



Ecotours - BC

"Grizzly Bears, Wildlife and Nature"

BC's Premier Outdoor Adventure Specialists!

Expérience distinctive



Signature Experience

About Ecotours-BC and The Cariboo Mountains Adventure

Deep in the heart of British Columbia in the Cariboo Mountains surrounding the deepest fjord lake on earth is the rare temperate rainforest found nowhere else on earth. In the Quesnel Lake watershed, which drains some 12,000 square kilometers of land, water is the essence of the sustainability of the vibrant and abundant life forms found within it. Through spring and summer the high alpine explodes in a kaleidoscope of color as the wild flowers burst into full bloom – asters, glacier lilies, solomon's seal, monkey flower, Indian paint brush and a myriad of others. The lush valley bottom ecosystems provide food and shelter for countless species, including Grizzly Bears and black bears, waterfowl, furbearers ungulates, butterflies, and a whole other plant world. In the rivers of these valley bottoms the bull trout and rainbow trout share their habitat with the salmon – sockeye, coho and Chinook. This natural place – remote, wild and endlessly green – refreshes your soul and cleanses your inner spirit.

Ecotours – BC is a grass roots outdoor adventure guide service offering extraordinary wilderness experiences. Our specialty is grizzly bear watching and wildlife viewing. Situated in the heart of one of the most unique and diverse areas on earth, the Quesnel Lake watershed has it's own unique micro-climatic zone on the western slopes of the Cariboo Mountains. Experience it first hand with experienced knowledgeable guides including local experts, people recognized nationally in their fields of expertise whether it be entomology, botany, biology, bryology and ornithology. Whether you come for the sheer pleasure of observing nature and life in this unique ecosystem, or whether you are a novice or amateur naturalist or a research expert, you will find much to challenge your interests when you join us on an ecotour in the Cariboo Mountains.

The Cariboo Mountains watershed area includes a unique cross section of biogeoclimatic zones, which make it a rare and interesting nature study. The region runs the gamut from Old Growth interior cedar – hemlock to Engelmann spruce – subalpine forests, and including northern spruce, willow and birch of the subalpine zones and alpine tundra of the high mountains. This results in a very mixed climate ranging from cool, wet winters, and summers which are generally warm and dry, to long, cold winters and short, cool, growing seasons in portions of the area. Consequently this cross section also creates an unusually productive area for plant and animal life. It makes the wetlands a particularly rich staging area and home habitat for a varied and numerous bird population. This is area also is rich in history. It is the heart of the 1860's Cariboo Gold Rush and there are many authentic and interesting historical sites remaining from the gold rush days.

Cariboo Mountains Park & Cariboo River Park

Meet the Cariboo Mountains "Bear Whisperer"!

Gary Zorn has a passion for the big bears – the grizzlies. With Gary you will meet the Cariboo Mountains grizzly bears in their wild natural habitat. Gary has devoted his life studying the social hierarchy, habits, habitat and body language of these creatures while communing with them on their turf. Grizzlies, one of the largest predatory and most solitary species with their razor sharp claws, big demeanor, tell-tale hump over the shoulder and dished nose are unmistakable - the undisputed signature species of the Canadian wilderness. From the wetlands to the alpine travel the trails of these great animals with Gary. He knows the bears here intimately from their unique habits, temperaments, family units and colorings. While amongst the grizzlies, Gary thinks like a bear. As he communicates with the bears he speaks in a soft monotone, and filled with his special brand of humour, he conveys calmness but can also convey a stern command – "Hey, bear, how's the fishin'?" "Enough bear, back off now". These bears are wild, free and unhabituated. With over 30 years experience Gary maintains a constant and vigilant respect for the bears. His most often repeated advice in bear viewing – "Grizzly Bears are wild animals. Remain calm. Never run from a bear." High safety standards ensure guests enjoy this unique experience and see some of Canada's premier wildlife in close proximity, ideal for photography and just experiencing nature in the raw. Whether you are viewing the bears on the rivers by jetboat going about their daily business and enjoying a salmon feast or feeding on Solomon seals (*Polygonatum multiflorum*) and grasses in the high mountain valleys, it is an experience you will remember and treasure forever.

Observe the "cycle of life" as the clear glacial waters of the Mitchell River run red with the returning sockeye salmon. One of the life's blood rivers of the Quesnel Lake watershed and one of the major salmon producing rivers in the Province, the habitat it provides is shared by the resident trout and the salmon. The salmon return from the Pacific Ocean

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through the Fraser River system and the Quesnel River into the watershed. They make their way to the Mitchell River where they spawn and complete their life cycle. As the salmon return the Grizzly bears also return to the river. This adventure provides exceptional grizzly bear watching and photography opportunities as the bears feast on salmon and ready themselves for their winter hibernation. Along with the grizzlies the river is lined with eagles, bald and golden, also feasting on the salmon carcasses. This exquisite river ecosystem provides a unique study opportunity for naturalists and photographers.

The Cariboo River originates among the mountain peaks and glaciers in Cariboo Mountains Park. The glacial waters follow a rugged path of waterfalls and rapids through steep boulder strewn canyons, Cariboo River Park, and Cariboo Lake to its confluence with Quesnel River. The Cariboo River is spectacularly beautiful from its amazing crystal blue-green churning waters through the wild wilderness to where it meets the Quesnel River at the historic gold rush ghost town of Quesnel Forks. This river hosts the largest bodied Chinook (King) Salmon run in the interior of British Columbia making it a "grizzly bear buffet". It is an amazing sight to see these big King Salmon, that often exceed 60 pounds, attempting to jump the waterfalls to return to their spawning grounds. The Cariboo's long runs and deep pools are ideal habitat for it's big bull trout and rainbows. It also provides critical habitat for wildlife, especially moose, grizzly bears and waterfowl.

As you observe the cycle of the salmon and the antics of the native wildlife you are likely to see many species of birds including ducks, geese, blue herons, trumpeter swans, dippers (water ouesels), whiskey jacks (gray jays), sapsuckers, woodpeckers, grouse, swifts and many more. Native wildlife in the area includes the mountain grizzlies, mountain goats, mountain caribou, mule deer, moose, black bears, and a host of smaller furbearers such as otters, beavers, pine martens, chipmunks, squirrels and more. Don't miss this natural history adventure. This is one of the few places on earth where this cycle of life remains in tact in the wild – untamed and undisturbed. Season – August to end of October.

All the seasons in the Cariboo Mountains are spectacular in their mountain beauty. The splendor of autumn is particularly magical and enchanting as the withdrawal of summer heralds the coming of autumn with its crisp cool mornings and warm sunlit days. Picture yourself on the shore of Quesnel Lake, the deepest fjord lake on earth, or drifting on one of the rivers with the sun rising over the snowcapped mountain peaks to illuminate the brilliantly colored yellows, oranges and reds mixed in with the shades of green of the surrounding forests. The crisp, lightly frosted morning comes alive with the sounds of nature and woodland life surrounded by magnificent snowcapped mountains, old growth forests with trees over 1000 years old, wildlife, birds, unique eco-systems, and outstanding beauty. Ecotours-BC has many unforgettable scenes like this.

We use jetboats to access the rivers and then drift down which gives you an up close and personal view of the rivers, the ecosystems and the wildlife inhabitants. It is a unique and safe way to view bears and enjoy the wilderness rivers in the Cariboo Mountains.

Come and join Gary and Ecotours – BC for this unique experience. Hear his engaging and often humorous bear stories and learn about these magnificent animals from his knowledge and experience in the world of the great bears. A truly Canadian wilderness adventure this is not just a grizzly bear viewing trip. It's a pure intimate experience with nature – one that has the power to enlighten and redefine one's inner self.

Bear Viewing Seasons & Options

We are the only bear viewing specialists that follow the bears through the seasons – spring, summer and fall. Spring Grizzly Bear viewing is done on the estuaries and on the slides of the Matthew and Mitchell Rivers, on the Cariboo River and in the mountain valleys. Access is by 4x4, short hikes and jetboats. The early spring grasses and sedges sprouting in the lowlands and along the shores of Quesnel Lake draws the bears to the lower elevations where feed is plentiful after the long winter hibernation period.

In July and August the bears are in the high alpine basins and valleys in the Cariboo Mountains. Viewing at this time involves alpine hiking. Some areas we can access and be in the alpine and on top of the peaks in under an hour. These areas offer excellent viewing and photographic opportunities as you walk along the high alpine peaks and ridges and view the mountain valleys below. Travel time to get to the trailheads is an hour or less from the lodge. Besides grizzlies guests may also see moose, mountain caribou, black bear, mountain goats, wolves, mule deer, wolverine, lynx and a variety of mountain song birds, smaller animals and unique alpine plants and flowers.

Fall Grizzly viewing in September and October is done primarily over the salmon runs on the rivers by jetboats. Toward the end of August the sockeye salmon begin to arrive in the Cariboo Mountains Quesnel Lake watershed and travel up the rivers and tributaries to the spawning redds of their birth where they will lay their eggs to ensure future generations and end their lives. These fish have traveled thousands of miles, often from the gulf of Alaska all the way down the coast of British Columbia where they enter the Fraser River, their highway to the interior spawning rivers, then up the Quesnel River and into the rivers of their birth in the Quesnel Lake watershed. This is a mighty feat of nature and

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is an amazing and wondrous site to behold. The arrival of the salmon in the rivers quickly draws the grizzlies to the rivers for their fall feast at nature's buffet in preparation for their winter's hibernation. The Quesnel Lake watershed hosts the largest sockeye salmon runs in the world with an average of 5 to 7 million fish returning to the rivers on a major run year (50,000 to 500,000 on minor run years).

On all of our wildlife viewing trips safety is first and foremost for both the wildlife and our guests. We are especially vigilant and safety conscious on our bear viewing excursions. Our guides are experienced, qualified professionals. Knowing and recognizing bear body language plays an important role in safe viewing. The bears we view are wild bears in their natural habitat. They are not habituated bears used to being around people. We keep in mind at all times that we are visitors and guests in their homes and we do everything possible to avoid stressing and impacting them as they go about the usual business of their daily lives and foraging for food. They are intelligent, often playful and very entertaining. Guests regularly comment that seeing the grizzlies is the highlight of their vacation trip.

Note: Our lodge offers a comfortable retreat for your wilderness bear/wildlife viewing excursion. We recommend you allow a minimum of at least 2 days (3 or more is better) so that you have the best opportunities to view the bears and wildlife. We request that you arrive at the lodge the evening before your tour begins for an orientation session and also because of our early morning starts. Guests also need to ensure they are prepared for all types of weather with warm clothing, full rain gear – pants and jacket - and waterproof footwear. Please let us know of any special dietary requirements, physical impediments or medical conditions we should be aware of at time of booking.

Packages Include: Accommodations, meals, guides, necessary motorized equipment (boats, motors, vehicles), orientation and interpretive information. Depending on the trip chosen guests need to bring camera (preferably with a telephoto lens), memory cards/film, a good pair of binoculars, proper footwear, backpack, day pack sack, hat, raingear, gloves, clothing that can be layered – fleece is best, personal toiletries.

Not Included: International airfares, applicable Canadian taxes, Wilderness Stewardship Fund, gratuities, liquor, ground transportation from/to Williams Lake airport. Ground transport is available.

Payment & Cancellation Policy: Bookings are confirmed with a 50% deposit with the balance due 60 days prior to arrival. In the event of cancellation 60 days prior to your scheduled arrival, and we can rebook your reserved space, the deposit can be applied for an alternative date. All payments are final and nonrefundable. Payments may be made by bank draft, bank transfer, or personal cheque. Prices are subject to change without notice. Bookings confirmed with a deposit are guaranteed.

Notes: Ecotours – BC reserves the right to cancel or modify services as weather and local conditions warrant without notification in the interest of safety of all concerned. We view wild animals in their natural habitat. The animals are totally wild and unhabituated. This is natural wildlife viewing of animals in their natural habitat. There are no viewing platforms and the animals are not enclosed in any wildlife preserve. With natural wildlife viewing there are a number of variables that are out of our control including weather conditions, natural instincts and movements of the wildlife, and human capabilities. We do not guarantee sightings, but do our best to give guests the best opportunities for viewing wildlife and we have a very high success rate (well over 90%). Guests are required to sign a waiver of liability prior to participation in activities.

Custom packages of longer or shorter duration can be formatted to suit you or your group's itinerary. Please inquire for family/group rates and availability. References available on request.

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