

14 PREMIER RIDGE FROM PREMIER LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK

Premier Ridge is a rewarding short and steep hike. The views of the entire valley are worth the effort. Rugged Purcell Mountains stretch across the western skyline and the majestic Rocky Mountains dominate the eastern views. The Kootenay River and the highway braid the bottom of the Rocky Mountain Trench. Speculation Lake is located in the forest at the western base of the ridge.

Also, enjoy a short side trip to the Quartz Lake overview. Stand atop the blocky, brown and rugged cliffs, which are 60 m (200 ft.) above the shimmering waters of the sea-green Quartz Lake.

Premier Ridge is one of the few places in the East Kootenay that is free of snow most of the year. You can hike this open forested area from March until late November. Even in midwinter, Premier Ridge has very little snow accumulation.

Begin hiking from the day-use parking lot of Premier Lake Provincial Park (by the overflow campground). Hike back up the main road for a couple of hundred metres (220 m). Take the first small gravel road on the left (south). This gravel road immediately branches; the right fork goes to the Quartz Lake overlook and Premier Ridge, and the left fork leads to Quartz Lake boat access, 2.2 km. *(In summer you can drive these roads, see the drive section.)

Take the right fork south to Quartz Lake overlook and Premier Ridge. A road map sign for "Premier Ridge Area Road Closure" is posted a short distance from this junction. Hike up the winding gravel road for 4.4 km. It is moderately steep and rocky and it climbs 195 m (640 ft.) elevation in the shady Douglas fir forest. The track finally levels off at a cattleguard at 1090 m (3600 ft.) elevation.

Quartz Lake overview is another 0.5 km south of the cattleguard. (It is about a 45 minute optional detour down to the viewpoint and back.) Walk on the road and descend about 18 m (60 ft.) elevation. On the left side of the road (east), the forest opens out to a grassy meadow on top

Rating moderate

Time short day hike

Distance 5.5 km

Elevation gain 465 m (1540 ft.)
Premier Ridge 1344 m (4411 ft.)

Trail old rocky roads, 1 km steep bushwhacking, no defined route to rocky low elevation ridge

Map 82G/13 Skookumchuck

Trail map page 54

Drive

Road any vehicle to provincial park

Road map page 23, 54

- 0 km Highway 93/95, 1 km north of Skookumchuck and the bridge over the Kootenay River. Turn east at the signed road for Premier Lake Provincial Park. (If driving the highway from the south, stay right at 0.8 km. The left fork just connects back to the highway.)
- 7.7 km Turn right (south) on Premier Lake Road
- 11.7 km Follow the signs to the provincial park campground
- 13.7 km Turn left
- 14.1 km Park at the day-use site by the first campground. A sign marks the trailhead for the Yankee/Canuck lakes.
- 16.1 km *Optional summer only. Drive most of the hike on a high-clearance, rough and narrow road in the "Premier Ridge Area Closure" for 4.4 km. Park by the cattleguard (see hiking directions).