

THE HERMIT, GLACIER NATIONAL PARK (ROGERS PASS), BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Hermit is considered to be the steepest trail in a park which is well known for its steep trails. In 3.2 kilometers, hikers gain 819 meters. But the first 0.4 kilometers aren't particularly steep, and the trail briefly levels out in a meadow at the end, so most of this elevation gain is in the middle 2.7 kilometers.

The end of the Hermit trail is really just the starting point for many other explorations of this area. From the campsite at the meadow near the end of the trail, one can hike towards the Swiss Glacier, to Mt. Tupper, or just explore the rocky glacial moraines and attain nearby ridges for excellent views.

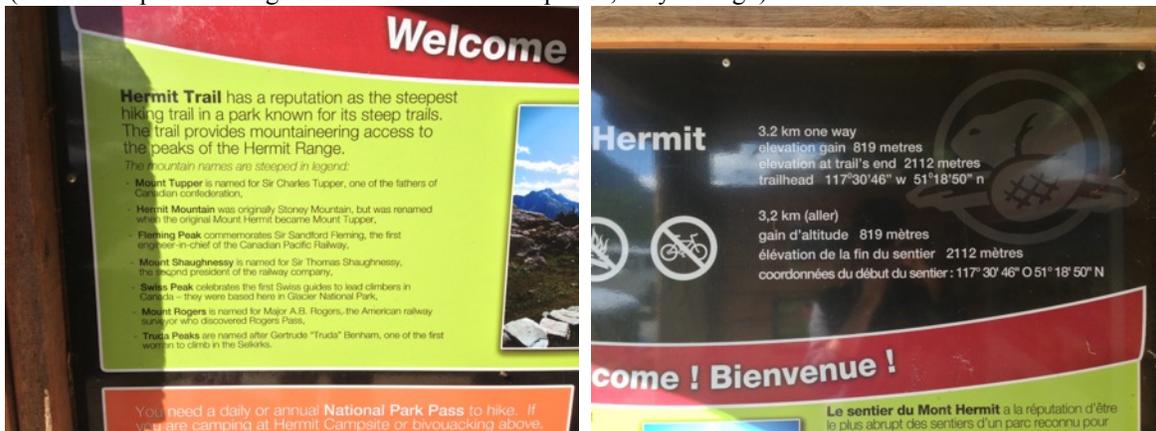
On our drive to the trailhead for the Hermit, we stopped at the Illecillewaet campground and trailhead to get some photos of that area since we wouldn't be able to hike there on this trip due to trail closures and restrictions because of bear activity in the area. Here, the Illecillewaet Glacier can be seen in the valley on the left, Glacier Crest in the center, and the Asulkan Valley to the right. The Illecillewaet Glacier has receded noticeably since our last trip in 2011, when we had hiked up to the toe of the glacier:



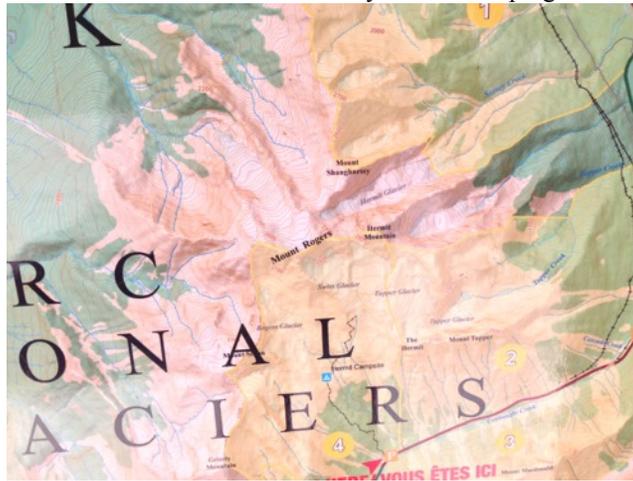
From there, we drive to the parking area for the Hermit trail. This photo is of Cheops Mtn., southwest of the Hermit trailhead:



The sign at the trailhead gives some information on the sources of many of the nearby mountain names, and also warns hikers that this 3.2 km trail is very steep (I think this particular sign is new since our last trip here, 5+ years ago):



The TOPO map at the trailhead shows the trail to the Hermit campsite, where the "End-of-Trail" sign is located. I think this map was here on our last trip. Surprisingly, this map also shows the trail continuing beyond the camping area, across three creeks and then switchbacking up to the toe of the Swiss Glacier. I wonder if at one time the trail did continue beyond the camping area:



The trail starts out moderately steep, but as compared to what it will be like soon this is essentially flat:



After about 0.4 km, the trail starts to gain elevation rapidly—and it will only get steeper:



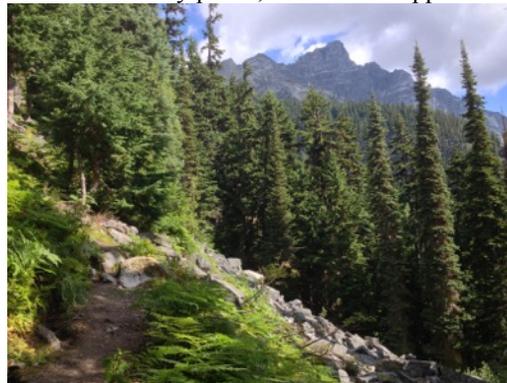
Looking down a set of steep switchbacks:



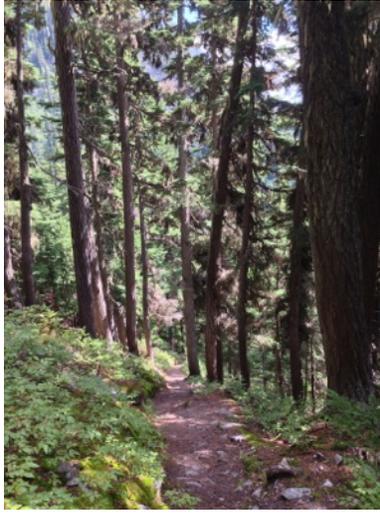
This is one of the sections of trail that felt steep on the way up but didn't look particularly steep; however, on the way back, this part of the trail was hard to walk down without being worried about slipping and falling because of the steepness:



We finally start to get some views through the trees of the nearby peaks; this is Mt. Tupper:



Looking back down another particularly steep stretch of trail:



Looking across the valley at Mt. MacDonald:



The trail eventually reaches a sort of dry meadow, and the trees begin to thin:



These interesting plants' leaves appeared to be cup-shaped to help hold water droplets:



In a rare flatter stretch, we were able to get a view towards where we are going:



Panorama with Mt. Tupper on the left, Mt. MacDonald in the center, and the Illecillewaet Glacier visible in the background to the right:



The Hermit trail goes up the small valley barely visible behind the trees in the left of the photo:



Looking back at Mt. MacDonald and the Illecillewaet Glacier:



Looking to the right at what I think must be the other (north) side of Cheops Mtn.:



The trail gets steep again, and we start to see more peaks in the background:



The views through here are spectacular; Abbot Ridge is just right of center in the photo, with the Illecillewaet and Asulkan Glaciers to its left and the Bonney Glacier to its right:



This ridge which lies to the west of the Hermit trail has always looked to me like it would have great views of the surrounding areas:



Another view looking out towards the Illecillewaet Glacier area, with Grizzly Mtn. and Cheops Mtn. visible to the right:



Zooming in on Mt. Tupper, with The Hermit to its left. Note the balancing rock visible in the photo:



We soon encounter a small stream and a nice patch of flowers:



Looking over at the slopes of Mt. Tupper from here; the ridge to the left (west) of Mt. Tupper doesn't look too difficult to get to, though it might be more difficult when you get closer to it, but either way it would probably be a long hike (and it certainly would be very steep):



When we look back at Mt. MacDonald, we notice that we are gaining elevation rapidly:



On the first few times I hiked this trail, the route continued up this rocky ridge. On the last few times, however, there has been a nicely maintained trail with rock steps off to the left side:



This part of the trail is much nicer than it used to be:



Putting in all these rock steps must have been a lot of work:



Looking back down towards the main road and where we parked; notice how steep and precipitous the terrain is here:



The trail is mostly steps now (it used to be a muddy path), and we gain elevation quickly:



Panorama with Mt. Tupper on the left and Mt. MacDonald on the right:



We can now see the ridge to the west of Mt. Tupper, as well as get glimpses of all the waterfalls coming down from the nearby glaciers:



The trail will head towards the rocky slopes seen in the center of this photo, then will make a final steep ascent to the ridge:



Panorama of the interesting scenery from here; the ridge mentioned earlier as probably having good views can be seen to the far left:



Looking again at this ridge, which we are getting further away from:



The trail levels out briefly through this meadow, which in some years has had incredible wildflowers (but not this year):



There were a few wildflowers here and there, but even without abundant flowers this is still a very pretty meadow:



Looking back at the rock slopes we have been crossing:



The trail now makes the final ascent to the camping area:



Instead of these nicely placed steps, the trail used to be slick mud, and sometimes on our way back down we had trouble finding it:



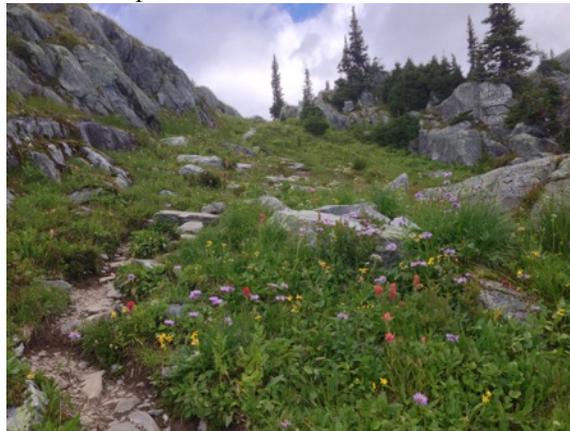
Before the steps were put in, this rope was very useful in getting down the trail safely:



Looking back out at the Illecillewaet Glacier area; Cheops Mtn. is the peak seen to the right, and I think the rocky slopes to the right of it are part of Grizzly Mtn.:



More wildflowers appeared once we passed the final steep stretch:



Hikers going only to the end-of-trail sign can enjoy the scenic remainder of the hike, as the rest of the trail is quite level (compared to the other parts of the trail):



The flowers were very nice along this part of the trail, although they were not particularly abundant:



As we reach the top of this small ridge, we start to get good views of the nearby peaks:



There are many peaks visible from the Hermit camping area, and I'm not sure which one has what name, but from left to right there is Fleming Peak, Rogers Peak, Swiss Peak, Grant Peak, Truda Peaks, and Hermit Mtn. (different from The Hermit):



Looking over towards the rock (reminiscent of the rock below the Illecillewaet Glacier) which would need to be crossed to access the ridge leading to Mt. Tupper:



The rocks used as stepping-stones along the trail through here are necessary to prevent getting one's shoes wet, as the meadow is surprisingly damp:



The view to the west from the campsite is somewhat blocked by these large rock piles, which we did not have time to ascend on this trip. I think there are some (very small) lakes visible on the other side of this rock mound:



Panorama from near the camping area, with Mt. Tupper in the center and the Illecillewaet Glacier barely visible on the right:



This creek drains from near the Swiss Glacier, and it must be crossed to get to the actual end-of-trail sign:

