

Windfall Lake Hiking Route (#23)

The Windfall Lake area, west of Tumbler Ridge, offers some of the best 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: 414 m (1325 ft)

Rating: Challenging ◆

Directions to the Trailhead

From Tumbler Ridge, drive north towards Chetwynd on Hwy 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 FSR 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. Boardwalks were installed across wet sections in 2015. The trail crosses a creek and begins to ascend up a series of open draws and meadows. Keep right at the signed junction (at km 3.5) to head directly to the lake. After climbing a section with steps installed in 2017, the route flattens out with views of the rock wall above the lake.

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 or swimming. Note the spot where the outlet stream disappears into an underground channel. There are six tent pads, a bear cache, dishwashing station and an outhouse. Please pack out what you pack in. Campfires are not allowed at these campsites due to the lack of available firewood in this sensitive environment.

In poor weather it is best to return by retracing this route. In good conditions the circular route is highly recommended for the return trip. 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. A series of tall posts marked "Circular Route" are within line of sight of each other, starting near the campsite area at the southeast end of the lake. Follow these through meadows up beyond treeline to the high point, below the peak marked "1878 m", then east.

After one kilometer, the circular route comes to a view overlooking a valley, and descends to the left down into a meadow which leads into the forest and links up with the main trail. From the viewpoint, it is possible to connect to the Pinnacle Peak hiking route by heading right for the pass at the top of the valley, and then using route-finding skills up a series of ridges and summits to reach Pinnacle Peak.

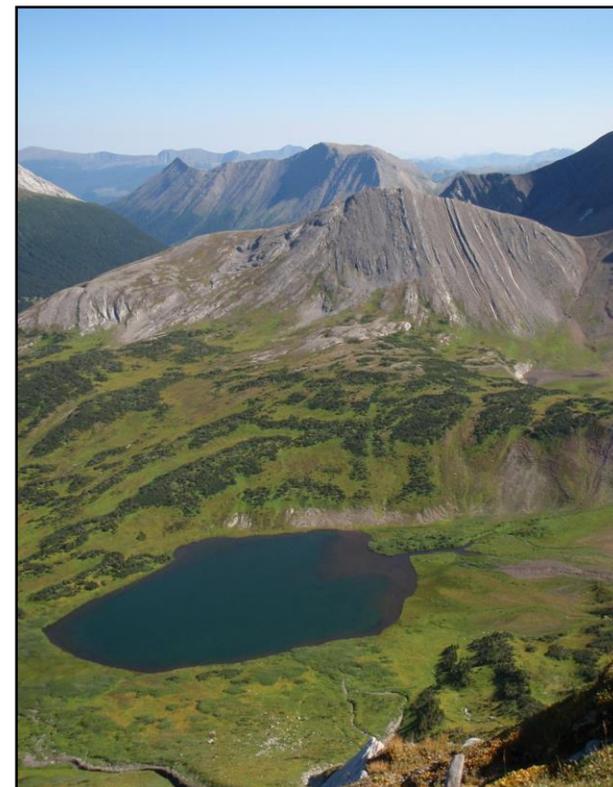
West of the lake there is a steep, long climb that leads up onto the ridge above the lake, with views down into the Sukunka Valley to the west and glaciated Sentinel Peak in the distance. While ascending, look for the green, less rocky areas, which form the easiest route. Once on the ridge, you can head southeast along the crest, all the way to the summit of the ridge (2093 m). The views from here 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 about 30 m higher.

Generous funding from the Peace River Regional District in 2015, 2016 and 2017 allowed WNMS volunteers to make substantial improvements to the Windfall Lake trail, including the boardwalks, stairs, campsite area, signs and circular route.

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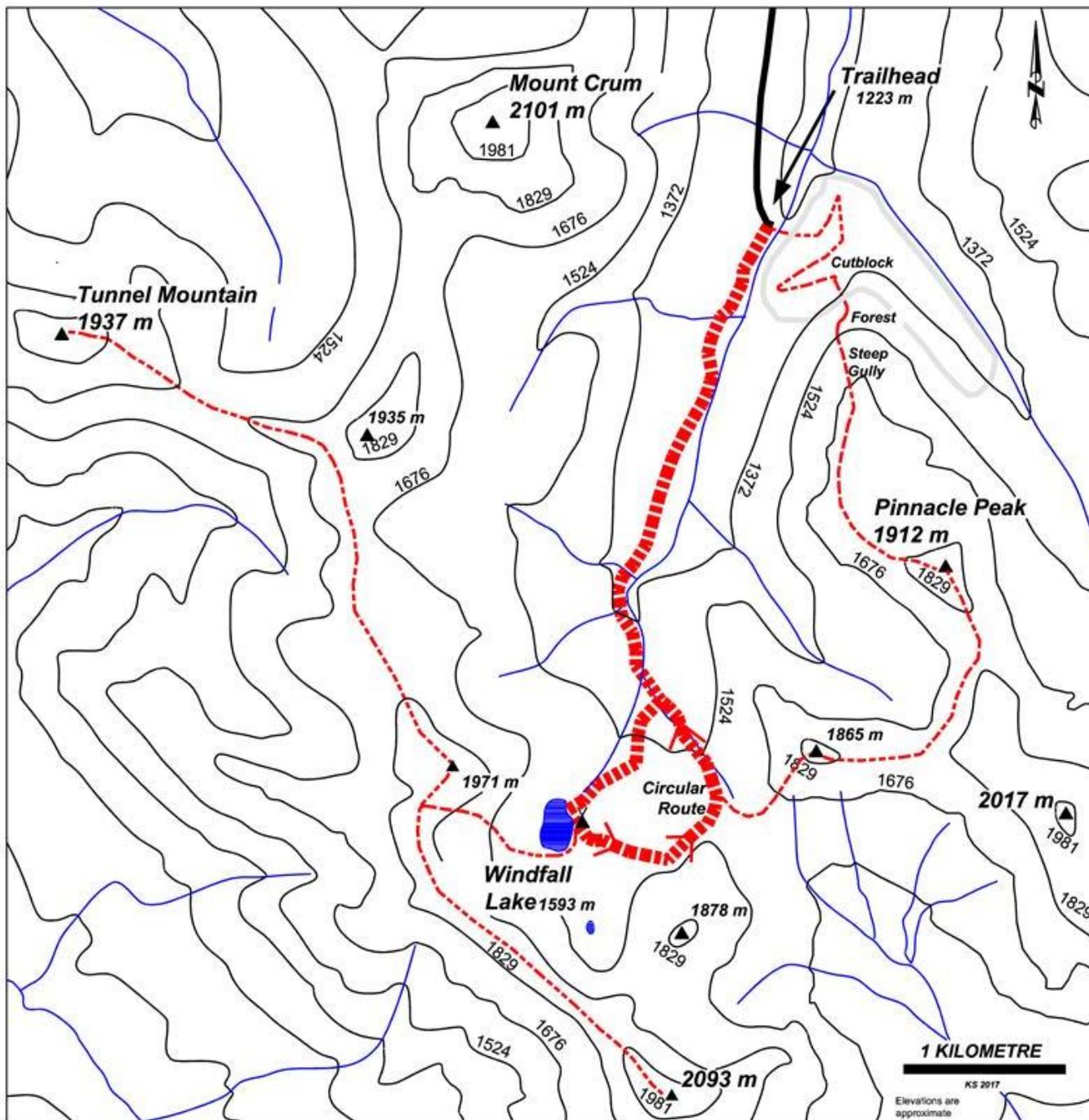
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Rating: Challenging ◆

Time: 5-7 hours





Windfall Lake 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
- No camp fires please, due to the sensitive environment

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1:50,000 map reference:

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