

76 HISTORIC PERRY PASS TRAIL

In 1895 the Perry Pass trail was established to access the “Follow Me” gold claims. Initial gold hard-rock mine reports for the Gold Run Lake area were very promising. Expectations were high that an operating mine would result from these early assays. Provincial funding was obtained to build the trail and construction was completed by the fall of 1900. The grades were set at 12 per cent and the tread width was specified at 3 ft.

Thomas McVittie, the government agent surveyor, approved the early mining on Perry Creek, Meachen Creek and the St. Mary River, and it is likely that he was also involved in approving this new trail. Although a mine was never built, small groups of miners used this trail until the 1930s. Work crews built this trail primarily for access for

Rating moderate

Time full day hike

Distance 4 km from Gold Run Lake to Kamma Pass

Elevation gain 293 m (960 ft.)

Perry Pass 1993 m (6540 ft.)

Kamma Pass 1860 m (6100 ft.)

Nogalski Peak 2256 m (7400 ft.)

Mount Flett 2408 m (7900 ft.)

Trail variable conditions, north section overgrown, hike fragments of historic trail, routefinding to lakes, Mount Flett or Hellroaring Pass

Map 82F/8 Grassy Mountain

Trail map page 221

Drive

Road high-clearance vehicle to Gold Run Lake (most common access)

Road map page 180

Follow directions for Perry Creek Road, page 215, and drive to the Gold Run Lake trailhead at 35.5 km (33-km sign).



Scrambling along the badly faulted ridge, Ann makes her way to the summit of Mount Flett.



Hiking below late melting snow cornice on ridge walk between Richmond Lake to Gold Run.

gold exploration, but today it provides hikers access to the southern Purcell Mountains and offers several possibilities for moderate day hiking. Perry Pass trail is now a recreational corridor.

The trail maintains elevation as it hugs the hillside above Gold Run Lake where it is the most preserved section of this old horse route. It survives after nearly 100 years since its construction and remains in amazingly good condition. A short part of this heritage trail is used for the Richmond to Gold Run Lake traverse circuit hike, page 221. Perry Pass trail can also be used to access upper Hellroaring Creek, Kamma Creek or the Mount Flett hikes.

Perry Pass trail traverses the hillside from Liverpool Creek (a Perry Creek tributary) to above Gold Run Lake. The trail then descends across the headwaters of Hellroaring Creek to Kamma Pass (between Hellroaring and Kamma creeks). Its entire length is about 12 km.

Most of it, however, is now overgrown with alders. Yet the graded trail surface remains intact.

Gold Run Access

The most common way to reach Perry Pass trail is from Gold Run Lake. Bushwhack uphill from the north side of the lakeshore. The heritage trail is about 100 m (300 ft.) above the lake (on the north side). The bush is reasonably open and can be hiked with moderate difficulty. When climbing upslope from Gold Run Lake, watch closely for a trail stretching east/west (or approximately at right angles to your bushwhacking route). Be careful; it could easily be mistaken for a game trail in some places. However, once you locate it, this trail is easy to follow.

Above Gold Run Lake, the Perry Pass trail runs along contour at an elevation of 1950 m (6400 ft.).

Once you connect with the heritage trail, walk west (turn left when coming upslope from Gold Run Lake).

Perry Pass and Nogalski Peak

Hike 1 km along the historic trail above Gold Run Lake. The trail crosses Perry Pass at an elevation of 1993 m (6540 ft.).

Glimpse Nogalski Peak, at 2256 m (7400 ft.), between an open forest of Douglas fir, larch and pine. This peak separates Gold Run and Richmond lakes. To climb it, routefind on the subalpine slopes for about 1 km south of Perry Pass. The final 150 m (500 ft.) toward the summit, the route steepens as it becomes more alpine. Angle a bit east (left), and you will find a less steep and more climbable route to the top.

Hikers stand on Nogalski Peak and look west to Hellroaring Lakes in distant basin.



Hellroaring/Kamma Pass

Instead of climbing Nogalski Peak, you may want to explore the headwaters of Hellroaring Creek. From Perry Pass, the trail descends 210 m (700 ft.) through a thick spruce and fir forest to the base of a steep rocky cliff. A recent rock slide from the cliffs above has covered the historic trail with broken boulders, making it difficult to locate. Follow the talus around the base of the steep headwall and across avalanche slopes. If you maintain about the same elevation, you should easily locate the trail before entering the forest again.

Climb up the trail through a thick spruce and subalpine fir forest. Large fallen trees lie tangled on the trail and are a bit of a nuisance to climb over. The trail rises another 80 m (260 ft.) and opens into Hellroaring/Kamma Pass.

The trail ends at an interesting geological feature, a stark dry box canyon with steep sides and broken bedrock. The canyon always tempts us to follow it down Kamma Creek toward the Goat River, but so far we have not ventured down the rocky lane as other exploration routes seem more interesting.



View from ridge top above Hellroaring Lakes, with Kamma Pass on left side of photo.

Hellroaring Lakes to Mount Flett

To reach the first subalpine Hellroaring Lake, elevation 1981 m (6500 ft.), bushwhack about 1 km west from Kamma Pass by keeping just slightly north (right) of the ridge. A second lake is 500 m farther west, upslope from the first lake.

To climb Mount Flett, hike north from either lake and bushwhack another 2.5 km heading north to the ridge. Once on the ridge, follow the broken rock and talus spine over rough terrain to the summit, elevation 2408 m (7900 ft.). This summit hike requires a topo map for routefinding.

While on the western ridge we noticed a fault has cracked the ridge in two. Most ridges divide the water runoff to both sides, but not this one. A huge bedrock crack slices this narrow ridge in half lengthwise and blocky boulders with deep chasms run along the top. Melting ice flows between the fractured sides and re-freezes, a process that could eventually split the ridge into one single knife-edge.

Another interesting feature about Mount Flett is that it is a hibernation zone for ladybug beetles. When turning over a single rock on the summit, we found hundreds of dead ladybugs. Because this rocky summit is above tree line, no food is available here. Why, then, are the beetles here? We looked under many more rocks and discovered a number of clumps of both live and dead beetles. Why were they hibernating up in the rocks so far above their food supply? I had heard that grizzly bears will venture up into the rocky alpine areas to feed on this winged protein source. This is the only mountain on which we have seen such clumps of ladybugs.

Perry Pass offers hiking access to many different places. Use this well-built heritage trail to open up the headwaters of Perry, Hellroaring and Kamma creeks.

Just imagine what it was like for the packhorses and people in 1900!