

69 HALL LAKE

Leaving the vehicles “at the crack of noon,” we crossed muddy bogs, many overgrown avalanche slopes and two very slippery log bridges across raging Hall Creek to reach the north end of the lake in just over four hours.

Hall Lake, a thin 1.5 km-long strip of water edged by thick bush, is backdropped by a south curtain of rock and snow. The lake is very cold, deep and clear.

Above the south end of the lake, a day hike up a talus slope and a short scramble will bring you to the west ridge. The ridge features wide sections of broken bedrock and alpine vegetation. From this high spot you can see Redding Creek, the St. Mary River, Snowcrest Peak to the south and Kokanee Glacier in the northwest.

This hike is an overnight backpacking trek, but can also be a long day trip. The trail is more demanding than the distance and elevation gain indicate, as the hiker must cross many fallen logs and very deep boggy places. The mud forms suction and can overflow into an unwary hiker's boots, filling them with cold, mucky water.

The trail crosses two slippery log bridges in the last third of the hike. These log crossings are wet and moss-covered, making them tricky and dangerous. At the second crossing the creek is narrow and fast.

Begin the hike to Hall Lake from the parking spot at the transformer station. Hike south (up-hill); most of the way the trail is a well-defined path. However, the sections of trail are indistinct through overgrown avalanche slopes. As you cross this tangle of slippery stems, be careful where you place your feet so as to avoid a fall.

A few cedars line the first part of the route. These are not giants, but the dense canopy contributes to an enclosed feeling. Farther upslope the Douglas fir, pine, aspen and birch forest predominates. Large spruce trees inhabit final boggy sections.

The trail leads to the north end of Hall Lake to a well-used and undesigned campsite.

Rating moderate

Time long day hike, backpack

Distance 6 km

Elevation gain 579 m (1900 ft.)

Hall Lake 1829 m (6000 ft.)

Trail gradual elevation gain in forest, rough trail, muddy sections, slippery bridges to subalpine lake

Map 82F/9 St. Mary Lake

Trail map page 212

Drive

Road any vehicle, high clearance last 1-2 km

Road map page 180

Road directions for Redding Creek

From Highway 95A, drive 500 m north of Marysville. Turn left (west) on to St. Mary Lake Road. Follow the St. Mary Lake FS Road for 29 km to Redding Creek FS Road/St. Mary FS Road (past the 39-km sign). Turn left (south) at a large clearing by the St. Mary River bridge. Redding Creek Road is signed, as well as Grey Creek Pass Road.

- 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** (communications tower access) downhill. Look on the left side for a tiny, narrow dirt road heading down to a bridge across the creek. Follow this side road for almost 2 km to a fork.
- 10 km Turn right at the fork (the left branch is the access for a communications tower on the ridge).
- 10.5 km Park at the trailhead beside a fenced-in transformer station.

Southern Purcells

We decided not to stay at the north campsite because of the questionable water quality. *Giardia* is not yet common in the East Kootenay. The parasite is hard to detect and its ingestion is preventable. Although not an absolutely safe practice, we try to collect our water from as close to its source as possible, such as a meltwater stream high in the mountains, and we try not to drink lake water. See also page 13.

We found a more scenic and unspoiled campsite by hiking a roughly sawn-out trail (basically bushwhacking) to the south end of the lake. From the north campsite follow the eastern (left) lakeshore. Cross a boulder field and follow the variable trail. About two-thirds of the way along the lake, the route appears to head into the water. Scramble down below the lakeshore to a lumpy camping spot.

For those inclined, hike up the rocky slopes from the south end of Hall Lake and routefind toward the southwest pass. Head west and boulder hop the blocky talus to get around the thick forest. Alpine areas of mosses and waterfalls make the climb to the ridge an enjoyable day hike. A short section of strenuous scrambling is required for the last 15 m (50 ft.) up to the pass, at an elevation of 2347 m (7700 ft.). North along the ridge, an unnamed summit rises to 2560 m (8400 ft.).

The Hall Lake trail features diverse forest habitats and fishing opportunities at the lake. The exploration potential and views from the alpine ridge extend this hike into an overnight trip.

