

Revised
2nd edition

Getting North to Alaska



A Yukon & Alaska Road Trip Primer
by Ron Haidenger, The RV Mentor

Getting North to Alaska

Traveling to the Yukon and Alaska is one of the most common RV bucket list destinations. But, for many, their journey is not all it could have been.

Good information and planning are key to getting the most smiles per travel mile. “Getting North to Alaska” provides a great primer for planning your trip, providing insight into routes, road conditions, towns and opportunities along the way.

About the book

"Getting North to Alaska" is a primer for planning a trip through Northern British Columbia and the Yukon. It explores the various routing options and what to expect when driving through the northern wilderness.

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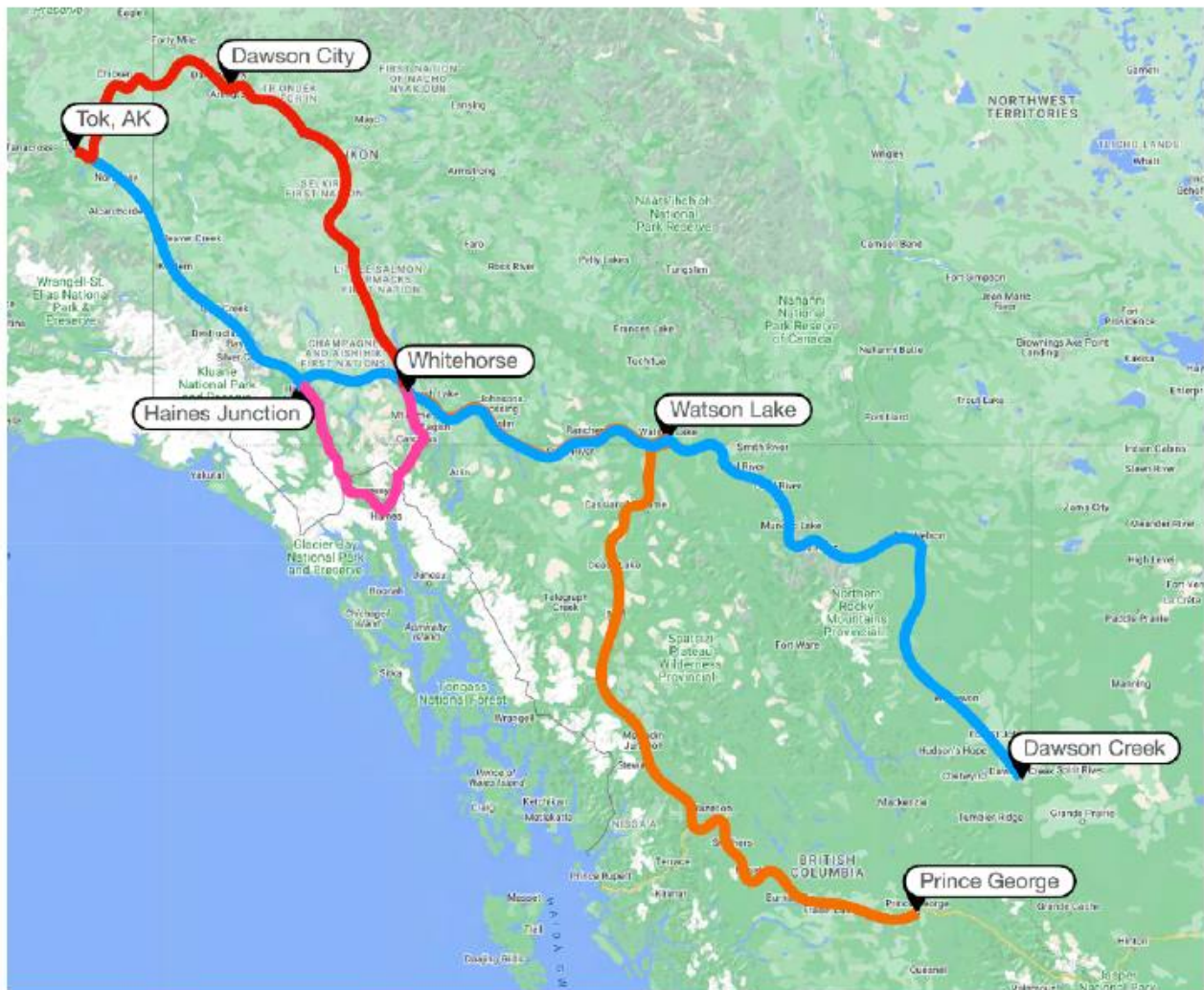
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Introduction

Many first-time travelers, heading for the Yukon and/or Alaska, believe there is only one road — the Alaska Highway. But, there are other options and since most travelers return south, they have the option of exploring multiple routing options.



Getting North to Alaska is divided into three sections:

- Travel Information
- Getting North Routes
- My Route

Travel Information

Planning a first-time trip to the northern frontier is exciting and sure to contain some trepidation of the unknown. This Travel Information section provides an overview of the north, its roads and important travel information that will help make your journey enjoyable and safe.

Getting North Routes

When many people dream about going north, their imagination places them on the Alaskan, or Alcan as it's sometimes called, Highway. Though the Alcan is a great road with fantastic scenery and spectacular wildlife, it is not the only route available. Alternate routes, rival the Alaska Highway but in different ways. The vast majority of travelers heading north will journey back south again in a few weeks or months so seize the opportunity to experience your journey differently on your return and follow a different path. We'll show you the way.

My Route

It is difficult to choose from multiple route options, especially when all are unknown to you. In this section, I describe my favorite routes — the ones I would recommend you take to get the most from your northern trek.

You can choose to follow it as described, reverse its direction or ignore it and chose a different path to follow. That is one of the great opportunities this book offers, informing you of your options and empowering you to choose what suits your fancy.

Section 1: Travel Information

The distance from the Canada/US border in the south to the Alaskan border is approximately 1,800 miles or 2,900 kilometres. So, regardless of your origin or destination, a significant portion will be traveling through British Columbia and the Yukon Territory.

Depending upon the routes you choose, the journey to our start jump-off points of Prince George and Dawson Creek, will be similar to driving anywhere else in North America.

Tourism/Construction Season

The tourism season starts in mid-May and continues through to late September. Traffic is heavier during this time and many campgrounds open and close accordingly.

Expect greater demand for campsites, hotels and other services during this time period.

In addition to tourism season, this is also Road Construction Season.



Flag persons are a common sight on norther roads. Most are friendly and helpful.

Road construction and maintenance in the north is different from that in southern regions. Harsh winters and permafrost play havoc with both.

Large multi-season construction projects can be up to 40 or 50 miles long whereas season repair projects are often limited to about 13 miles — a distance that can often be completed in a single season.

The nature of road repair also differs from that in the south. Simply resurfacing or repairing a short piece of roadbed is ineffective with frost heave and permafrost calling for dramatic measures. Several feet of roadbed must be removed and replaced with fresh material, then built back up again.

Construction zones require patience as they are often one-lane alternating traffic controlled by flag persons and pilot cars. Also, be aware that motorcycles will frequently be directed to go to the front of a waiting line of traffic. Riding a motorcycle over soft ground can be precarious and dangerous, especially if their speed is governed by a slow car in front.

Road Conditions

One of the most common questions asked is, "What are the roads like?". The question will often be punctuated by comments like, "A friend told me, your car will be trashed by the terrible roads."

For some unknown reason, some people like to make their adventure sound adventurous and possibly they feel by bemoaning terrible driving conditions, their adventurous nature will be magnified. The truth is, other than road construction and specific sections of road subject to frost heave, the other roads are generally the same as tertiary and other highways throughout Canada and the US.

One other exception to this is The Top Of The World Highway, north of Dawson City, heading toward Tok via Chicken, AK. We'll go into that in more detail later, when discussing that route.

Frost Heave Ahead

Extreme northern temperatures result in permafrost, which many perceive to be permanently frozen ground. It is not permanently frozen, however, or at least not that which is near the surface. This surface layer goes through continuous freeze/thaw cycles resulting in an unstable and ever-changing surface layer.



When the moisture in or under a roadbed freezes, it expands and lifts the road surface, or heaves it up. Then, when the moisture thaws, it results in a soft unsupported surface which falls unevenly or even shifts causing cracks and fissures.

This can occur anywhere where the ground freezes, but it is especially prevalent along a 150-mile stretch of the Alaska Highway, north of Destruction Bay and a shorter stretch of the Klondike Highways between Whitehorse and Dawson City.

When traveling through these areas, slow down and keep a sharp eye on the road and along the roadside.



Red flags, along the roadside, warn of heaves in the surface but don't rely on them always being present or noticed. Undulating pavement is easiest to spot and the least damaging but abrupt fissures or ledges can also run across the highway or down its length and these are tougher to spot.

If you are towing a trailer, be especially vigilant and cautious. Your tow vehicle's suspension will handle the damaged surface with far greater ease than your trailer. Tossed trailer contents and bent or broken wheels and springs are common when drivers fail to slow down enough.

Night-time Driving

Wildlife is common everywhere along northern roads. The best advice I can offer in terms of safety is to drive with caution during the daytime and stay off the highway from dusk until dawn.



From dusk until dawn is a dangerous time for driving on northern roads. This is the time when wildlife is most active and when visibility is limited.



A collision with a porcupine or coyote is upsetting but a collision with a 340-500 kg (750-1100 lb.) moose will ruin everyone's day and your trip.

If at all possible, avoid driving from dawn until dusk.

Wildlife does pose a danger, but it also presents an opportunity for some memorable photographs. The abundance of wildlife ensures that sighting will occur, so be aware of not only what's on the road ahead, but also what may be off on the roadside. Often you will be alerted to wildlife near the road when cars ahead brake and pull to the side of the road.

When you pull over to take a photo, be sure to pull well off the travel lane. Trucks and large RVs will be traveling down the same road and may need extra space to navigate around others more intent on the wildlife than driving.

Accommodations

Hotel and motel accommodations are plentiful as far north on the Alaska Highway as Fort Nelson, in Prince George and Whitehorse. They are available but somewhat limited elsewhere and offerings are frequently more basic.

During the summer tourist season, you may encounter "No Vacancy" signs at hotels and





Big Creek Campground, west of Watson Lake.

This is my favorite site here, long enough for two big rigs to park together.

motels. If you are dependent on this style of accommodation, plan ahead and consider making reservations. Also, if you expect to arrive after 6:00 PM, advise the hotels, or you may find your room has been given away, assuming you to be a “no show”.

Campgrounds and RV parks are located all along these routes, as well as many great boondocking opportunities.

BC Provincial Parks

British Columbia has the third-largest public parks system in North America with 10,700 vehicle-accessible campsites, including 230 parks with facilities for those with disabilities. And more are being added each year.

Some of the newest BC campgrounds have big rig friendly pull-thru sites with 50-amp electrical power. But, those in the northern region of the province are mostly unserviced with a few offering



*Meziadin Lake BC Provincial Park
Junction of BC Hwy-37 and 37A.*

water and 30-amp electrical power. Campsites can be reserved but some are held for first-come, first-served campers. Less populated areas have greater numbers of first-come, first-served campsites. Campsite fees vary from one location to another.

- Reservation: <https://bcparks.ca/reserve/>
- Interactive map: <https://governmentofbc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=077ef73a1eae4ca88f2bafbb831215af>
- Fees table: <https://bcparks.ca/fees/userfees.pdf?v=1633968557079>

Government of Yukon Campgrounds

Most Yukon Territory Government Campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis with cash payment self-registration. Payment is placed in the provided envelope and deposited in the registration kiosk near the campground entrance.

Yukon Territory Campsites are generously sized and many are big rig friendly. Few have serviced sites, but they do have free firewood to keep you warm at night and roast marshmallows. The firewood may not be split so come prepared.

- Download park location map: <https://yukon.ca/en/map-government-campground-recreation-sites>
- Campground information: <https://yukon.ca/en/find-campground-or-recreation-site>

Commercial Campgrounds

Commercial campgrounds are scattered along the Alaska and other northern highways, but they are not plentiful in numbers. Most are older and rustic and may or may not be able to accommodate big rigs. Those seeking 50-amp sites will find only a limited number available. Be sure to verify your needs and the campground's ability to provide for them before making reservations.



*Fort Telkwa
Riverfront RV
Campground on BC
Hwy-16 has
ample space for
large rigs, including
three 50-amp sites,
and a free power
wash station.*

Boondocking

Overnight boondocking sites along or near the highways are plentiful — just keep your eyes open and pull in when you find one that looks good. Some will be right along the roadside while others may be a short distance off for a little more privacy.



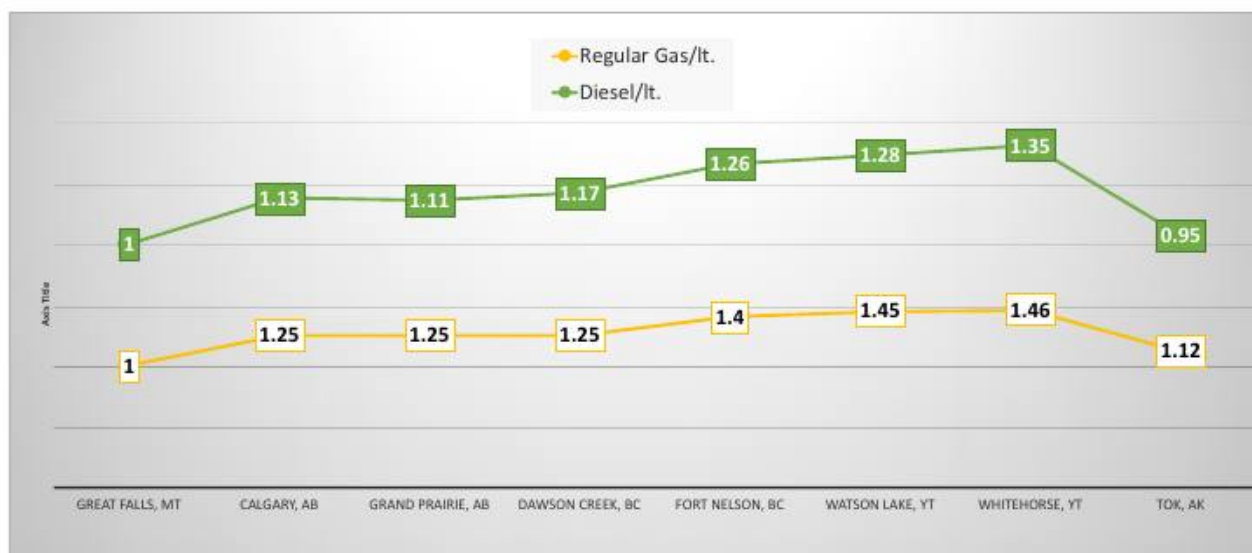
A roadside pullout along Hwy-37A.

We parked here for the night and took our flat tow car into Stewart and Hyder, AK

The unofficial rule or practice is, if it is not signed, gated or private property, it's a boondocking site.

Fuel

Whether your RV runs on gas or diesel, be prepared to pay more in Canada than in the US and the price increases as you travel northward. The following chart does not indicate actual fuel cost but rather the relative difference from a US baseline (Great Falls, MT).



This indicates the typical variance at key points up to and along the Alaska Highway, ending in Tok, AK.

As indicated, for every dollar per gallon or liter paid in Great Falls, you can expect to pay 46% more for gas in Whitehorse and 35% more for diesel.

These prices are based on the cost in established towns. Expect to pay more when fuel is purchased in a smaller community or from a lone gas station in the middle of the wilderness.



Due to the distances between population centers and refueling locations, it is important that you be aware of your fuel level and remaining range at all times. Some fuel locations may close in the early evening, so don't rely on refueling after 9:00 PM or before 8:00 AM and never leave yourself without options if the next gas station is unable to service your needs.

Tires

If you don't travel off the major highways, your chances of encountering a tire failure are no greater, or less, than on any other road. What is different however is the availability of tire repair and replacement services.

Inspect your tires and adjust them to the correct pressure. If a tire's condition or tread depth is questionable, replace it before departing on your journey. Also, be sure to bring along full-size replacement wheels and tires or, at a minimum, have a roadside assistance package that includes full tire service. Paying for roadside tire service and/or tire replacement in remote areas will be costly.

If you choose to rely on roadside assistance, be aware that it will be challenging and slow in remote areas. If you drive a big rig, with tires that you cannot change yourself, check ahead with your provider to ensure your package covers the areas you'll be traveling through.

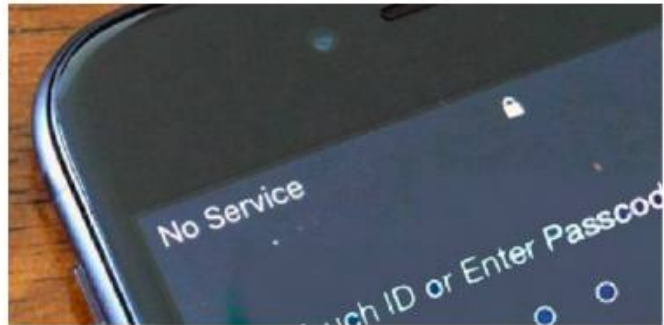


Your vehicle should also be equipped with safety equipment, such as reflector triangles or flares and the appropriate tools for changing a tire along the roadside.

Communications

Do not rely upon cellular phone service when traveling through remote areas. There are vast areas without cellular coverage and your provider may not have coverage in areas with cell towers.

Check with your provider to ascertain the available coverage in this region.



In addition to advising friends and family of your travel plans and schedule, it is wise to consider alternate communication solutions.



One possible solution is a satellite communication device, such as a Garmin inReach or inReach Mini, that enables two-way communications from virtually anywhere in the world.

I personally carry a Garmin inReach Mini, a small portable satellite communications device that enables me to send and receive text messages, anywhere. It connects wirelessly with my cellular phone, which provides a display screen and keyboard, but does not require a cellular connection. The device costs about \$300 and there is a small monthly service fee.

Share Your Real-time Location

When venturing out into wilderness areas, as many of these roads are, you should always make sure that one or more of your loved ones know where you are going and when you are due back. Better yet, let them know where you actually are.

One way you can do this is through Google Maps on a mobile device. You can choose who to share your location with and how long to share. Due to the number of options available I won't list the specific instructions here but instead choose one of the following links.

iOS devices:

<https://support.google.com/maps/answer/144361?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform%3DiOS>

Android devices:

<https://support.google.com/maps/answer/7326816?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform%3DAndroid>

Note: Actual real-time location sharing requires a cellular connection. Where a cell connection is not available, your location will be indicated as your last connection point.

Information Resources

Below are links and information on resources that will aid you in creating and executing a winning trip plan.

Canada Border Services Agency

<https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/menu-eng.html>

<https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/menu-eng.html?fbclid=IwAR3yl-8hqiVAuQH2qfMqrV697yq8HuHA0leXIJk499YqhTAz6JN4fOA-uY>

Americans and travelers from other countries should check the Canada Border Services Agency website for information on admissibility, travel restrictions, pets and restricted goods. Don't count on information collected from friends and social media sites — get accurate facts from the folks that control the border and visitor entry.

British Columbia Visitor Information

<https://www.hellobc.com/plan-your-trip/visitor-information-services/>

The Province of British Columbia sponsors more than 100 community-owned Visitor Centres and booths around the province. Their "Hello BC" website offers detailed information on a variety of destinations around the province and provides Travel Guides for each region.

Yukon Visitor Information

<https://www.travelyukon.com/en/guidebooks>

A variety of Yukon Travel Guides are available for downloading and online viewing. A request form is provided to obtain free maps and guides.

The Milepost

<https://themilepost.com/>

The Milepost, first published in 1949, was only 72 pages and weighed a mere 4 oz. With more than 600 pages of location information and maps for the Alaska Highway and other northern routes, it is a great resource. The Milepost is also available in a digital format.

Bell's Travel Guides

<https://www.bellsalaska.com/>

Bell's Travel Guides have been providing travel information and resources for more than 80 years and offer a clear alternative to The Milepost. Most of their maps and travel guides are available free of charge and provide location-focused information. Pick a northern destination and view their guide online or download it to bring along on your adventure.

Google

<https://www.google.com/>

<https://www.google.com/maps/>

<https://www.google.com/maps/about/mymaps/>

Google and its resources such as Google Maps and My Maps are the most versatile and powerful suite of trip-planning resources available. Use the Google Maps “near” search to find things like “campgrounds near Whitehorse”. Then use Google to gather additional information on specific locations. Lastly, enter your points of interest in My Maps to create a custom interactive map as an information data bank for building your trip plan.

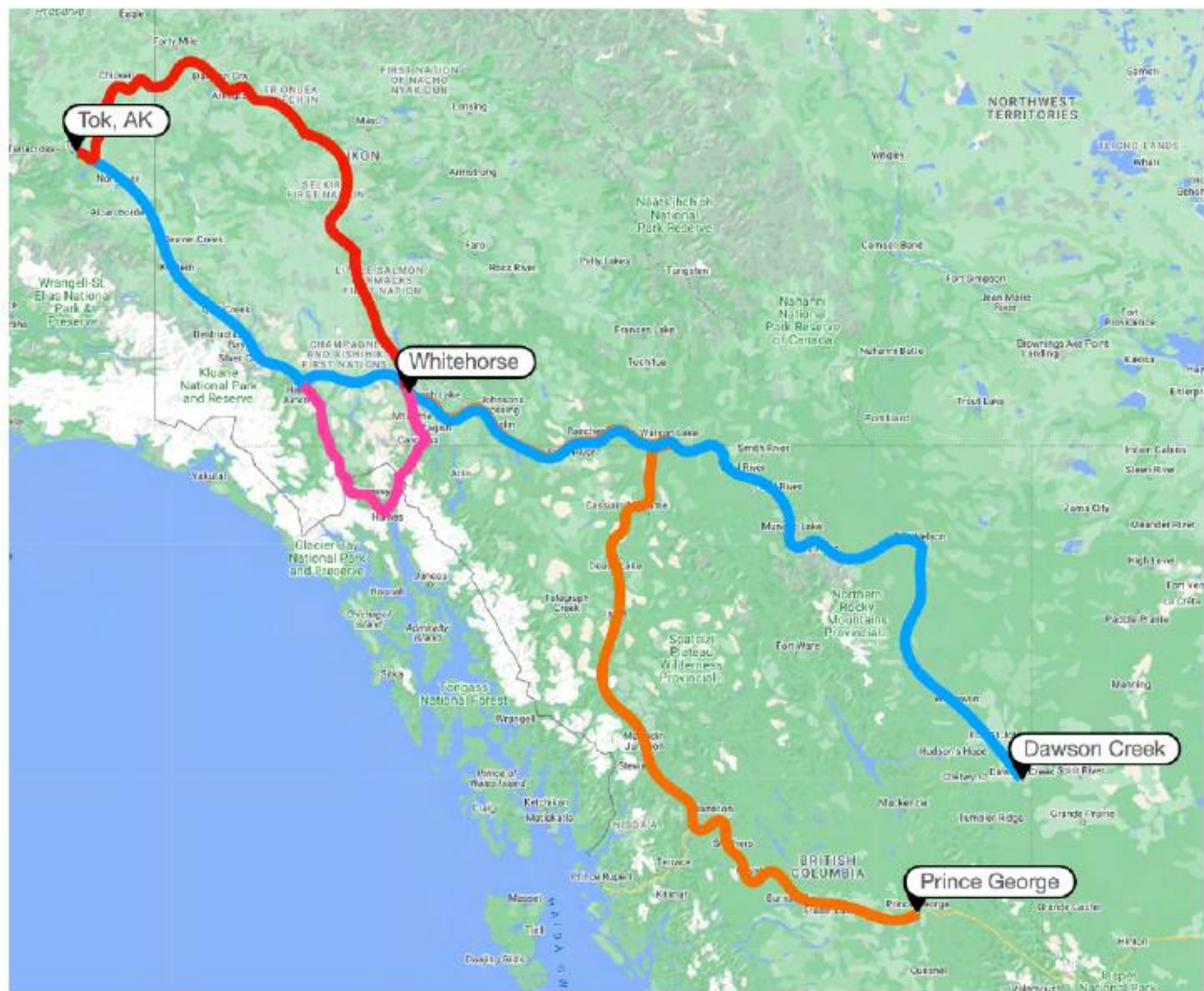
You can experience examples of My Maps, used for travel planning, by visiting the Travel section of the “The RV Mentor” website.

<https://www.thervmentor.com/travel>

Section 2: Getting North Routes

Start and End Points

The southern start/end points of your routes are Dawson Creek or Prince George, BC, and the northern start/end point Tok, AK in the north. All routes will either start or end in these locations as well as Whitehorse where they all converge.



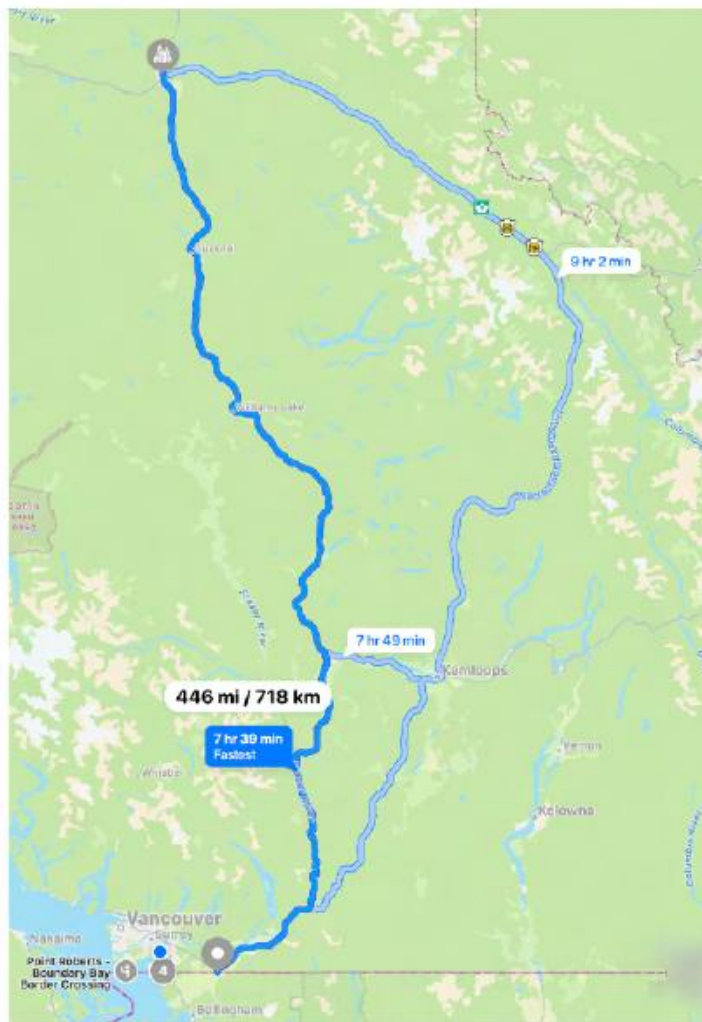
The southernmost start/end points, Dawson Creek and Prince George, BC, are remote but easy to access by Canadian and US travelers.

Below are a number of common routes used to access these jump-off points by US and Canadian travelers from the south and those venturing on to Yukon and Alaskan designations in the north.

Prince George

The largest city in Northern British Columbia, Prince George was built around the forest industry, in fact, its city mascot, Mr. PG, is a towering human-like statue crafted out of logs. Prince George serves as a stopover town for those heading north using the western route, up the Cassiar Hwy.

Vancouver to Prince George



There are four border crossings in the Vancouver, BC area; Peace Arch, Pacific Hwy, Aldergrove and Sumas. These are popular crossing points for those coming from the West Coast up I-5.

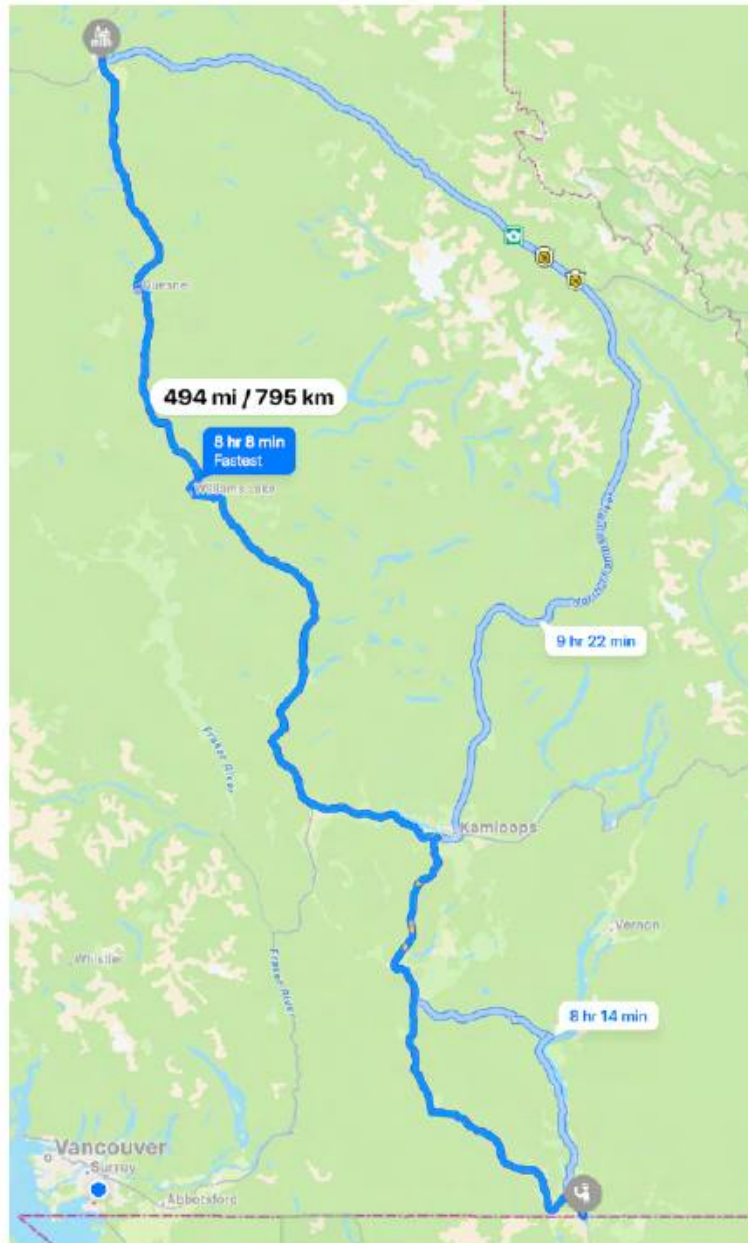
This route takes you up to the famous Fraser Canyon with its spectacular sights, and in the summer you can watch white-water rafters challenging Mother Nature.

Alternately, you can go north, through Vancouver and up the Sea-to-Sky Hwy to Whistler and then follow Hwy-99 through the mountains until it joins Hwy-97, the Caribou Highway.

You can also take Hwy-5 (Coquihalla Highway) from Hope and come back over to Hwy-97 from Kamloops or continue on along Hwy-5, north of Kamloops until it joins Hwy-16 at Tête Jaune Cache. Turning west on Hwy-16 take you to Prince George.



Osoyoos to Prince George



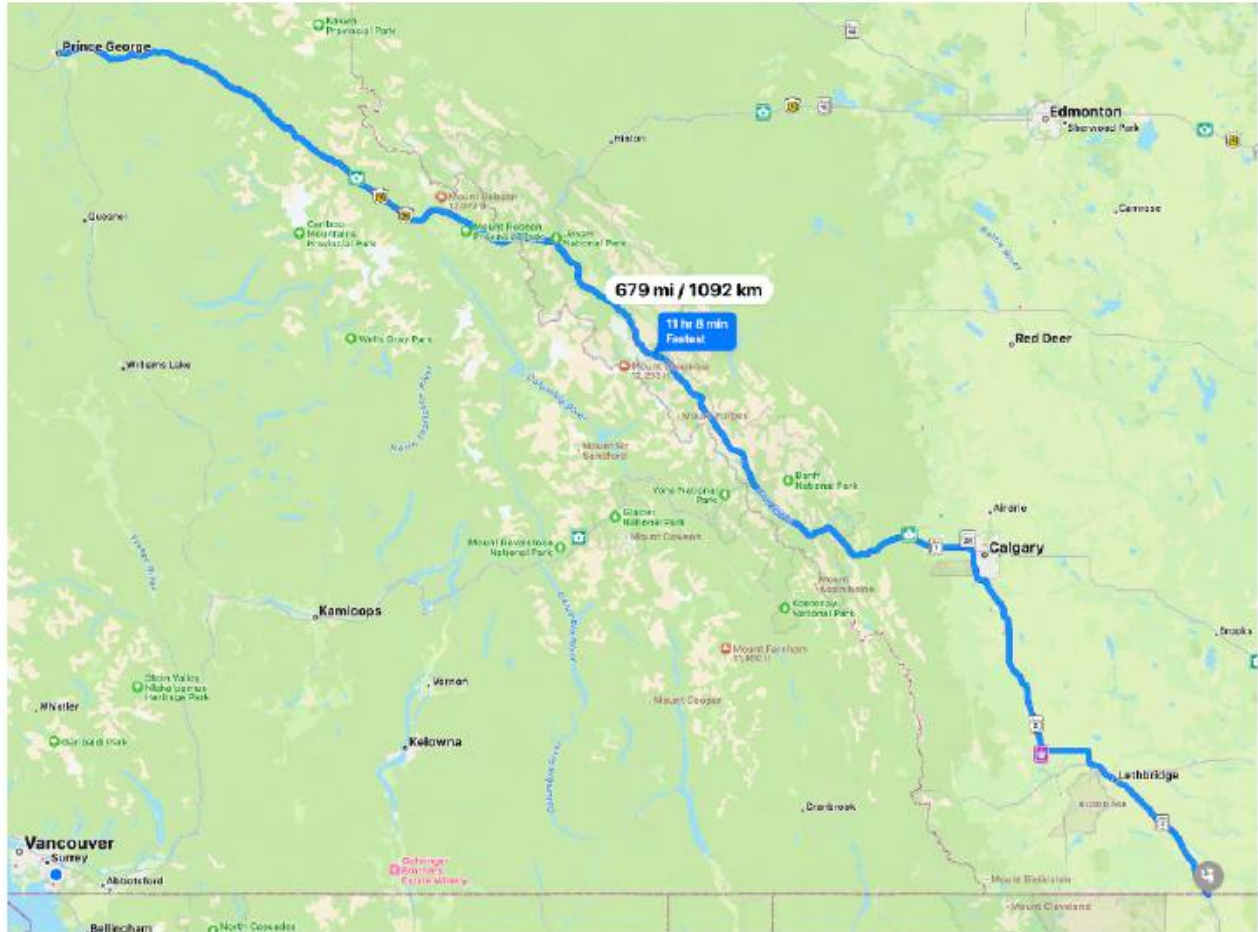
Our next maps show the routes from the Oroville-Osoyoose Border Crossing north to Prince George.

From this central BC entry point, you have a number of choices but the one I would recommend is not the fastest or displayed on this map.

I suggest taking Hwy-97 north, through the Okanagan Valley to where it turns west, just north of Vernon. This takes you on a scenic drive to Kamloops and then on to Cache Creek where it turns north towards Prince George.

While traveling through the Okanagan Valley be sure to check out the fruit currently available and the many spectacular wineries.

Sweetgrass-Coutts to Prince George



US travelers coming from more eastern states may wish to cross into Canada at Sweetgrass, MT and travel north to Calgary, the home of the world-famous Calgary Stampede. From Calgary, you turn westward toward Banff national park and Lake Louise in the Canadian Rocky Mountains.

This route offers you an opportunity to experience the breathtaking Icefield Parkway. The Parkway is dotted with more than 100 ancient glaciers, cascading waterfalls, dramatic rock spires, and emerald lakes set in sweeping valleys of thick pine and larch forests. You can even stop and take a walk on the Columbia Icefield, a massive glacier located just beside the highway.

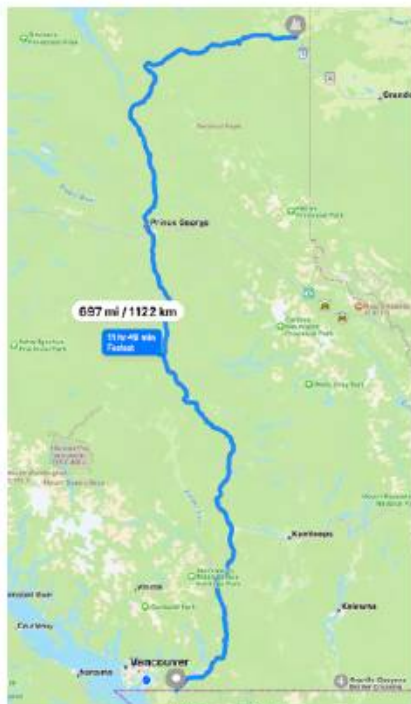
Dawson Creek



Dawson Creek is Mile-0 of the Alaska Highway, a location each northern traveler must pass by at least once.

You can reach Dawson Creek from Prince George using BC Hwy-97 or from Alberta on Hwy-2.

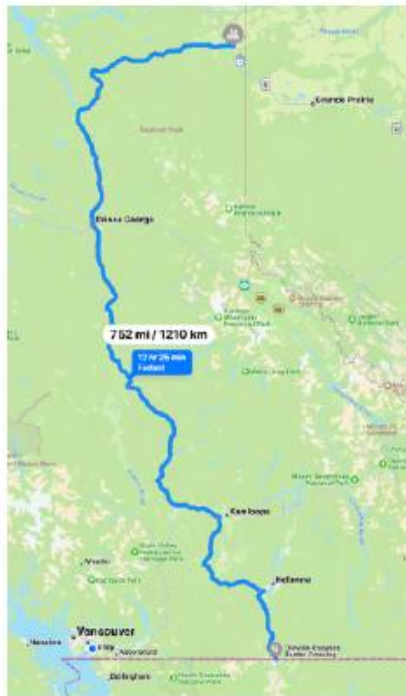
Vancouver to Dawson Creek



This route is the same as the Vancouver to Prince George one, with you carrying on to the north from Prince George on Hwy-97 to Dawson Creek.

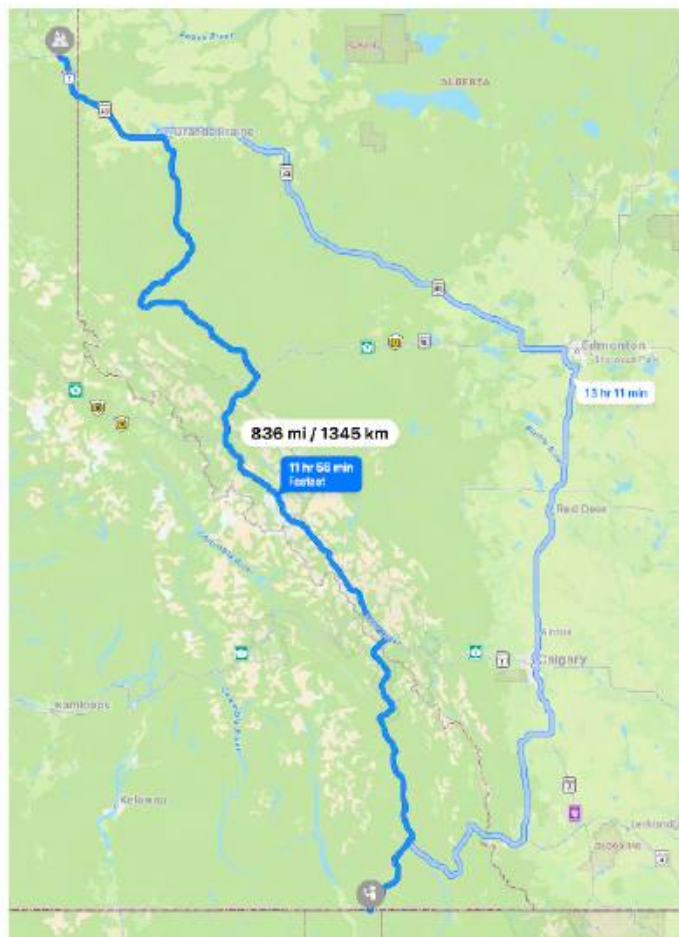
Along the way you'll pass through Chetwynd, famous for its many log carvings and the home of the annual international chainsaw carving competition.

Osoyoos to Dawson Creek



Again, this route mirrors that of Osoyoos to Prince George, extending on to Dawson Creek.

Eastport-Kingsgate to Dawson Creek



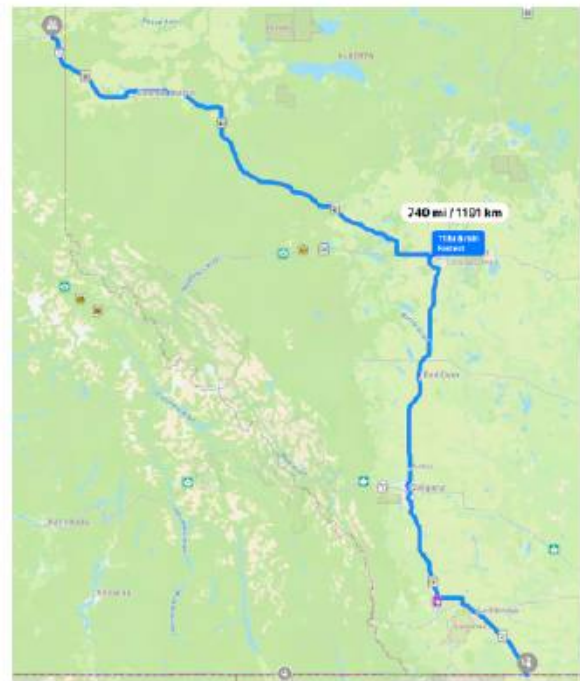
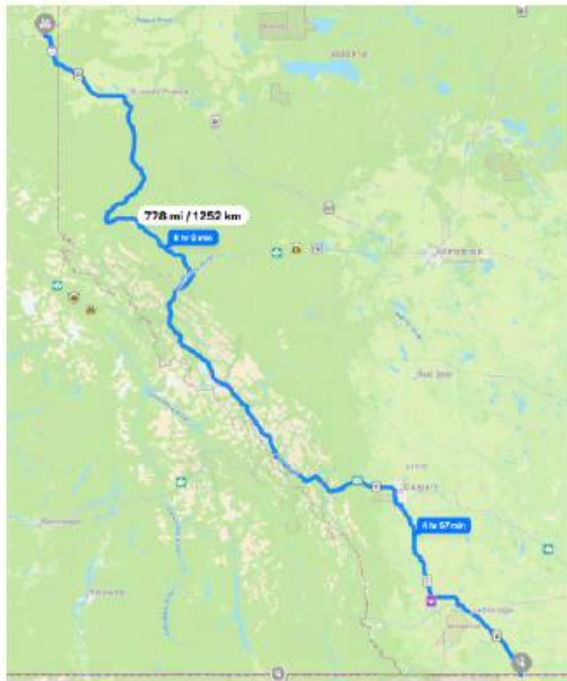
The Eastport-Kingsgate Border Crossing lies north of Sandpoint Idaho and enters BC southwest of Cranbrook.

From Cranbrook, you follow Hwy-93 through historic Fort Steele and Radium Hot Springs to connect with Hwy-1, the Trans-Canada highway between Banff and Lake Louise.

Hwy-93 carries on north from Lake Louise as the Icefield Parkway to Jasper. After a slight jog to the east toward Hinton, AB, you take Hwy-40 north to Grand Prairie and then on to Dawson Creek.

A truly spectacular route.

Sweetgrass-Coutts to Dawson Creek

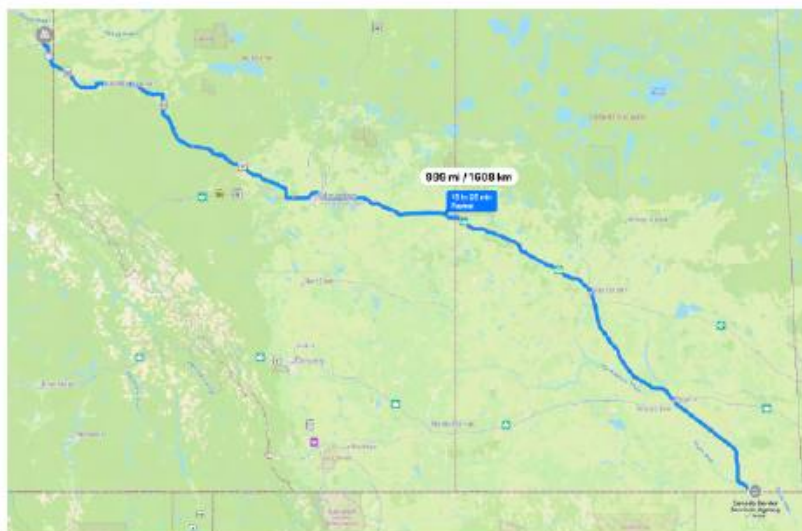


Sweetgrass - Coutts is a popular border crossing offering two distinctly different route options.

The first, and my favorite, takes you north to Calgary and then west to Lake Louise. You then go north up the Icefield Parkway to Jasper and weave your way up to Dawson Creek. This is the better of the two options in terms of scenery.

The second goes through Calgary before turning west at Edmonton. This is the faster and shorter of the two options from Sweetgrass, Montana.

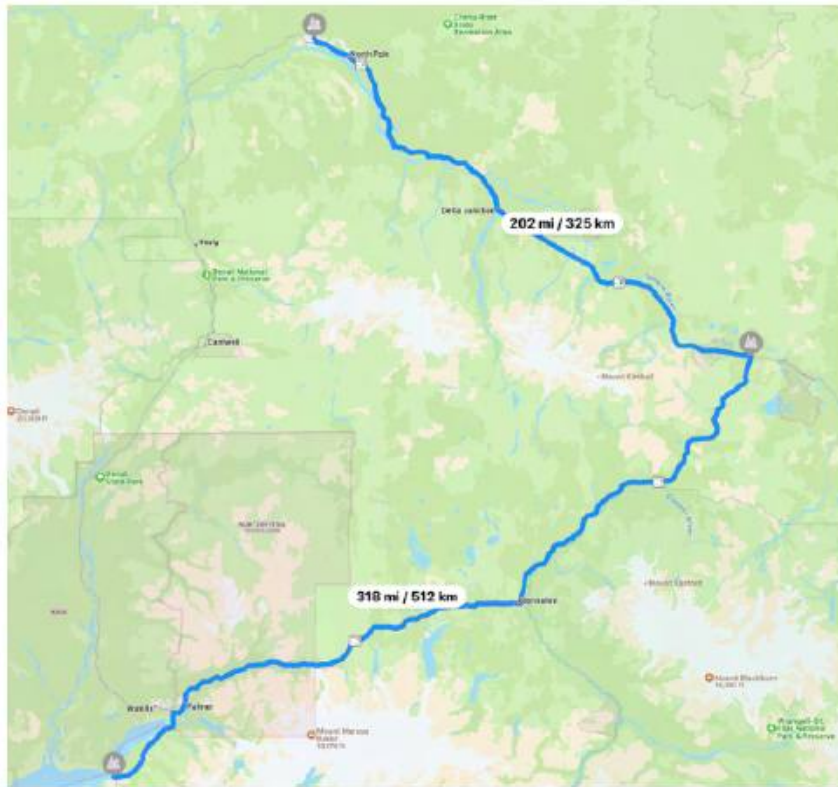
Portal-North Portal to Dawson Creek



Those coming from further east may wish to choose the Portal-North Portal Border Crossing, southeast of Regina.

Just enter "Dawson Creek, BC" into your GPS and you'll get there — it will just take a while.

Tok



All roads leading in and out of Alaska go through Tok. And, since Tok has only a single road heading toward Canada and two heading further into Alaska, mapping out the options is uncomplicated. You enter Tok on the Alaska Hwy, Hwy-2, and it carries on through Tok to its terminus at Delta Junction. You can continue north on Hwy-2 to Fairbanks.

The other highway, leaving Tok to the southwest, is Hwy-1 going to Glennallen, Anchorage and the Kenia Peninsula.

About Route Descriptions

Following are descriptions of each of the routing options starting from the southern routes and going north.

A table of miles/kilometres from the start of a route to key points along that route is provided at the end of each route's description. **The Mile-0 and KM-0 points are based upon the default location, used by Google Maps, unless noted otherwise.** In some cases, such as Whitehorse, this may be in a location other than on the highway. In other cases, as noted for Prince George, it is on a specific point in the typical route through town.

Dawson Creek <> Whitehorse Route

Dawson Creek, BC to Whitehorse is the first route that comes to mind for most people contemplating a trip to the Yukon and Alaska. It follows the world-famous Alaska Highway and generates a sense of adventure for those exploring a new frontier.



Alaska Highway sign in Dawson Creek, not "Mile-0"

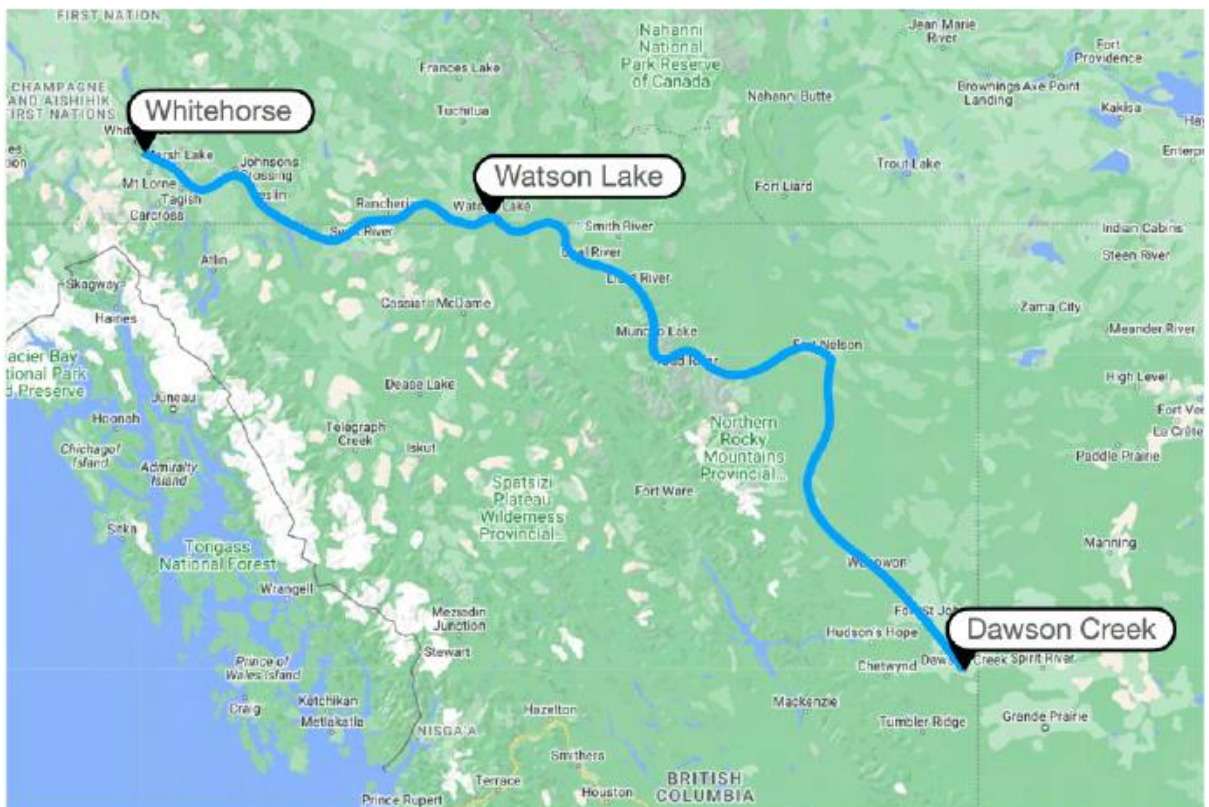
Many people start their route at the famous Alaska Highway sign by the grain elevators and tourist information center. If they failed to do their homework they may not realize that the actual Mile-0 of the Alaska Highway is located 4-blocks to the west at the intersection of 10th Street and 102 Avenue.

Cars and RVs stopping at the main intersection of the downtown for photos forced the city to lure tourists to a more conducive location along the realigned highway.



Mile-0, downtown Dawson Creek

From Dawson Creek, the Alaska Highway (Hwy-97) heads north through Fort St. John and Fort Nelson, passing farmland and going through several small communities along the way. If you fueled up in Dawson Creek, this 453 km (281 mi) stretch can be made easily on a tank of fuel, but you will want to top off here as fuel prices climb from here on.



At Fort Nelson, you turn west on your 513 km (317 mi) leg to Watson Lake. This section of the trip provides some spectacular scenery, such as Muncho Lake, and you can take a relaxing break at Liard Hot Springs.



The spring at Liard Hot Springs Provincial park.



Keep an eye out for buffalo as there are a number of herds that like to graze along the roadside and wander onto the roadway. If you stop to take photos stay a good distance from the buffalo and pull well off the traffic lane.

Buffalo are unpredictable and have been known to cause serious harm to those who get too close.

The next sizable town is Watson Lake where you'll want to stop and check out the famous Sign Post Forest.



If you brought along a sign from home, you are welcome to add it to the collection, or you can make and mount it while you're in the Forest.

Watson Lake is also a good place to refuel as prices only get higher the further north you go.

It's another 438 km (272 mi) to Whitehorse and your next chance to avoid the extreme prices of the small town and isolated gas stations.

Teslin, 260 km (162 mi) west of Watson Lake, is a favorite spot to stop and stretch your legs. If you are riding a motorcycle, note that you enter it by a 446.95 m (1,466.4 foot) long cantilever bridge with a corrugated steel grate surface.



About 2 hours drive past Teslin you'll enter Whitehorse, the capital of the Yukon Territory and the last stop in this segment of the Dawson Creek <> Whitehorse route.

Whitehorse is the largest city in the Yukon, and it offers a variety of things to see and experience.



Miles Canyon on the Yukon River

Travel Legend: Dawson Creek ↔ Whitehorse Route

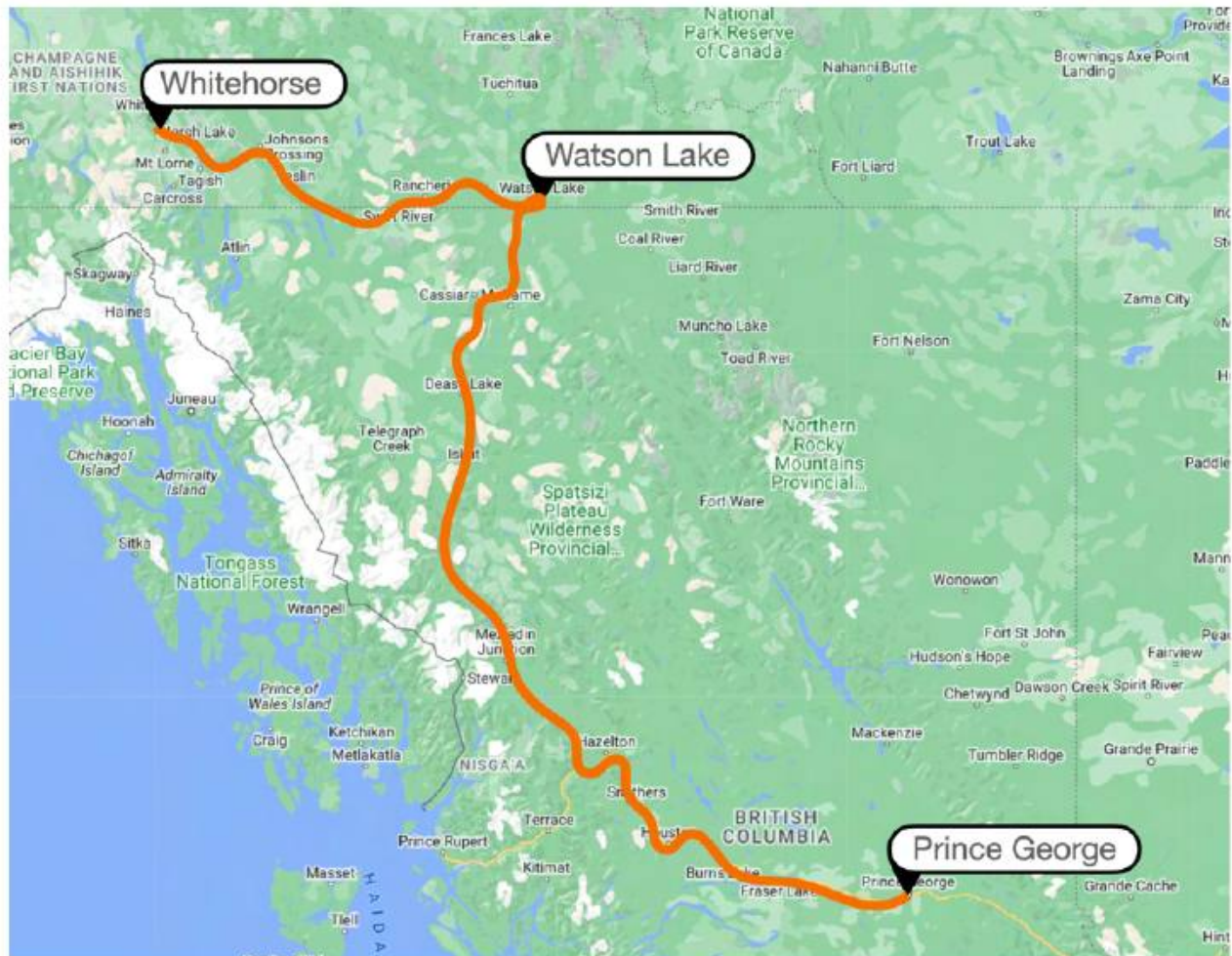
Mileage from start of route

<i>Mile 0</i>	<i>KM 0</i>	<i>Dawson Creek</i>
<i>Mile 46</i>	<i>KM 74</i>	<i>Fort St John</i>
<i>Mile 139</i>	<i>KM 224</i>	<i>Pink Mountain</i>
<i>Mile 182</i>	<i>KM 293</i>	<i>Fort Nelson</i>
<i>Mile 399</i>	<i>KM 642</i>	<i>Toad River</i>
<i>Mile 430</i>	<i>KM 692</i>	<i>Muncho Lake</i>
<i>Mile 471</i>	<i>KM 758</i>	<i>Liard River Hot Springs Provincial Park</i>
<i>Mile 600</i>	<i>KM 966</i>	<i>Watson Lake</i>
<i>Mile 614</i>	<i>KM 988</i>	<i>Alaska Hwy & Cassiar Hwy (Hwy-37) Junction</i>
<i>Mile 638</i>	<i>KM 1027</i>	<i>Big Creek Government Campground</i>
<i>Mile 762</i>	<i>KM 1226</i>	<i>Teslin</i>
<i>Mile 770</i>	<i>KM 1239</i>	<i>Teslin Lake Government Campground</i>
<i>Mile 822</i>	<i>KM 1323</i>	<i>Jakes Corner</i>
<i>Mile 860</i>	<i>KM 1384</i>	<i>Carcross Cutoff</i>
<i>Mile 872</i>	<i>KM 1403</i>	<i>Whitehorse</i>

Prince George <> Whitehorse Route

The Prince George <> Whitehorse route is a great choice for those wanting to explore the wilderness and see a wide variety of wildlife. Portions of this route are a little more rustic than the modern Alaska Highway but easily driven by all types of cars and RVs.

This route is also referred to as the Cassiar Highway route.



This route starts in Prince George, but before you head out of town, be sure to fuel up. If you are a Costco Member, stop at their location on Hwy-16 West for the lowest gas and diesel prices in the area. And, if you have a big rig RV, their gas and diesel pumps are accessible.

Heading west on Hwy-16, also known as the Yellowhead Hwy, you'll pass through farmland and several moderately sized communities before turning north on Hwy-37, near the village of Kitwanga. This 480 km (298 mi) stretch of two-lane highway provides easy driving on good pavement with gentle curves and no major elevation changes.

Several towns along this section of the route have plentiful fuel stations, restaurants and accommodations.



At Kitwanga you turn north on Hwy-37, also known as the Cassiar Hwy. This highway takes you all the way up to join onto the Alaska Highway, 720 km (447 mi) north, 21 km (13 mi) west of Watson Lake, YT.

97 mi. (156 km) north you'll come to Meziadin Junction where Hwy-37A branches off to the west to Stewart, BC and Hyder, Alaska. The one-way in, one-way out drive down to the communities of Stewart and Hyder is 41 mi (66 km) each way, and well worth the time. Along the way, you'll pass by Bear Glacier and other spectacular scenery. From Stewart, it is a short hop across the US border to Hyder, the southernmost town in Alaska. Consider getting "Hyderized" while you are there.



Meziadin Provincial Park is also located at Meziadin Junction.



175 mi (282 km) north of Meziadin Junction you'll encounter the Cassiar Highway's last remaining stretch of gravel road. You'll descend into the Stickine River Valley, cross the river, and rise up again to the pavement a short 3 miles later. Though not freeway quality, the pavement continues on for the rest of this route.

30 mi (48 km) later you'll reach the community of Dease Lake. Though not large, it does have limited services, including fuel, groceries and a hotel.

Jade City, 116 km (72 mi) further north, is the next landmark along the Cassiar. The Cassiar Mountain Jade Store displays some of the riches of BC's jade mines. You can wander around the store's grounds and explore the jade samples and processing equipment or purchase a jade souvenir. If you are traveling in an RV, the Jade Store provides free overnight parking just to the south of the store.



119 km (74 mi) past Jade City, Hwy-37 intersects with the Alaska Highway a short 21 km (13 mi) west of Watson Lake, YT. You'll want to travel into Watson Lake for fuel as the station at the intersection is significantly more expensive than those in town.

With a full tank of fuel, you'll head west on the Alaska Highway. There are not many communities along the next stretch of highway but fuel, a motel and a restaurant are all available in Teslin, 162 mi (261 km) west of Watson Lake. 110 mi (177 km) more brings you to Whitehorse and the end of this route.

Note: Additional information on Watson Lake and Whitehorse is available in the Dawson Creek <> Whitehorse Route description.

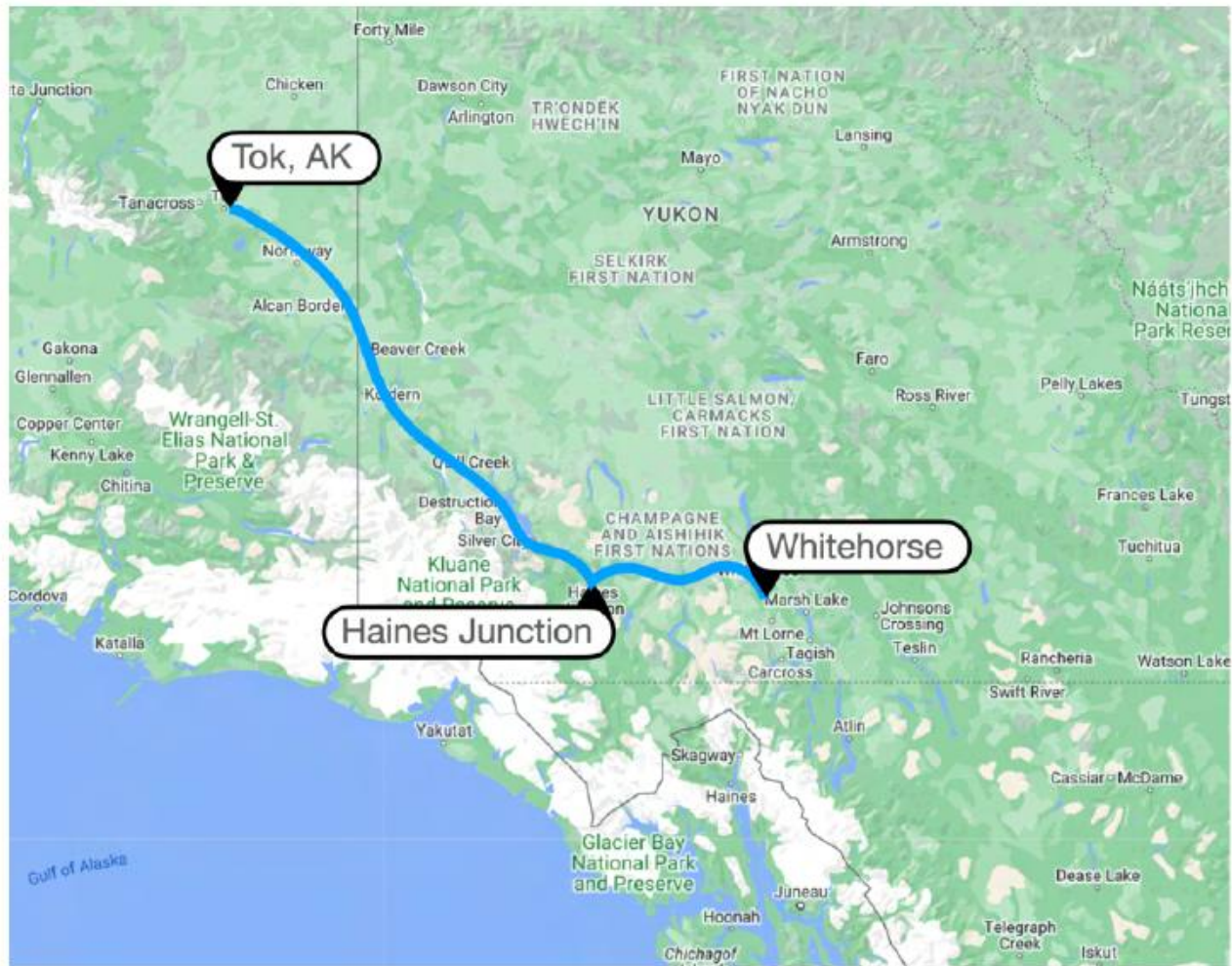
Travel Legend: Prince George <> Whitehorse Route

Mileage from start of route

<i>Mile 0</i>	<i>KM 0</i>	<i>Prince George (Junction of Hwy-97 & 16)</i>
<i>Mile 60</i>	<i>KM 97</i>	<i>Vanderhoof</i>
<i>Mile 140</i>	<i>KM 225</i>	<i>Burns Lake</i>
<i>Mile 229</i>	<i>KM 368</i>	<i>Smithers</i>
<i>Mile 300</i>	<i>KM 483</i>	<i>Kitawanga</i>
<i>Mile 395</i>	<i>KM 635</i>	<i>Meziadin Junction</i>
<i>Mile 452</i>	<i>KM 727</i>	<i>Bell II</i>
<i>Mile 600</i>	<i>KM 966</i>	<i>Dease Lake</i>
<i>Mile 671</i>	<i>KM 1080</i>	<i>Cassiar Mountain Jade Store</i>
<i>Mile 746</i>	<i>KM 1200</i>	<i>Junction 37 (Hwy-37 & Alaska Hwy)</i>
<i>Mile 759</i>	<i>KM 1221</i>	<i>Watson Lake</i>
<i>Mile 797</i>	<i>KM 1283</i>	<i>Big Creek Government Campground (via Watson Lake)</i>
<i>Mile 921</i>	<i>KM 1482</i>	<i>Teslin</i>
<i>Mile 980</i>	<i>KM 1577</i>	<i>Jakes Corner</i>
<i>Mile 1019</i>	<i>KM 1639</i>	<i>Carcross Cutoff</i>
<i>Mile 1031</i>	<i>KM 1659</i>	<i>Whitehorse</i>

Whitehorse <> Tok Route

The most direct route from Whitehorse to Tok, AK is straight up the Alaska Highway, but there are two alternate routes available.



This 387 mi (622 km) route takes you through a few small communities, a lot of wilderness and over the Alaska Highway's infamous frost heave.

Heading west out of Whitehorse you pass the turn-off where Hwy-2, the Klondike Hwy, goes north to Dawson City. We'll look at that routing option in the Whitehorse < Dawson City > Tok Route.

Another notable location, 83 mi (134 km) further west along the highway is the Pine Lake Campground. This Yukon Government Campground is located 6 km (4 mi) east of Haines Junction, and it offers numerous campsites, including a number suitable for the largest RV as well as disabled access campsites. As with most Yukon Government Campgrounds, these sites are unserviced.



The community of Haines Junction is located 154 km (95 mi) west of Whitehorse and named for its juncture of Hwy-1 (Alaska Highway) and Hwy-3 to Haines, AK, 148 mi (238 km) to the south. It has fuel, hotels, restaurants and some RV parks.

Be sure to fuel up here before departing for the remaining 290 mi (467 km) to Tok, AK. There are a number of gas stations along the way, but they may or may not be open – it changes each year.

Destruction Bay, 162 mi (261 km) past Whitehorse, is located at the mid-point of Kluane Lake and the south end of where you are most likely to encounter frost heave on the road surface. This hazardous section of road runs for about 142 mi (229 km) to the Alaska Border or beyond.



Slow down, take it easy and watch for red flags along the side of the highway. Imagine driving your vehicle up and over the abrupt edge of a concrete curb — some of the frost heave damage is very similar.

Beaver Creek, 277 mi (446 km) from Whitehorse is the last town before the Alaska border. Oddly, The Canadian and US border crossings are located 20 mi (32 km) apart.

A little further on, 374 mi (602 km) is Tetlin Junction. Here, Hwy-5 goes north to Chicken, AK and the “Top of the World” highway to Dawson City. 12 mi (20 km) later you arrive in Tok, the end of this route — the gateway to Alaska.

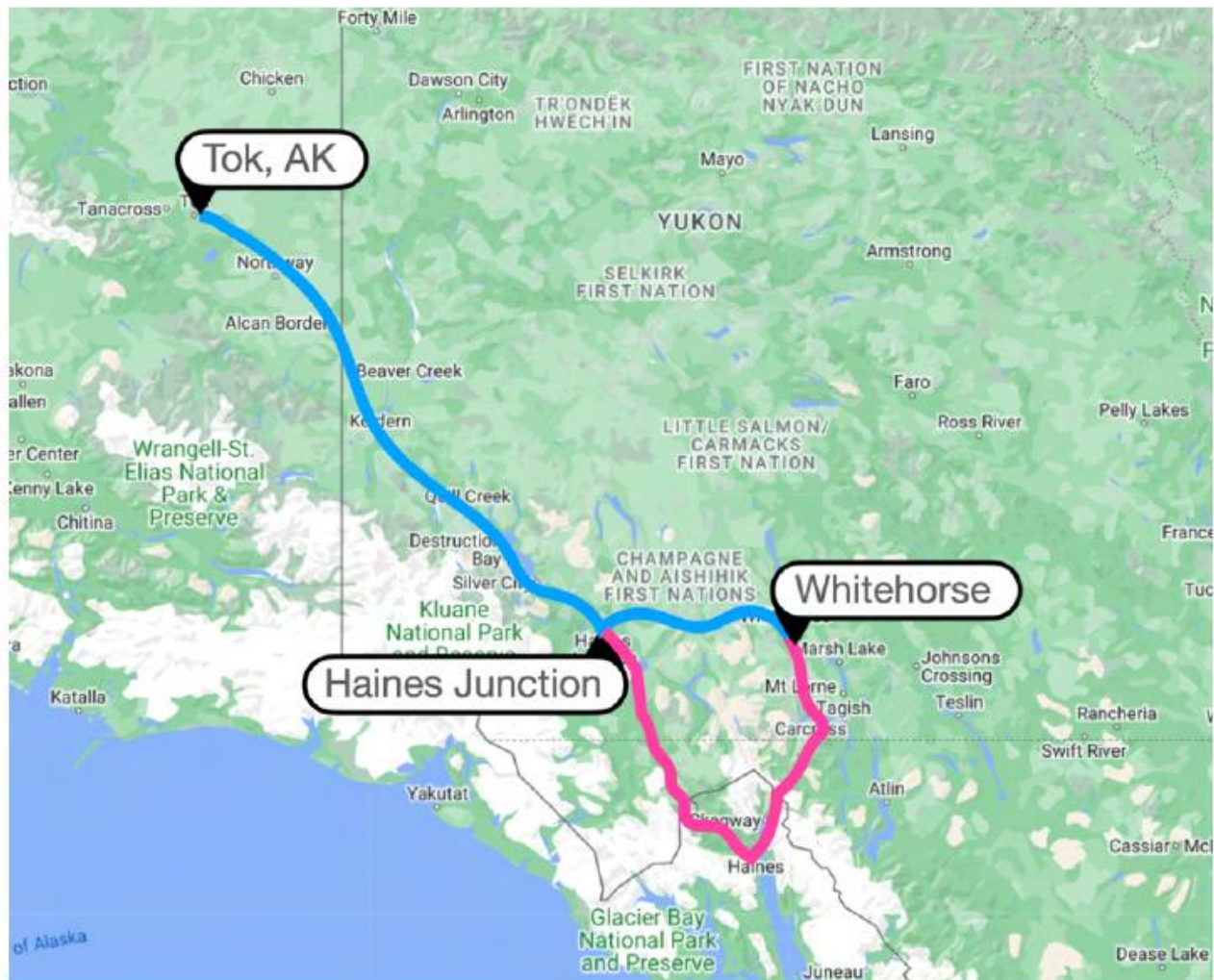
Travel Legend: Whitehorse <> Tok Route

Mileage from start of route

<i>Mile 0</i>	<i>KM 0</i>	<i>Whitehorse</i>
<i>Mile 9</i>	<i>KM 15</i>	<i>Klondike Hwy Junction</i>
<i>Mile 92</i>	<i>KM 149</i>	<i>Pine Lake Campground</i>
<i>Mile 96</i>	<i>KM 368</i>	<i>Haines Junction</i>
<i>Mile 162</i>	<i>KM 261</i>	<i>Destruction Bay</i>
<i>Mile 172</i>	<i>KM 277</i>	<i>Burwash Landing</i>
<i>Mile 277</i>	<i>KM 446</i>	<i>Beaver Creek</i>
<i>Mile 281</i>	<i>KM 453</i>	<i>Canada Border - Beaver Creek Port of Entry</i>
<i>Mile 297</i>	<i>KM 478</i>	<i>U.S. Customs - Alcan Port of Entry</i>
<i>Mile 374</i>	<i>KM 602</i>	<i>Tetlin Junction (Hwy-5 & Alaska Hwy)</i>
<i>Mile 387</i>	<i>KM 622</i>	<i>Tok</i>

Whitehorse < Skagway > Tok Route

This route is very similar to the Whitehorse <> Tok Route but takes a detour down to Skagway, AK, the ferry over to Haines, and then up to Haines Junction where it rejoins the Alaska Highway. It increases the 387 mi (622 km) drive from Whitehorse to Tok to 566 mi (912 km).



For this route, we depart to the east from Whitehorse and travel 12 mi (20 km) to the Carcross Cutoff and take Hwy-2 south. After 33 mi (53 km) you'll arrive in Carcross.

In addition to being the first town along this route, it is also a great spot for RVers to leave your RV here and take a day trip down to Skagway or hop on the White Pass & Yukon Route Railway for a scenic journey into the past.

This is also the home of the Carcross Desert, one of the smallest deserts in the world and the home of some spectacular sand dunes. The Carcross Desert Viewpoint, just east of town, is a popular location for hiking and off-road driving.



From Carcross, it's 51 mi (82 km) to the US border, with scenic splendor along this and the remaining highway down into Skagway.

If you wanted to choose a town that sets a standard for recreating the past glory of the Klondike Gold Rush, Skagway would be near the top of the list. Yes, Skagway is a tourist town, but it's well done and well worth the effort of getting there.



Take a stroll down main street and possibly stop for lunch at the Red Onion Saloon, previously a brothel. While you are visiting Skagway, you have to take a ride on the White Pass Railway.



White Pass Railroad, Skagway, AK

You may have seen images and heard stories about Klondike miners, laden with supplies, climbing the famous Chilkoot Trail out of Skagway.

Though the images and toil of the miners were real, the Chilkoot Trail actually originates 16 km (10 mi) northwest of Skagway in Dyea, AK. If you have the time, drive out to Dyea and hike some of the trails walked by Klondike miners.



The next stop along this route is Haines, AK, 15 mi (24 km) south of Chilkoot Inlet. Vehicles, including RVs, 30 ft or less, can take a 1 hr 45 min ferry ride to the Haines terminal 7 km (4 mi) north of Haines, AK.



Skagway to Haines Ferry at the Shagway dock.

Be aware that the ferry is costly for RVs. A 30 ft. motorhome with two passengers costs \$207 (USD) for a one-way trip. Be sure to check the current cost, maximum length and RV boarding procedure before booking a passage. Some vehicles, including RVs have to back up the loading ramp and into their parking spot. If you are uncomfortable with backing up your RV in tight spaces, this may not be the best route for you.

Leaving Haines you'll head north on Hwy-7, 64 km (40 mi) to the Canada/US border and then another 174 km (108 mi) over the Chilkat Pass to Haines Junction where you rejoin the Alaska Highway.

Note: From Haines Junction you'll follow the same route described in the Whitehorse <> Tok Route.

Travel Legend: Whitehorse <Skagway> Tok Route

Mileage from start of route

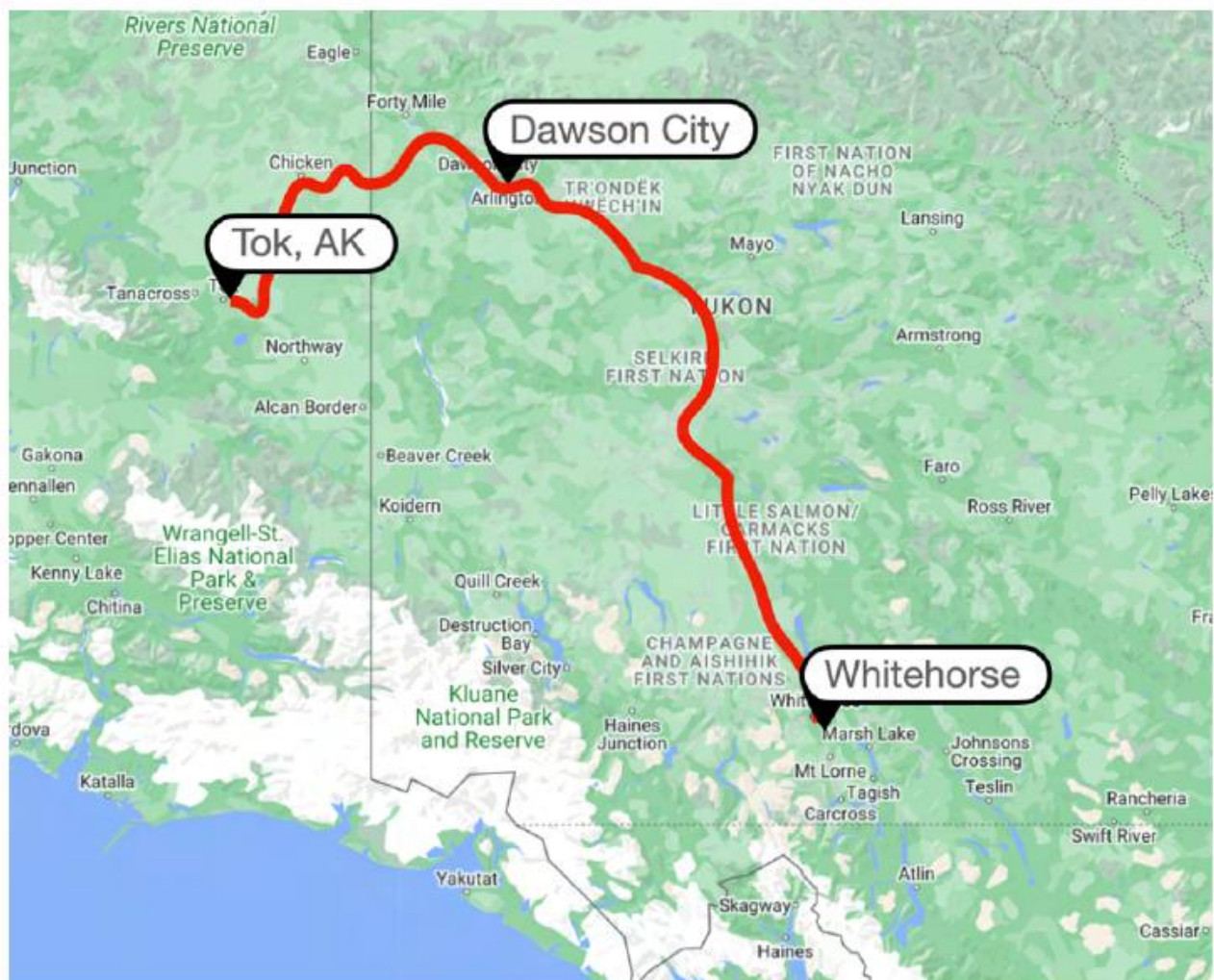
<i>Mile 0</i>	<i>KM 0</i>	<i>Whitehorse</i>
<i>Mile 12</i>	<i>KM 20</i>	<i>Carcross Cutoff</i>
<i>Mile 45</i>	<i>KM 72</i>	<i>Carcross</i>
<i>Mile 91</i>	<i>KM 153</i>	<i>US/Canada Border</i>
<i>Mile 109</i>	<i>KM 175</i>	<i>Skagway</i>
<i>Mile 129</i>	<i>KM 207</i>	<i>Haines</i>
<i>Mile 168</i>	<i>KM 270</i>	<i>US/Canada Border</i>
<i>Mile 276</i>	<i>KM 445</i>	<i>Haines Junction</i>
<i>Mile 342</i>	<i>KM 550</i>	<i>Destruction Bay</i>
<i>Mile 352</i>	<i>KM 566</i>	<i>Burwash Landing</i>

<i>Mile 457</i>	<i>KM 736</i>	<i>Beaver Creek</i>
<i>Mile 461</i>	<i>KM 742</i>	<i>Canada Border - Beaver Creek Port of Entry</i>
<i>Mile 477</i>	<i>KM 768</i>	<i>U.S. Customs - Alcan Port of Entry</i>
<i>Mile 554</i>	<i>KM 892</i>	<i>Tetlin Junction (Hwy-5 & Alaska Hwy)</i>
<i>Mile 566</i>	<i>KM 912</i>	<i>Tok, Alaska</i>

Whitehorse < Dawson City > Tok

The final and my personal favorite route north from Whitehorse goes to Tok Alaska via Dawson City, over the Top Of The World Highway and past Chicken, AK. This route is a little more adventurous but provides unique vistas seen nowhere else and allows you to see and experience remnants of the Klondike gold rush that lay along the roadside to this day.

The direct route, along the Alaska Highway, from Whitehorse to Tok, AK is 386 mi (622 km). Going via Dawson City and the Top Of The World Highway is 518 mi (833 km), including about 80 mi (129 km) of gravel highway. But it's worth it.



Head west out of Whitehorse to the Hwy-2 (Klondike Highway) junction and turn north. It's 332 mi (534 km) of a two-lane paved highway to Dawson City. The highway is generally in good condition, but it includes some frost heave sections so watch the road surface and for red flags along the

roadside. Though the frost heaves can be dramatic, they are usually not as intense as those found on the Alaska Highway.

The Klondike Highway starts in Skagway, AK and continues north, past Whitehorse, to its terminus in Dawson City. So, technically, you are already on the Klondike Hwy as you pass through Whitehorse where Hwy-1 (Alaska Highway) and Hwy-2 (Klondike Highway) overlap.

You'll turn off the Alaska Hwy just a few miles out of Whitehorse where the Alaska Hwy continues west and the Klondike Hwy turns to the north. Since Google Maps uses a start location in downtown Whitehorse, the Hwy-1 and Hwy-2 junction will be at Mile-9 (Km-14).

Not counting small settlements, the first village you'll pass through is Carmacks. It is located at the west end of the Robert Campbell Highway (Hwy-4) from Watson Lake.

The next village, 176 mi (284 km) from Whitehorse, is Pelly Crossing. the Klondike Hwy crosses over the Pelly River here. This was a ferry crossing until 1950 that halted further steamboat traffic to Dawson City.

At the 220 mi (354 km) mark, you cross the Stewart River and the highway comes to a "T". Turning right takes you to the small community of Mayo. We'll turn left to continue along Hwy-2 to Dawson City.

The next notable point along the Klondike Hwy comes at mile 307 (493 km), the start of the Dempster Highway (Hwy-5). The Dempster starts as paved but soon turns to gravel as it heads far north to Inuvik in the Northwest Territories. In November 2017, Hwy-10 was opened, extending the road access another 87 mi (140 km) to Tuktoyaktuk on the shore of the Arctic Ocean, 551 miles or 886 kilometers from its start at Hwy-2.

25 miles (41 km) further up the Klondike Hwy you'll reach Dawson City, Paris of the North and the 19th-century center of the Klondike Gold Rush. Be sure to spend a few days here, explore and possibly even try your hand at gold panning.



*Gold dredge tailings
near Dawson City, YT*

As you near Dawson City you will see odd wormlike piles of gravel along the roadside. These are the tailing left by the gold dredges that were popular in the area from about 1900 to the mid-1960s. You can learn about gold dredging by visiting Dredge No. 4, available to see along Bonanza Creek, near Dawson City.

Dawson City offers a wonderful opportunity to explore the Klondike's past, tour an active gold mining site and watch cancan dancers at Diamond Tooth Gerties Gambling Hall.

Leaving Dawson City is a unique experience for many, crossing the Yukon River by ferry (free) to drive up the Top Of The World Highway.



Free ferry across the Yukon River at Dawson City

Several of the ferry services in the north operate similarly, where a bulldozer pushes gravel to the riverbank to form a ferry loading ramp where the river then washes it away. This cycle continues all summer long until the river freezes over and the ferry service is halted until next spring. But, have no fear, this system and the ferries are able to accommodate all sizes of vehicles including large trucks and the largest RVs. The ferry operates 24/7 during the summer but line-ups are common during the tourism season.

Our route now takes us onto and over the Top Of The World Highway. After crossing the Yukon River on the ferry you'll find the Yukon River Campground (Yukon Government Campground) offering 102

campsites, including 20 pull-thru sites. Like many Yukon Government campgrounds, the campsites are unserviced.

As you pass the campground, you'll begin climbing out of the valley on a good paved road, but the pavement will end in a few miles.

The next 79 mi (127 km) is what's known as the Top of the World Highway. It runs from West Dawson, across the river from Dawson City, to the community of Jack Wade, 19 mi (31 km) west of the Yukon/Alaska border. It is mostly gravel, in good condition when dry and slick if excessively wet. When the surface is very dry, it will be dusty, but if the roadbed contains a bit of moisture it is a surprisingly good gravel highway.



Top of the World Highway

The Top of the World Highway is unlike most mountain roads. It does not cross over the mountains from one side to the other, but travels along the ridge of the mountains, providing a unique and spectacular 360° view over miles of wilderness in every direction.

Later, you'll reach Little Gold Creek and the Poker Creek border crossing. This port of entry is seasonal, open from about mid-May until late September, depending on the seasonal opening of the Top of the World Highway. Both US and Canadian border services work out of the same building.



Little Gold Creek and Poker Creek border crossing



The remaining 42 mi (67 km) is mostly two-lane paved highway.

The first town, after crossing into Alaska is the oddly named village of Chicken. The story goes that the residents wanted the town to be called "Ptarmigan" (a local chicken-like bird) but they could not agree on its correct spelling, so they simplified it and went with Chicken.

Chicken is not exactly a thriving metropolis, but it does offer a couple of rustic eateries and basic RV parks. It should be noted, however, if you have an RV that requires a reasonably level campsite, Chicken may not be a great choice. It does have some quaint attractions and the local Chicken Creek Saloon hosts a large collection of baseball caps and ladies' undergarments hanging from its ceiling.

Chicken is 65 mi (104 km) from Tetlin Junction, where Taylor Hwy connects to the Alaska Highway. The Taylor Hwy, heading southwest from Chicken has a long rough gravel road section, possibly the roughest road you'll encounter on your northern journey, other than construction zones.



Downtown Chicken, AK

This puts you at Taylor Hwy Junction where you turn west for the short 12 mi (20 km) drive into Tok Alaska.

Travel Legend: Whitehorse <Dawson City> Tok Route

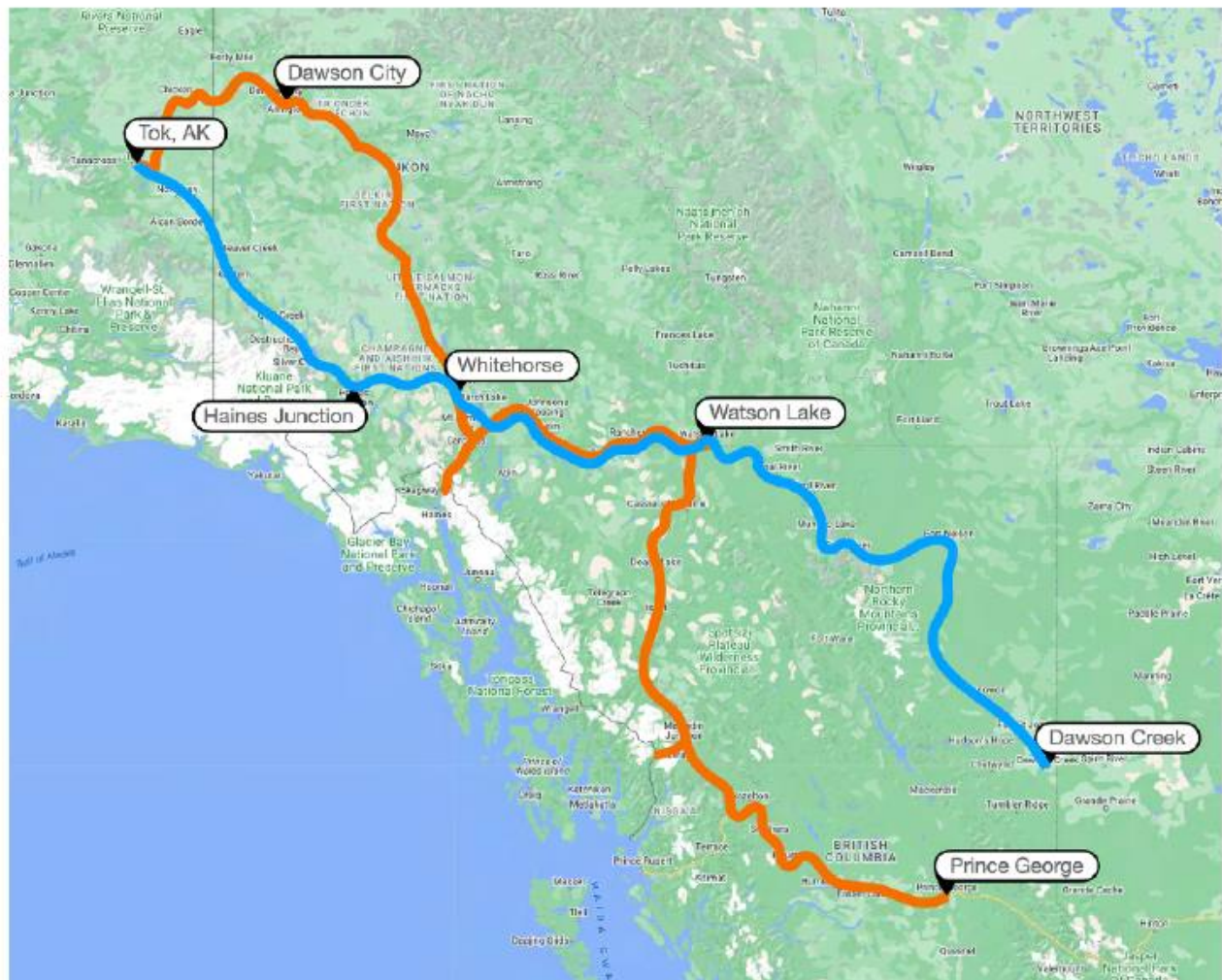
Mileage from start of route

<i>Mile 0</i>	<i>KM 0</i>	<i>Whitehorse</i>
<i>Mile 9</i>	<i>KM 15</i>	<i>Klondike Hwy Junction</i>
<i>Mile 110</i>	<i>KM 177</i>	<i>Carmacks</i>
<i>Mile 176</i>	<i>KM 284</i>	<i>Pelly Crossing</i>
<i>Mile 220</i>	<i>KM 354</i>	<i>Stewart Crossing</i>
<i>Mile 331</i>	<i>KM 533</i>	<i>Dawson City</i>
<i>Mile 397</i>	<i>KM 639</i>	<i>US/Canada Border (Little Gold)</i>
<i>Mile 439</i>	<i>KM 706</i>	<i>Chicken</i>
<i>Mile 503</i>	<i>KM 811</i>	<i>Tetlin Junction (Hwy-5 & Alaska Hwy)</i>
<i>Mile 516</i>	<i>KM 831</i>	<i>Tok, Alaska</i>

Section 3: My Route

Choosing a route is difficult, especially for those who will do a northern trip only once. This section of the book is meant to help with that choice through the selection and description of what I feel offers the best and most robust experience.

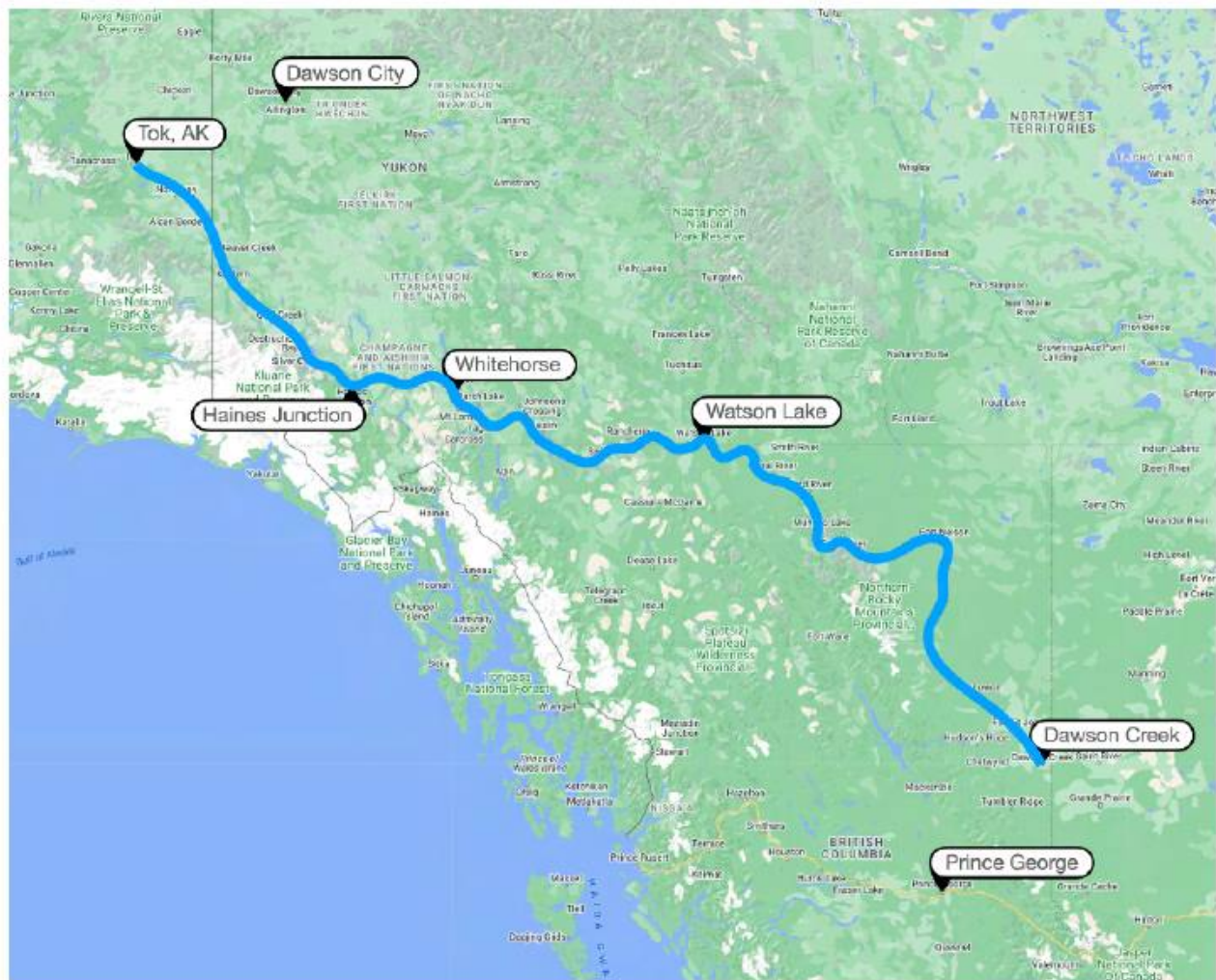
Though I must write this, describing one direction of travel, you can do the trip going either way, whichever best suits your desire and time. The route I have chosen, starts in Dawson Creek, BC, ventures directly up the Alaska Highway to Tok, AK and then returns through Dawson City in the Klondike, incorporates a day trip to Skagway and then comes down the Cassiar Hwy to its end in Prince George, BC.



This route description does not contain mileage indications, as those are provided in each route's description in section 2. I do however include suggested stops and things to see and experience along the way.

Direct on the Alaska Highway

The route begins in Dawson Creek and follows the Alaska Highway all the way north to Tok, AK.



Before leaving Dawson Creek, stop at both Alaska Highways signs. The true Mile-0 location is located downtown but local residents understandably don't want people parking in the middle of the road to take photos. To alleviate this, a second sign has been erected, along the highway, near the intersection of Hwy-49 and Hwy-2 (Alaska Highway). This highway location, beside the grain elevators, offers a safe location to park your travel rig and snap a few photos. And, while you are there, stop in at the Visitor Center for information on local attractions and a road report.



Over the years, the Alaska Highway has been improved and undergone a number of realignments, sometimes cutting off some great sights.

About 17 mi (27 km) north is the turnoff to an old section of the Alaska Highway that holds a hidden treasure, the old Kiskatinaw Bridge. Watch for signs for the Kiskatinaw Provincial Park and Campground.

The Kitatinaw Bridge was the first of its kind in bridge construction and a sight well worth a short detour.

I suggest checking with the tourism center in Dawson Creek beforehand to see if it's open to vehicular traffic. At the time of this writing, it was closed to vehicles due to land movement in the area and no re-opening date was available as an engineering assessment continues.

As you travel north you'll pass a number of communities with a full array of services. The last of these, before venturing into less populated territory is Fort Nelson. Past this point, you'll also want to keep a sharp eye open for wildlife on and along the road.

Have your camera ready when you reach Muncho Lake, a jade-green lake whose color is attributed to the presence of copper oxide leached from the bedrock underneath. The sight is truly memorable as you travel the highway along its eastern shore.



Not far past Muncho, you reach Laird River Hotsprings, in the Laird River Hotsprings Provincial Park. This is a great spot to stop and take a relaxing break soaking in the hot springs.

The hot springs are open 24/7 all year and the entrance fee is only a modest \$5.

The hot spring is a natural river of hot water in a natural setting, other than the changing rooms and shore structure. You can stay as long as you like but 10 or 15-minute soaks, with breaks in between, are recommended to prevent overheating.



As you travel north toward Watson Lake you will likely encounter one or more herds of bison along the highway. It's fine to stop and take a few pictures but stay well back as bison can be temperamental and unpredictable. They are not an animal to trifle with.



Wildlife is abundant both along the Alaska Highway and in these northern regions in general. Mountain sheep, moose, caribou, ravens and black bears are common sights. But, keep your head on a swivel and your eyes focused for some of the rarer sightings such as grizzly bears or a wolf. I can personally attest to having seen all of these on multiple occasions while just driving down the highway.

Watson Lake will be the next town. A must-see at Watson Lake is their world-famous Signpost Forest. A collection of over 70,000 signs contributed by visitors from around the world. Each year visitors add new signs, but there is still room for yours.

Just a few miles west of Watson Lake you pass through the junction for Hwy-37, the Cassiar Highway, which I suggest for the second leg of this journey.

You'll pass over an 1584 m (1,917 ft) steel grate road surface bridge, the longest bridge on the Alaska Highway, just before the community of Teslin. Two additional points you'll pass before arriving in Whitehorse are the junctions at Jake's Corner and the Carcross Cutoff junction. These will be noteworthy on the other leg of this trip when used for a trip down to Carcross and Skagway.

At last, you arrive in Whitehorse, the largest city in the Yukon and its capital. You'll want to spend a little time here as there is lots to see.



Visit the S.S. Klondike, one of Canada's few remaining steam-powered paddle wheelers, and learn how life on the rivers of the Yukon has changed over time.

Explore Miles Canyon either by hiking and walking its suspension bridge or by boat tours offered by local tour companies.

The Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre, also located in Whitehorse, is dedicated to the presentation and preservation of the First Nations and scientific history of the vast sub-continent called Beringia. Since its opening, the Beringia Centre has greeted more than 350,000 visitors—sharing with them an appreciation for the unique ice age heritage of the Yukon.

Heading up the Alcan, your next notable town is Haines Junction, named for its Hwy-3 connection to Maine, 148 miles south. Haines Junction is also known as the gateway to the Kluane National Park and Reserve.



Continuing north, you'll come to the southern tip of Kluane Lake, followed by the communities of Destruction Bay and Burwash Landing. It is along this stretch that you may first encounter frost heave on the highway so keep a keen eye peeled for red marker flags on the roadside and slow down well below what you think is required.

If you are towing a trailer, know that ignoring this warning may well cost you an expensive suspension repair. The ride may not seem that bad in your tow vehicle, but trailers don't have the same resiliency in their suspensions and things break.

The highway is pretty uneventful for the next while, other than wildlife until you get to Beaver Creek, the last town before the Alaska border.

There is approximately 25 miles between the Canadian and US/Alaska border checkpoints, most of which is still in Canada.

There are a couple of small communities along the highway, but the next key point is Tetlin Junction, where Hwy-5, the Taylor Highway, branches off to the north to Chicken, AK and the Top of the World Highway going to Dawson City.

Soon after, you reach Tok, AK, the gateway to your Alaska destinations. You pass through Tok again on your southward journey.

A Scenic Alternate Route

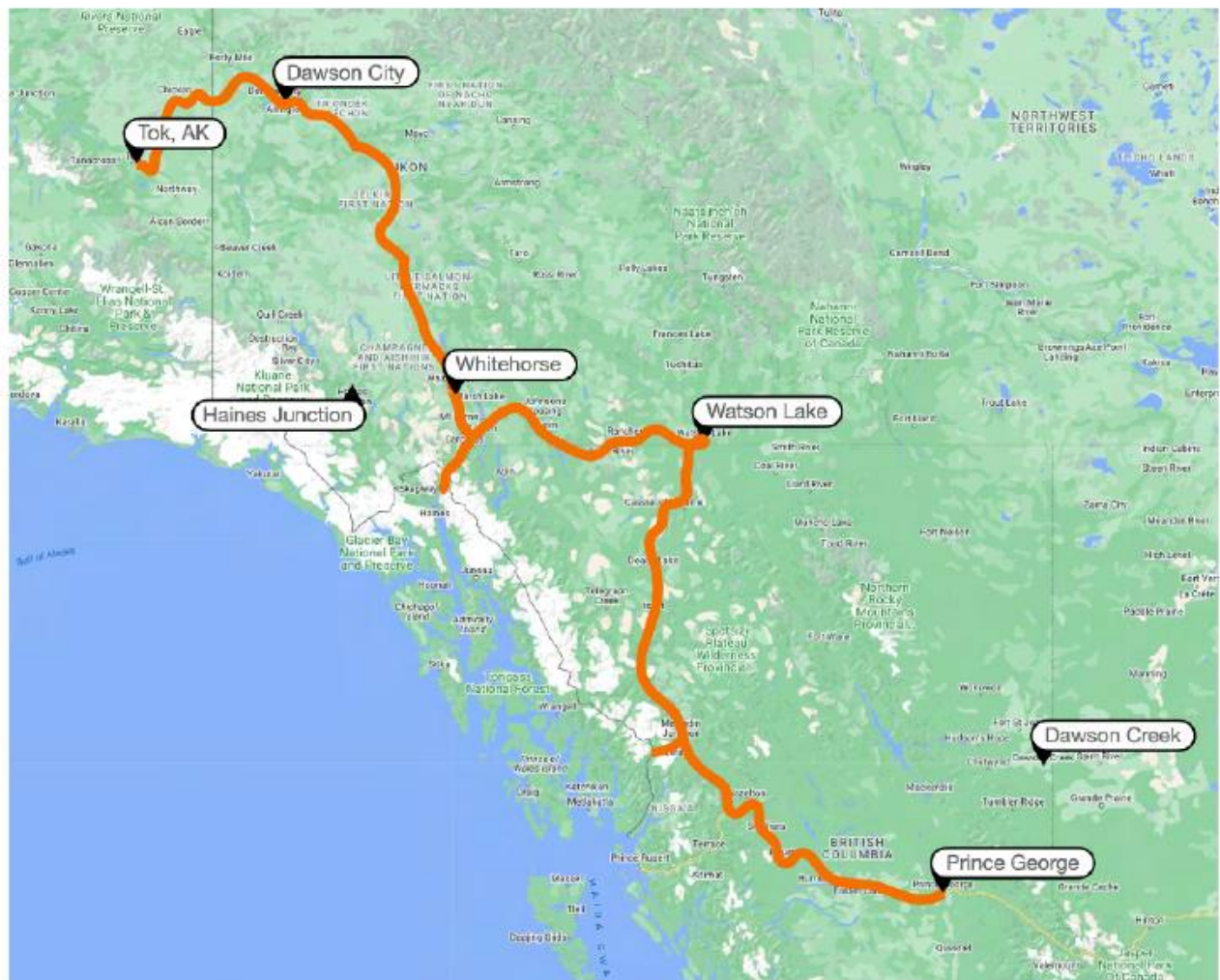
If you thought the drive up the Alaska Highway was scenic, wait until you find what awaits you on this alternate route.

This route, written in a southbound direction, takes a longer and more adventurous series of highways and byways. Departing from Tok, we'll venture over the Top of the World Highway to Dawson City, the heart of the Klondike, transit through Whitehorse again and visit Skagway, AK. Our route covers a portion of the Alaska Highway seen going the other direction and then we'll turn south near Watson Lake onto the Cassiar Hwy.

On one of my journeys along the Cassiar, I counted wildlife spotting and compared that count to the number of vehicles I encountered along the highway — the cars won by only one. On another occasion, we had to crawl along behind a herd of caribou walking down the highway. It was certainly the best 10-minute road obstruction delay we've experienced.

Once over the Cassiar, Hwy-16 takes you to Prince George and the end of this route.

So, let's get started.



Shortly after leaving Tok you'll turn onto Hwy-5, the Taylor Highway. Soon, the quality of the road surface will begin to deteriorate and eventually turn to gravel and it will eventually become rough. Just go slow and be patient — I'm not leading you onto a dead-end trail. 65 mile (104 km) from the Tetlin Junction is the community of Chicken and the road gets much better going forward.



You have to stop and visit Chicken. This small quaint little community is an iconic residue of its pioneer heritage. If you can't spell "Ptarmigan", just call it "Chicken".

It also gives you a chance to settle down and forget about the short rough ride getting here.

The road from Chicken to the Alaska/Yukon border is a mostly paved road in very good condition.

After crossing into the Yukon, and onto the Top of the World Highway, the road returns to gravel, but far better gravel than what you experienced before Chicken. If it is dry, this road can be dusty and if really wet, it will be muddy and possibly a little slick, edging you to slow down. Anywhere between very dry and very wet, it's a great gravel highway.

The views from the Top of the World are spectacular. Driving along the top of the ridge allows you to see a vast distance of wilderness 360° around you. Eventually, you return to paved road, descend into the Yukon River Valley and cross on the ferry to Dawson City.



Dawson City was the center of Klondike gold mining and mining still goes on there today. If you wish, you can take a tour of some of the local gold mining activities or purchase your own gold pan and try it out yourself. Some public access areas are available for you to pan without staking a claim or facing an angry claim owner if you are in the wrong place.

Dawson City is small and unique. The highway going through town is paved but all the other streets are gravel by choice to allow the town to retain its Klondike look and feel. It even has a gambling hall with Cancan Girls putting on a nightly dance routine. You might also want to take a ride on the Klondike Spirit, a nostalgic paddle wheeler that offers rides on the Yukon River.



Heading south, out of Dawson City is the Klondike Highway, stretching all the way down to Skagway Alaska — this route follows it all the way.

A short distance south of Dawson you'll pass the junction for Hwy-5, also known as the Dempster Highway. Hwy-5 is a mostly gravel highway that stretches to Inuvik, 456 miles north, more than 200 miles past the Arctic Circle in the Northwest Territories. In 2017 an extension was built extending the road to Tuktoyaktuk on the Arctic Ocean. But, this road's story is not part of this book and it's not to be taken on without additional planning and knowledge — but, that is a story for a different book.

You'll pass a number of small communities such as Steward Crossing, Kelly Crossing and Carmacks. At Carmacks, Hwy-4 veers off to the east to join the Alaska Highway at Watson Lake. For our route down the Klondike Hwy, it's only another 120 miles to Whitehorse.

Having discussed Whitehorse a number of times earlier, in other route descriptions, we'll pass on through and head down the Alaska Hwy for a short distance until we turn south, staying on Hwy-2, at Carcross Cutoff.

A short 37 miles further you arrive at Carcross where you have a few choices to make. You can take the White Pass & Yukon Route Railway down to Skagway. It is a great trip but does require an overnight stop in Skagway. Or, you can drive down for a single-day trip. If you're driving or towing an RV, consider leaving it in Carcross while visiting Skagway to avoid a return trip up the steep and winding mountain side. Skagway is worth the journey so don't miss it. Don't forget to bring your passport along to cross the US/Canada border.



Departing Carcross, we'll turn onto Hwy-8 on the north end of town and rejoin the Alaska Hwy at Jakes Corner. The Alaska Highway will guide you through Teslin and beyond until you reach the junction to the Cassiar Hwy, Hwy-37 — but don't turn onto it yet. Rather than begin traveling down the Cassiar, take the short drive into Watson Lake to refuel and avoid some of the higher fuel prices you'll see for the next 450 miles.

From Watson Lake we'll backtrack to the Hwy-37 junction and take the Cassiar Highway south.

You may have heard stories about the Cassiar being all gravel, but those tales are old and often exaggerated. All but a 3-mile stretch through the Stikine River Valley is paved in varied levels of quality — but fine for all vehicles.



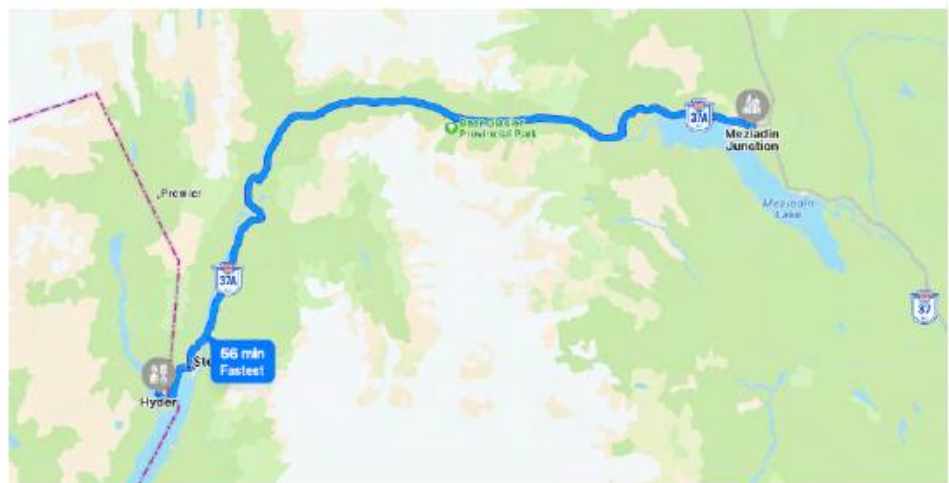
One of the first settlements you'll encounter is the Cassiar Mountain Jade Store. This region is known for its jade mining and good examples can be found here. They also provide free overnight parking for RVs. Dease Lake will be the next town and the largest one along the Cassiar. They have a hotel, groceries and fuel available.



Dease Lake, BC

You will also have an opportunity to refuel at Bell II, if needed before reaching Hwy-37A at Meziadin Junction. You can continue south on Hwy-37 or take a side-trip on Hwy-37A to Stewart and Hyder, AK.

Hwy-37A is a wonderful 38 mi (61 km) drive that you get to take going into Stewart and coming back out again. This drive takes you by the terminus of Bear Glacier, just off to the side of the highway and a scenic drive into the small community.



A short 3.4 miles past Stewart is Hyder, the southernmost town in Alaska. There is no "border crossing" entering Hyder, but you do have to go through the Canadian Port of Entry coming back into Canada.

Hyder is known for getting "Hyderized" at the Glacier Inn. This Hyder initiation ceremony involves some 50-proof alcohol, so it's not recommended for those driving.



Hyder has a couple of additional attractions to consider, the Fish Creek Wildlife Observation Site and Salmon Glacier.

The Fish Creek Wildlife Observation Site is located a short distance out of town and consists of a raised platform/walkway where you can safely watch bears and other wildlife feeding on salmon in the river below.



Salmon Glacier - accessible from early July to late September.

18 miles (30 km) past Hyder you can see the Salmon Glacier. It is reached by an unpaved road that climbs up to a 4000 ft elevation, journeying through rich forest and past old mine sites. This is not a road for RV or low ground clearance cars. Due to its high elevation and the amount of snowfall in the area during winter, the road to the viewpoint might not be accessible until mid-June.

Back on Hwy-37, at Meziadin Junction you'll also find Meziadin Lake Park, a provincial park with 66 campsites. Fees are \$22/nt plus an additional \$5 for those with electrical power.

The next notable junction is at Hwy-16, the Yellowhead Highway, where we turn east towards Prince George. Along this stretch of highway, you'll pass through a number of small communities, but when

you get to Witset, you'll want to stop for a photo-op at Whitset Canyon on the Bulkley River, a salmon favorite fishing spot for the local First Nations.

Just across the river at Witset you'll find the Witset RV Park and Campground. I've not stayed here yet but it looks like a nice spot. Further down the highway, past Smithers, you'll find the Fort Telkwa Riverfront RV Campground with 30 and 50-amp full-service sites and a pressure wash station to clean off any Alaska Highway road construction muck still coating your car or RV.



A short way before the town of Vanderhoof you'll come to the junction of Hwy-27. You can take a 33 mi (54 km) drive north to visit the Fort St. James National Historic Site, Parks Canada's largest collection of wooden buildings faithfully restored to the fur trade era.

It is only a short 62 mi (100 km) from Vanderhoof to Prince George and the conclusion of this route.





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About the author

My Journey

Since retiring from the world of leading-edge technology development, I have travelled east to west across North America and north to south as far as the roads allow, journeying more than 75,000 miles. Yet, no part of Canada or the US continues to draw me back like the Yukon and other northern regions.

I live in southwestern British Columbia and I have travelled to and through northern BC, the Yukon and Alaska numerous times. Over the years I have watched these roads transform from challenging gravel roads to modern asphalt highways. I have witnessed isolated gas stations and cafes turn into small villages and then into cities and towns offering all the services travelers demand.

I tell you now, "Come share our journey, exploring and enjoying the Canadian North!"

My Passion(s)

I enjoy helping others and I have demonstrated this through my life and career. This has been demonstrated through the numerous groups and organizations I have started and helped grow and the presentations I've given on TV and at professional conferences.

Now, in retirement, I continue to express my passion for RVing and travel through social media such as Facebook and the world wide web. Please stop by and check out my website and join my Facebook Discussion Groups.

World Wide Web:

The RV Mentor website was started to provide a repository for information on RVs, RV travel and the RV lifestyle. It includes a wide variety of information and resources, some of which cannot be found elsewhere on RV-related websites.

<https://www.thervmentor.com/>

Facebook Discussion Groups:

"The RV Mentor" Facebook Group is a friendly and informative resource for new and seasoned RVers. Here you can gather information, discuss ideas and issues and access tools and skills to improve your RV journey.

A "Guides" section provides fast and easy access to many of the most asked-about topics. If you can't find what you are looking for post a question and your fellow group members will jump in with answers.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/thervmentor>

The “Yukon & NWT Travel” Facebook Group is for all types of travelers, on a motorcycle, car, or RV, even those flying in to experience northern Canada. Feel free to ask questions, share your insight and experience, and enjoy our friendly community.

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