

Newsletter

March 2019



2019 Adventure Tours

UNBC Continuing Studies is entering its fifth year of offering experiential adventure tours in Northern BC. In 2015, the first year of the tours, we offered four tours and in 2019 we are up to eight. The tours focus on unique, niche-based tours highlighting northern BC's history, culture, wildlife and amazing scenery.

The 2019 lineup of tours consists of:

- Ghost Towns of the East Line
- Canneries of the North Coast
- Northwest BC Grizzly Bear Discovery Tour
- The Town That Got Lost - Anyox Exploration
- Skeena River Historic Journey by Jet Boat
- Kitsault & Alice Arm: Ultimate Ghost Town Adventure
- Fort George River Journey

Five Year Guest Facts

48% male/52 % female

Average Age – 62 yrs old
Median – 64 yrs old
Mode – 71 yrs old
Oldest – 89 yrs old
Youngest – 26 yrs old

36% of guests from outside Northern BC
64% of guests from within Northern BC

6% of guests from outside of Canada

25% of guests have taken more than one tour

** One guest has taken every tour and she is also the oldest guest to join us*

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This newsletter highlights some of the Northern BC Adventures its many associated stories. With five years of tours, we have lots of photos and stories to share so please enjoy the newsletter and feel free to forward it to anyone who may be interested.

For more information about this year's Northern BC Adventures, visit:
www.unbc.ca/continuing-studies/courses/tours

The Woodcock Airstrip

When driving along the Skeena River from Terrace to Kitwanga most people are unaware of the long paved airstrip just on the opposite side of the Skeena River. Near the town of Cedarvale on the north side of the river lies the Woodcock airstrip. The strip is believed to be named after William Henry Woodcock who established one of the first trading stops at the mouth of the Skeena in 1870. The Airstrip was built during World War II by the Royal Canadian Air Force as a relief landing field. It was used more recently by the local cadets as a base for their operations but has now fell into disrepair with trees and brush sprouting up through the pavement. This site is always a stop on our Skeena River Journey as it is easily accessible from the river.



All you ever wanted to know about Sternwheeler Cordwood

When the Grizzly Bear turns out to be Black?

When planning and advertising a grizzly bear viewing tour our goal is always to find the bears to watch, and photograph them in their natural environment. On a past tour we ventured out onto the ocean for an hour-and-15 minute boat ride to an amazing inlet full of Lyngby sedge which the grizzly bears love to eat for a couple of months when coming out of hibernation. As we entered the sedge-filled estuary, a guest spotted a bear eating the succulent sedges along the shore. Upon closer inspection we realized it was a black bear. Grizzlies usually do not tolerate black bears, but luckily, for the black bear, there were no grizzlies in sight. We edged up close to the bear from the comfort and safety of the boat to get some amazing photos of the bear who was totally uninterested in us. We photographed the bear for 20 minutes before noticing another black bear about 500m up the shoreline. It did not take long for the bear we were watching to get the scent of the other bear and off it went in pursuit of the other unaware bear. After 20 minutes, the bear caught up to the other bear and after a quick sniff, they both disappeared in to the forest. Even though they were not grizzly bears it was still a magical experience in a remote untouched estuary!



A big part of the history of the Skeena River and Upper Fraser River involved the use of Sternwheelers to transport people, equipment, supplies, furs, and food up and down the rivers that served as main transportation routes. Almost all of the sternwheelers used wood to feed the boilers, which in turn powered the large paddles at the rear of the boat. Wood was a readily available resource that grew adjacent to the river and could easily be cut and split into 3 to 4-foot sections and piled into cords by local entrepreneurs.

The term cordwood became part of everyday language, as it was a necessity for every day travel. The cordwood cutters received around \$3 to \$4 a cord for each one used by the boats. They would cut it and stack it next to the river at strategic points so that there was always an available supply along the routes that they traveled. The sternwheelers burned 1 to 3 cords an hour depending on how hard they ran the boat and the size of the boilers. This, of course, was for upstream navigation only, as downstream navigation typically used a fraction of the power needed because they were able to use the current. Passengers were typically

enlisted to help with the loading of the cordwood at the supply points. Some of the larger boats could hold up to ten cords of wood at one time. It was the job of one crew member to continually feed the boilers with wood the entire time the boat was moving.

Ironically, sternwheelers faded into obscurity between 1912 -1920 as the railway replaced the need for ships and river transportation. Before the end of sternwheelers, they assisted with goods and supplies to build the railway. On the Skeena River, the last sternwheeler, the Inlander, completed its final trip in 1912. What is interesting about the cordwood is there are still piles of old cordwood lying along the banks of the river, never used and still remain after 100 years. In one location visited on our Skeena River Historic Journey, there are six piles lying adjacent to the river that are in different stages of rot and decay but still identifiable. The best way to view these historic cordwood piles is to join us on our Skeena River Historic Journey by Jet Boat, a 5-day tour from Hazelton to Port Edward.



The Guests of UNBC Adventure Tours

We have had some amazing guests over the past five years of tours. Many of them are repeat guests and all with a passion for adventure. Here are some photos from some of the groups we have had over the years.



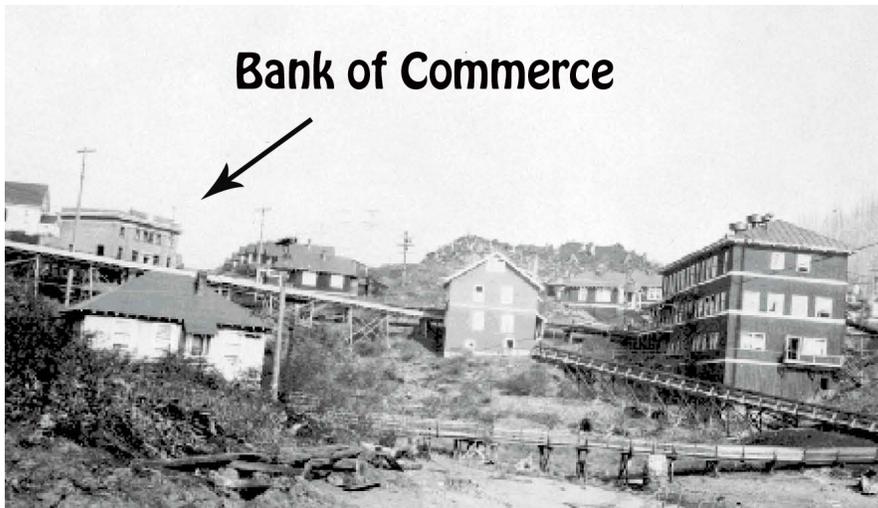
From top left counter-clockwise:

- Alice Arm & Kitsault Tour, August 2018
- Ghost Towns of the East Line, May 2018
- Fort George Historic River Journey, May 2017
- Canneries of the North Coast, May 2017
- Anyox Exploration, 2017
- Skeena River Historic Tour, 2017

The Most Remote Bank in Canada

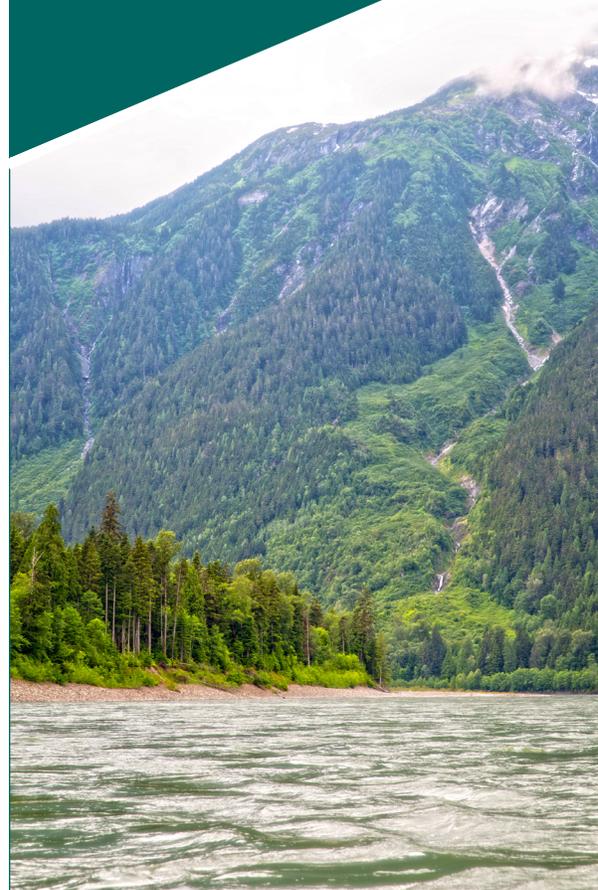
In the small copper mining town of Anyox on the remote north coast of British Columbia, local residents had been using the 'company store' as a bank to cash their bi-monthly cheques. This was not an ideal situation for the 2500 residents as long lines and delays occurred on payday. Accessible only by boat, the town soon got its own bank in 1919. The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce announced they would be opening a branch, known as "the most remote bank in Canada." Work began immediately and within a year, the distinctive red brick building in town was built. The bank was built in the center of town at the junction of Main Street and the Old Mine Road.

Visiting the town now, you will see the forest has taken over the buildings but the large pile of red bricks and the brick-lined vault walls provide the clues as to the purpose of this building. The first thing guests do when exploring the building is to scour the vault for forgotten or misplaced bags of money. Unfortunately, for our guests, none have walked away with anything suspicious or quit their jobs immediately after the tour.



The Usk Bunny

Jet boating down the 'River of Mists', or Skeena River as it is better known, the anticipation builds as we make our way around each bend in hopes of seeing the resident rabbit of enormous proportions. The guests are told that the odds of seeing it are almost as sure as "death and taxes." Some guests can not contain themselves but then we round the corner near the tiny town of Usk and there lies the "Giant Bunny" towering over the river. Surprisingly it takes many of the guests awhile to see this massive bunny but once seen it is always easy to spot again. Our Skeena River Historic Journey provides an opportunity to see this local legend.





The Alice Arm School house & the mystery of Ronnie's coat rack!

The once thriving silver mining town of Alice Arm in the early 1900s was home to the Dolly Varden Silver Mine and a dozen or so cabins and homesteads. Alice Arm is one of our stops on the Kitsault & Alice Arm: The Ultimate Ghost Town Adventure. Every place we visit always has some interesting stories...and Alice Arm is no exception.

The Alice Arm Schoolhouse is one of the original town structures that is still standing. Completed in the fall of 1921, teachers and students moved in on October 21 of that year. At the entrance of the school is a coatroom and on all the walls there were coat hooks for all the students to hang their jackets up. Each hook had their name above it and one of the names that remains is that of Ronnie. Jump ahead 70 years and Rob Bryce, our Northern BC Adventures coordinator, received an email from Ron Hadland inquiring about the Alice Arm tour. After some correspondence, it became apparent that Ron was in fact Ronnie who used to hang his jacket there every day while in school.



Alice Arm School Is Completed

The public School which was finished on Friday, is now ready for occupation and it is expected that school will be held there on Monday.

The main room is 23ft. by 29ft. inside, and an ante room in front, 10ft. by 14ft. Toilets, wood-shed and coal bin are situated at the rear of the school room, and a closet has been built in the school room for the storage of school supplies.

The inside of the building downstairs has been V-jointed and varnished throughout, and big windows give lots of light.

The living quarters for the teacher is upstairs and this has been beaver-boarded and tinted and makes a very pleasant room indeed. The public library of Alice Arm will be located in the New School, under the supervision of Miss Boa.

The school, now it is completed, is a great improvement over the old quarters in the Anglican Church and is a credit to any town the size of Alice Arm. Great credit is due to the public spirited citizens of Alice Arm for the energetic manner in which they carried the project out.

The School cost in the neighbourhood of \$2500.

A play platform, 20ft. by 24ft. will be built in front of the school as soon as possible, for the use of the children.