

## Cowmoose Mountain Hiking Route (#20)

The Cowmoose Mountain area, west of Tumbler Ridge, offers some excellent alpine hiking. Although the lower portions of this trip are rated intermediate, the alpine parts of the route are suitable for experienced hikers with good routefinding skills. The alpine ridges are often windy, and fog may roll in unexpectedly. Take a map and compass, and know how to use them. The distance to the top of Cowmoose Mountain is 5.5 km, with 530 m of elevation gain.

Time/Distance: 5-7 hours/9 km for circular route  
Elevation Gain: 530 m (1740 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 Rd for 16 km and turn right onto the signed road. Follow this road up for 5 km to just before a bridge, and park at the sign. The road ends at a gas well 0.5 km past the trailhead.

### Route Directions

From the parking area, head uphill, watching for orange diamond shaped trail markers. The route strings together pieces of old coal exploration trails that were built in the 1970's, and climbs steadily. Keep an eye on the cliffs of Bullmoose Mountain across the valley, as goats are usually seen. The goats were re-introduced in the 1980s after the original population was eliminated. The steep cliffs of Bullmoose Mountain are composed of sandstone, which is more resistant to erosion than the softer shales.

Once the route ascends above treeline, the views improve. When the last of the exploration trails is left, the route climbs up to gain the ridge (peak "1839 m" on the map), passing through a zone of large sandstone blocks. This wide open

hiking has spectacular views of the Rockies to the south, including the peaks of Monkman Park. At this elevation, the vegetation is stunted due to the harsh climate and winds. Flowers have a short season in which to bloom and go to seed.

The view to the south includes the former Bullmoose Mine. The mine operated from 1983 to 2003 and produced a total of 35 million tonnes of metallurgical coal, which was exported for use in steelmaking. The mine area has been reclaimed, and now supports a large variety of wildlife.

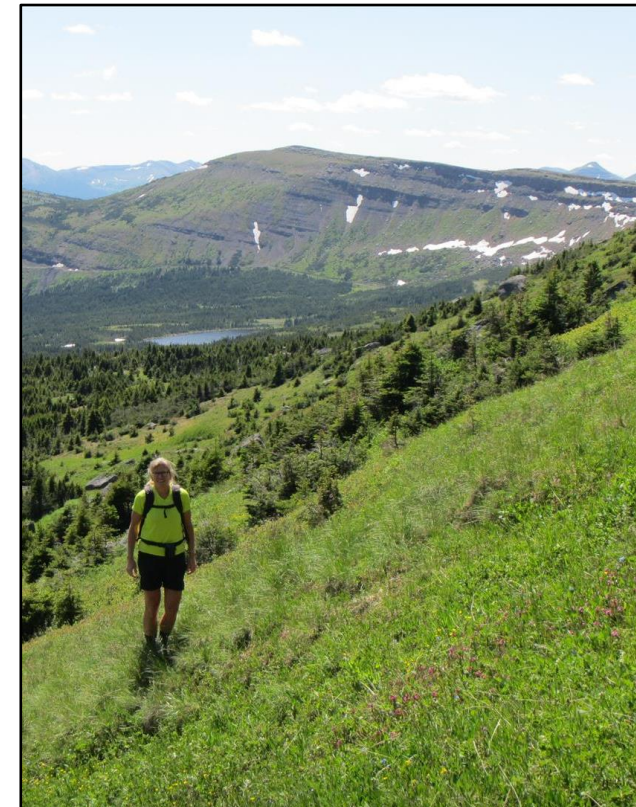
For some hikers, the first alpine ridge can be the destination for the day. The actual summit of Cowmoose Mountain is visible 1.5 km to the west, and is a worthwhile extension for those wanting more time in the alpine. To reach it, head west along the ridge, dropping down to a saddle, then up onto exploration trails which wind around to the top. A steel post marks the top (1871 m). Once in the alpine, even more rambling can be done along the cliff edge to some shallow ponds on the flat-topped ridge. All three species of ptarmigan are found in the alpine areas.

For a circular route, exploration trails leading down from Cowmoose Mountain can be followed past some lakes below the cliffs, then down a series of switchbacks, eventually leading back to the ascent route (see map).

A worthwhile side trip on the way back is to Cowmoose Step Falls, which are above the road at 3.1 km. From the road, climb 100 m up through the forest to the base of a series of picturesque cascades.

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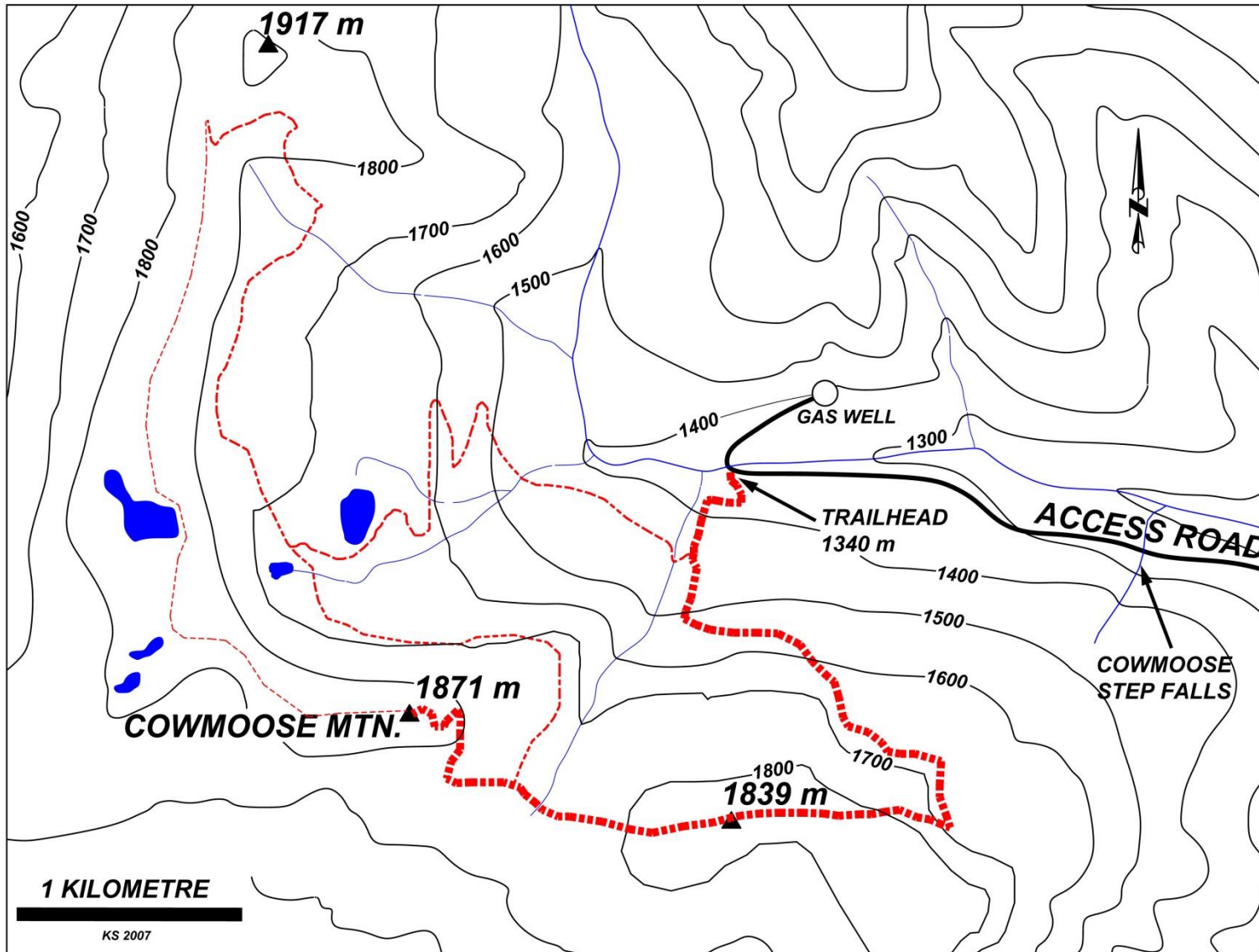
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Rating: Challenging ◆

Time: 5-7 hours





### Cowmoose Mountain Hiking Route

- *These routes are in bear country; travel in groups and make noise*
- *Please pack out what you packed in*
- *Alpine weather can change suddenly – carry appropriate clothing and a map and compass or gps*



For more information, contact:

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Photo Gallery website:  
[www.wnms.ca](http://www.wnms.ca)

### Tumbler Ridge Visitor Centre

(250) 242-3123

Tourism website:  
[www.TumblerRidge.ca](http://www.TumblerRidge.ca)

1:50,000 map reference:  
93 P/3, 93 P/4

Photo Credit: Kevin Sharman

