

Wardner/Fort Steele Road: A Scenic Paved Backroad

The Wardner/Fort Steele road is a scenic and paved backroad along the base of The Steeples Mountains and parallel to the Kootenay River. It is a cut-off road between Highway 93/95 at Fort Steele and Highway 3/93 at Wardner and Lake Kooacanusa.

There are branch roads from Wardner/Fort Steele Road that lead to dozens of hiking trails.

This road is access for Wildhorse Creek FS Road, Mause Creek FS Road, Sunken Creek and Bull River Road. Each secondary road is a FS gravel road leading to the high country of the southern Rockies.

Maps: 82G/5 Moyie Lake (**NAD83**); 82G/6 Elko (**NAD27**); 82G/11 Fernie (**NAD27**); 82G/12 Cranbrook (**NAD83**)

Road map: page #####; see also page ##### for a detailed map of the Wardner /Fort Steele road and its side roads

Fort Steele access from Highway 93/95

On Highway 93/95, drive 300 m north of the Fort Steele Heritage Town (provincial tourist museum) and turn right onto Wardner/Fort Steele Road (the turnoff is at the large RV campsite and store on the highway). The scenic road heads approximately southeast, meanders for 31 km, then connects to Highway 3/93.

Fort Steele is between Cranbrook and Wasa on Highway 93/95.

Wardner access from Highway 3/93

On Highway 3/93, between Cranbrook and Fernie, drive to the east side of the bridge over Lake Kooacanusa (a Kootenay River

reservoir) and, immediately east of the bridge, turn left (northwest) onto Wardner/Fort Steele Road. The turn is also marked from this end by a Trout Hatchery sign. For hikes in the Bull River, use the Wardner end.

The small town of Wardner is reached from a road heading south near the west end of the Kooacanusa bridge.

Wardner/Fort Steele Road

0 km: Highway 93/95 Fort Steele end of this backroad.

200 m: Wildhorse Creek FS Road: turn left (north), unsigned. The turnoff is just before crossing the large Wildhorse Creek Bridge (don't take the small road heading downhill to a parking spot beside the creek). Large gravel road. For details see page #####.

2.2 km: Mause Creek Road: turn left. Large gravel road (northeast). For details see page #####.

11 km: Sunken Creek: turn left (north) at Horseshoe Lake FS Rec Site (small sign). Medium-sized gravel road. See road details at page #####.

14.8 km: Peckhams Lake: turn left to nice picnic/swimming lake in a provincial park at the base of The Steeples Mountains, a dramatic-looking range of the southern BC Rockies.

15 km: Norbury Lake Provincial Park; turn right (campground).

23.1 km: Bull River Road; turn left (east) on a large gravel road. Bull River Guest Ranch sign. (Bull River Road is 8.2 km from the Wardner end of the Wardner/Fort Steele road.)

25.3 km: Bull River bridge. (There is a trout hatchery 500 m northwest of the bridge.)

31.3 km: Wardner/Fort Steele Road ends at Highway 3/93, just east of the Lake Kooacanusa bridge.

Wildhorse Creek FS Road

Drive Wardner/Fort Steele Road (from the Fort Steele end). In about 200 m, turn left (north) onto the unsigned Wildhorse FS road. The turnoff is just after the RV campground and just before crossing the large Wildhorse Creek bridge (don't take the small road heading downhill to a parking spot beside the creek).

See details on page #####

Mause Creek Road

2.2 km from Highway 93/95 along Wardner/Fort Steele Road. Mause Creek Road (also signed as Maus) is high clearance and using a 4x4 helps on the loose gravel and the waterbars (cross-ditches). The last 6 km had been suffering in recent years with very little or no maintenance. There are now deep ditches and mudholes. It is still drivable, but you need to be careful.

0 km: Mause Creek Road from Wardner/Fort Steele Road.

0.4 km: Turn left (north) onto Mause Creek Road (not Maygard Road right). Drive by farms and stay on main road.

2.3 km: At a large junction, take the left fork onto Boulder Creek Road.

3.4 km: Take right fork (4 km sign at junction): Mause Creek FS Road (signed).

4.3 km: At a four-way crossroads, continue straight and cross a cattle guard.

5.7 km: The road gets rough and rocky. Several graded waterbars slice across the road.

10 km: Fisher Peak trailhead (signed), a wide spot along road. Please do not block the roadway, as many vehicles continue past this trailhead. On a midsummer weekend there may be 10 vehicles parked here.

13 km: Mause Creek Tarns trailhead. The road before the trailhead is rough, with mudholes, loose rock and a steep sidehill. Parking in a large pullout. Motorized vehicles not allowed past the parking lot.

Sunken Creek Road

11.4 km from Highway 93/95 along Wardner/Fort Steele Road. Sunken Creek Road is a tiny dirt path across a field at the base of The Steeples. A car can drive it, but in wet weather it will get very rutted and muddy, with deep holes; you may want to walk the 1 km from the Horseshoe Lake parking area.

0 km: On Wardner/Fort Steele Road, turn left (north) at a tiny blue sign for Horseshoe Lake.

300 m: Turn right onto small road. (The left fork goes to the BC FS campsite by Horseshoe Lake; busy place.)

1.1 km: Right fork (the left also goes to Horseshoe Lake). The main road veers left, but take the straight road toward the mountains that rise out of the flat field. Five-way intersection of dirt roads.

2.5 km: Parking #1 is at the sign for Sunken Creek FS Road with trail assistance by the Kootenay Backcountry Horsemen. If you keep driving, you will need a high-clearance vehicle. Take two right forks on the rough road and in 300 m the road ends.

2.8 km: Parking #2 is where the road ends. Take the right fork onto the trail.

Bull River FS Road

21.6 km from Highway 93/95 along Wardner/Fort Steele Road or 8.2 km from Highway 3/93 at the Wardner end by the Koocanusa bridge. Bull River Road is a well-built and wide logging road and industrial road. Watch for logging trucks or other heavy equipment. It is in good condition for any vehicle.

0 km: Wardner/Fort Steele Road (signed).

2.3 km: Continue straight. (A small right fork and parking spot leads to Bull River Spring Walk. For the Spring Walk, park in the clearing by the road and hike down toward the Bull River (south) on old roads, powerline access and cattle trails. The route leads to an S bend in the river: In the past this area has been accessible for many early spring walks,