

Windfall Lake Hiking Route

The Windfall Lake area, west of Tumbler Ridge, offers some of the finest alpine hiking in the region. There is the option of returning along a different route, plus further alpine options; these are more challenging, suitable for experienced hikers with good route-finding skills. The alpine ridges are often windy, and fog may roll in unexpectedly. Take a GPS, map and compass, and be prepared to use them.

Time/Distance: 5-7 hours/10 km return to lake
Elevation Gain: 370 m (1215 ft)
Rating: Challenging

Directions to the Trailhead

From Tumbler Ridge, drive north towards Chetwynd on Highway 29 for 25 km to the turnoff for the former Bullmoose Mine. Follow the Bullmoose mine road for 17 km and turn left onto the Windfall Creek Forest Service Road. This turnoff is just before an electrical substation. Follow the Windfall Creek road as it heads up the valley of South Bullmoose Creek. There is a junction at the 9 km mark – do not take the turnoff to the left, but head straight, cross a small bridge, and continue up the road. This road climbs over a pass at km 14. Turn left at km 23 and follow this side-road for 1.8 km until it ends at a deactivated crossing of Windfall Creek. The signed trailhead is on the right.

Route Directions

The first half of the trail is through lush forest, with a few boggy sections. The trail crosses the creek and begins to ascend more steeply, up a series of open draws and meadows. Keep right at the junction (at km 3) with the optional return route. Shortly beyond this point there is one steep section up through a rock band. Nearer the lake the route is sometimes indistinct in the meadows, but is generally well flagged.

Once at the lake, which is nestled in a bowl below impressive cliffs, follow the shore on the left to the south end of the lake for better, drier areas for relaxing, swimming or camping. Note the spot where the outlet stream disappears into an

underground channel. In poor weather it is best simply to return by retracing this route. In good conditions the circular return option is recommended, but it involves overland travel with no markers and no trail for a kilometer. The rewards include great scenery through limestone terrain with small caves – higher up there are more substantial caves but they are challenging and require advanced skills.

To follow this circular route, ascend the slopes southeast of the lake. This leads into a polje, a large sunken bowl holding a lakelet. From here ascend the slopes to the east, below the 1878m peak, making your way through meadows and rock bands. Try to keep above the treeline and below the steeper cliffs, while heading east.

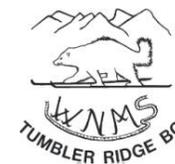
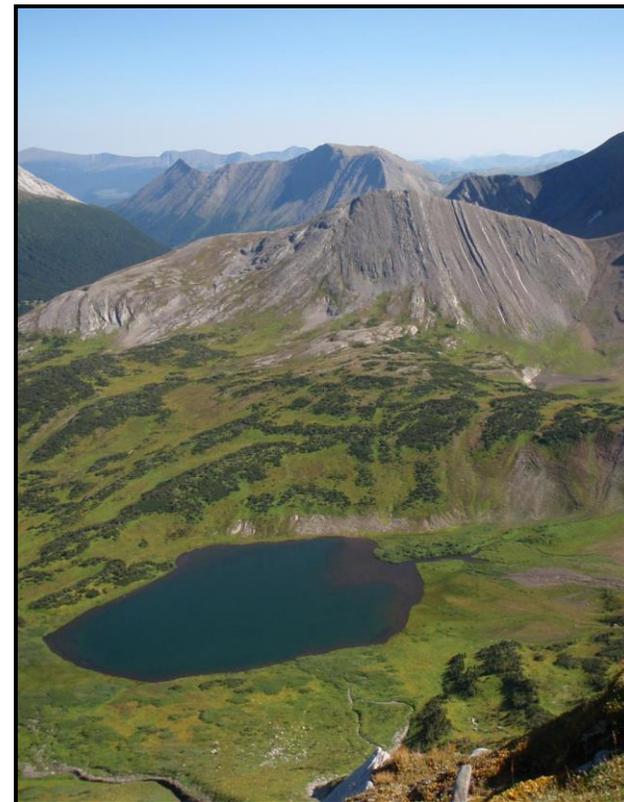
After a few hundred metres you will see a pass to the east, linking the Windfall Creek and Wolverine River drainages. Do not descend to the top of the pass, but rather head further down to the meadows on its northern aspect, and then pick up the trail that leads down the draw into the forest, to link up with the main trail.

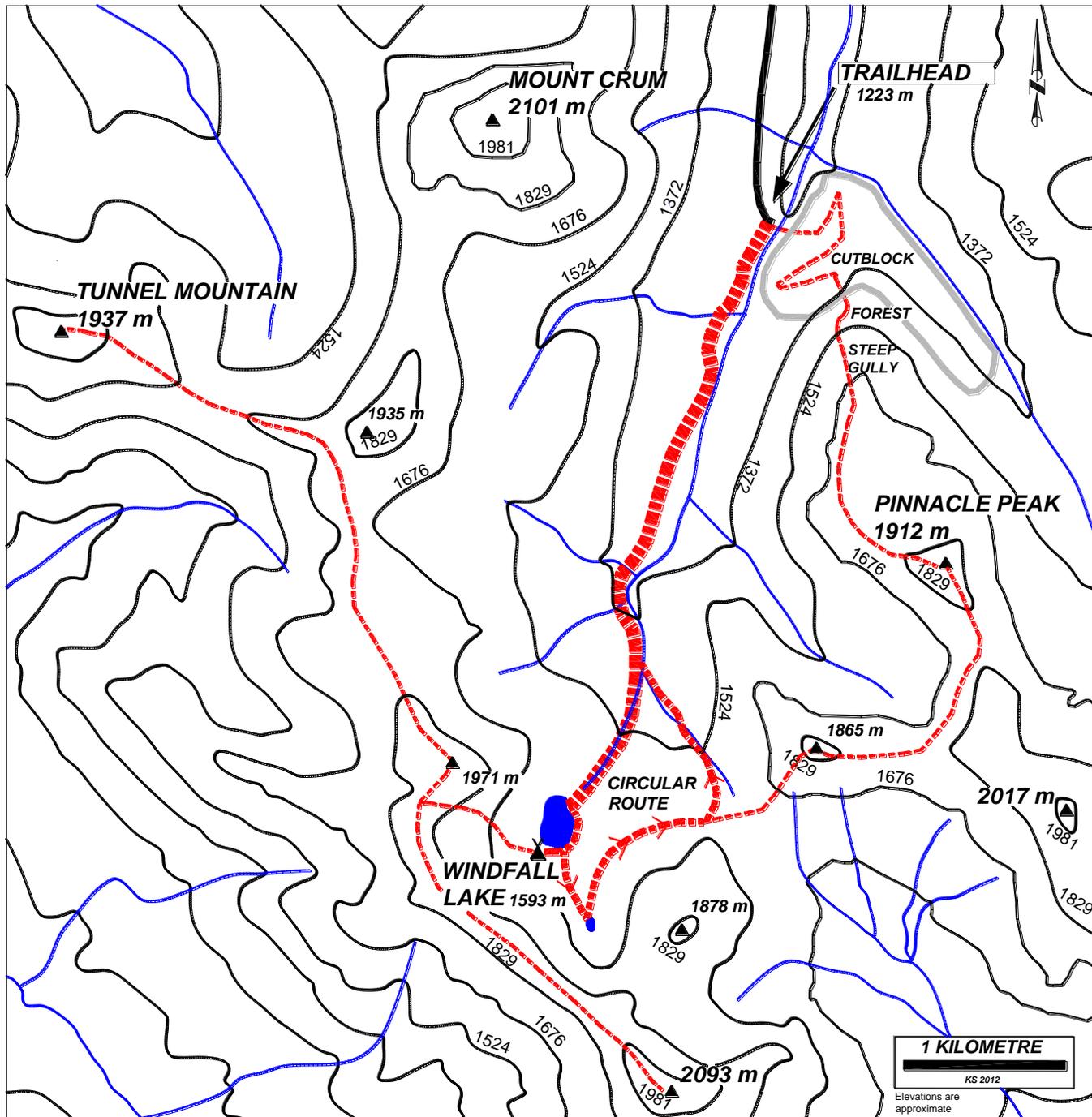
For a longer option, it is possible to connect from this pass to the Pinnacle Peak route. This ridge route involves some tricky ledges on the slopes north of the pass.

West of the lake there is a steep, long climb that leads up onto a long ridge, with views down into the Sukunka Valley to the west, and glaciated Sentinel Peak in the distance. While ascending, look for the green, less rocky areas: these form the easiest route. Once on the ridge, you can head southeast along the crest, all the way to the summit of the peak (2093 m). Views are magnificent.

Alternatively, a longer trip leads through a series of ascents and descents, and some side-hilling, to Tunnel Mountain. This peak is easy to ascend along the ridge, but the more interesting option is to traverse across the scree to the dark spot directly below the summit. This is the entrance to the tunnel. Ascend through the tunnel, climb through the mountain, and emerge close to the summit!

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WINDFALL LAKE HIKING ROUTE

- **THESE ROUTES ARE IN BEAR COUNTRY; TRAVEL IN GROUPS AND MAKE NOISE**
- **PLEASE PACK OUT WHAT YOU PACKED IN**
- **DRESS WARMLY FOR THE ALPINE**

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