

BMN TRIP REPORT

Yak Peak (September 13, 2008)

by Mark Johnston

On Saturday, September 13, we finally got around to doing one of our “more difficult” hikes, a climb up Yak Peak, which rises above the Coquihalla Highway near the road’s summit. Although short in distance—just six kilometres—this hike has an elevation gain of 840 metres, and given that the first kilometre is on level ground along the side of the highway, the uphill portion, an average grade of 42%!

On a beautifully clear day with the autumn colours beginning to show, eight of us were up for the challenge. We left the highway, dropped down the embankment, crossed a wet area, and started up the steep, tightly switchbacking trail to a boulder slope above. Clambering up the boulders, we reached the base of Yak’s impressive granite wall. From here we could see two climbing parties inching their way up along diagonally-running cracks.



Our group resting at lip of the subalpine bowl, with Needle Peak in the background. (Photo by Terry Puls)

For our part, we followed the base of the wall to the right, until we could begin to ascend on easier terrain. Nonetheless, as we headed upward, we had to make frequent use of our hands, both for balance and to pull ourselves up, sometimes by means of whatever branches bordered the trail.

Two hours from our cars, we reached the lip of the subalpine bowl below the Yak-Nak col. We paused to catch our breath, admire the view, and refuel a bit. The

highway appeared to be almost directly below us: we couldn't really see the slope we'd just come up. Prominent across the way were Needle Peak (looking very needle-like) and Coquihalla Mountain.



Group atop the southern sub-summit of Yak Peak. (Photo by Glen Stedham)

Looking in our direction of travel, we could see our objective—although we puzzled over whether we were indeed that close or maybe looking at a false summit—but our progress toward it was somewhat delayed as we sauntered through an expansive patch of juicily-ripe blueberries, all of us picking and eating them along the way!



Ian atop Yak's northerly summit. (Photo by Terry Puls)

We visited the southern sub-peak first before heading for the northerly summit and its panoramic views. Especially striking were the views north and west to the rows of steep, granitic peaks named after New and Old World animals: Llama, Alpaca, Vicuña, and Guanaco in front; Gamuza, Steinbok, Ibex, Chamois, and Gemse behind.

We took equally long coming down due to harvesting more blueberries, the steepness of the descent and our general desire to make a truly magnificent day last as long as possible.



Glen on the northerly summit of Yak Pk. (Photo by Terry Puls)