



Hiking Vancouver

Exploring southwest British
Columbia's most beautiful trails

BY KARL WOLL

Hiking Vancouver

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Hiking, by its nature, has inherent risks. You are responsible for your own safety while traveling in the backcountry or any trail described herein. It is the sole responsibility of the reader to determine his or her fitness levels or those of his or her party. Readers also hold sole responsibility to be aware of and alert to changes that might have occurred to trails since the research and writing of this eBook. This book is for entertainment purposes only.

How can you explain that you need to know that the trees are still there, and the hills and the sky? Anyone knows they are. How can you say it's time your pulse responded to another rhythm, the rhythm of the day and the season instead of the hour and the minute? No, you cannot explain. So you walk.

- The Walk

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PART ONE: HIKING IN VANCOUVER

Many people travel to Vancouver for the shopping, restaurants, and ocean scenery and don't realize the spectacular hiking opportunities that exist so close to the city.

A quick jump over the Lions Gate Bridge from downtown Vancouver takes you onto the 'North Shore'. Here, you can find quick access to countless miles of trails buried within lush forests, and sweeping panoramic vistas atop numerous mountains. Heading further north, along the Sea to Sky Highway, takes you to Squamish, Whistler, and Pemberton - areas which offer dozens of the most brilliant summits you can scale in a day-trip. This area north of Vancouver alone would take years of hiking to begin to explore. But, in case that's not enough for you, just head east of Vancouver into the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley. Coquitlam, Maple Ridge, and Chilliwack are just a few cities within reach that offer more gorgeous peaks. Each region offering its own unique topography, experience and adventure.

This books covers many of the local favorites across southwest B.C., and also includes some hidden gems.

USING THIS EBOOK

This book will guide you through over 100 hikes in southwest British Columbia. Each hike has a difficulty rating; either easy, moderate or difficult. These are rated as 'hikes' and not 'walks' so even something rated as easy may have a few sections of challenging terrain. Moderate hikes have relatively less elevation gain, and can be completed in a shorter duration than difficult hikes. Difficult hikes offer big climbs with lots of elevation gain and technical terrain, requiring a full day's effort. Generally, difficult hikes should not be undertaken by young children or novice hikers.

The vast majority of the hikes in this book can all be reached within a two and a half hour drive from Vancouver, and range from as far north as Lillooet and as far east as Kamloops. The 'Estimated Driving Time from Vancouver' provided for each hike is measured from downtown Vancouver and can vary depending on current traffic, the exact route you take to reach the trailhead and assumes you are traveling by car.

Many of these hikes are accessible by public transit as well. A link to the Translink website is provided in the [Resources](#) section so you can see current bus routes and times.

Most the hikes are out-and-back hikes (you return on the same path as you take to the summit), though some are a point-to-point hikes (meaning your hike ends at a different location than where you start), and some are circuits. For the out-and-back hikes, the distances offered for each hike are measured from the trailhead to the summit, and then back to the trailhead. Distances, even when provided to a fraction of a kilometer, are only rough estimates.

The listed elevation gain is the simple math of the difference in the starting elevation and the summit, in meters. **It is not a cumulative calculation of the total elevation gained during the hike.** This means you are often climbing more than the listed elevation. Hikes that have significantly more cumulative elevation gain will have this noted in their descriptions.

The completion times of the hikes are estimates and will vary per individual ability and weather conditions. Once you have done a few hikes from this eBook you can use them as a guideline to estimate your personal time to complete a hike. The times offered, however, are meant to be generous. Individuals with a lot of hiking experience and good fitness should be able to finish the hikes easily within the estimated times provided.

Each hike has a corresponding season when the trail is most likely to be in good condition. However, as the snowfall and snowmelt vary each year, these too, are estimates.

Each hike will indicate if dogs are allowed. If dogs are allowed, it does not necessarily mean that the trail is 'dog-friendly'. Even though dogs might be allowed, it may be a bad idea to bring them on certain hikes (due to ladders, difficult sections, boulder fields, length, etc). This is up to each dog owner to research and determine in advance.

It is best to confirm the current trail conditions before heading out. There are some websites listed in the [Resources](#) section at the back of this book which can help.

There are some external resources linked to throughout this book. Links have a tendency to change or break from time to time. If you click a link and it doesn't load or doesn't work as expected, go here: bestvancouverhikes.com/resources.

I'll use that page to keep track of any changes between revisions to the book.

If at any point while reading this guide you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. I can easily be reached on Twitter (@karlwoll) or on email (karl@bestvancouverhikes.com). This eBook is a living document that is revised over time. If there's anything you think that can be done to improve the book, please let me know! Your reviews are also encouraged at the online bookstore you purchased from, as they will help others discover the eBook.

One last point I'd like to make before jumping into the content is this - southwest British Columbia is a beautiful corner of the world. Please do your part to keep the natural environment pristine. In other words: 'Tread lightly, take only pictures, leave only footprints, kill only time'.

I hope you enjoy the book, and your time spent outdoors!

SAFETY

The hikes described in this eBook are all on well-known and well-marked trails. Still, safety precautions must be undertaken, especially if you are new to hiking in British Columbia.

Each year in the province of British Columbia there are over 1,000 search and rescue missions initiated. That is more than all the other Canadian provinces **combined**. Most of these missions are necessary because of a lack of preparation by those heading into the backcountry. Vancouver is a beautiful city where you can enjoy some spectacular hiking, but please be cautious and prepared before heading out. Do not be fooled by your proximity to civilization. Once you step into the backcountry, you are truly on your own.

The safety information provided here is a basic overview of outdoor precautions. Hands-on experience is ultimately the best way to make sure you are ready for the outdoors, and your best bet is to take a few courses. Avalanche safety training, wilderness first aid, wilderness survival, and orienteering are a few courses you can take. These courses equip you with important skills for your time in the wilderness. Not only... {Safety info, etc removed from preview copy}

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PART TWO: THE HIKES

Ask yourself these questions before you head out:

- Does someone know where I am going and when to expect me back?
- What is the weather forecast?
- Do I need to be aware of the tides, sunset time or other factors?
- Am I prepared if I get stranded overnight?
- Are my cell phone, headlamp, and other electronics fully charged – Do I have extra batteries for any of these?

Now that you are fully prepared for your adventure, ***let's get to the fun stuff!***

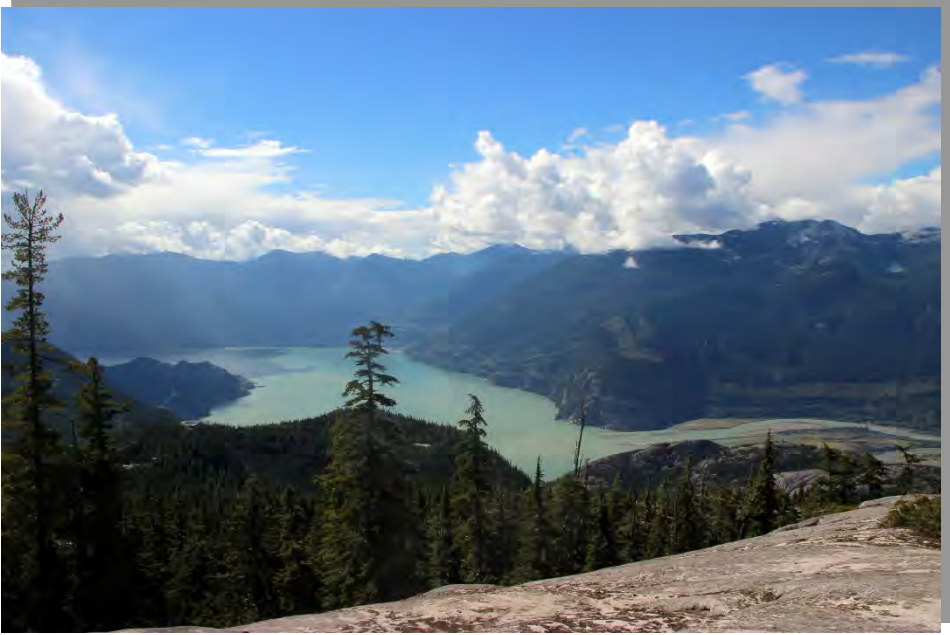
Please note: The hikes are listed geographically north to south, west to east, and are not ranked in order of preference.

SEA TO SKY

The Sea-to-Sky Corridor is a loosely defined region spreading from Horseshoe Bay through Whistler to the Pemberton Valley and sometimes beyond.

For our purposes, the hikes in this section are located within or near Squamish, Whistler, Pemberton, and Lillooet.

AL'S HABRICH RIDGE



The view of Howe Sound from Al's Habrich Ridge

HIKE SUMMARY

Rating: Moderate

Distance: 7 km

Elevation Gain: 350 m

Highest Point: 1,220 m

Time Needed: 2 -5 hours

Type: Out-and-back

Season: July to October

Dogs Allowed: No

Est. Driving Time from Vancouver: 60 minutes

Trailhead Coords: 49.670513, -123.126296

With the opening of the Sea to Sky Gondola in 2014, came the opening of some new hiking trails. There is no hike more popular at the top of the gondola, than **Al's Habrich Ridge**. While a mouthful to say, Al's Habrich Ridge is stunning and worth the journey up the gondola.

The hike to Al's Habrich Ridge takes you through a pleasant forest up to the ridge which sits far below the summit of Mount Habrich. From the ridge, you have an expansive view of Howe Sound, The Stawamus Chief, Sky Pilot Mountain and the Tantalus Range. From the ridge viewpoint, the trail pushes along further to reach the Neverland Lake. There is also an extended version of the hike called Neverland Loop. The Neverland Loop Trail adds an extra hour to the route described here and takes you to a small waterfall.

As of 2016, an adult ticket for the gondola is \$40, or \$10 for a download-only ticket. If you want to hike up, you can take the Sea to Summit Trail. It is possible to hike both the [Sea to Summit Trail](#) and Al's Habrich Trail in the same day, but that will make for a long day of hiking.

The extra perk of this hike is the amenities at the Sea to Sky Gondola lodge. After your hike is over you can enjoy a drink and some food on a beautiful patio, before downloading back down to the parking lot.

AL'S HABRICH RIDGE HIKING ROUTE

Before starting your hike, make sure you've noted the time of the final gondola run. You don't want to be stuck at the top after your hike!

From the top of the Sea to Sky Gondola, walk down the platform towards the large map of the area. From the map, you'll find a sign for the Wonderland Loop. Follow that direction down a wide gravel road (Backcountry Access Road). At the bottom of the hill, there will be a sign marked for Al's Habrich Trail. You will pass by a water reservoir on your left. Go up the hill, and on your left, you will see a marker for Al's Habrich Trail going into the trees.

The singletrack trail starts here by tucking into the trees. Following the trail from here is fairly straightforward, and there will be markers in the trees along the route. There is some pink flagging and every so often there are official 'Al's Habrich Trail' markers. They are large, diamond-shaped markers. Each of the markers are numbered and will end at #44 at Neverland Lake.

The trail rolls up and down but remains more or less level. After a few hundred meters there is a large rock wall on your right. To your left, a partial view of Squamish will open up.

There will be some wooden steps on this section of trail as the trail winds along through the trees.

Roughly 600 m into the hike there's a creek crossing with a rope to help you across. Although, later in the summer Oleson Creek will be dry and the rope won't be needed.

From the creek, the trail begins to climb up but remains easy to follow. About 1 km in, you can find a small bluff just off the trail overlooking Howe Sound the 3 peaks of The Chief down to your right.

Shortly after, there are a few steep sections with ropes to help you scramble up the trail. You will come out onto an exposed ridge and the upward climb continues. There aren't many markers as you scramble up this section of rock, but if you look carefully you will see some pink tape or cairns along the way. Just keep climbing up and up the granite outcropping.

2 km along the hike you will start to descend. At the bottom of the descent on the other side of the ridge, the trail ducks back into the trees to your right. There is a trail marking and some ribbon at this spot – which might be hard to find at first. Once you've found the trail, it goes back into the trees and drops down a bit.

Follow the trail through the trees and around 2.8 km there's a junction for Yuko's Pond. You are nearing the beautiful view at Al's Habrich Ridge. Stay right at that junction and you'll soon emerge at the 'summit'. There are two main viewpoints. One is a steep scramble up the exposed rock just off to your right. This area provides a slightly better view as you can see all the way up the Squamish Valley. You will also get a spectacular view of the Sea to Sky Gondola lodge, The Stawamus Chief, Sky Pilot Mountain and Howe Sound. To the north, you can see Mount Garibaldi and Garibaldi Provincial Park. Enjoy the view and have a snack before carrying along the trail towards Neverland Lake.

Carefully scrambling back down, the main trail carries along to the south. There is another expansive bluff with the same incredible view. You can stop here if you want, but the full hike of Al's Habrich Ridge Trail requires another kilometer to reach Neverland Lake.

The trail continues to the south along the ridge and will tuck back into the trees. There is an Al's Habrich Ridge Trail marker in the tree where the trail continues.

Picking up the trail and going into the forest, you will cross over a small creek. Keep following the trail.

Before too long, there will be a junction on your left for Neverland Loop and the Neverland Falls. You can do a 30-minute detour if you wish to see the waterfall, but, it isn't the most scenic waterfall around. In the summer it might not be much more than a trickle. Or, if you want to do the full loop be sure to add at least an hour to your estimated time for this hike.

Staying right at the Neverland Loop junction, the trail will continue a few hundred meters more to Neverland 'Lake'. While it isn't much larger than a pond, the lake is actually quite scenic. There is a neat drop off the back side of the lake. You can cross over the stream on the end of the lake and follow the trail up the other side to another little bluff with a great view. The view is the same as from the main lookout at Al's Habrich Ridge.

After enjoying the lake retrace your route back to the gondola. If you want, you can enjoy a beverage at the gondola before heading back down to the parking lot.

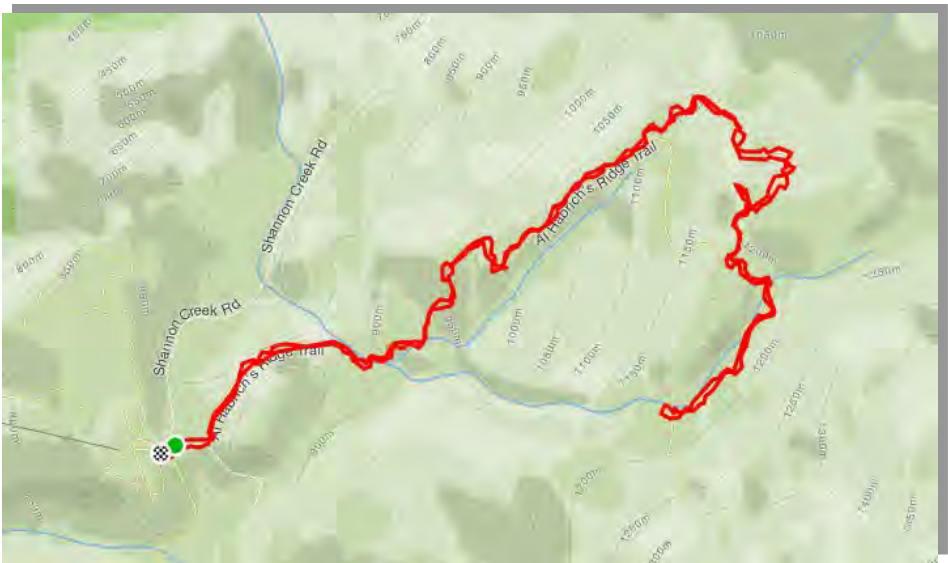
DIRECTIONS AND PARKING

Take Highway #99 heading north past Horseshoe Bay towards Squamish. As you near Squamish, watch for the signs for Shannon Falls and the Sea to Sky Gondola (they're hard to miss), and simply pull into the lot right off the highway.

Parking: There is parking at the base of the Gondola, although sometimes it fills up. There is long term parking at Darrell Bay (to the south across the highway from Shannon Falls) and Chances Casino (to the north), and a shuttle operates for these lots on weekends and holidays. You can also park at the parking lot for the Stawamus Chief Provincial Park, or at the parking lot for Shannon Falls.

Google Map [directions are here.](#)

The online version of this [hike is here.](#)



BLACK TUSK



The Black Tusks seen from Panorama Ridge

HIKE SUMMARY

Rating: Difficult

Distance: 28 km

Elevation Gain: 1,750 m

Highest Point: 2,319 m

Time Needed: 9 - 11 hours

Type: Out-and-back

Season: July - October

Dogs Allowed: No

Est. Driving Time from Vancouver: 90 minutes

Trailhead Coords: 49.946139 - 123.056792

Black Tusk, visible from Whistler and several points along the Sea to Sky highway, is an iconic natural landmark in southwest BC. Located in Garibaldi Provincial Park, The Black Tusk offers a truly unique hiking experience and draws hikers from far way. There are several amazing hikes in Garibaldi Park, but a trip to The Black Tusk is a must for anyone visiting the area.

The dramatic shape, and contrast of the mountain to its surroundings make it instantly recognizable. The Black Tusk is the remnant of a volcano which has eroded immensely over time. Many people hike only to the exposed base of Black Tusk, however, with caution, the south peak can be accessed via a tight rock chimney. The true, northern, summit – only about 1 meter higher – can only be gained with climbing gear.

Most hikers will tackle The Black Tusk from Garibaldi Lake/ Taylor Meadows, but it can also be accessed via a route from Helm Lake to the north.

STARTING THE BLACK TUSK HIKE AT THE RUBBLE CREEK PARKING LOT

Same as the hike to [Panorama Ridge](#), Black Tusk can be accomplished as a day-hike from the Rubble Creek parking lot, but I highly recommend turning this into an overnight hike and starting from the campsite at [Garibaldi Lake](#) (or the one at Taylor Meadows). Or, as Dawn Hanna puts it in [her book](#)

As a dayhike from base camp at Garibaldi Lake or Taylor Meadows, Black Tusk is a perfect day of alpine meadows, a good aerobic workout and stunning mountain scenery. As a dayhike from the Black Tusk parking lot, it's a 32 kilometre, 10-hour long bad idea.

I wouldn't go so far as to call it a bad idea if you are a trail runner, or very fit, but the point is well taken.

From Rubble Creek parking lot, find the trailhead which takes you up Garibaldi Lake Trail. The first stretch of the trail take you up alongside Rubble Creek, which you will hear rumbling nearby. The first 6 km are relatively uneventful. You will work your way up, and up, and up – along several long switchbacks. Each kilometer is marked so you can marvel at your slow progress. The trail itself is wide and well groomed, so there's not much worry about...
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Preview



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