

# TRAVEL

## Town of Lillooet is steeped in history

by JACK HARTLINE  
For Southam Newspapers

LILLOOET, B.C. - Half the fun of visiting this historic, little gold-rush town is the spectacular, picture-postcard drive that takes you here.

Lillooet is 320 kilometres north of Vancouver, and the four-hour trip takes you up Highway 99 from the quiet waters of Howe Sound to the snowy peaks of Whistler and the rustic ranches of Pemberton, to the gleaming Joffre ice fields, the glacier-fed, blue-green lakes of Duffey and Seton, and the winding green canyon of Cayoosh Creek. It has got to be one of the most beautiful drives in North America, if not the world.

A couple from Czechoslovakia, whom we spotted feeding half-a-dozen, seemingly tame grey jays beside the highway at Duffey Lake, said they had never seen anything like it. There wasn't another soul on the lake and it was so quiet and still that it seemed as though the four of us might be the only people on earth. "You can't ever get away from it all like this in Europe," said the man from Prague, as a cheeky jay plucked another peanut from his hand. "It's always crowded wherever you go."

The drive north from Pemberton was especially peaceful and the feeling of remoteness got stronger and stronger until we finally reached Lillooet, a sleepy little village of 2,900 nestled in the arms of three mountain ranges.

At the height of the Cariboo gold rush in 1860, however, it was a boom town. Situated at the confluence of the Bridge and Fraser rivers, it was the jumping-off spot for thousands of eager prospectors and miners hoping to duplicate the success of Billy Barker who struck it rich at Barkerville in 1862. A commemorative stone cairn erected on Lillooet's Main Street 60 years ago marks it as Mile "0" of the Cariboo wagon road that led to the gold fields. It was from this point that all roadhouses and stopping places became known by their mileage from Lillooet - 70-Mile, 100-Mile, 150-Mile and so on, all the way to Barkerville.

The miners used horses, mules and oxen to haul their gear over nearby Pavilion Mountain. This explains why little Lillooet's Main Street is so wide. Since oxen can't be backed up, the street had to be big enough to turn around a double-freight wagon pulled



A couple from London, England, enjoy the peaceful view at Seton Lake.

by a team of the lumbering beasts.

One enterprising miner even imported 23 camels to haul supplies, but although they were good pack animals, they smelled so bad that they spooked all the other animals on the trail. They also had such a fondness for soap that they constantly got into trouble for gobbling up other people's laundry.

The sharp rocks and gravel of the mountains proved too hard for the camels' soft feet, however, and the experiment was soon abandoned. But the camels were immortalized more than 100 years later when the province built Lillooet a new bridge across the Fraser River in 1982 and named it The Bridge of the 23 Camels. An old camel saddle is just one of the many artifacts from Lillooet's colourful past that you'll find in a small museum and information centre across the street from the Mile "0" cairn.

This is where you can get a free map describing a historical walking-tour of the town, as well as information on accommodations and sights to see.

The museum is situated in a former Anglican church on the same site as the town's first church, which was built in the 1860s. An old bell and miniature organ from the original church are also on display in the museum, where 74-year-old curator Hilda Bryson used to teach Sunday school. The museum is only open from April 15 to Oct. 15, but you can also obtain free maps and information from the Lillooet Economic

Development Commission, which is open year round at the Recreation Centre at 930 Main St.

There are 15 historic sites listed on the walking tour, which Lillooet calls its Golden Mile of History. One of the most fascinating is the fabled Hangman's Tree in a small park on a hill just above Main Street. It's a twisted, gruesome-looking Ponderosa pine where B.C.'s famous hanging judge, Sir Matthew Begbie, is reputed to have sent eight men to their deaths during the 1860s.

On a road just below the park are the Chinese Rocks, a huge, neatly stacked pile of washed rocks three metres high and nearly 50 metres long. They were left by Chinese miners sluicing for gold during the late 1800s.

The mild climate and spectacular surrounding scenery make Lillooet a charming place to visit. Because of its unique location at an elevation of just 240 metres below the surrounding mountains, it gets less than 25 centimetres of rain a year and a minimum amount of snow. In summer, it is often the hottest spot in all of Canada.

Nearby, one of Lillooet's most beautiful attractions is stunning blue-green Seton Lake, 30 kilometres long and nearly 500 metres deep. On the day we happened by, there wasn't a single soul on the smooth-as-glass water, and with a snow-covered mountain shimmering in the distance, it was so peaceful that we felt we could stay there forever.

### ...if you go

■ Getting there: Take Highway 99 north past Squamish, Whistler and Pemberton all the way to Lillooet. The drive is 320 kilometres and takes about four hours. BC Rail also provides a wonderful, one-day round-trip journey for \$132, which includes a three-hour stopover in Lillooet as well as both breakfast and dinner on the train. (A 40-per-cent discount fare of \$79.20 is available until April 30.)

■ Accommodations: Lillooet has three motels and two small hotels (\$40 to \$65 a night), half a dozen bed-and-breakfasts (\$50 to \$60), and a provincial campground (\$14).

■ Other things to do: Play golf on a working sheep ranch where the hazards include sheep grazing on the greens, but the owner guarantees "you'll never have a ba-a-a-a-round"; pan for gold or hunt for jade along the river; tour one of the ginseng farms blanketed by huge black tarpaulins; check out the town's heritage suspension bridge of wood and steel built 86 years ago; play tennis at the recreation centre; go fishing, swimming or canoeing on any of several nearby lakes; scan the surrounding mountains for eagles and bighorn sheep.

■ Information: Visit or write to Lillooet Museum/Travel Info Centre, Box 441, 790 Main St., Lillooet, B.C. V0K 1V0, or phone 250-256-4308. Write to Lillooet Economic Development Commission, Box 609, 930 Main St., Lillooet, B.C. V0K 1V0, or phone 250-256-7775.

## Luggage is lost: What do you do?

by DAPHNE BRAMHAM  
Southam Newspapers

VANCOUVER - Here is some hard-earned advice about luggage loss when traveling by air:

■ If you've got a discreet black bag, transform it into something distinguishable. It makes it easier for the airline to pick it out if your name and baggage tags get ripped off.

■ Put your name and address on both the inside and the outside of bags.

■ Find out what the airline's policy is on compensating you for necessities in the first three days. Alaska Airline's policy is to pay up to \$50 US a day for three days. However, that \$150 will be deducted from any final settlement.

■ Find out what insurance you have. If you bought your ticket using a premium credit card (one that you pay for as opposed to the fee-free ones), the compensation for lost luggage can be higher than the airline's. The credit card I use covers up to \$500 if your bag is delayed. However, insurance will cover only those items that you buy within the first four days of your arrival. The credit-card insurance also covers up to \$500 if your bag never shows up. But that \$500 is paid out only if your final settlement with the airline doesn't cover all of your costs.

■ Make sure you know what insurance coverage you have before you put your bag on the conveyer belt.

■ Bug the airline in the first three days as much as you can. This, apparently, is the critical period when most luggage is found.

■ Keep every single receipt for purchases so that your claim can be processed more easily.

■ Try to resist the urge to go for the throat of the baggage claim agent who asks you to provide receipts for all of the items in your lost luggage.

■ Try to be patient. Alaska Airlines - as an example - says it takes four to six weeks to process claims. And until you've done that, you can't make claims on your other insurance policies.

## Monday, bloody good Monday.

At last, a reason to look forward to the first day of the week.

Every Monday, the Citizen features a sports roundup of the weekend's local and professional sports activity.

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The drive up Pavilion Mountain 10 kilometres north of town is another visual treat that offers spectacular vistas at nearly every turn in the road. Every

time you look back, you see another breathtaking panorama of the Fraser River cutting its way through a multi-coloured canyon 1,000 metres below.

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