoot home of thunder. Crowsnest Mountain is where the Raven lives. Glacier's Lake McDonald is home of a Kootenai sacred dance



Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park/ Áísínai'pi National Historic Site Abundant First Nations petroglyphs covering sheer sandstone cliffs, and native

of the Blackfoot spiritual heritage. **Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump** Before guns and horses, native hunters stalked bison on foot and stampeded the animals over cliffs. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump remains an important cultural UNESCO World Heritage site where Blackfoot First Nations share

grasses and wildlife are protected as part

First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park For at least a thousand years, before horses and guns made the work easier and safer, Plains Indians stampeded bison over this ledge to be finished off by the spears and arrows of hunters

their history and values.

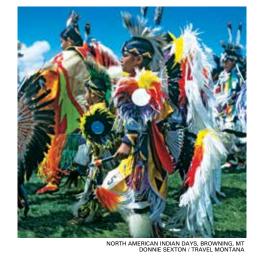
waiting below. **Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park** The Blackfoot nations and Canada signed an 1877 peace treaty at this natural ford of the Bow River, known

by the Siksika as Sooyooh'pawahko, or "underwater bridge." The park offers First Nations guides, indoor exhibits, tipi lodging, and ceremonial dances. Fort Whoop-Up and Indian Battle Park North America's last intertribal clash here in 1870 was followed by a treaty between plains-roaming Cree and foot-

hills-resident Blackfoot. Native peace was exploited by whiskey smugglers who plied the Whoop-Up Trail between here and Fort Benton, Montana, and prompted the formation of today's Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The People's Center Hear oral history directly from the contemporary custodians of Salish and Kootenai tribal heritage, adjacent to trib-

al headquarters and community college. St. Eugene Mission and Ktunaxa Interpretive Centre The interpretative centre honouring Ktunaxa history and renewal is located inside the St. Eugene Golf Resort & Casino. The Ktunaxa Nation decided to



international destination resort. **Maskinonge Lake** The Blackfoot people trace the origins of served animal hides and waterfowl skins,

turn the icon of a sad period of history

an old Indian residential school into an

into an economic engine by restoring

the sacred beaver bundle, with its preto this place still rich in creatures.

## POWWOWS

In the late 1800s, U.S. government agents were determined to stamp out Indian culture, including traditional ceremonies. But they couldn't say no when leaders of the Salish-Pend d'Oreille tribes wished to celebrate the nation's birthday. The Arlee powwow continues to blend tribal traditions and contemporary festivities over the Fourth of July weekend. The second weekend of July belongs to the Blackfeet Nation's North American Indian Days in Browning. Attend the rodeo to watch riders switch mounts three times in a fierce, bareback race. National Aboriginal Day in Canada is June 21—a day to celebrate the cultures of First Nations. The Tobacco Plains Aboriginal Day Celebration welcomes visitors to the Ktunaxa homeland. All powwows and First Nations celebrations are open to tribal members and non-Native Americans alike.

#### **GEOLOGIC GRANDEUR**

For millions of years, ancient seabeds were twisted, folded, and lifted by the tectonic crush of Pacific and North American plates. Successive ice ages then plowed through relatively soft limestone layers to carve river valleys, leaving behind dark forests and deep pockets of fresh water that endure today as glaciated lakes. The prairie meets the mountains at dramatic escarpments along the Rocky Mountain Front where ranchers and conservationists have joined to protect vast expanses for restored populations of wildlife. Weather systems converge over these mountains—Pacific, arctic and

continental—magnifying the value

of many geologic niches for a great

**EXPLORERS AND PIONEERS** 

Frank Slide D-3 For an intimate view of the mountain

Sparwood, B.C.

variety of plants and animals.

Prepare for bracing winds at adjoining

lakes where clashing Pacific and Arctic

air masses funnel through a mountain

gap along the Continental Divide, caus-

ing abrupt transitions in tree species,

wildflowers, and birdlife. Water from

Bay. Adjacent Summit Lake empties

westward toward the Pacific Ocean.

stant 7°C (45°F). Or visit enormous

open-pit coal mines, still active in

Coal Mine Tours C-2 and D-3

Crowsnest Lake flows east to Hudson

Chill in the Bellevue Underground Mine

where the tunnel's breeze stays a con-

collapse that buried 90 sleeping resi-

dents, drive the unpaved track through

the rubble, running west from the main

Hillcrest access road. See the full pan-

orama of the 1903 disaster from the

Frank Slide Interpretive Centre.

**Crowsnest Pass D-3** 

Decades before the appearance of fur traders, missionaries and discoverers, their impact arrived as waves of disease decimated native populations on the plains and in mountain valleys. Westside tribes tolerated early trading posts and religious missions, although the Blackfoot nations were less accommodating on the east slopes. Military forces played both sides of the new order, subduing pockets of Indian resistance while restraining whiskey traders who exploited social breakdown. The wholesale slaughter of native wildlife, especially bison, and the introduction of cattle and railroads solidified the transition to a new society with a different economy.

Bar U Ranch National Historic Site B-3 The Bar U Ranch spills eastward from the Rocky Mountains across the rolling grasslands of Alberta's Highway 22 Cowboy Trail. Transport yourself to an era when horse-drawn chuck wagons followed cattle drives on sprawling, open-range ranches staked by investors in Montréal.



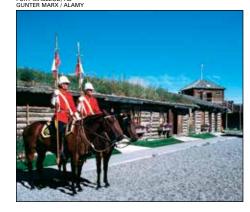
Cranbrook History Centre D-1 Hints of dining car flirtations and parlour car cigar smoke haunt the vintage trains waiting forever at the Cranbrook History Centre. Stay in nearby CPR house, once the grand home of the railway's regional superintendent, and now a bed and

Fort Steele Heritage Town D-1 Rescued pioneer-era structures, summer street theatre, and grazing Clydesdales recall Fort Steele Heritage Town's origins as an outpost of the North West Mounted Police who came to tame itinerant gold seekers from America's wilder West

Hillcrest Cemetery D-3 The 189 coal miners who died in Hillcrest Mine's 1914 explosion are buried in mass graves, grouped according to the religious cultures of the mostly young and immigrant men.

Heritage Acres Farm Museum D-4 As you tour the log house, general store, photographic red barn, and other structures of this late 19th-century to early 20th-century homestead, you'll see a vast collection of restored pioneer artifacts. For special events, volunteers demonstrate early farming methods and fire up vintage machinery such as the steam-powered sawmill

Kootenai Brown Pioneer Village D-4 This haven for rescued 19th-century structures is a good starting point for you to wander along Alberta's Cowboy Trail through the Rocky Mountain foothills, where film crews are sometimes as common as cattle drives.



The Fort (Museum of the North West Mounted Police) D-5 Red-coated police on horseback were dispatched to Fort Macleod in the 1870s to stop American whiskey traders from abusing Blackfoot First Nations and defying Canadian sovereignty. Museum and musical rides honour Canada's tradition of cavalry riding to the rescue of natives, not interlopers. Visit the nearby restored 1884 police barracks and interpretive centre.

Remington Carriage Museum E-5 See working wheelwrights heat and

shrink steel bands around wooden

#### wheels for Remington Carriage Museum's display of 225 horsedrawn vehicles. Ride restored coaches, wagons, or sleighs behind Clydesdales,

Canadians, quarter horses, or shires. **Tobacco Valley Historical Village F-2** Pioneer buildings were moved to save them from drowning when the Libby Dam created Lake Koocanusa in the 1970s.

Browse Fewkes General Store for his-

made quilt, you'll be helping provide

torical artifacts. And if you buy a locally

funds for village upkeep.

**Great Northern Railway Depot G-3** If you're a railroad buff, you'll love this historic depot, the busiest Amtrak stop between Seattle and Minneapolis. The depot doubles as Whitefish Museum.

Old Trail Museum H-7 Join local guides to explore the Old North Trail, North America's original transcontinental highway, used for millennia by native peoples moving north or south along the Rocky Mountain Front. Then visit the Dinosaur Gallery to go back an additional 65 million years to meet earlier travelers.

**Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail** Interpretive Center I-8 Montana's first non-Native American tourists found a route to the Pacific Ocean in an 1803-06 odyssey along the Missouri and Columbia Rivers. As a modern explorer you can trace the journey more quickly here.



d'Oreille Coyote stories, can be seen

Get an early start for a long day-hike to this three-faceted jeweled spire, dividing Rocky Mountain waters among the Saskatchewan River's amble to Hudson Bay, the Missouri-Mississippi's slide to the Gulf of Mexico, and the Columbia's

During the last ice age, 13,000

**Triple Divide Peak F-5** 

plunge to the Pacific Ocean.

Two Medicine Dinosaur Center H-7 See hatchling bones from a fossil nest and join in active dinosaur digs along Montana's Rocky Mountain Front.

Glacial Lake Missoula I-3

to 15,000 years ago, an ice dam in a narrow canyon in northern Idaho periodically gave way, releasing raging torrents from a 2,000-foot-deep (610 meters) lake in western Montana. The legacy of these

in huge ripple marks in Camas Prairie. **Mission Mountains Wilderness** Rugged hikers scale ragged peaks jutting 7,000 feet (2,134 meters) above valley floors in adjoining wilderness areas managed by the U.S.

Forest Service and Confederated

Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Portions

of the tribal wilderness are closed to humans when grizzlies congregate to

feed on alpine insects. Scapegoat Wilderness J-6 The massive limestone cliffs of Scapegoat Mountain anchor the Chinese Wall, a geologic reef in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. The Scapegoat was added to the "Bob" floods, which are recalled in Salish-Pend through citizen advocacy in 1972.



Transboundary Flathead E-3

Unbounded by dams, dikes, or

diversions, this meandering flood-

plain ecosystem is known as the

North Fork Flathead in Montana

and simply as the Flathead in

British Columbia. Grizzly bears,

wolves, and wolverines radiate

Venture on these rough roads with

spare tires and a patient attitude.

Canada's Waterton Park Front E-4

Prairie and mountain ecosystems

from this wild, remote valley.

The Nature Conservancy of

clasp like fingers where ranches bor-

der the national park. A visitor centre

and nature trail at Waterton Springs

for livestock and wildlife.

Campground describe how cowbovs and

environmentalists conserve grasslands

## OUTDOOR RECREATION

WILDLIFE VIEWING Freedom to roam for big mammals—bear,

elk, wolves, lynx, moose—means robust wildlife populations and great viewing. During spring and summer, grizzlies wander the high country, scarfing up grass, roots, insects and, rarely, meat. In the autumn, they rove where berries ripen. Black bears prefer the cover of forests. Your chance of seeing a wolverine during your lifetime is greatest while hiking in Glacier National Park, especially the Highline Trail. The region's wild rivers and glaciated lakes are magnets for waterfowl, resident and migratory. Eagles, hawks, and owls swoop through intermountain valleys and along alpine ridges.

Columbia Wetlands B-1 Swans, eagles, ospreys, herons, and ducks rest on their seasonal migrations along one of North America's longest wetlands. Both the Columbia and the Kootenay Rivers originate here, flowing in

opposite directions, to merge hundreds of

kilometres later, at Castlegar, B.C. South Livingstone Raptor Watch Site D-3 Watch migrating golden eagles ride updrafts along the eastern flank of the Rocky Mountains. See them best from the ridge called Piitaistakis, or "The Place of the Eagles," by Piikani Blackfoot.

**Kokanee Salmon Runs E-2** 

Witness late summer bounty when grizzly bears, osprey, and eagles congregate at Kootenay River tributaries. Kikomun and Wild Horse Creeks set a feast for all when waters run red with spawning Kokanee salmon.

Goat Lick Overlook G-5 Midsummer provides peak viewing for mountain goats using this pioneering underpass that provides safe passage beneath Highway 2. National Bison Range I-3 Established in 1909 and stocked with descendants of bison rescued from

on 18,500 acres (7,487 hectares) of rolling grassland and forest. Take short nature walks from access points along 24 miles (39 kilometers) of road loop. Sun River Wildlife Management Area I-6 Sun River Canyon reverberates in late fall from the clash of bighorn rams knocking heads for breeding rights. Below the canvon, in the wildlife management area itself, watch in winter for herds of stately elk and swift pronghorn antelope.

extinction by Pend d'Oreille people, this

sanctuary protects hundreds of bison

Birds by the hundreds of thousands and humans by the handful congregate at Freezeout Lake to celebrate early spring. Tundra swans, snow geese, and 200 other migrating species pause here in mid-March while they wait for nature's traffic control system to indicate that far northern destinations are open for feeding and breeding.

HIKING

Freezeout Lake I-7

Tremendous day hikes and vast backpacking terrain are a bonanza for mountain explorers. Thousands of miles of trail crisscross public land, much of it maintained by volunteers. Close to town, families find pedestrian joys at Foys to Blacktail Trails

near Kalispell, the Whitefish Trail, Columbia Lake Spirit Trail, and Kimberley Nature Park. The Montana Wilderness Association, since 1962, leads free nature hikes. Waterton and Glacier National Parks provide access to trails that quickly put you in alpine zones, although you must be willing to walk uphill in beautiful settings that take your breath away.



Top of the World Provincial Park C-2 Chert for tools and weapons was quarried by the Ktunaxa inside today's Top of the World Provincial Park. If you're a skier, snowshoer, angler, hiker, or horseback rider, you'll enjoy wilderness trails and campsites that are closed to vehicles powered or pedaled.

Carthew-Alderson Trail E-4 Catch the hikers' shuttle at Tamarack Outdoor Outfitters for a one-way 19-km (12-mi) hike back to the town of Waterton. A steady climb past Summit Lake and above the tree line rewards you with panoramic views on Carthew Summit. Descend along alpine lakes.

Jewel Basin Hiking Area G-4 Watch eye-level eagles and hawks in the autumn from atop Mt. Aeneas, the tallest peak in this hikers-only wonderland. The area is studded with 25 alpine lakes and offers 35 miles (56 kilometers) of prime hiking trails in the Flathead National Forest

### WATER **ACTIVITIES**

At the headwaters of the continent, thousands of small streams feed hundreds of lakes and two dozen major rivers. Flathead Lake is the largest natural freshwater lake west of the Mississippi in the Lower 48. Outfitters point to choice riffles to cast your fly in the Elk River and South Fork of the Flathead. Muscle-

powered boaters find wilderness tranquility on Kintla Lake in Glacier National Park and Elk Lakes Provincial Park. Mountain hikers swear by the rapeutic leaps into glacier-fed lakes to pacify weary muscles. Downstream, millions of North Americans depend upon these fresh, clean waters for drinking, recreation, and agriculture. **Crowsnest River D-4** 

Shallow riffles, deep pools, and runs too rocky for drift boats make the Crowsnest River above Lundbreck Falls a treasured preserve for traditional dry fly anglers who prefer to walk and wade. Waterton and Glacier Boat Tours E-4,

F-4. and F-5 Sunset cruises on a tranquil Lake McDonald, Narrated tours of Upper Waterton Lake. Wildlife- and glacierviewing on St. Mary Lake. Take your pick of these and other guided trips on

historic vessels that ply the deep blue

water at the foot of majestic peaks.

Middle Fork Flathead River G-5 From family-friendly, half-day rafting trips to thrilling, multi-day horseback riding and rafting adventures, white-water opportunities on this wild and scenic river abound.

Flathead Lake Marine Trail H-4 Pick up a trail map (which specifies access points, campgrounds, and distances) and paddle the crystalline water. Explore islands and more than 120 miles (193 kilometers) of forested shoreline.

WINTER ACTIVITIES Although not a strict dividing line, the Continental Divide is a helpful

guide for those who do and do not love snow. The mountain crest catches Pacific storms that deposit abundant snowfall on the west side. On the eastern side, snoweater chinook winds, warm and fierce, quickly erase the leftovers of earlier blizzards. Snowshoeing, and cross-country and downhill ski opportunities abound on the west side. Windows between freezing and snowfall for wild ice skating may last longer on the east side for those who can abide the wind.

Dogs permitted only on Dickey Creek Road



St. Ignatius Mission J-4

Hudson's Bay Company.

Furs and souls drew traders and mis-

ics of commerce and conversion are

found in timeworn buildings. Paintings

Jesus and his mother as native North

was an outpost of imperial Britain's

sionaries to native lands where rel-

inside the mission church interpret

Americans, Nearby, Fort Connah

ROWN OF THE CONTINENT ROSS-COUNTRY SKIING		/-	./.	_/	/	/	/
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r more information on Montana trails: ntermt.com	/raii.	Trail C	Diffice.	Mode.	Easy &	Trail .	Dogs.
llison-Chinook Cross Country Ski Trails, Crowsnest Park, AB D-3 llisonwonderlands.ca	30	19	•	•	•	*	
ig Mountain Nordic Trails, Whitefish, MT G-3 laciernordicclub.com	10	6	•	•		•	•
igfork Community Nordic Center, Bigfork, MT G-4 orthshorenordic.org	10	6		•	•	*	
lacktail Mountain Nordic Trails, Lakeside, MT H-3 orthshorenordic.org	19	12		•	•		•
ranbrook South Star Recreation Area, Cranbrook, BC D-1 anbrookchamber.com/activity/south-star-recreation-trails	30	19	•	•	•	*	
k Valley Nordic Centre, Fernie, BC D-2 ernienordic.com	7	4		•	•	•	
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ne Fernie Dyke, Fernie, BC D-2 ernienordic.com	5	3			•	•	•
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land Lake Lodge, Fernie, BC D-2 ernienordic.com	8	5		•	•	•	•
aak Walton Inn, Essex, MT G-4 aakwaltoninn.com	33	21	•	•	•	•	<b>♦</b> <sup>1</sup>
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ake Windermere Whiteway, Invermere, BC B-1 Obycreeknordic.ca	31	19			•	*	•
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tillwater Nordic, Whitefish, MT G-3 illwatermtnlodge.com	20	12		•	•	•	<b>◆</b> <sup>2</sup>
unset Ridge Ski Trails, Sparwood, BC C-2 cisparwood.com	8	5	•	•	•		
rail fee not required, donations recommended							

Dogs permitted on a 3.5 km-section (2.2 miles) of the trail Copyright © 2014 National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C.

