

BMN HIKE REPORT

Bear Mountain (Saturday, September 10, 2016)

By Mark Johnston



Time for lunch on the helipad just below the summit of Bear Mountain. Brad Spring photo.

Once again, we had Bear Mountain on our schedule, and, once again, we were facing some uncertainty about following through. The forecast called for clouds, and a chance of showers in the morning and the early afternoon. If we weren't going to have any views, we didn't want to drive all the way to Harrison Lake. But since we woke up to high cloud with a few streaks of blue sky, we decided to put our destination to a vote. A majority of those who voted elected to stick with the original plan. So, our destination settled, we piled into cars for the ninety-minute trip to Harrison.

The group of 11 hikers at the trailhead.
Brad Spring photo.

As we drove toward the eastern Fraser Valley, we were heading toward a thicker cloud cover and wondered whether we had made the right decision. But at this point there was no turning back. After a brief stop



at the lakefront to use the washroom facilities, we located the trailhead on the east side of the lake and prepared to ascend the 1000 m to the summit. Most of our route would be via the Bear Mountain Forest Service Road. Except for its steady uphill grade, we found the grass-covered road to have more the appearance of a country lane. At the outset we passed mining company signs that warned against trespassing. Knowing we were on a publicly owned road, we proceeded anyway. Just round the first switchback we came upon a structure containing trays upon trays of core samples, and, farther up the road,



there was a gated mine shaft, but it was clear that the mining activity that had taken place here was no longer current.

A remnant of mining: discarded trays of core samples.
Brad Spring photo.

Past the next bend in the road, we came upon a pretty little waterfall. The water that ran down over the moss-covered rock face looked like a beaded curtain, but one comprised of falling droplets, and we were happy to rest awhile in its thrall.

On the move again we continued to gain elevation. We were never far from the edge of the mountain and except for the trees would have had views all the way. But it was only when we crossed relatively open talus slopes, that we had a clear view out over the lake and toward the mountains on its west side. While shrubs and other plants have begun to fill in some of the open spaces, we could still look out and see Harrison Hot Springs Resort (spotlighted by a shaft of sun), the beachfront, and Mts. Agassiz and Woodside behind. We could see the lake's outlet, the Harrison River; and looking along the length of the lake, we had a nice view of Echo Island and Cascade Peninsula. Skies to the west were clearing and we began to hope for good views from the top.



First good views, looking across the lake toward the Harrison River; Harrison Hot Springs Resort is visible in the lower left hand corner of the photo. *Brad Spring photo.*

After a long traverse to the north, we cut back to the south and came to a marked fork: left for Bear Mountain, right for Bear Lake. We decided to see the lake first and then head for the mountain.

The north end of Bear Lake.
Brad Spring photo.

Still on road, we passed along the north end of the lake. This end, long and narrow, was covered in lily pads. We found a place where we could walk down to the water's edge for an unobstructed view. From this vantage point it was clear that there was a substantial area of open water to the south. What had looked initially to be more of a pond, proved ultimately to be an attractive and inviting body of water.



While we were at the lake, the sun began to shine, and we would enjoy its warming rays for the rest of the afternoon. We hastened back to the main road and continued along the increasingly overgrown track toward the peak. When the growth finally prevented further progress, we bypassed the road on an undulating trail through open forest. Even this was not without its obstacles, as we encountered a lot of blowdown, with the trail sometimes being rerouted around it.



**View from the summit,
looking down on the farms
of Agassiz-Harrison.**
Terry Puls photo.

We passed over a high point and then dropped down a little, at last pushing through a fringe of trees and out onto the open rock bluff and its “makes-it-all-worthwhile” prospect. Although clouds continued to obscure mountaintops, we had a roughly 270-degree view of valleys and hills, townsites and

agricultural fields. The ridge we were on juts out toward a major bend of the Fraser River, and we could look down at the river's braided channels and treed islands. Particularly striking were the farms of Agassiz-

Harrison, spread out, map-like, directly below us. We could also see the Harrison River and a portion of Harrison Lake.



Another view from the summit, looking toward Harrison River and Lake.
Terry Puls photo.

Most of our group sat on the helipad to eat lunch, but a few of us sat on the rock surface above it and, consequently, were more exposed to a stiff wind blowing. Those on the helipad had a warmer

time of it, but had to put up with bugs and be content with a more circumscribed view; those of us on the rock surface needed to put on two or three layers of clothing, but weren't bothered by insects and could look in all directions. After eating we moved back and forth between the two spots, discussing and photographing features near and far.

Our trip back down was very pleasant as we were now enjoying considerable sunshine. We stopped two or three times to drink water and eat a snack, most notably on the next to last switchback where we came to a long log (serving as a kind of "guard rail") on which we could all sit down.

Stopping to rest at long log.
Brad Spring photo.



It was nice to feel the sun's rays on our back, and, after nearly eight hours on the trail, it would have been easy to sit for a long time. But hard as it was, we put our water bottles back in our packs and got to our feet for the last little bit of descent. We had been a long time coming to do this hike, but now that we were finishing, it was a little bit tough to leave it behind!