

Where the Blacktop Leads

By Jennifer Huitema

There is nothing romantic about asphalt. It's dark and grey, extends far past the furthest point of your vision, and is decorated with faded yellow paint, dotting the centre of the path. And yet, asphalt has a very appealing nature - especially when you see it before you as empty, endless stretches, gently sloping and winding under a canopy of ancient Douglas fir trees, accented by cerulean skies, and the shimmering, rolling waves of the Pacific. This is the kind of asphalt you will find along the Sea to Sky Highway, which leads you into a transcendent slice of bliss, beginning in the glimmering city of Vancouver and ending in historic Lillooet. The views are astounding, from striking panoramas of the islands of Howe Sound to the ice-capped peaks of glacial Coast Mountains, the roadway surroundings are a huge boost to the charm of basic asphalt. Not yet convinced that this particular expanse of pavement is worth exploring? Enter the RV. Imagine riding in smooth luxury, where the hidden turquoise lakes are your morning view, the fresh mountain air is so sweet and intoxicating, you have forgotten what coffee tastes like, your afternoons are filled with brilliant streams of sunshine highlighting mossy forest pathways, and your evenings are soothed with the sounds of tender, lapping waves along the shoreline. An RV allows you to create your own backyard, constantly changing and surprising you, and there has never been a better road to do this than the Sea to Sky Highway in Vancouver, Coast & Mountains region.

Begin your journey heading towards Squamish. This "Mother of the wind" community sits nestled along the shores of Howe Sound and is brimming with an eclectic mix of outdoor adventures, First Nations culture, and coal mining and railroad history. The sweeping shoreline and verdant mountainsides provide an abundance of space, so park the RV and take in some sights. The BC Museum of Mining welcomes you to venture inside the cavernous mouth of the cliff face, riding a rickety miner train, and experiencing life firsthand inside a coal mine. Include a visit to the West Coast Railway Heritage Park, the resting ground for the Royal Hudson, the infamous steam train. Train number 2860 was one of four Royal Hudson steam engines to be preserved, and the only one to be used in excursion service after preservation. Transporting tourists until 1999, the Royal Hudson is a sleek, black treasure, and leads you back to times of luxury, opulence, and traditional rail travel.

Climbing further into the mountain range, your next ideal RV destination is the quaint, charming town of Pemberton. Tuck your RV into the serene, awe-inspiring woodlands in Nairn Falls Provincial Park for a relaxing night's sleep, or activity filled day - fishing for cutthroat trout and Dolly Varden char or exploring the leafy trails. Saturdays in Pemberton come alive with the Farmer's Market, offering succulent fruits, unique crafts, and the area's specialty - tasty seed potatoes.

Leaving the sea behind, your RV climbs towards the sky, following the Sea to Sky Highway along the Duffey Lake Road. Aqua lakes dot the curvy path, alongside a multitude of streams and waterways. This scenic stretch of roadway is a sought after destination for road trips, guiding you to the historic town of Lillooet. Once here, there is plenty to see beyond the windows of the RV. Play golf amongst the sheep at the Sheep Pasture Golf Course (exactly what it sounds like!), visit the Hangman's Tree, where legend has it that eight lawbreakers were swung from it in the times of the gold rush, or search for "Chinese Rocks" along the river banks, neatly piled by the Chinese during their search for gold nuggets.

So, the next time you hear a complaint about roadwork, paving, and construction zones, remember that often those stretches of asphalt can lead to roads less travelled, rustic hideaways, and spectacular views waiting to be captured in your memory. Asphalt is what leads us to discover that all things are possible in Vancouver, Coast & Mountains region, home of the Sea to Sky Highway, and an RVer's ideal destination.