

Connect with wild side; Diverse terrain and wildlife a magnet for visitors

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From the Cariboo Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, the Cariboo/Chilcotin region offers adventure enthusiasts and animal lovers a host of experiences to help explore their wild side.

Steep cliffs and hoodoos break the grassland benches of Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park to provide a habitat for endangered species such as bighorn sheep.

Rugged peaks, alpine meadows and waterfalls dominate the diverse ecosystem of Ts'ylos Provincial Park, attracting grizzly and black bears, bighorn sheep, wolverines, moose, mountain goats and cougars, as well as bald eagles.

HORSING AROUND

Tucked in the Nemiah Valley in the heart of the Chilcotin is the Brittany Triangle where more than 155,000 hectares of wilderness is home to wild horses.

Believed to be descendants of Spanish mustangs, the horses feed in sprawling grass and sedge meadows and are watched over by conservationists, biologists and, more recently, by Canada's only wild-horse patrol ranger.

Visitors can catch a glimpse of the horses while staying at the **Elkin Creek Guest Ranch where guests are taken out on horseback in search of the mustangs. www.adventurewestresorts.com/elkin**

JUST FOR EWE

The Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park, situated where the Chilcotin and Fraser rivers meet is where some 600 bighorn sheep call home.

The park is a nationally significant grassland ecosystem. Grasslands in B.C. cover less than two per cent of the land mass, yet hold nearly 40 per cent of the province's species at risk. These include the sharp-tailed grouse, spotted bat, rubber boa and the flammulated owl.

Visit the Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Society's website at www.cconserv.org

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

The Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary at 100 Mile offers some of the best birdwatching in the region.

Information and interpretive signs are spread throughout the park, making it easy for even novice birdwatchers to identify the numerous species of birds that inhabit the park.

Birds to look out for include swans, the pied-billed grebe, teals, lesser scaup, ruddy duck and spotted sandpiper.

Visit www.southcaribootourism.com

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- Colour Photo: CanWest News Service / Range Riders in the expansive, big-sky Chilcotin country head for the hills.

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