

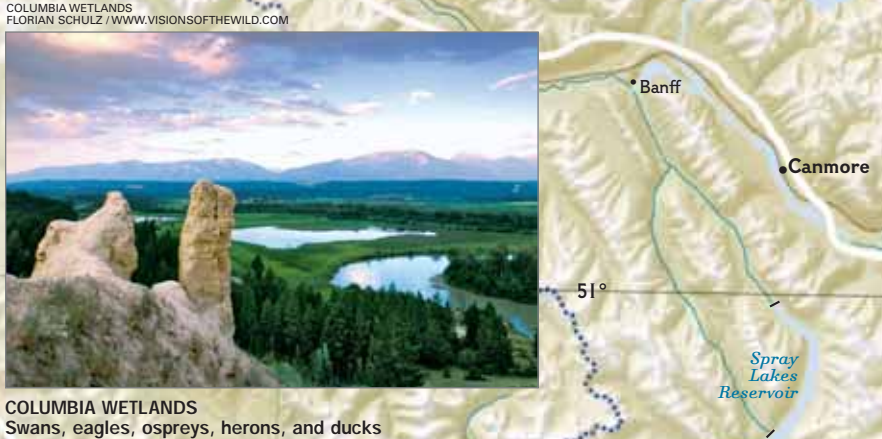


National Geographic and the people of Alberta, British Columbia, and Montana present this Geotourism MapGuide to the Crown of the Continent region.



Rocky Mountain Front

We live on the eastern slopes where the prairie meets the mountains. Visitors discover a dramatic landscape at the rugged edge between civilization and wilderness. Our guests are eager to learn how our cattle and horses help restore streams and protect native plants. After visiting, they often support our effort to establish this special place as a national park.



COLUMBIA WETLANDS Swans, eagles, ospreys, herons, and ducks nest here on their seasonal migrations. Both the Columbia and the Kootenay Rivers originate here, flowing out of the wetlands in opposite directions, to merge hundreds of kilometers later, at Castlegar, BC.



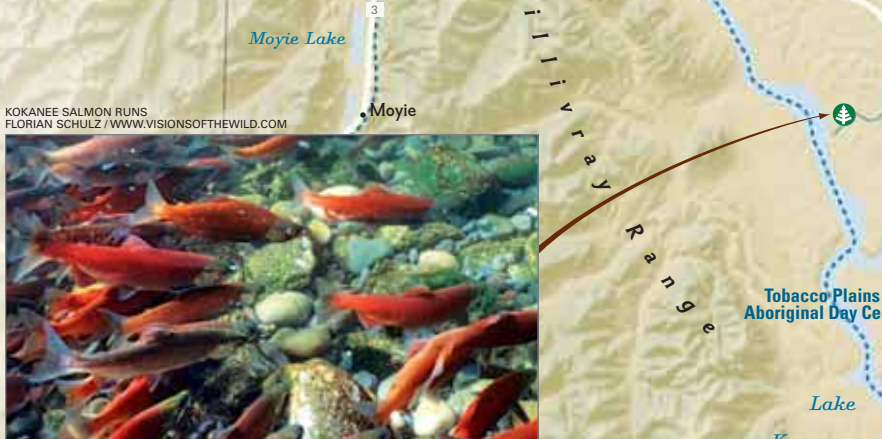
Rocky Mountain Front National Historic Site of Canada. The trail is a 100 km long route that follows the path of the first transcontinental rail line. It is a great place to learn about the history of the region and the role of the Rocky Mountain Front in the development of the West.



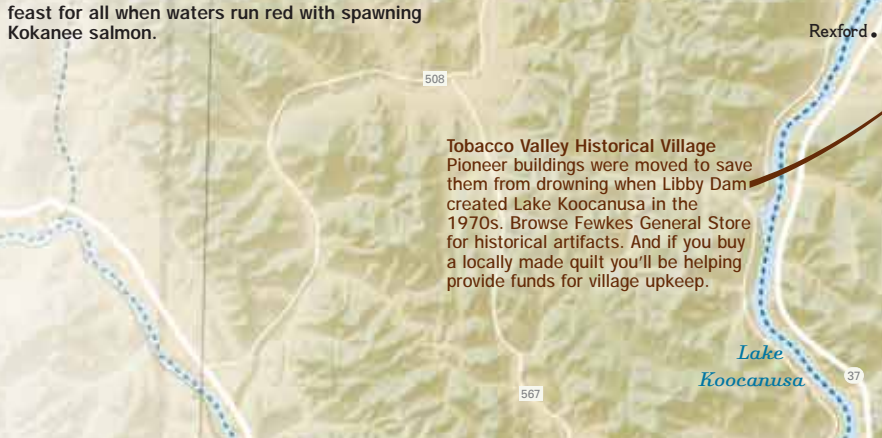
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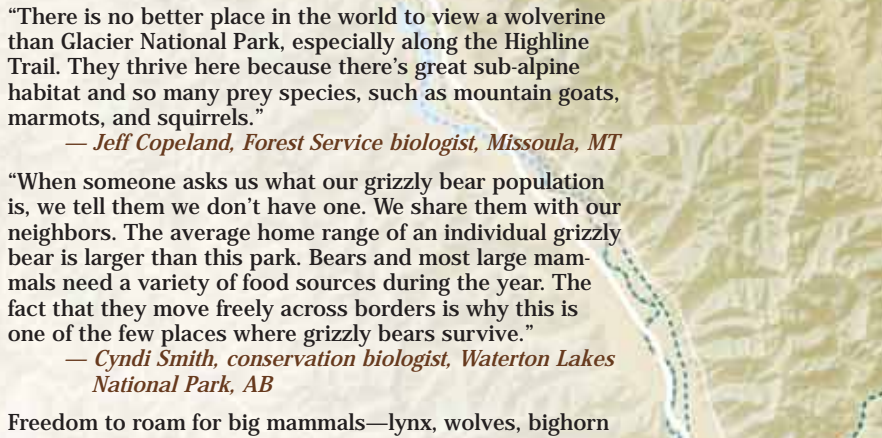
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Map Key

- Festival
- Historical site
- Museum
- Natural or scenic area
- Other point of interest
- World Heritage site
- (Mts) Tribal name

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The Living Heritage

WITNESS FROM THE MOUNTAIN ALONG THE TRAIL OF HISTORY

Atop a snow-dusted peak in October, a friend and I hear an elk bugle. Scanning meadows below with binoculars, I spot instead a silver-tipped grizzly bear, flexing its massive shoulder hump to excavate glacier tillies. "This is his place," my friend says. "He owns this country." Indeed, while we eliminate grizzlies in so many places, a robust population freely roams the Crown of the Continent, from mountain-tops and plunging valleys to tescue prairies and cedar rainforests.

Think of these magnificent bears as wary sentinels of change. For millennia they watched over people who honored their power. The Ktunaxa called to the bear spirit for guidance and protection, while Blackfoot traditions tell of the Medicine Grizzly who rescues and nurtures a young boy. Explorers David Thompson, Meriwether Lewis, and William Clark learned the ancient wisdom of mutual respect the hard way. After several violent confrontations, provoked by nonlethal musket fire, en route to these mountains, Lewis determined to live and let live: "I find that the curiosity of our party is pretty well satisfied with respect to this animal."

From their silent perches, grizzlies witnessed the first trains cross Crownson and Marias Passes, followed by settlers to populate the Rocky Mountain Trench, and Flathead and Elk Valleys. By the turn of the 20th century, the bear's outlook dimmed as wildlife was slaughtered across the continent. Here, however, grizzlies persevered into a new era of wildlife restoration, wilderness designation, and cross-border stewardship. Today, they are a source of fierce local pride and the namesake of many businesses and festivals.

As the great silvertip disappears into the forest that bright October afternoon, I am the observer, humble and grateful that such a place may yet be found.

— Steve Thompson, writer, National Parks Conservation Association, Whitefish, MT

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