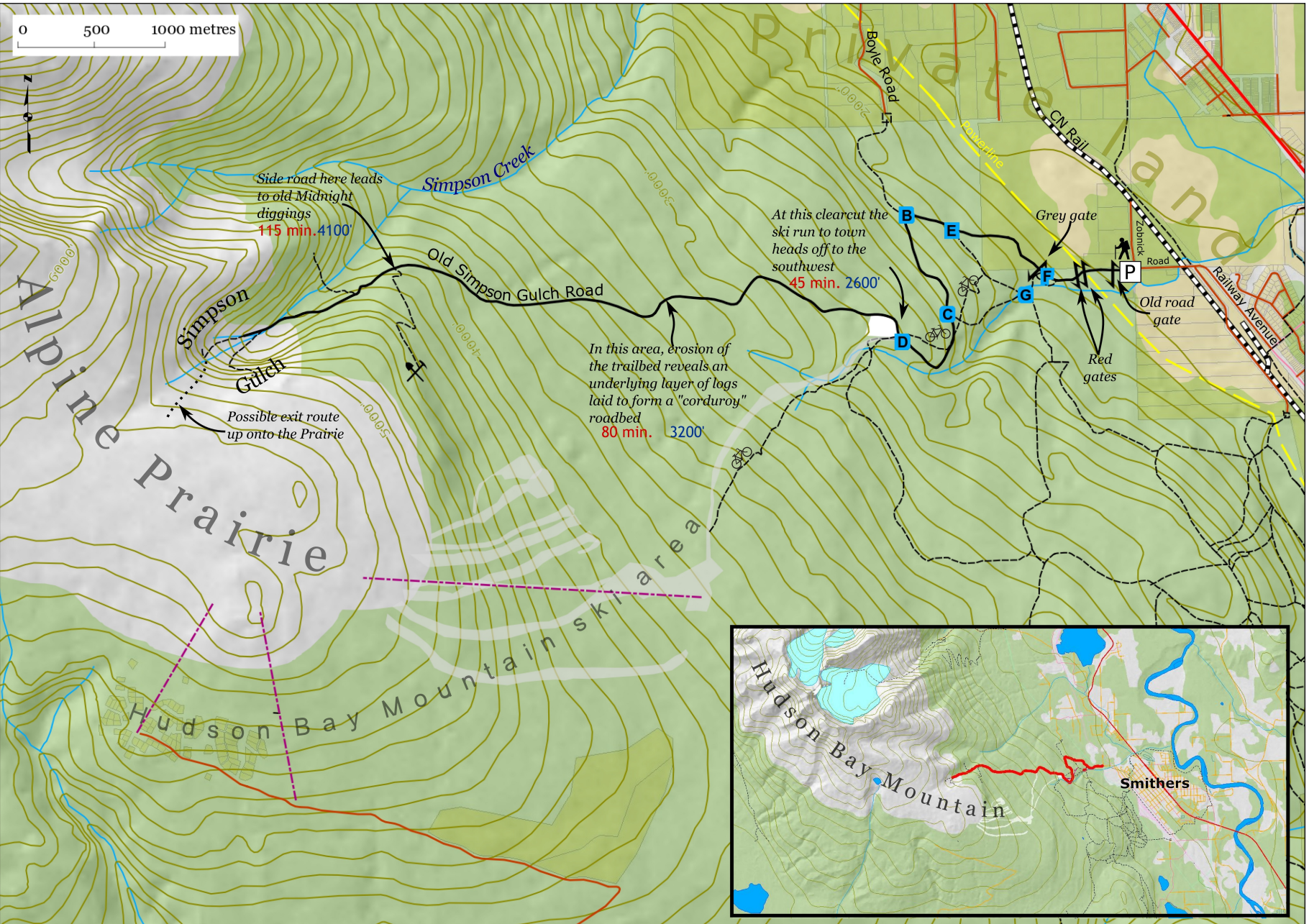


0 500 1000 metres

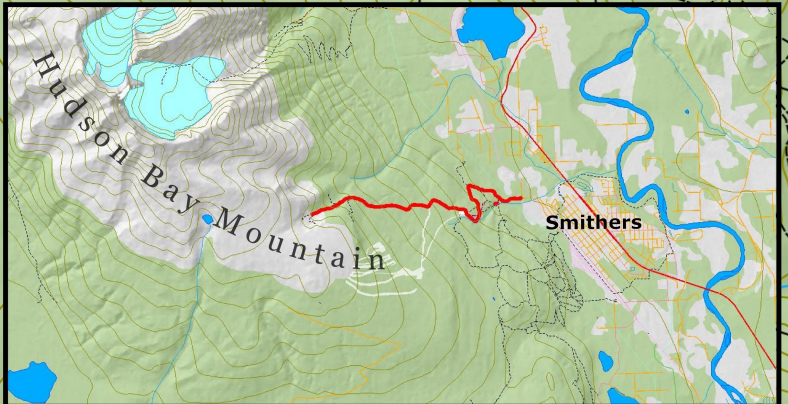


Side road here leads to old Midnight diggings  
115 min. 4100'

At this clearcut the ski run to town heads off to the southwest  
45 min. 2600'

In this area, erosion of the trailbed reveals an underlying layer of logs laid to form a "corduroy" roadbed  
80 min. 3200'

Possible exit route up onto the Prairie



# THE OLD SIMPSON GULCH 'ROAD'

*Morgan Hite, May 2011*

## DIRECTIONS

At the north end of Railway Avenue in Smithers, cross the tracks and head directly uphill on Zobnick Road to where the pavement makes a hard right. There is a small trailhead here with a parking lot. Past this point, the trail is appropriate for non-motorized use only.

Pass through an old gate (sometimes locked) and proceed up the dirt road to the clearing for the hydro lines. Enter the clearing through a small spring-loaded red gate, and leave on the other side through a second red gate. Continue up the old road. Pass around a final, grey gate about five minutes later.

After about 2.5 kilometres and 45 minutes, having climbed about 1000 feet, come to an intersection with a clearcut ahead to the right. (Another landmark here is the mountain biking structures in woods to right.) Turn right, entering the clearcut (where many logs are stacked), and follow around its north side to find the old trail leaving at its northwest corner.

From here the trail continues for 3.75 kilometres and another 2000' to treeline in Simpson Gulch. Allow 3 hours from the edge of Smithers to the head of the Gulch; 2 hours to return.

## COMMENTARY

Simpson Gulch (or Simpson's Gulch) is a small, attractive gorge at treeline on Hudson Bay Mountain just north of Ski and Ride Smithers--easily visible from the Lake Kathlyn area. It is sometimes called "Little Simpson Gulch" to distinguish it from the large alpine canyon just north of it (which is actually nameless). Properly it is the smaller "gulch" which is Simpson's: Donald Simpson and his brother were miners who staked and worked claims here between 1909 and 1926.

Someone worked hard to build this now little-used track into the mountains. Corduroy and cuttings across scree slopes attest to the wealth they imagined here.

The "Simpson Gulch Road" was perhaps a track first built by Simpson Brothers to provide access from town to their claims. It was widened and "improved" after WWII by other miners. It continues today to provide a hiker's route from the edge of town all the way to treeline (and the Alpine Prairie/Crater Lake area). If you want to start from Smithers and climb the peak of Hudson Bay Mountain, this is your route.

After you pass through the final, grey gate, you are crossing private land for the next few minutes: please be respectful.

Small signboards with letters on them nailed to trees along the first part of the old road were put up by the Northeast Slope Trails group, and indicate intersections with other trails.

When the "ski run to town" to town was built, it used the old Simpson Gulch Road from the site marked "D" down to town. The original track was significantly disturbed and widened to accommodate skiers. However, above "D" it retains its natural character: a little-used and overgrown track.

Three kilometres beyond "D," another old track forks off to the left. This leads to the short-lived "Midnight" diggings operated in the early 1980's. One can continue from there south across the face of the ridge into Ski and Ride Smithers.

Once in the Gulch there are many interesting things to explore, and one can easily spend two hours here. For an exit route up to the Prairie, follow the trail to its high point in the Gulch, then work up through the krummholtz and bands of rock.