

## SPARKLE LAKE, TOP OF THE WORLD PROVINCIAL PARK, BRITISH COLUMBIA

For current road conditions to, and hiking conditions in, the Top of the World Provincial Park, as well as for more information regarding this specific hike and other hikes at the Top of the World Provincial Park, I recommend inquiring at the Radium Hot Springs Visitor Information Center. As of the writing of this trip report (August 2016), the folks at this visitors center were exceptionally helpful in answering questions about hiking and road conditions in the Radium area. Also, as of the writing of this trip report, porcupines do not yet appear to be causing damage to vehicle parts while hikers' vehicles are parked at the Top of the World parking area; however, I would advise anyone considering a trip to the Top of the World Provincial Park to confirm that this is still the case.

### **To access the Top of the World Provincial Park:**

The Whiteswan FSR is located 4.5 kilometers south of Canal Flats when driving along Highway 93/95. After about 22 kilometers along the Whiteswan FSR, you will reach Whiteswan Lake Provincial Park. Turn right onto the Lussier River Road (following the Top of the World Provincial Park signs), and continue on this road for approximately 32 kilometers. The parking area for Top of the World Provincial Park will be on the left. Note that there are a few small logging roads which branch off the main road; generally when there could be confusion the main road to Top of the World is marked. However, it does help to have a good map of the logging roads; I recommend the East Kootenay Topographic Adventure Map from Backroad Mapbooks (the free BC Rockies Map is not sufficiently detailed).

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** As of August 2016, Google Maps routes drivers through the Ram Creek road to reach Top of the World, rather than the Whiteswan Lake road. Please note that the Ram Creek road is a VERY rough road, considered impassible to low clearance vehicles, and it is (currently) CLOSED at the junction with the Lussier River road. I believe the other end of the closure is near the Ram Creek Hot Springs. This road does not appear to even be listed on many newer maps. Please check with a reputable source (e.g. the Radium Hot Springs Visitor Information Center) regarding your planned route before you attempt to access the Top of the World Provincial Park.

### **The hike to Sparkle Lake from the Top of the World parking area:**

Parking Area to First Junction with Horse Trail: 0.5 km

First Junction with Horse Trail to Second Junction with Horse Trail: 3.2 km

Second Junction with Horse Trail to Third Junction with Horse Trail: 2.3 km

Third Junction with Horse Trail to Fish Lake Loop Trail Junction: 0.1 km

Fish Lake Loop Trail Junction to Fish Lake Cabin: 0.4 km

Fish Lake Cabin to Sparkle Lake/Wild Horse Ridge Trail: 0.5 km

Sparkle Lake/Wild Horse Ridge Trail to Sparkle Lake/Wild Horse Ridge Fork: 0.4 km

Sparkle Lake/Wild Horse Ridge Fork to Sparkle Lake: 1.3 km

**Total:** 8.7 km one-way.

Passing by the Hoodoos near Canal Flats on our way from Fairmont Hot Springs to the Top of the World Provincial Park:



The next seven photos show the nice scenery we drove through on our way to the parking area; the mountains here certainly are spectacular, though perhaps not quite as nice as those in the park itself:





There is only one trail leading off from the parking lot, and the first destination which must be reached is Fish Lake:



The trail heads gradually downhill for the first 0.5 kilometers; this felt like a short distance on our hike out, and a long distance on our way back when we were tired:



The trail levels out briefly and crosses Nicol Creek; just past the bridge there is a route to Wild Horse Creek marked on some maps, which turns off to the right, but this route was not clearly visible:



Looking down Nicol Creek towards where it joins with the Lussier River:



Just past the bridge, hikers can turn left and follow the horse trail to Fish Lake (this adds 0.5 km to the hike), or can go straight along the hiking trail (along which mountain biking appears to be currently allowed):



The trail is quite flat at first and is very pleasant walking:



There were a few of these small yellow flowers alongside the trail:



Looking up the Lussier River from where the trail starts to closely follow the river:



Looking across the river from one of the rare viewpoints of the surrounding mountains:



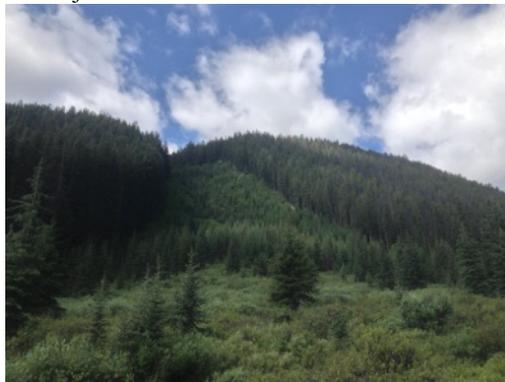
The trail finally reaches a small meadow near the second junction with the horse trail:



Here, hikers can continue straight to Fish Lake, or turn left and check out the Crazy River and Crazy Creek viewpoint (which bubble out of the ground from a subterranean drainage), which is located along the horse trail (this adds 0.4 km to the hike to Fish Lake):



Avalanche chute above the meadow where the second junction with the horse trail is located:



Looking across at the prominent ridge on the northeast side of the park:



These tree-colored mushrooms were prevalent along this part of the hike:



The trail now begins to gain elevation more steadily, but it is still not at all steep:



Here the trail crosses the stream which drains from Dolomite Lake, which is located between Wildhorse Ridge and Mount Doolan:



These tiny white flowers, which had petals so small that they made the flowers almost look fuzzy, were common once we crossed the bridge:



The side-trip to Crazy River and Crazy Creek is closer from the third junction with the horse trail:



This is the main trail junction just before reaching Fish Lake; from here, one goes to the left to quickly access the trailheads for Coyote Creek, Summer Pass, and the Alpine Viewpoint, and to the right to access the trailheads for Wildhorse Ridge and Sparkle Lake (note that one can effectively reach these places from either direction, however, because of the loop trail around Fish Lake):



This is the beginning of trail which goes to the left at this junction, which we did not have time to check out on this trip:



To the right, heading towards the Fish Lake Cabin, hikers first cross this boardwalk which leads through a marshy area north of the lake:



There were numerous wildflowers around the Fish Lake Cabin, but not nearly as many as we would see in the meadows below Sparkle Lake:



Looking across Fish Lake at the mountains high above it:



The trail continues around the lake, past many campsites. Because of the long drive to the parking area for Top of the World, and the 6.5 km hike to Fish Lake, most visitors either camp overnight at Fish Lake and explore the many trails in the surrounding area from there, or do just a day hike to Fish Lake:



The trail to Sparkle Lake and Wildhorse Ridge heads up into the valley visible above Fish Lake in this photo; from there, it forks, with the trail to Sparkle Lake heading off to the left and zig-zagging up the forested ridge to the left in this photo:



After leaving the camping area, the trail crosses the outlet of Fish Lake on this narrow bridge:



There is also this log-jam at the northwestern end of the lake which we saw campers walking on later in the day:



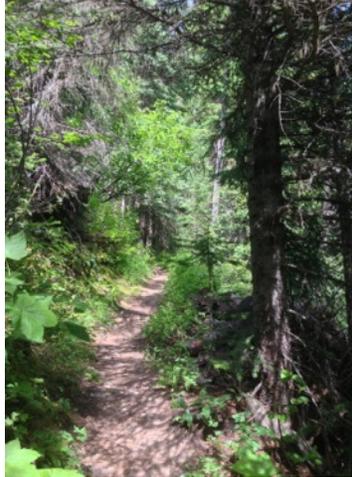
This is the junction of the Lakeshore Trail with the Sparkle Lake/Wildhorse Ridge Trail. The hike itself from the parking area to Sparkle Lake and back is long and difficult, but certainly not too much for a day hike. What makes the entire trip difficult is the long drive to the parking area from any nearby town (Canal Flats, Fairmont Hot Springs, etc.) in addition to the long, steep hike:



Panorama of Fish Lake from the trail junction:



The trail becomes steep right away, quite a change from the trail to Fish Lake, and quickly gains elevation through numerous switchbacks:



After 0.4 km, the trail finally reaches the fork with the Sparkle Lake and Wildhorse Ridge trails. I found the remaining 1.3 km to the lake to be a very difficult 1.3 km, probably more tiring overall than the previous 7.4 km we had hiked to get to this point, because of the steep elevation gain:



Looking across at the ridge to the northeast above Fish Lake; there is certainly a lot of very interesting hiking to be done in this area:



The trail soon crosses this small stream in a small meadow:



There were some wildflowers near the stream which were very nice, but we would be seeing many more wildflowers soon:



Looking southwest at the peaks which we would be working our way around to get to Sparkle Lake:



After crossing the meadow, we begin gaining elevation fast to quickly reach the forested ridge noted in a previous photo taken from Fish Lake:



After numerous steep and slippery switchbacks on a precipitous hillside, we finally reach the ridge:



There were some purple-flowered plants among the rocks along this ridge:



Panorama from the ridge, where the trail levels out for a short distance. Sparkle Lake is located in the valley seen in the center of this photo:

