

6 LAKIT LOOKOUT TO TEEPEE MOUNTAIN

We delighted in the views and welcomed the gentle wind as it skimmed the Rockies, removing the flying insects from around us. What a treat it was to hike along the Rocky Mountain alpine ridge that divides the Kootenay River and Wildhorse River valleys! From this breathtaking mountain-crest traverse we could see both waterways flowing far below.

The ridge walk from Lakit Lookout to Teepee Mountain is a multi-day backpacking adventure. It demands scrambling over knife-edge passes and balancing on rock over craggy summits. Another challenge involves skirting around very steep hillsides of late-melting snow sheltered on the northern slopes. As you hike closer to Teepee Mountain, the ridge gradually widens and smooths out. If you are fortunate to arrive at the right time of year, the meadows will be covered with pink and white heathers and Dryas flowers. This trip also features many kilometres of walking between alpine larch stands or through smooth, wide alpine meadows.



Rating difficult

Time 3 days Lakit to Teepee to Mount Stevens trail

5 days Lakit to Teepee to Fay's Lake to Wildhorse

Distance about 29 km

Elevation change 600-760 m (2000-2500 ft.) per day

Teepee Mountain 2774 m (9100 ft.)

lowest pass on ridge 2256 m (7400 ft.)

Trail backpacking, alpine routefinding on rocky ridge top, no trail, some scrambling

Maps 82G/12 Cranbrook

82G/13 Skookumchuck

Trail maps Lakit Mountain page 36

Mount Stevens page 43

Begin at **Lakit Lookout** parking.

Final destination **Mount Stevens** trailhead, page 74, or continue hike to **Fay's Lake**, page 43.

Drive

Road map page 23

This trip requires two vehicles. The night before the hike we parked a vehicle at the Mount Stevens trailhead and drove home. The next morning, a friend drove us to the Lakit Lookout parking lot. This planning eliminated a long car shuttle at the end of the hike.

See the **Lakit Lookout** hike on page 37 and the **Teepee Mountain** hike on page 74 for the western descent down to Wasa.

For a longer alpine tour, see the **Fay's Lake to Teepee Mountain** hike on page 45 and descend down the northeast side of Teepee Mountain to Wildhorse Creek.

Janice leaning on cairn along the Lakit to Teepee ridge walk. Photo by Dave Read.

Most backpackers start this tour from the Lakit Lookout parking area and go north along the alpine ridge to Teepee Mountain. This direction is preferred because you can drive your gear almost to the ridge top at Lakit to avoid carrying it all the way up the Mount Stevens trail (Teepee access). When heading north along this ridge walk, the hardest scrambling sections are completed on the first day or so.

For a longer alpine tour (another day or so), continue the hike past the summit of Teepee Mountain and head down its north side. Connect with the Fay's Lake to Teepee Mountain hike on page 45. Plan for a vehicle pickup at both ends of the Wildhorse FS Road.

Topographic maps are essential for both these traverses. From Lakit to Teepee the maps show 21 summits. Most are moderate climbs and between them some of the passes are broken into thin slices. Loose shale-like rubble forms a knife-edge of rock along some of these passes, creating steep inclines on both sides. Be careful; a misplaced step could be dangerous, especially with a full overnight pack. However, most of the route is straightforward and without hazards.

The water supply is limited on this trek, so large containers for storage may be necessary. Before attempting this hike, check on the remaining snowpack. You can drive Highway 93/95 below and see how much snow is left up near the ridge. If you see patches of snow (large enough to be visible from the highway) at regular intervals, you can assume there will be enough water.

The best time to find enough snow to melt for water is early or mid-July, as snow still lingers at these elevations until then. We could find no water on the last day of hiking (without a descent of 180-240 m [600-800 ft.] to the highest tarns, that is).

Hike from the Lakit Lookout parking area up to Lakit Lookout and follow the ridge north to the summit of Lakit Mountain. Continue to follow the winding ridge, heading generally north.

About 2.5 to 3 moderate days of hiking, scrambling and leisurely overnight camping will take you to the pass just south of Mount Stevens. The trail back down from Mount Stevens heads down southwest, from the pass. (See Mount Stevens to Teepee Mountain on page 74 for the trail information.) When looking north toward Mount Stevens, the route down is on the left side. Take the long dry trail down to the vehicle.

Before the final descent along the Mount Stevens trail, hike to the top of Teepee Mountain, another 1.5 km north. This section is the most scenic and worth completing on the last day of your backpacking trip. Leave the pass south of Mount Stevens and follow the easy ridge lines north and up to the summit of Teepee Mountain.

Even though your isolation on this ridge walk is almost assured, the place does not feel like a true wilderness setting as roads are visible on both sides. In spite of this, the trip is one to savour. After the hike, while you race along the highway past Wasa, you can see the ridge lines and recall how rich and satisfying life is high in the mountains.