



HUDSON BAY MOUNTAIN PEAK

DIRECTIONS

Drive to Ski and Ride Smithers, and park at the base of the green T-bar.

Ascend the Crater Lake trail for about twenty minutes. At the last mat of stunted trees, leave the trail, and strike out directly for the most direct route to the crest of the Southeast Ridge.

Once atop the ridge, walk west along its broad and gently ascending crest, avoiding snow cornices which overhang the valley to the right. The ridge climbs very gently, and then, turning northwest, more steeply.

At the junction with the Central Ridge of the mountain continue west to the summit. The final few meters are on, large blocks overhanging the Hudson Bay Glacier.

It is possible to ascend or descend via Crater Lake. One route passes on the north side of the lake (most direct), another on the south side. Beware the cornice that overhangs the lake all summer.

Allow 3 hours to ascend (6km and 1000m), 2 hours to return.

COMMENTARY

The South Summit of Hudson Bay Mountain rises almost 7,000' above the valley floor, the kind of vertical relief the Tetons are famous for. It offers impressive and airy views, a glacier below on one side and the endless Coast Range peaks on the other—yet it's a walk-up that can be done in a long morning.

At the parking lot at the base of the green T-bar is a sign now that says something to the effect of "No Parking." It seems to be universally ignored and not enforced.

The Crater Lake trail is well-worn, and two-tracked in places, and seems successful in that the popularity of the lake does not seem to have had much impact off the trail.

Hudson Bay Mountain, for a well-visited place, suffers a dearth of names. Only Crater Lake and the "Alpine Prairie" are named, plus the diminutive Simpson Gulch. The large, handsome valley at the head of Simpson Creek cries out for a name, as do the ridges which border it on the north and south. On the accompanying map I have called them, respectively, the Central Ridge and the Skyline Ridge. The ridge that descends just west of Crater Lake too is nameless (I have called it the Crater Ridge). Two other notable points—where the Crater Ridge joins the Skyline Ridge, and where it joins the Central Ridge—also need names. (Decision Point and Sky Junction to me.)

Before gaining the Skyline Ridge one leaves the world of grass and enters the world of rock. The Alpine Prairie below is green, and speckled with lakes. At the distinctive point on the ridge there is a nicely-made cairn about 40cm high, which serves, no doubt, on descending in fog on this ridge, as the indication of the time to turn due south, to go down onto the Prairie and intersect the Crater Lake trail.

Walking now along this ridge must be the most delightful hike in the Bulkley Valley. You are on high, contemplating a landscape of rock all around you which is forbidding and yet inviting. The cliffs on all sides call to mind dire settings of Himalayan exploits or plane crashes or Mordor. The ridge ahead of you, however, rises in such a gentle series of platforms and slopes that to walk along it all day is not only possible but desirable. And this begins an hour and a half from the

trailhead, making it a very prized possession. But, it must be said, this is not a tundra hike. This is not the above-treeline land of grassy flowers and inviting streams. This is the rugged, knobby, broken, slabby face of raw nature. It is reminiscent of landscapes around boulder fields everywhere in North America. Rock fractures into steps, into benches; you are walking on piles of rubble. Under your feet, bedrock is broken by innumerable cracks which nonetheless consistently fall into one or two sets of parallel lines. On a pleasant day there is no better place to be. Provided you have the right clothing, and water, for there is no water up here.

In fog, beware the precipitous drop in the valley on the north (on the other hand, the ridge slopes very gently to the south).

At Decision Point, all ascent routes come together, and all descent routes divide. Hikers coming up from Crater lake approach from the left. There is nothing distinctive about this place and its cairn can easily be missed in fog. Ahead of you now is a rather steep climb to the Sky Junction. But temptingly to its left now appears the summit ridge, the final ascent to the top of the mountain. It is compelling tower-like. It rises, steep and narrow, like an afterthought, from the left side of the ridge ahead, as if someone were extending a stubby arm in the bicycle signal for a left turn. Its lower buttresses are hidden by the slope you are ascending still. All you see is this impossibly narrowing stump of rock, sticking up like a stovepipe.

The last bit of the ascent to this prominence at the head of Simpson Gulch is on pure scree. Tiny, smaller-than-your-fist-size, down to dime-sized, chips of rock. A slog, the way laid out by many feet before me as it zigzags its way up the prominence. But you have the pleasure of seeing, drop *below you* at this point, the central ridge.

At the Sky Junction, journeys out on to the Central Ridge may be possible for mountaineers. The rock, which has been many colours but chiefly white and gold, changes to black out on this ridge.

At the summit, climb out on large blocks to the register, hidden in a small cairn at the north end.