

## 70 BAKER LAKE

In the baked days of summer, Baker Lake at the headwaters of west Redding Creek shimmers like sapphires. The 750-m-long, triangular-shaped lake is cold and deep. It snuggles into a thickly forested valley below rugged Akokli Mountain, to the south. The light grey walls of the ancient Purcell sedimentary rock are broken into cliffs and crags.

As with many mountain hikes, the drive to Baker Lake trailhead takes longer than the actual hike. It takes about 2.5 hours to drive, one way, to the trailhead, and we hiked to the lake in about two hours. Baker Lake is quiet and remote. The topography is pleasingly typical of the southern Purcell hikes, with dense forests, jagged climbable peaks, a short waterfall, many clear small creeks, wildflower meadows and a refreshing mountain lake as the destination.

The trail is moderately rough and some route-finding across moist meadows and talus slopes may be necessary. The trail is well marked—watch for flagging, trail signs or cairns showing the route.

From the parking spot along the western Redding Creek fork, walk across the road-bridge

**Rating** moderate

**Time** full day hike

**Distance** 4.5 km one way

**Elevation gain** 335 m (1100 ft.)

Baker Lake 1920 m (6300 ft.)

**Trail** variable, some easy route-finding, well-maintained trail, bridge crossings, to subalpine lake

**Maps** 82F/7 Boswell

82F/10 Crawford Bay

**Trail map** page 213

### Drive

**Road** high clearance, waterbars

**Road map** page 180

Baker Lake trailhead is a 2.5 hour drive from Highway 95A. Bump along Redding Creek Road, see page 211.

0 km St. Mary Lake Road 29 km (39-km sign). Turn left for Redding Creek FS Road.

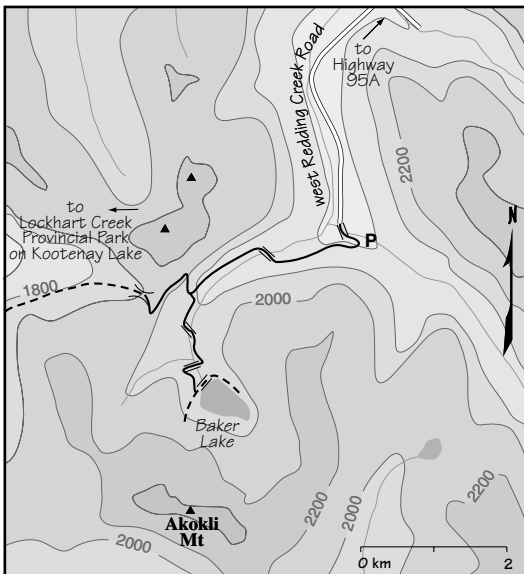
8 km Continue straight for **Baker Lake**. Turn left (south) for **Hall Lake**, see page 211 (communications tower access).

23.7 km Continue straight (avoid Grey Creek Pass, right fork), 24-km sign

32.5 km Continue straight. For Snowcrest Mountain access, turn left (past 32-km sign), then immediately turn left again.

38.7 km Turn right (west) for **Baker Lake** (38-km sign), east and west Redding Creek junction

39.4 km Park before the bridge for Baker Lake.





*Crossing fallen log bridge over west Redding Creek on the way to Baker Lake.*

and follow the road up a switchback. Then hike west (right) for about 1 km to a flattened clearing at the end of the road. Take a skid road uphill (parallel to the creek) for a few minutes, then follow the trail markers leading downhill (right) toward the creek.

Follow the path across a slanted fallen log bridge. Trail crews recently improved this crossing spanning the fast and deep Redding Creek, but careful footing is crucial. Children and pets may need assistance. Head steeply uphill in the forest on a footpath. The trail bends left (southwest) and ascends diagonally up a white talus slope. Look for flagging.

After crossing the talus slope, the hike is very pleasant as it skirts the edges of boggy meadows brimming with flowers and small tributary creeks bouncing into the wetlands. Generally the trail is distinct, but flagging marks the way for some sections of this sub-alpine area.

At 2.5 km there is a trail junction. The right fork leads to Lockhart Creek in the West Kootenay. This trail climbs about 300 m (1000 ft.) to a ridge dividing Red-

ding Creek with Lockhart Creek. Stay on the left fork to Baker Lake. It's easy to miss this junction—if the trail begins to climb steadily, you may have inadvertently taken the right fork. The hike over the Lockhart Creek trail offers enjoyable views of the Baker Lake valley and the southern Purcell Mountains.

Just after the junction, the Baker Lake trail crosses a second talus slope; the mountain views become especially inviting. A wide waterfall splashed down a short slope across the creek from the trail. Stay on the west (right) side of the creek and follow the bouldered slope to the south. From the end of the boulder field, a faint trail heads steeply up into the forest to the lake.

At the lakeside, sheltered in the forest is a campsite where brush has been cleared for about six tents. For a day hike, you may want to climb the eastern ridge of Akokli Mountain 2598 m (8520 ft.). This route requires bushwhacking through the moderately open forest up to the alpine ridge.