

THE SKEENA

A JOURNEY THROUGH NATURE,
CULTURE AND TRADITIONS



PEOPLE MOVING PEOPLE



VIA Rail Canada

THE SKEENA ROUTE

The *Skeena*[™] train travels 1,160 km between the Rockies and the north Pacific coast through remarkable and varied landscapes.

Great stretches of wilderness, lakes and rivers punctuated by settlements, farms and sawmills span this section of Canada's northern transcontinental rail line, completed in 1914 by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway.

The ancient traditions of the native peoples, the not-too-distant pioneer days of sternwheelers and panning for gold and modern history have all left their mark alongside the tracks.

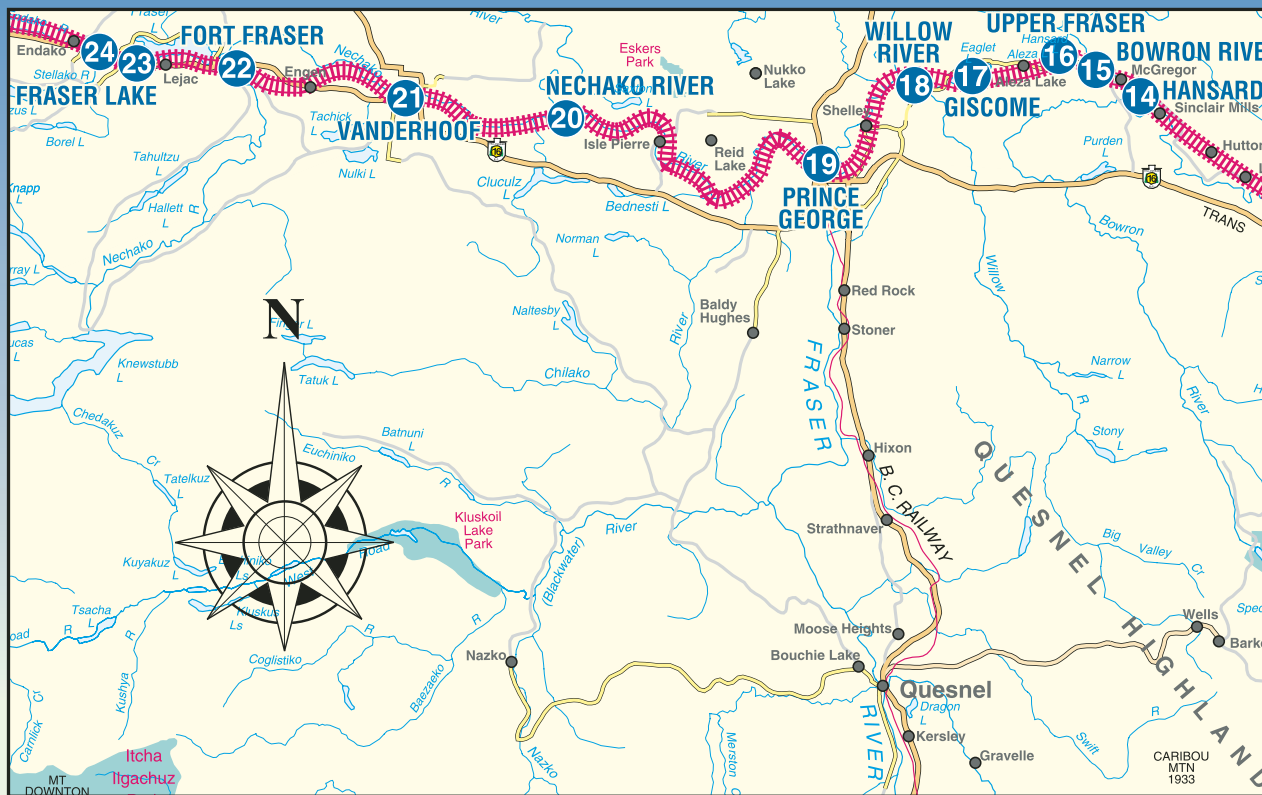
Many villages and towns along the line were surveyed and named by the railway. Important industries across the region include forestry, agriculture, mining, tourism and commercial fishing.

Canadian National trains carry coal, grain, lumber and mixed freight, and weigh as much as 14,000 tonnes. (Try counting the rail cars in passing trains!)

Wildlife such as bear, moose, elk, deer, wolves, coyotes, eagles, hawks and seals may be seen during the trip, depending on season and chance.



- 1 JASPER**, mile 0 (pop. 5,000). World-famous for skiing, hiking and outdoor sports, Jasper attracts tourists from around the world and is said to be among the country's most-photographed places. Because Jasper National Park is a wildlife sanctuary, it is common to see all sorts of wild animals in their natural habitat. Elk and mule deer often wander the main street of the town.
- 2 YELLOWHEAD PASS**, mile 17.5 (elev. 1131 metres). Crest of Yellowhead Pass, Alberta – B.C. border, change between Mountain and Pacific time zones. Highest part of the *Skeena* route. Miette River flows eastward. Westward, water flows into Yellowhead Lake, miles 20 to 24, en route to Fraser River and Pacific Ocean. Southeast across lake is Mount Fitzwilliam (2,911 metres).
- 3 FRASER RIVER**, mile 25, westward. Visible for most of journey to Prince George as it grows manifold. Major salmon stream and longest river within B.C. borders, flowing over 1,300 kilometres to Pacific Ocean. Named after explorer Simon Fraser.
- 4 MOOSE LAKE**, miles 36 to 43.7. Thunder Falls south across lake, mile 38. Fraser River re-emerges by the tracks at railway junction of Red Pass, mile 44.
- 5 MOUNT ROBSON**, miles 12 to 14 Robson subdivision; miles 52 to 62 Albreda subdivision (3,954 metres). Highest mountain in Canadian Rockies. Height and horizontal strata make it easily recognized. Indian name Yu-hai-has-hun, "Mountain of the Spiral Road." Surrounded by 2,172 sq. km Mount Robson Provincial Park, founded 1913.
- 6 TETE JAUNE CACHE**, miles 0 to 4.7. Railway construction town of over 2,000 people and head of navigation for Fraser River sternwheeler travel from 1911 to 1913. Railway enters Rocky Mountain Trench: Rockies to north, Cariboo Mountains to south. Train may loop south 22.5 km at junction.



7 DUNSTER, mile 23.4. Rare general store and post office, north side, serving rural community. Station built in 1913.

8 RAUSH RIVER BRIDGE, mile 32.7. Second-longest of *Skeena* route, 315 metres. Eddy Bridge, mile 39. Rest of train visible (north side) on unusual curved concrete bridge.

9 MCBRIDE, mile 43.4 and mile 0 (pop. 720). Established as railway divisional point, 1913. Station, built 1919, is reminder of elegant railway architecture once common on line.

10 TUNNEL, mile 18.1. Length, 250 metres.

11 MOUNT RIDER, mile 22. Peak to the north (2,513 metres) named after writer Sir Henry Rider Haggard (1856-1925), who rode on that train in 1916.

12 CRESCENT SPUR, LOOS, DOME CREEK, miles 30 to 56. Sawmills and stores have long since closed, but farming and logging continue. Helicopter hiking and ski lodge by tracks at Crescent Spur.

13 PENNY, mile 69.5. Once a bustling sawmill settlement, now one of most remote stretches of line. Chinook salmon hatchery makes use of clear spring water.

14 HANSARD BRIDGE, mile 99.1. Railway bridge over Fraser River also as public road. Traffic controlled by signal operator working in cabin on bridge.

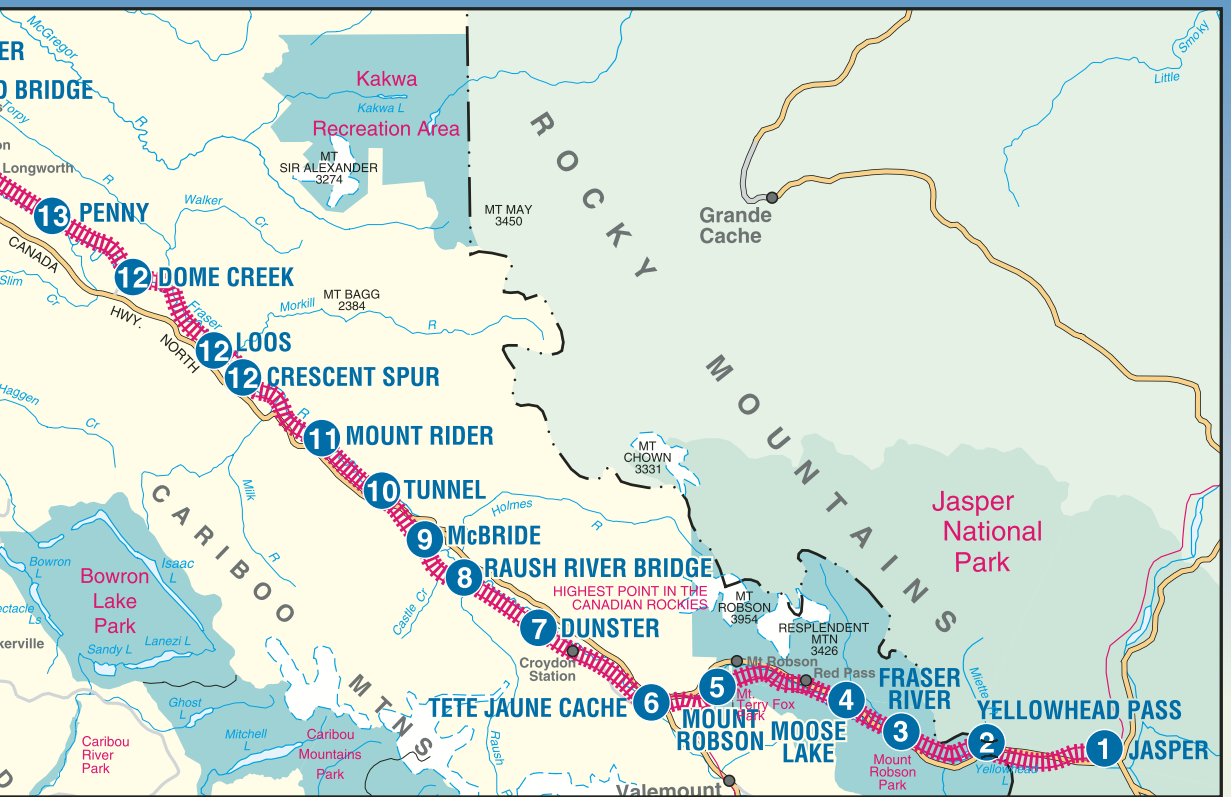
15 BOWRON RIVER, mile 101. Large tributary of Fraser River.

16 UPPER FRASER, mile 104. Train passes through sawmill yards. Track heads away from Rockies past Hansard, Aleza and Eaglet lakes.



17 GISCOME, mile 122. Once had largest sawmill north of Vancouver. Concrete foundations near track show where it stood. Greenish igneous rock quarried here for railway ballast.

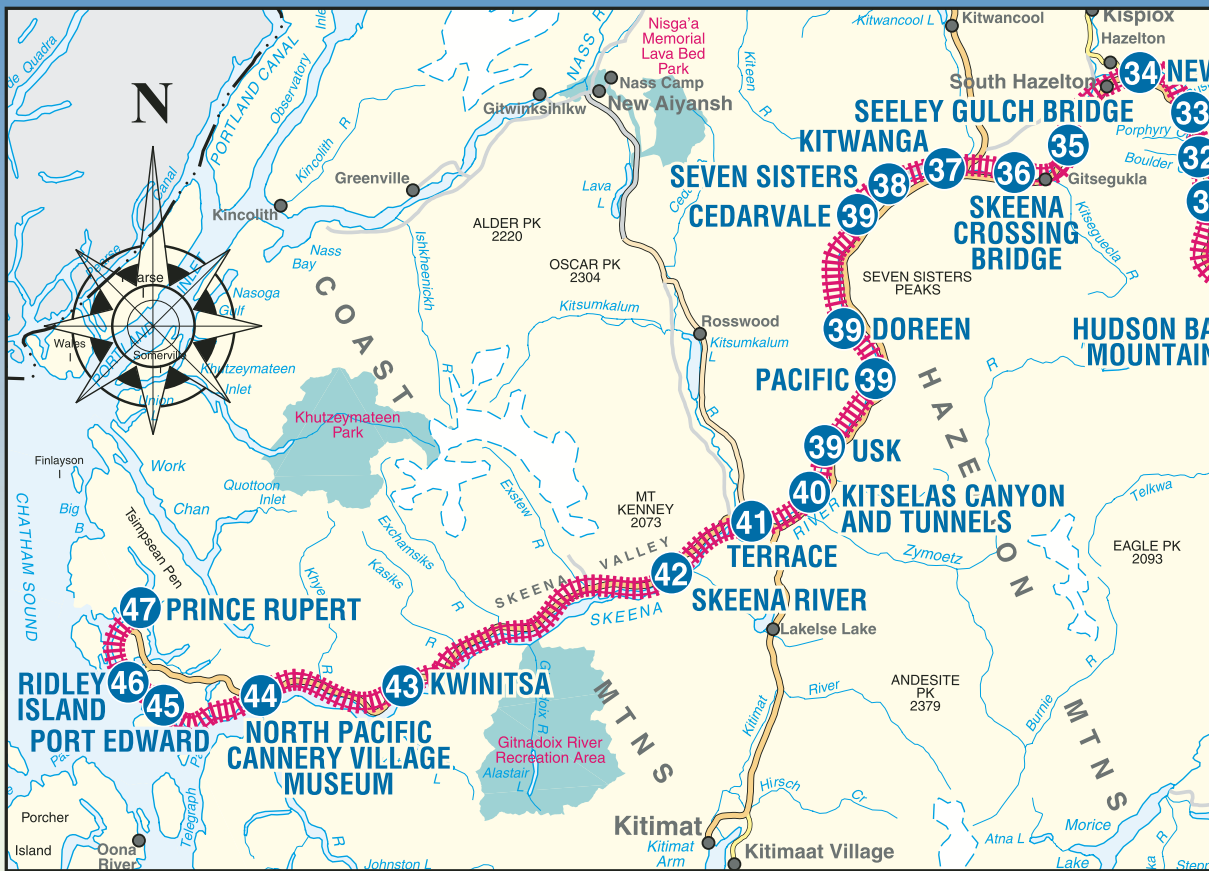
18 WILLOW RIVER, mile 127. General store visible near track, north side.



- 19 PRINCE GEORGE**, mile 140 and mile 0 (pop. 75,200). Three pulp mills and an oil refinery, north side of Fraser River. Largest city in northern B.C.; major manufacturing and service centre, transportation crossroads and seat of University of Northern British Columbia. Railway bridge at east side of city is over 800 metres long. Next to C.N. rail yards is Central Interior Railway Museum.
- 20 NECHAKO RIVER**, major tributary of Fraser River. *Skeena* follows it more than 80 km and crosses at mile 95. Upstream, Nechako waters are used to generate electricity for one of world's largest aluminum smelters, at Kitimat.
- 21 VANDERHOOF**, mile 69 (pop 4,500). Geographic centre of B.C.; local centre for dairy farming and forestry.

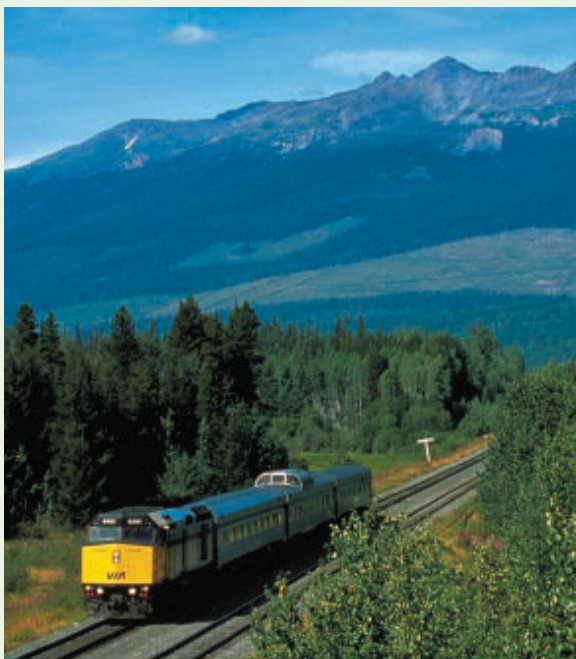
- 22 FORT FRASER**, mile 94.3. Near site of fur-trading post built in 1806 by explorer Simon Fraser. Last spike to complete Grand Trunk Pacific Railway driven at mile 93.3 on April 7, 1914.
- 23 FRASER LAKE**, mile 98 to 109. South side: columns of volcanic rock near mile 99; Mouse Mountain, mile 107.
- 24 FRASER LAKE**, mile 108 (pop. 1,300). Village founded by railway. Now supported by sawmills, tourism and molybdenum mine south of Endako. Railway crosses Endako River eight times, miles 10 to 21.





25 BURNS LAKE, mile 35 (pop. 2,130). Centre for Lakes District, popular fishing and boating region. Lake of same name east of village, south side, miles 24 to 35. Decker Lake to the west, miles 40.3 to 48.

26 ROSE LAKE, mile 51.3. Amid rural community of same name. Watershed for Upper Bulkley (Skeena system) to west and Endako (Fraser system) to east. Railway crosses Bulkley river 11 times.



27 HOUSTON, mile 85 (pop. 4,000). Centre for recreational lake and river fishing in area. Biggest fly-fishing rod in world and sculpture of steelhead trout in gardens, south side.

28 TELKWA, mile 116 (pop. 1,100). Wet'sewet'en name for "Where the rivers meet"; junction of Telkwa and Bulkley rivers. Service centre for area until Smithers founded.

29 SMITHERS, mile 125 and mile 0 (pop. 5,800). Founded by railway in 1913. Recreation destination; service centre for forestry, mining and agriculture. Railway station built in 1918.

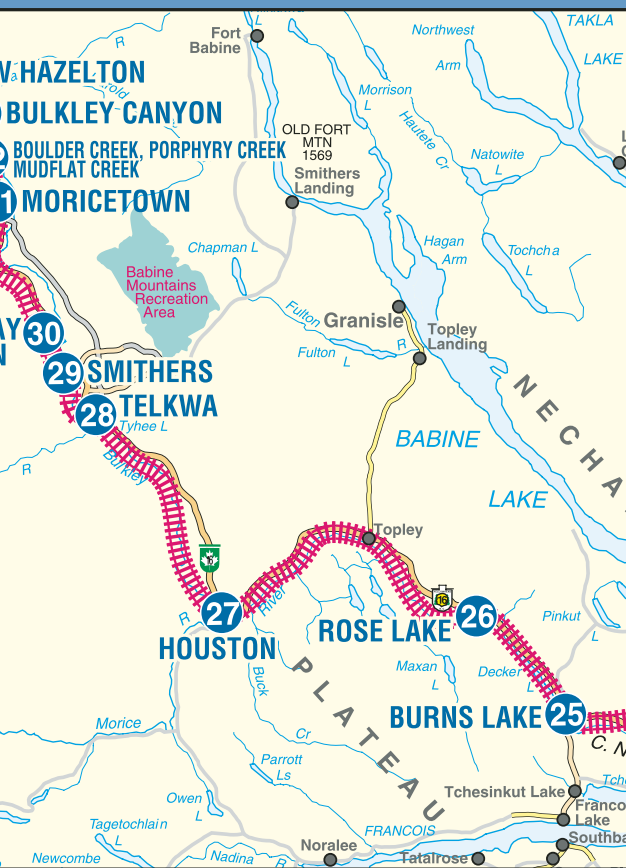
30 HUDSON BAY MOUNTAIN, (2,560 metres), Kathryn Glacier and Twin Falls, mile 4. One of best views of a glacier from a passenger train in Canada.

31 MORICETOWN, mile 22. Wet'sewet'en settlement. A vital fishing site for at least 5,000 years.

32 Bridges up to 48 metres high: **BOULDER CREEK**, mile 28.4, **PORPHYRY CREEK**, mile 31.3, **MUDFLAT CREEK**, mile 36.1

33 BULKLEY CANYON, miles 39 to 44. Three tunnels take train past canyon; Bulkley River churns below. Eastern tunnel, mile 40.8, longest on route (630 metres).

34 NEW HAZELTON, mile 46 (pop. 820). One of several communities clustered near junction of Bulkley and Skeena rivers (to north, miles 49.5 to 50). Valley curves around large mountain to south named Stegyawden by Gitksan people and Rocher Deboule by 19th-century miners (2,438 meters).



- 41 TERRACE**, mile 132 and mile 0 (pop. 13,400). One of three cities on *Skeena's* route; service centre for Skeena Valley and northwest. Railway junction with branch line to Kitimat, 62 km south
- 42 SKEENA RIVER**, translated from native Tsimshian as "Water of the clouds" and from the Gitksan as "River of mists." Trading route and fish source for thousands of years. Many trackside waterfalls, mile 40 to 60. Pacific Ocean tidal zone begins as river widens out. Snow from avalanches often seen near tracks in winter and spring.
- 43 KWINITSA**, mile 48. Original site of station; now railway museum in Prince Rupert.
- 44 NORTH PACIFIC CANNERY VILLAGE MUSEUM**, mile 81.9, west side. Oldest cannery village on coast of B.C.
- 45 PORT EDWARD**, mile 86. Fishing boats dock at this village. Pulp mill, east side. Cross bridge onto Kaien Island.
- 46 RIDLEY ISLAND**, mile 87.3. Grain and coal trains empty cargoes here; ocean freighters load up at massive terminals built in 1980s.
- 47 PRINCE RUPERT**, mile 93 (pop. 17,700). VIA station located in the B.C. Ferries terminal. End of rail line; gateway by air and sea to Pacific coast. Forestry, fishing and tourism support the city's economy. Museum of Northern B.C. displays 10,000 years of coastal history. Visitors can tour harbour to see ancient village sites and watch carvers at work.

35 SEELEY GULCH BRIDGE, mile 50.5. Height, 59 metres; length, 275 metres. View north.

36 SKEENA CROSSING BRIDGE, mile 62.3. *Skeena* train crosses river for which it is named. Height, 50 metres; length, 288 metres. Village of Gitsegukla across river to west.

37 KITWANGA, mile 73. Locally called Gitwangak, a Gitksan village. On south side is one of many totem poles for which area is famous.

38 SEVEN SISTERS, miles 74 to 90. Row of sawtooth peaks to south. Tunnel, mile 78.9, length, 200 metres.

39 CEDARVALE, mile 85.9, **DOREEN**, mile 101, **PACIFIC**, mile 106.9, remote settlements. At **USK**, mile 119.3, are orange-and-white towers of rare water-powered car ferry across Skeena River.

40 KITSELAS CANYON AND TUNNELS, miles 121 to 123. Skeena River tumbles among jagged rocks (south side), rail line skirts canyon through four close tunnels (miles 121.9 to 122.8). Best seen from dome or back of train.

RAILWAY SIGNS TO WATCH FOR

Siding and Station Name Boards

Newer siding and station name boards are white with a black CN logo and name.



Older station name boards are also white with a black name, but the names are in capital letters and the signs are mounted on buildings.

Mileposts

Milepost numbers increase from east to west, and return to zero at the start of each subdivision. Subdivisions are 43 to 146 miles (69 to 235 km) long.



For more information, contact your travel agent,
 call VIA Rail Canada at
 1 888 VIA-RAIL (1 888 842-7245)
 TTY 1 800 268-9503 (hearing impaired)
 or visit viarail.ca.

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