

Cariboo Chilcotin Adventure Guides Potato Mountains Spring/99

Rec Use:
Rating:



At a Glance

The Potato Ranges offers some of the best easily accessible wilderness hiking in the Coast Mountains. A number of subalpine and alpine routes are possible. Highlights are inspiring views of Tatlayoko and Chilko Lakes, alpine flowers, wildlife viewing, and a sense of isolation. Although there are many trails and routes in the Potato Mtns, only the main ones are described.

Overall Length: ± 25 km North to South along main trail
Average Grade: 20-30% on climb to Alpine
10% grades in Alpine
Total Elevation gain: ±480 meters Main Potato Trail
±900 meters Potato Crest Trail

The outdoor recreation ratings have been developed through a combination of generally recognized standards for activities such as biking, hiking, kayaking, and local knowledge.



Land Use

The Potato Mountains have always been an important area for First Nations traditional use. Historically, the Xenii people (Nemah valley) have harvested the wild potatoes that grow in the alpine meadows of the range. Many of the trails and routes in the Potato Mountains were travel routes originally used by First Nations to access summer-fall gathering and hunting areas, and for communication between communities.

The Potatoes is a multi-use area shared by First Nations, local ranchers, trappers, guide-outfitters, and recreationalists. The information in this guide is intended to help visitors enjoy the scenic beauty and wilderness nature of the Potatoes in harmony with other land users.

Key Trails and Routes

There are two main routes through the Potato Range, the Potato trail or main cattle trail, extending through subalpine meadows and the Crest Route, along the west ridgeline of the Potato Mountains, providing spectacular views of Tatlayoko Lake. The Potato trail is well worn after decades of cattle use. You can expect to encounter or see evidence of cattle grazing in the alpine and subalpine in certain locations over the summer months. Please avoid disturbing cattle, especially since ranchers don't want them to come off the range prematurely. The Potatoes are a huge area and cattle are often bunched in small meadows and openings so it is relatively easy to avoid them.

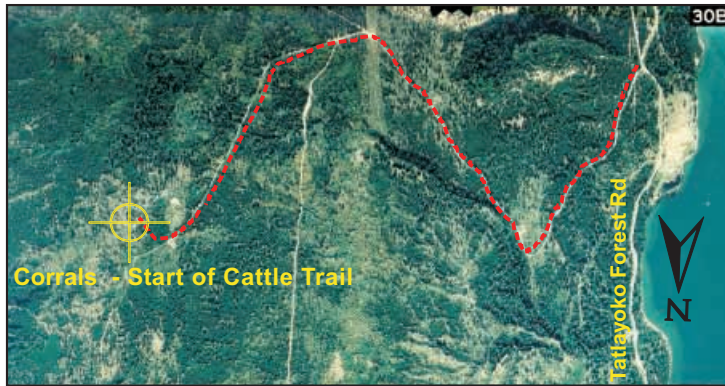
Trailhead(s)

Drive west from Williams Lake on Highway 20 for 280 km to the community of Tatla Lake. Just before Tatla Lake, turn left onto the Tatlayoko Valley Road (good gravel) and follow signs into this very scenic valley. Continue south on the Tatlayoko Forest Service Road, winding along the east side of the lake.

North Potato Trail Access

About 1.2 km past the Ministry of Forests Rec Site, turn left on an old logging road, heading up about 3.5 km to a set of corrals - the route up the road is tricky - see map inset for details. Park near the corrals or arrange for a drop-off and continue up the main trail on foot. Eric Hatch of Niut Trails can arrange guiding and packing services, if necessary, and provide advice on local conditions (ph: 250-476-1191). Local information and camping is also available at Driftwood Cabins (ph: 250-476-1185).

Below: North Potato Mountains Access



South Potato Trail Access

Continue on the main forest road (along the lake) for 16.5 km past the MOF Recreation site. Look for the signs indicating the turn-off to Bracewells' Alpine Adventures (well marked). Turn left onto an old logging road to Bracewells and continue for another 6+ km to the lodge. Another option after turning left is to look for an old corral about 2 km up the road. The trail begins on the left opposite the corral and contours around the bottom of the Potato Range, linking up with the trail above the lodge. This trail is not maintained regularly and you can expect some windfalls.

The recommended option is to drive to the lodge and determine trail conditions, location of livestock, bears sighting, etc., before heading out. The lodge is also a good place to stage your exploration of the Potato Mountains and arrangements can be made for packing and guiding (ph: 250-476-1169).



Left: Tatlayoko Lake from Crest Route

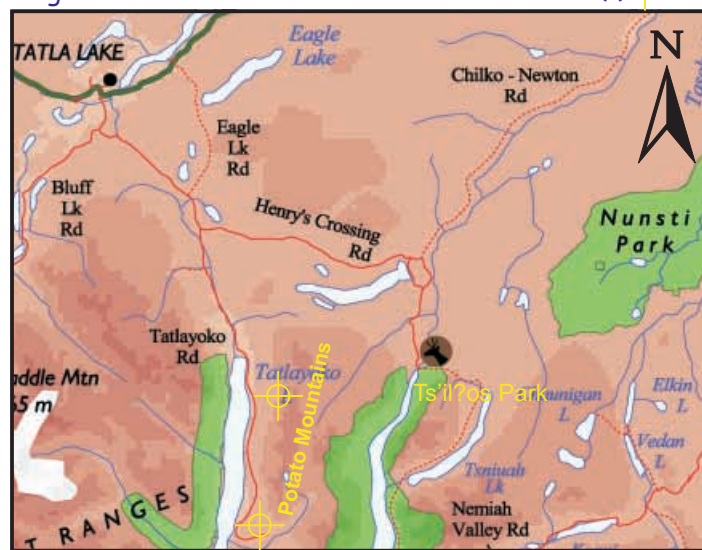


Right: Tullin Mountain from trail up from lodge to Crest Route

Trail Ethics:

- ▶ Practice low impact camping and sanitation. Leave no trace of your fire ring-tent site, and pack out what you pack in. For more info on this subject check out the Outdoor Rec Council brochure.
- ▶ Respect private land. If starting at the south end of the trail, stop in at the Bracewells Lodge to inquire about trail conditions and location of cattle on range.
- ▶ Follow trail advice (in this guide) to avoid impacts on cattle during grazing season (summer-fall), especially near trail heads leading off the Mountains at the south and north end of the range. This is critical to avoid cattle moving off the range prematurely.
- ▶ Hikers: when encountering parties on horseback, stop, step off the trail to the low side, and let the horse party pass. Follow directions from riders (ask if uncertain).

Regional Overview



Be Aware of:

- ▶ Potential for bear encounters - keep a clean camp.
- ▶ Backcountry nature of area. Be prepared for travel in all conditions. Potential for snow in all seasons.
- ▶ To assist in navigation, bring a compass, altimeter, and 1:50,000 maps 92 N/8 and N/9.
- ▶ Historic cattle use through Potatoes on main corridor.
- ▶ Other guided wilderness tourism parties on horseback.

The authors of the Cariboo Chilcotin Adventure Guides have tried hard to provide up to date, accurate information. However, no guide is perfect and no responsibility is accepted for any discrepancies or lack of precision. Also, users of the Cariboo Chilcotin Adventure Guides agree to waive any and all claims against the authors and staff for personal injury or mis-adventure while undertaking any outdoor recreation activity. Make sure you evaluate your ability in relation to the risks and challenges. Be prepared for weather changes, bring first aid gear, **go with a friend(s), and leave a copy of your trip plan with someone you trust.**

Ambulance: 1-800-461-9911 Police: 394-4211
For more information phone: (250) 398-7873

