



Glaciers of Mount Garibaldi above Garibaldi Lake, British Columbia. As either a day hike or an overnight, this is one of B.C.'s most spectacular hikes, chock full of views, wilflowers and wildlife.

Serene Garibaldi Lake

Hiking one of the most beautiful trails in British Columbia

BY MOUNTAIN MAN DAVE

Shortly after Labor Day, Mo Swanson, Cecile, and I took a five-day backpack to Garibaldi Lake in Garibaldi Provincial Park, 1.5 hours north of Vancouver, B.C. On Thursday afternoon, September 7, 2006 we left Seattle and drove to the very nice large campground in Alice Lake Provincial Park, ten miles short of the turnoff to the trail to Garibaldi Lake. The town of Squamish, an hour north of Vancouver, has restaurants and supermarkets for the hungry. Both the Alice Lake campground and the campgrounds at or near Garibaldi Lake are extremely popular and quickly fill up during the summer, especially on weekends, but by going later in the year and arriving at Garibaldi Lake early on Friday, we figured to avoid the crowds, and this indeed happened.

The next day we drove to Rubble Creek Parking Lot (1,900 feet), the trailhead for

Garibaldi Lake. It is here that you pay for your campsite permit, \$5/person/night (Canadian funds, cash only), for either Garibaldi Lake or Taylor Meadows. (Campsites there are nonreservable, and those at Garibaldi Lake of course fill up first.) At first there is a climb of 2,530 feet in 3.7 miles to a junction (4,430 feet), on a wide well-graded, but totally boring, trail in woods. Here, the left fork leads up about 400 feet to Taylor Meadows Campground in 0.9 mile, but take the right fork and soon pass first Barrier Lake and then Lesser Garibaldi Lake, both real beauties. You continue climbing to about 100 feet above Garibaldi Lake (4,850 feet), then drop down to cross its outlet stream on a sturdy bridge. Soon you will reach the campground, 1.9 miles from the junction.

There are plenty of campsites at Garibaldi Lake, and, having our complete pick of them, we chose what are probably the

best ones, #26 and #27. These campsites are located just before the second kitchen shelter on the lake. This was a fortunate choice, for the next day was pretty stormy and we spent most of the time inside the nearby shelter (fully enclosed, but without heat).

There were still some low clouds on day three, but we set off early to climb the forbidding Black Tusk (7,598 feet), a huge volcanic plug around which everything eroded eons ago. First we climbed 750 feet in 1.6 miles to Black Tusk Junction, picking up the main trail, which goes past Taylor Meadows, through Helm Pass, and north out Helm Creek past a third campground and down to the Cheakamus Lake Trail. Soon you reach a turnoff for the Black Tusk, and a steady climb presents incredible views of huge Garibaldi Lake with the glaciers of Mount Garibaldi and other peaks at its far end. Up high, the Black

DAVE JETTE



DAVE JETTE



Top: Hikers ascend to the top of Black Tusk, an eroding volcanic plug.
Bottom: Astounding views of Mount Garibaldi from Panorama Ridge.

Tusk Trail degenerates into a long steep scree slope—slow going—and we finally reached the base of the Tusk 300 feet below its top, getting spectacular views northward now as well. To the west, in the distance, loomed the Tantalus Range. It was now necessary to traverse along the base in order to reach a chimney for penetrating the sheer lower wall of the Tusk. Mo and I carried on alone, but upon reaching said chimney we judged it to be too dangerous and turned back. (Above the chimney, which is about 50

feet high, it is an easy walkup to the top, which Cecile and I have done before.)

The next day we climbed Panorama Ridge, the other outstanding day hike in the area. Again we first ascended to Black Tusk Junction, and then followed the main trail up to Helm Pass (5,750 feet) and took the side trail past Black Tusk Lake up to the top of Panorama Ridge (6,900 feet). Again the views were utterly fantastic: Garibaldi Lake and glaciers to the south, more glaciers to the east, Black Tusk to the northwest, and the

Tantalus Range to the west. (The Cinder Cone just to the north used to be an interesting attraction, which Cecile and I walked up some twenty-five years ago, but now it's basically a hill with plenty of foliage.) After lunch I continued for twenty minutes atop the open ridge on a path to where it dropped off towards Gentian Peak and the Helm Glacier—a wonderful ridge walk! For variety, on our way back we continued descending on the main trail to Taylor Meadows and then took a somewhat primitive trail directly over to Garibaldi Lake.

Cecile and I agree that this Garibaldi Lake backpack is probably the most beautiful one in the Northwest, certainly providing the most bang for the buck (and fairly easy backpacking). The Garibaldi Lake area is ably reported on in the Mountaineers' guidebook, *103 Hikes in Southwestern British Columbia* by Jack Bryceland and Mary and David Macaree. The 1:50,000 Canadian topo Cheakamus River (92 G/14) covers most of the area, although for exploring its far eastern part you'll also need Mamquam Mountain (92 G/15).

Mountain Man Dave (aka Dave Jette) is a WTA member from Seattle. ♦

Trip Essentials

Garibaldi Lake, Black Tusk and Panorama Ridge

Hikable: July–October

Total mileage: 11 miles round trip to Garibaldi Lake, 27.6 miles round trip to Black Tusk and Panorama Ridge

Elevation gain: to Garibaldi Lake, 2,600 feet, total trip, 7,700 feet

Map: Canadian topo maps Cheakamus River, Mamquam Mountain

To get there: Turn right off Hwy. 99 just after you cross the Rubble Creek Bridge, 23 miles north of Squamish or 12 miles south of Whistler onto a paved road that leads 1.5 miles to the Garibaldi Lake parking lot.