



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.

ALEXANDER FALLS



The partially-frozen Alexander Falls

HIKE SUMMARY

Rating: Easy

Distance: 2.5 km

Net Elevation Change*: 0 m

Highest Point: 820 m

Time Needed: 2 Hours

Type: Loop

Season: December to March

Dogs Allowed: Yes

Est. Driving Time from Vancouver: 1 Hour 30 Minutes

Trailhead Coords: 50.137288, -123.129339

Alexander Falls is a beautiful waterfall in Callaghan Country just a few kilometers south of Whistler. There is a viewing platform overlooking Alexander Falls along the road to the Whistler Olympic Park. In the summer, the viewing platform is a nice detour spot along a drive to or from Whistler.

But in the winter, you can do one better than seeing the falls from the viewing platform. When Callaghan Country is operating during the winter months, you can snowshoe right to the base of the spectacular Alexander Falls for an up-close view.

If you're lucky enough to time your trek during a cold snap, you may see Alexander Falls completely frozen, which is a remarkable sight. But frozen or not, a snowshoe trip to the falls always makes for a fun outing.

Alexander Falls is a cascade waterfall that plummets 52 meters over 6 separate steps.

Starting at the Callaghan Country base, you can take the Express Trail straight to the falls. Or, you can take a longer loop to enjoy more time snowshoeing through the beautiful forest. Taking the Express Trail, the snowshoe can be completed in about one hour. Doing the loop along the Alexander Falls Explorer Trail takes closer to two hours.

We recommend taking the longer, more scenic loop with the Finger Lakes / Alexander Falls Explorer Trails. The route description below describes this loop.

The trail is easy to navigate and shouldn't pose too much of a problem for children or beginner snowshoers. The exception is one short, steep section just before Alexander Falls, where caution should be taken.

It is important to note that to snowshoe to Alexander Falls, you must pay admission to access the [Callaghan Country terrain](#).

Besides the Alexander Falls Trail, there are other great snowshoe trails within Callaghan Country. Two popular trails are the Finger Lakes and Real Life trails. Admission also provides you joint-access to the snowshoe trails of the Whistler Olympic Park.

Callaghan Country is a popular place for cross-country skiing and is also home to the incredible Journeyman Lodge. We have reviewed both wintertime and summertime stays at the Journeyman Lodge before.

ALEXANDER FALLS HIKING ROUTE

From the Callaghan Country basecamp, walk past the double-decker bus/coffee shop. You will see the snowshoe trail access sign just behind it. The trail goes into the trees from the main junction. Then there will be a sign that says 'Snowshoe Trails'.

You quickly come to a junction. The right is marked for the Real Life Trail, and the left is marked for the Express and Alexander Falls Explorer Trails. Go left.

The trail goes downhill and into the forest away from the main cross-country ski track.

You'll quickly come to another junction. Left is marked for the Express Trail. If you're short on time go that way, to take the direct route to the falls. If you have some time, stay to the right on the trail marked for the Finger Lakes Trail. This will take us to the Alexander Falls Explorer Trail.

As you walk along the snowy path, there are yellow markers in the tree with an icon of snowshoes on them. The trail will undulate up and down.

The trail continues to meander up, down and through the beautiful forest of Western Hemlock. In about ten minutes, you'll come to the junction for the Alexander Falls Explorer Trail. Go left.

The trail drops downhill here. Quickly, you'll come to a junction with orange flagging in the trees. Go left, following the orange flagging and onto the trail with the yellow snowshoe markers in the trees.

The trail continues to carry up and down but has a net downhill as you drop towards Madeley Creek. Depending on the amount of snow, you may see a small stream on the right, partially exposed.

You'll come out to a junction at the bottom of the Express Trail. Go right here and you'll approach one final steep section to decline down the creek. Take your time on this short section of the trail.

When you drop down at the creek-level, you'll go left. It's just a two-minute walk to the base of the waterfall, and you'll see it appear ahead of you as you round the corner.

Alexander Falls runs along the Madeley Creek which lies in the Squamish River watershed. It is 52 m tall and about 20 m wide at its widest point.

Cool fact: The falls are usually cited to drop 141 feet (43 meters), but upon surveying the falls in 2009 it was shown to be 173 feet (52 meters) tall. [[sour](#)]

Enjoy the beautiful falls, before heading back up the trail. This time, as you reach the junction with the Alexander Falls Explorer Trail, stay straight. This allows you to short-cut straight up the Express Trail to the Callaghan Country Lodge. By doing this, the hike out will be quicker than the hike down.

As you drive back out towards the Sea to Sky highway, there is a terrific view of the iconic [Black Tusk](#) ahead of you.

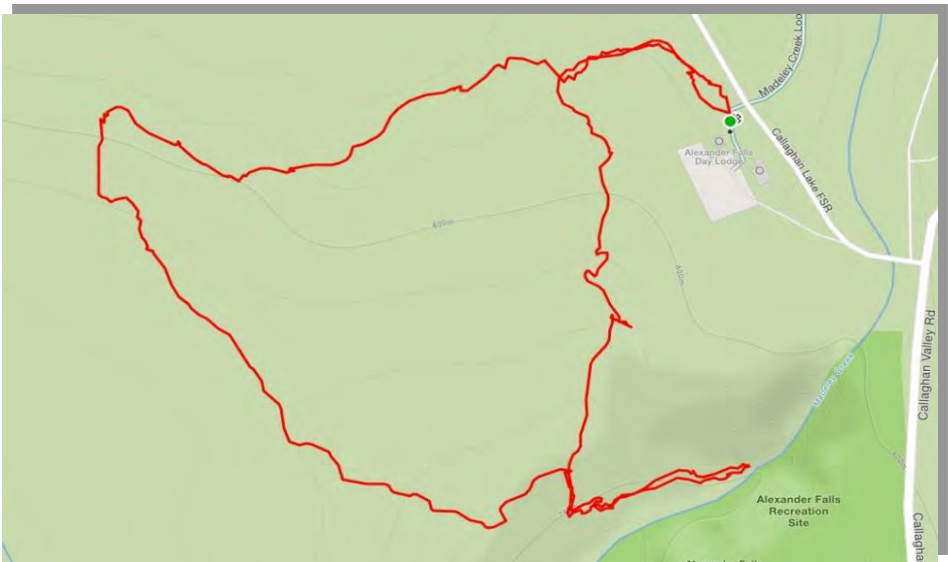
DIRECTIONS AND PARKING

Take the Sea to Sky Highway (Hwy 99) north passed Squamish towards Whistler. Not too far beyond [Brandywine Falls](#) Provincial Park, there will be a turning lane to turn left onto Callaghan Road. Turn left and head up Callaghan Road.

The entrance is just after the Alexander Falls lookout. Just before a hairpin turn, you'll see the bridge and entrance gate for Callaghan Country. If you reach the Whistler Olympic Park, you've gone too far.

Google Map [directions are here.](#)

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



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... **{Removed from preview copy}**

End of

Preview



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amazing new hikes today at
www.bestvancouverhikes.com

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