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A CITY IN  
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TRAVEL FROM  
EAST › WEST

VALUE  
ENGINEERING

BURGUNDY ON  
THE BENCH

ARTS FOOD & DRINK LIFESTYLE MOTORING TRAVEL

# REMARKABLE ROCKIES

by jay kana | photos by jay kana

Road tripping  
through the  
East Kootenay's

*As someone who's driven over a million kilometres  
over 29 years, I'm always ready for a road trip...*



There's an outdoor space to relax, eat and drink, it's family friendly and is a wonderful way to spend a few hours.

Keep your nature "high" going and take the short 20 minute drive to the famous Kicking Horse Mountain Resort. Hop in the Kicking Horse Gondola and be whisked up to a sensational 7,700 feet and enjoy views of the iconic Rocky Mountains, Columbia River Wetlands and of course, Golden. Once at the summit, I racked up another 10,000-ish steps by doing a long hike, some moderate climbing and being thankful for plenty of digital storage on my iPhone.

While you're there, get your paws on the Ranger Assist Program Tour, which provides a unique perspective and safe encounter with resident bear, Boo. There's a feeding (food is dropped from a chairlift into his area) along with plenty of bear-related information about Boo, the area and its history, including Boo's 20 years here.

Wrap up with dinner at any one of the local restaurants; I opted for a patio seat at the Rockwater Grill and Bar for a classic burger and fries.

A quaint lunch spot in town is the Bacchus Books & Cafe, which is primarily a bookstore, and the service, food and coffee is oh-so superb!

Rest up at the Rooms at Riveredge, conveniently downtown and backing onto the Kicking Horse River. A comfortable bed, a modern room, a scenic setting and an above average experience make this your ideal lodging choice.

In the morning before you head out, you must, must, must get to Golden Bakery & Deli for breakfast and some road snacks...the fresh croissants are simply perfect!

## St. Eugene

Enough of heading west; now we head south for three hours along Highway 93 and 95, complete with seemingly never-ending views until you reach Cranbrook's St. Eugene Golf Resort & Casino.

Previously known as the Kootenay Indian Residential School until it closed in 1970, Ktunaxa Nation Elder Mary Paul inspiringly said that "since it was in that school that our culture was taken away, it should be there that it is taken back."

Yes, it boasts beautifully kept grounds, an astonishing interior, first-class facilities, 125 rooms, event facilities, a championship golf course and much, much more. However, what resonated the most for me was the preservation and sharing of history within the walls. From pictures, mosaics, images, artifacts to statues and other ways to honour the memories of decades ago, St. Eugene has found a way to balance modern amenities with remembering and paying tribute those who came before them within these walls.

Their website says "The peoples of the Ktunaxa Nation and the Shuswap Indian Band opened the golf course, casino, and hotel in the early 2000s, the KOA RV Park in 2017, creating an exciting future for this place from its dark past. This inspiring achievement, which builds on our truth and our story, is a testament to the strength of our people, our nations, and our cultures, and to our commitment to moving forward.

We know that in these times, people from across North America have questions about how to honour children and survivors of Indian

*c o n t i n u e d . . .*





Residential Schools in a way that is respectful and appropriate. We appreciate this and appreciate you choosing to be with us. By spending time with us at St. Eugene Resort, you not only help us to honour those children but to build a brighter future.”

The food, service and room comfort were great, as was playing a few holes on the course and truly, it was an enjoyable and educational experience. The staff were exceptionally courteous and informative, as well.

Balancing the anticipation of its history, reflecting upon the past, and appreciating the progress that has been made here will help elevate your time here.

## Kimberley & St. Mary Lake

An 20 minute jump westbound on the 95A from St. Eugene will bring you to quaint Kimberley, a small town full of charm. My star attraction was the world’s largest free-standing Cuckoo Clock. For only a dollar, “Happy Hans” will emerge and yodel, yodel, and yodel some more for your entertainment! This walkable town is oh-so photogenic and be sure to visit the Mining Railway & Interpretive Centre. There’s a very cool and inviting place called The Snowdrift Cafe that you’ve gotta visit for the food, coffee, service and memorable decor.

Also, Kimberley is known as the “City of Festivals” and smartly, has a place called The Platzl which is pedestrian-only, and has a little bit of everything for nearly everyone.

A hidden gem unearthed to me by a local expert comes via St. Mary Lake. First, the 20 km drive made it on my “Top 5 best drives ever” list. In fact, I did the drive six times over two days! Second, the peacefulness, calmness, elegance and breathtaking views saw over 100 photographs and videos captured.

It’s one of the most majestic places I’ve experienced in all my travels over four decades.

At sunset, the neighbouring St. Mary River glistens with sheer serenity from all angles.

Interestingly, as I was shooting a video, I made friends with a fellow who’d moved here from the states and we’re still in touch! Do not go to St. Mary’s Lake; it’s my hidden gem. Fine, go. Maybe. But let me drive both ways.

## Cranbrook

30 minutes southbound brings you to Cranbrook where I traded four wheels for two via an e-bike tour. I did the Northstar Rails to Trails route and while it spans 28 km and brings you from Cranbrook to Kimberley, my guide and I reached the crossing of the St. Mary River before turning around. I’d say it’s about the halfway point of the trail. This winding multi-use trail was completed in 2010 and has designated rest stops with information to accompany the stunning views.

The path itself is well maintained, smooth and is ideal for all

skill-levels. While mostly flat, there are some elevated areas where the electric boost came in handy for me.

A big thanks to North Star Bicycle Co for providing the e-bike!

Since I lost all those calories biking for a few hours, I had to replenish them, and that I did at Cranbrook’s hot restaurant, The Firehall. Did I have a lot of spicy chicken wings? Yes. Did I replace all the calories I burned and then some? Yes. Was the food delicious? Yes.

Wrapping up the day was the drive back to St. Eugene to spend my second of two nights there.

## Fernie

The last stop on my Rockies Road Trip comes via fantastic Fernie via another scenic drive through southeastern British Columbia, this time at 70-ish minutes.

Driving into town saw me have a quick Italian-inspired lunch at The Loaf before heading down the street to Beanpod for lots of chocolate and gelato for dessert.

After a quick stroll of the area, I did the short drive to Mount Fernie Provincial Park, where walked/hiked a couple of trails to work off all that food.

There’s a cool app that has six themed self-guided tour options from heritage to nature to arts to food, photography and more.

Then the rain came. Hard. Loud. Angry. Aggressive. I turned to the trusty Atlas Obscura to see what was interesting and close-ish and I was rewarded with this: The World’s Largest Tandem Axle Truck in Sparwood, a mere 20 minutes north. There’s plenty of video and pictures on my Instagram page showing its sheer size.

Go see the Terex Titan, that towers at 22 feet 7 inches high green machine with 12 foot tires, 3,300 horsepower and an over 10,000 cubic inch engine.

After a leisurely drive back to town, I checked into the Historic 901, full of luxury suites. Reimagined from the town’s original public school from over a century ago, these units are upscale, comfortable and quite close to downtown and the ski hill.

My choice of cuisine for my last night was Nevados, an authentic Tapas spot in town...I certainly chose well. A variety of tacos, a classic margarita and churro bites for dessert made for a stellar meal.

After another great night’s sleep, I packed up and enjoyed the 3 hour-ish drive back to Calgary to fly back home along the Crow’s Nest Highway, Highway 22 and Highway 2.

It’s a lovely drive that’s quite the contrast to crowded urban roads.

If you’re thinking of experiencing the East Kootenay Rockies, you should. You absolutely should. It’s a beautiful part of Canada that needs to be experienced, whether it’s your first or hundredth time. There’s something enchanting about this part of the world, from nature to its attractions, to the variety of ways to appreciate nature and plenty in between. I’ll certainly be returning sooner than later.

I’m happy to answer any questions you have as you plan your adventure.

kootenayrockies.com  
hellobc.com

**Thank you to Mazda Canada for providing the all-new 2023 Mazda CX-50 for my journey. Watch my full review on page 45!**

