Welcome to the Bella Coola Valley: In the Heart of British Columbia’s Great Bear Rainforest

Nestled in the heart of the Coast Mountains, the Bella Coola Valley is a remote natural paradise offering the visitor a vast array of authentic cultural and outdoor experiences. The first recorded visit to this Valley was in 1793 by Alexander Mackenzie, the first European to cross the continent.

Today, living at the end of the only road access to the Central Coast and the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest, with Tweedsmuir Provincial Park straddling the eastern end, our communities are privileged to extend a welcome as you enter a world steeped in history and culture, rich with wildlife, lush flora, and glacier-fed rivers. From sea to mountain peak, from valley floor to glacier, prepare to ‘Experience the Adventure’.

Central Coast Regional District

My name is Sixilaaxayc. My smayusta (Creation story) tells of the abundance that came at the time of Creation when the land tilted toward Chief Sixilaaxayc and Q’umk’uts on the bank of the river near where I live now. One hundred years ago, several long houses stood at that place. Long before that, at the time of Creation, the tilting land brought much abundance to the Valley of Nuxalk, which means in my language “becoming one.” I welcome you to our Valley, where all you see is sacred.

I hope you enjoy the scenery, the rich history, and the abundance. Please enjoy your stay.

Sixilaaxayc (Noel Pootlass), Nuxalk Nation Head Hereditary Chief and Artist

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Visit Bella Coola

The Visitor Information Booth is located on the Bella Coola Townsite in the former RCMP Station, also the home of Copper Sun Gallery and Journeys (summer months only). Phone (250) 799-5202 for information year round.

This Visitor Guide and Trail Guide on reverse have been produced by Bella Coola Valley Tourism with special thanks to Ernest Hall, Tom Hermance, Doug Baker, Lorne Baker, Harry Galaviz, and Rosemary Smart (photography credits, Chris Carlson, Leonard Ellis, Ross Cameron, Ernest Hall, James Salsic, Karen McWessel, and Michael Wyde). For the invaluable advice and contributions, BCVT is especially grateful to: Snxakila (Clyde Tallio), Ximximlayc (Robert “Skip” Saunders), Sixilaaxayc (Noel Pootlass), Chris Nelson and Karen Anderson. BCVT also acknowledges the Nuxalk Development Corporation for providing the venue for the Visitor Information Booth.

Member of the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association and BC Wilderness Tourism Association.

Cover photo: Detail of the Sisiutl “Two-Headed Serpent”. Carved by Nuxalk master carver Ximximlayc (Skip Saunders), this monumental sculpture memorializes a 2005 drowning victim, a descendant of Nusq’lst, the family founder who came down from Nasastaa (Heaven) in the form of a Grizzly Bear. During the Great Flood, he implored the Sisiutl to expand into a great canoe to rescue the survivors, taking them to the top of the nearby mountain that bears his name. This monument acknowledges the responsibilities of inheriting this sacred place.

Photo Courtesy of Benjamin Westerik
GETTING HERE: THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

Few places in the world combine authentic wilderness with comfort, and remoteness with accessibility in the way the Bella Coola Valley does. The glacier-carved valley of the Bella Coola River winds its way through the mountains to the sea at the head of one of British Columbia’s longest inlets about 450 km (270 mi) northwest of Vancouver.

BY LAND: THE HIGHWAY 20 ADVENTURE

All who approach the Bella Coola Valley via Highway 20 for the first time experience the driving adventure of a lifetime. From its headwaters high on British Columbia’s central plateau, the river scours its way down through the Coast Mountains to saltwater at its mouth, providing a corridor for overland access from Williams Lake via Highway 20. This highway—paved over the “Grease Trail” bearing their precious cargo of emerald alpine tarns surrounded by meadows, where waterfalls gush amid glacial scree, and where volcanic cones and sawtooth pinnacles cradle rivers of ice, unseen by human eye except by air, winging above and around the highest mountains in British Columbia. For more information, phone during business hours or visit www.bellacoola.ca.

As the river winds its way the Bella Coola Valley does. “The Hill” is no longer the hair-raising spectacle that once discouraged trailer rigs, supplying the valley merchants, tourists, and sawmills. In 1953 ended the isolation of the Bella Coola Valley. You can simply flag down the driver from the roadside. Fare for any distance is a flat rate. Dial-a-ride at (250) 799-0079. For more information, phone during business hours or visit www.bellacoola.ca.

Experience the spectacular. Trips on the Community Bus can be pre-booked at least 24 hours in advance—or you can simply flag down the driver from the roadside. Fare for any distance is a flat rate. Dial-a-ride at (250) 799-0079. For more information, phone during business hours or visit www.bctransit.com.

Leaving the outer coast islands, the adventure continues through narrow glacial fjords that enter North Bentinck Arm to the mouth of the Bella Coola River—some 100 km (60 mi) inland. For the meditative traveler leaning on the rail, this mountainous coastline of stunning granite cliffs and tumbling waterfalls, misty green dark forests, and deep glacier-fed inlet waters dredges up images of tall ships of European explorers or the painted paddles of First Nations peoples in their dugout cedar canoes flaming in the sun since the dawn of time. Ferry reservations are strongly recommended.

DOUBLING THE ADVENTURE

Experience a Circle Tour by traveling clockwise fr Vancouver to Vancouver Island, north to Port Hardy, ferrying to Bella Coola, and driving out across the Chilcotin Plateau, returning south through Whistler and back to Vancouver. This Circle Tour takes the traveler through some 11 of the 14 commonly identified eco-zones on Planet Earth. This four-to-five-day road trip is rivaled by few other such journeys. Of course the reverse (counter-clockwise) tour is equally varied and spectacular.

Eagle’s Nest Resort

Adventures.

THE CHILCOTIN COAST Experience

Three unique resorts along Highway 20, in three completely different landscapes, each offering amazing wilderness adventures.

Experience the spectacular. Visit the Great Bear Rainforest and the Chilcotin Ark

www.bellacoola.ca | Visit Bella Coola | www.chilcotincoastexperience.com

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VENTURING WEST OUT THE CHANNEL

ENJOY A MARITIME EXPERIENCE BY TAKING A MARITIME TOUR CRUISING OUT FROM THE BELLA COOLA HARBOUR OVER THE GLACIAL WATERS OF NORTH BENTINCK ARM AND INTO A VAST NETWORK OF DEEP FJORDS—SOUTH BENTINCK, LABOUSERE, BURKE, DEAN—PAST TIMBERED ROCKY SHORES AND SNOW-CAPPED PEAKS WHERE THE SOLITUDE IS BROKEN OVER AND OVER AGAIN BY THE MANY SCENIC HIGHLIGHTS THAT LOOM INTO VIEW AS YOU APPROACH. KEEP YOUR CAMERA AT THE READY!
along these fjords more than 10,000 years ago—5,000 years before the Great Pyramid was built in Egypt.

**TAKING A HOT DIP**

Relax and soak away your cares in the hot soothing waters of a seaside wilderness hot spring. Natural hot springs, accessible only by air or water, are just a charter away from the Bella Coola Harbour. Rent or bring your own sea kayaks (but be prepared for an overnighter). Perhaps see some dolphins, seals or eagles on the way out. The hot springs are sacred places to some dolphins, seals or eagles on the way out. The hot springs are sacred places to the Nuxalk people who have enjoyed their healing powers for millennia, so respect them as you might a Gothic cathedral.

**SEEING BIG – FEELING SMALL**

If you’ve never been humbled by the awe that comes with standing under the dark, swooping branches of a botanical wonder, here’s your chance: The Big Cedar Tree, just a short hike up from the beach at Larsa Bay on South Bentinck Arm, measures more than 5 metres (18 feet) in diameter. That’s a whopping 18 metres around (more than 56.5 feet)! This ancient giant was a seedling during the late Roman Empire 1,500 years ago.

**VIEWING THE WILDLIFE**

As you cruise along the often misty rivers through the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest, keep your eyes peeled. In the spring, bears emerge from their alpine dens after the long fast of hibernation and dawntrek recorded trek across the North American continent some 12 years before the more famous but much longer a journey by American explorer Lewis and Clark.

**CONNECTING AGAIN AT CASCADE INLET**

You make another historic connection with Mackenzie’s at this rock, the western terminus of his daunting adventure—the first recorded trek across the North American continent some 12 years before the more famous but much longer a journey by American explorer Lewis and Clark.

**CONNECTING ADVENTURES AT MACKENZIE’S ROCK**

Alexander Mackenzie from Canada by land 22nd July 1793: So reads the vermillion inscription daubed on a rock standing on the shore at the mouth of Elcho Harbour in the Dean Channel. You connect your Central Coast adventure with Mackenzie’s at this rock, the western terminus of his daunting adventure—the first recorded trek across the North American continent some 12 years before the more famous but much longer a journey by American explorer Lewis and Clark.

**HUGE HARBOUT**

**HOOOOKING THE BIG ONES!**

The Bella Coola Harbour is a great departure point for saltwater anglers heading out to enjoy the bounty of marine life while taking in the pristine scenery of the Central Coast. Cruise along the cliffs rising skyward from glacial fjords as deep as 600 metres (2,000 feet). Cast your eyes up to the rugged snow-capped peaks as you angle for Chinnok and Coho salmon.

Drop your line to the bottom for huge halibut, or bring up lunker ling cod and red snapper by air or light tackle. Set your traps for jumbo white spot prawns from the deep and for Dungeness crabs near the mouths of the creeks.
Nearby is the picturesque and historic Augsburg Church, which celebrated 100 years in 2004. Firvale, located midway up the valley, was first settled by Seventh Day Adventists in the early 20th Century. Only a few houses and farms of this once-thriving community remain, scattered along the scenic highway. Stuie, a pocket-sized gem in the south end of Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, was the original locale of the well-known Stuie Lodge, constructed in 1931 and destroyed by fire in 1950. This is also traditional territory of First Nations peoples who for thousands of years have sustained themselves on the abundance provided by the Atnarko River and surrounding forest.

EXPERIENCE THE VALLEY

Our Communities
The Bella Coola Valley is 80 km (50 mi) long with a population of approximately 2000. From west to east the Valley consists of several small communities:

**The Bella Coola Townsite** is located at the head of North Bentinck Arm on the Bella Coola River. The commercial centre of the Valley, the townsite offers accommodation, restaurants, groceries, fuel, auto repairs, banking and other retail services. The region’s Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachment is located here along with a library, museum, hospital, clinic, pharmacy, and post office. Marine services are nearby at the Government Wharf. Part of the Townsite is a Nuxalk village.

Drop by Bella Coola Valley Tourism’s Visitor Information Booth during the summer months for detailed information on accommodation, attractions, local events, and hiking and wildlife bulletins. Phone (250) 799-5202 or visit www.bellacoola.ca.

**Four-Mile Subdivision** (Snxllh or “Sunny Village”), four miles from the Government Wharf, is a second Nuxalk residential area and the home of the Nuxalk Art and Cultural Centre. Nuxalk art galleries and other surprises to be discovered in this neighbourhood. (See p. 20.) Ask at the Nuxalk Administration office or visit nuxalknation.com.

**Hagensborg** is a townsite 15 km (9 mi) east of the Townsite, filled with history. The historic Augustus Church, which celebrated 100 years in 2004, is located here. Nearby is the picturesque Augsburg Church, which celebrated 100 years in 2004.

**Hagensborg** is the other commercial centre with groceries, gifts, accommodations, camping, fuel, auto repairs and post office. On Friday nights, the Royal Canadian Legion is open for pub service. In summer, the outdoor Centennial Swimming Pool next door is open for swimming as well as lessons and specialty classes. Phone (250) 982-2488.

**Fuel:** Available on the Townsite, at Four-Mile and in Hagensborg, but nowhere 24/7. Fuel is not available between Hagensborg and Anahim Lake.

**Shopping:** A number of businesses are open on Sunday. Some establishments close on Mondays and some may close for lunch breaks.

**Sani-Stations:** Located at Tweedsmuir Provincial Park Headquarters (near the foot of “The Hill”), and at several of the private campgrounds in the Valley.

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**Talheo Cannery** is a unique and picturesque site located at the mouth of the Bella Coola River. The area was the historical site of the Bella Coola Cannery, which operated from 1918 to 1959. The Cannery Museum is a must-see for history lovers.

**Visit Bella Coola**

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**VALLEY ADVENTURES**

From sightseeing to outdoor adventure, embark on a scenic Valley journey using Highway 20 as your guide. Explorers, day-trippers, anglers, and nature enthusiasts will find plenty beckoning to be discovered along the byways and trails, shorelines and river banks.

**WEST BEYOND THE HARBOUR**

The western end of Highway 20 is the Bella Coola Harbour and Government Wharf, but the gravel road continuing west from there for 2.5 km (1.6 mi) provides access to Clayton Falls. (See Trail Guide, p. 6.) A left turn at that point takes the adventurer 23 km (14 mi) into the alpine with spectacular views of the nearby fjords and meadow-lined lakes (See Trail Guide, p. 4, 5.)
left standing on Canada's West Coast.

for processing, is one of the last canneries

packer boats began transporting fish south

of the coastal economy. This monument to

time when commercial fishing was a mainstay

until 1947, still stands as a reminder of a

1917 and operated by the Canadian Fish Co.

their moorings. Across the channel from the

fishing boats and pleasure craft bobbing at

Government Wharf among the commercial

THE BELLA COOLA HARBOUR

Back at the harbour, stroll around the

Harbour, historic Tallheo Cannery, built in

1917 and operated by the Canadian Fish Co.

before 1947, still stands as a reminder of a
time when commercial fishing was a mainstay
of the coastal economy. This monument to
progress, is one of the last canneries left standing on Canada's West Coast.

The harbour is the arrival and departure
point for the ferry service of the Discovery
Coast Circle Tour between Bella Coola and Port Hardy on Vancouver Island. Depending on
schedules and time of year, the Discovery
Coast Circle Tour may include landings at
Ocean Falls, Denny Island, and McLaughlin
Bay (Bella Bella). Ferry passage can be booked at the BC Ferries agent on the Bella
Coola townsite: Tweedsmuir Travel, 618 Cliff
Street, (250) 799-5638. Reserve ahead of
time to ensure a space on the ferry.

EAST FROM THE HARBOUR

Walk or cycle the popular cliff-side route
between the harbour and the Bella Coola
Townscape. Scan the estuary, locally known as
the Tide-flats, a rich eco-system and home
to waterfowl, migrating birds, and bears. A
number of old roads and trails weave in and
out of the forest to the junction where river
meets sea. Entry points vary. This is a tidal
zone, so beware of incoming water to avoid
getting wet or stranded.

Stop at the commemorative roadside rock
where plaques honour Canada's pioneers and
Alexander Mackenzie's trans-continental
trek. Listen here for the rush of water
cascading over the rainforest cliffs and step
into the woods to find "Hidden Falls".

THE BELLA COOLA TOWNSITE

• Enjoy the shops, restaurants, and
accommodations.

• Visit the Museum and pick up the brochure
for the self-guided historic walking tour
which details the historical landmarks
around the village including the location
of the Hudson Bay manager's home, the
House of Numst' with its totem pole entry,
and the tiny cabin that served as Bella
Coola's first jail.

• Be sure to take in the nukulax welcome
posted on River Road and the totem poles
across from the Co-Op and at Healthy
Beginnings.

• Mail your postcards from the Bella Coola
Postal Office and ask for the unique Nuxalk-
designed cancellation stamp.

ACWSALCTA

SCHOOL

FROM THE TOWNSITE TO
HAGENSBORG (16 KM/10 MI)

• For a truly mystical experience, engage a Nuxalk guide and visit the ancient
petroglyphs along Thorsen Creek ("Squamish" to the Nuxalk). See p. 21.

• In summer, visit the Farmers’ Market on Sunday mornings at the Fall Fair Grounds.

• At Lobelco Hall, you may catch an
event presented by and for the Valley
community.

• For a truly humbling experience, walk
among the giant trees enclosing the trails
in Snoottli Creek Regional Park. (See Trail
Guide, p. 8.)

• Take a short side trip into Walker Island
Regional Park, a popular park with locals.
Here are playing fields, picnic sites,
barbecue pit, and a kiddies’ playground.
Majestic old-growth cedars arch overhead,
and the river is accessible. Here at the
Rodeo Grounds you can catch cowboys and
cowgirls in action each July long weekend
or you might take in one of the regular
Sunday gymkhanas.

• Snoottli Creek Hatchery – An experience
not to be missed by any Valley visitor!
Take a guided tour of this federal salmon
hatchery, hatching and rearing over ten
million salmon fry each year for release
into rivers up and down the Central Coast.
In summer and early fall, ask about the
locations of salmon traps where the eggs
are collected, and plan to be there for
a collection. Tours are usually weekdays only
before 3 p.m. Phone (250) 982-2214.

• From July to September, stop at the many
bridges along the valley to wonder over
the migrations of spawning salmon in the
Valley creeks and rivers. Please park in
a safe, respectful manner and beware of
bears!.

• At Nookliklonnic Creek just west of
Hagensborg, pull off at the bridge for a
spectacular view of glacier-shouldered
Mt. Saugstad (named for the Norwegian
pioneer leader, Reverend Christian
Saugstad). Rising to 2,905 metres (9,532
feet), it is the highest Coast Mountain
peak visible from the Valley floor.

HAGENSBORG

Cleared by hand from the old growth
rainforest, the farms and fields of this
settlement nurtured Norwegian-speaking
colonists who settled the Valley between
1894 and 1910.

• Share the pioneer experience in a visit
to the Norwegian Heritage House, or the
historic Augsburg Church, once a place of
worship for the Lutheran pioneers. This
visit is not complete without a quiet walk
through the Hagensborg Cemetery a short
drive west down Highway 20 and south on
Sawmill Road (site of one of the Valley’s
early sawmills.)
At the east end of the terminal building at the Airport, check out the the BIG cedar tree 50 metres along a forest trail. Book a heli-hiking trip into the alpine or take it easy by booking a "flightseeing" tour of the area’s mountains, glaciers and fjords by plane or helicopter.

Get some exercise at the tennis court or cool off with a swim at Centennial Pool.

Drop by the Valley Gallery featuring local art, operated by the Bella Coola Valley Arts Council.

Mail your postcards from the Hagensborg Post Office and ask for the unique "Freedom Road" cancellation stamp. It was locally designed in 2003 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of "The Hill."

FROM HAGENSBORG TO "THE HILL"

• From Highway 20 two km (1.2 mi) east of Hagensborg, a left turn onto Saloompt Road leads to "The Bailey Bridge", one of the only two bridges across the Bella Coola River. In "The Sunny Saloompt" (so called because much of the area escapes the winter mountain shadow that covers a lot of the Valley), take in the Saloompt Forest Trails. Here, old-growth cedars, spruce, hemlock, and Douglas-fir seedlings during the Crusades, humble the human visitor. (See Trail Guide, p. 11.)

• While in the Saloompt ("Saime" in Nuxalk, meaning "a good place to live"), venture further to Lost Lake (See Trail Guide, p. 12.)

• Further up the logging road to the left is the rifle range operated by the local Rod and Gun Club.

• Returning to Highway 20, 3.3 km (2 mi) east of the Saloompt turnoff, is the West Nusatsum Forest Road which gives access to the picturesque Odegaard Falls and to virtually unlimited alpine terrain. (See Trail Guide, pp. 13-16.)

• Further east on Highway 20 near Firvale, watch for mountain goats that often descend from the cliffs at Assanany Creek and hang out along the roadway. Here, a short walk up the creek leads to the base of Assanamy Creek Falls.

ENTERING TWEEDSMUIR PARK

• At the Park entrance, at Burnt Bridge Creek, explore the historic area where Alexander Mackenzie reached the Valley floor after his trek across the continent and the Coast Mountains. Here he was so hospitably hosted by a large Nuxalk village that he dubbed it "Friendly Village." See Trail Guide, p.19 for information about this opportunity to experience walking and enjoy the同时的美丽自然风光。
in the footsteps of this great adventurer—and for a stunning view down the Valley!

• At McCall Flats, take the Talchako Forest Service Road. Notice Honeymoon Falls plummeting down the west-facing cliff. Mountain goats may be seen on the bluffs. Relax or picnic on a sandy riverside beach. Hike or bike the trails and roads.

• At Fisheries Pool or Atnarko

• At McCall Flats, take the point to view grizzly bears snagging fresh salmon and chowing down.

• At Mosher Creek, stop and imagine the force of water that took out bridge access to a lean-to shelter on the north side where Norton filled in a postcard (privately owned) log cabin where Edward Norton filled in a postcard (post-marked Bella Coola) while on the lam in the final scene of the 2008 Hollywood blockbuster “The Incredible Hulk.”

• At Big Rock and Kettle Pond have a picnic in the footsteps of this great adventurer—and for a stunning view down the Valley!

The 11 km (7 mi) of rough 4X4 road was also part of the old telegraph line and now ends at the trailhead for Hurien Falls (among North America’s highest waterfalls). This road and part of the trail also leads to the former homestead of the legendary Ralph Edwards of Lonesome Lake, “The keeper of the swans.”

The homestead burned to the ground in the Twistedmuki Fire of 2004. Travelling the road and trail in daylight is recommended to minimize wildlife encounters. See page 3 of the Trail Guide for Bear and Cougar Awareness.

YOUR VALLEY TOUR ENDS

The pavement ends. Highway 20, your trusty guide from the trailhead for Hunlen Falls to the Bella Coola Townsite. A turnoff to the right will lead you to the einz of kilometers of shoreline to explore, 3 of the Trail Guide for Bear and Cougar Awareness. Many kilometers of wilderness roads climb up the side valleys onto the mountain slopes, and Highway 20 is certainly a unique country cruise.

• At Stuie, turn off the pavement onto the old Highway 20 and drive through Douglas-Fir parkland to the “Smokehouse,” a lean-to shelter on the north side where First Nation people from the Chilcotin country cruise. Many kilometers of wilderness roads climb up the side valleys onto the mountain slopes, and Highway 20 is certainly a unique country cruise.

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HELI-SKIING
Unbelievable depths of stable powder with some of the greatest verticals in North America combine to create the perfect heli-skiing experience. Operations are based at the Airport just west of Hagensborg.

SNOWMOBILING
The East Branch Creek area near the top of “The Hill” in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park is renowned for its excellent snowmobile terrain and snow conditions. The upper Clayton Falls Creek area (accessible west of the Bella Coola Harbour) is also popular.

DOWNHILL SKIING, CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING & SNOWSHOEING
The local ski club operates a tow lift on weekends in the East Branch Creek area near the top of “The Hill.” In addition, there are more than 20 km (12 mi) of track set Nordic ski trails at East Branch. Go to www.tweedsmuirskiclub.com for information.

BEAR VIEWING
Watching a bear foraging is an unforgettable experience! Adventurers driving along Highway 20 into the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest any time from late spring to late fall may chance upon a sow and her cubs grazing on the long grasses along the road side. However, the prime bear-viewing opportunities are in the late spring, and then again in late summer and fall when the salmon are running in the rivers. Large populations of both black bears and grizzlies inhabit the region.

TOURS
• Tours are offered by knowledgeable, experienced and accredited bear viewing guides. Among them are those who drift their guests in shallow-keel boats quietly down the Attnarko and Bella Coola Rivers, looking for bears and eagles feeding on spawning salmon.
• Accredited trail guides can also take you along forest trails to some of the more remote bear habitats few visitors will ever see.
• Other guides offer a marine experience, taking visitors on excursions of varying length out the inlets for sightings of bears and other wildlife along the shores or estuaries of streams and rivers.

BEAR VIEWING STATION
For visitors not wishing to take a bear-viewing tour, the viewing station at Belarko, in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park 30 minutes “up Valley” from Hagensborg, provides a safe way to get close to grizzlies, watching from a platform as the bears dive and splash in the river or snag salmon from the rocky shore. The station is open seven days a week through September and is fully staffed for your safety.

For hours of operation, inquire at the Visitor Information Booth.

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EXPERIENCE WORLD-CLASS FISHING
The Bella Coola Valley is renowned the world over for its fresh-water fishing. Each year, all five Pacific salmon species return to the Bella Coola River to spawn after maturing at sea: Sockeye, Coho, Chum, Pink—and the prize of them all, the mighty Chinook salmon (variously called Spring, King or Tyee) which often exceed 25 pounds (11 kg) and have been known to weigh more than 50 pounds (22 kg)! Year after year, anglers also return to the river and its tributaries, often moving up the river with the runs to the Attnarko River, the Bella Coola River’s major accessible tributary.

Also highly popular with anglers is the pursuit of feisty Rainbow, Dolly Varden, and Cutthroat trout.

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Steelhead, an ocean-going rainbow trout, also run in the Bella Coola River system, but fishing for them is prohibited and those caught accidentally must be carefully released.

East of Bella Coola, across the Chilcotin, uncountable lakes teeming with Cutthroat and Rainbow trout provide unsurpassed fishing experiences. For instance, the Dean River downstream from Anahim Lake, is designated “Classified Waters” requiring a special license. Trout fly fishing on the Upper Dean draws anglers from around the world, and on the Lower Dean, inaccessible by road, the summer Steelhead, Spring, and Coho runs are unsurpassed. As fishing is highly regulated and the penalties for violations severe, anglers are advised to consult the fresh-water fishing regulations available locally wherever fishing licenses are sold.

Anglers unfamiliar with the area may wish to engage a guide to take them on a guided river drift.
**ARTS AND CRAFTS**

Besides at special events such as the annual Arts and Crafts Fair, the works of artisans can be found in retail stores and galleries and small home workshops and display rooms up and down the Valley. Unique works may include a traditional quilt or an "art" quilt (to be displayed on the wall), hand-crafted wooden furnishings, painted canvases, or fused glass jewelry.

**CERAMIC SCULPTURE**

Marc Hedges

CERAMIC SCULPTURE on customized workshops in their "studio-of-a-kind pieces in clay and glass and put together". Clay sculptor and his wife produce one-of-a-kind pieces in clay and glass and put together "showroom. Down another driveway, a potter/collage artist shows his work in his home gallery" where they also showcase work by local artists. Tucked down yet another road, find handicrafts, cards and artwork in a little shop attached to a nursery and organic foods store. You may want to stop by the Valley where many of the Valley's talents are featured. Home-based Bella Coola Valley soap makers market their wares in various venues. A well-known nature photographer shows and sells his books and cards in Bella Coola Valley retail outlets. A carver/graphite artist offers prints of his black-on-white works incorporating Nuxalk images and Central Coast icons. The list goes on and on.

On Saturdays during the summer, try the weekly Farmers' Market at Lobelco Hall where Valley artists and crafts people display their works alongside locally grown produce, homemade baking and preserves.

**NUXALK ART**

While Nuxalk art, largely carved in cedar or silver, is available in retail outlets, it is also hidden away in the home-based workshops of the artists. By asking around, you can create a chance to see a carver chiseling a cedar block into a mask or memorial pole or a group of Nuxalk women creating cedar bark into roses or lidded containers.

Start at the Nuxalk administration office at Four-Mile. By engaging a Nuxalk guide, you can ensure you will see more than meets the eye and add significantly to this cross-cultural experience. At Four-Mile, don't miss a visit to Acwsalcta School, a work of art in itself. You can't miss the two magnificent totem poles outside, and the school lobby serves as a showcase of Nuxalk art and artifacts. Up Valley, don't miss the carved memorial monument 16 km (10 mi) east of Hagensborg (crossing the Bella Coola River), and a few meters further, on the right side, a newly raised totem pole.

**PERFORMING ARTS**

From music nights in a lodge dining room, to public performances by a community choir, to full-blown theatrical performances by the Bella Coola Little Theatre Guild (and to the annual Bella Coola Music Festival, local and guest entertainers keep things happening. In addition, each spring the Bella Coola Festival of the Arts (affiliated with the British Columbia Festival of the Arts) showcases local talent.

**THE PETROGLYPHS**

An absolute MUST cultural experience for Valley visitors is the short hike to the petroglyphs at Thorsen Creek. Both out of due respect for the Nuxalk people, and to enrich the experience, visitors are strongly urged to engage a Nuxalk guide whose mission is both to protect the site and to share Nuxalk culture through authentic chants and legends. Here, you will discover, nestled in the lush rainforest moss and fens of a canopy forest, rock carvings believed to be at least 3,500 years old. These marvels are firmly rooted in today's Nuxalk culture like the spiritual heart of the Bella Coola Valley.

**POTLATCH**

Nuxalk Nation families often invite the entire Valley as well as "outsiders" to share in this age-old custom of formal dedications, feasting, singing, and dancing (with masks, in traditional attire). These events can begin with breakfast and last well into the night, sometimes for days. A potlatch is not staged for spectators; it is a genuine practice that reinforces social structure, affirms ancestral territory, and maintains governance. Visiting participants are often welcome to drop in and may be asked to bring their own plates, cups, and cutlery—nothing more. Check the local bulletin boards and newspaper (or drop by the Nuxalk Administration office at Four-Mile) to learn if a potlatch will occur during your Bella Coola adventure. Visit www.nuxalknation.ca.
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