

Boulder Gardens and Babcock Falls Hiking Trails

The area of Mount Babcock, south of Tumbler Ridge, has excellent hiking opportunities. Four marked trails can be found here, ranging from short hikes below treeline to full day alpine adventures. The focal point of the area is the Core Lodge, a steel shed that has been converted into a day use lodge by the Ridge Riders snowmobile club. This guide covers two of the marked trails in the area.

Directions to the Core Lodge

From Tumbler Ridge, drive south on Hwy 52 (the Heritage Highway; the section heading south from town is known locally as the Boundary Road). The paved road passes the turnoff to Kinuseo Falls at km 12.7. Keep going straight on the Hwy 52 for another 6.8 km to a right turn onto the Core Lodge Road. This road is radio controlled - watch for industrial traffic. At 12.5 km, there is a fork. Take the right fork, following the sign saying "all other traffic". The left fork is for mine traffic only. From the Heritage Highway, it is 14 km to the Core Lodge.

Boulder Gardens (#35)

Time/Distance: 2-3 hours/4 km return
Rating: Moderate, steep and rocky in places ■

This route leads onto the southeast slopes of Mount Babcock, passing through a landscape of towering rock pinnacles. Some simple rock scrambling is necessary in places. From the Hwy 52, travel along the Core Lodge Road, then turn to the right at 13.3 km. Go up this road for 1 km to a signed parking lot.

The dome shaped mass of Mount Babcock has been explored for its coal since the 1970s, and Quintette Operating Corporation mined for 3 years on its northwest side. The top of the mountain is composed of a thick bed of resistant sandstone. This has slid on the underlying softer shales. Pieces of the sandstone have broken off, forming a labyrinth of large blocks that is known as the Boulder Gardens.

It is best to hike the circular route in a counterclockwise direction. It passes through an other-worldly landscape strewn with rock pillars, slabs, and boulders. There are many cracks and crevices between the rocks, so please

stick to the trail and supervise children carefully.

There are two short, interesting side trails: the Chimney Rock side trail leads up a narrow but safe chimney to an impressive view site. The Lichen Towers side trail leads into the heart of one of the most spectacular tower areas.

The route then climbs gently to Boulder Tarn, a small lake nestled in between the bluffs. The Pancake Rocks area has large boulders with thin beds of sandstone. The Two Towers side trail leads to panoramic view sites with some scrambling required. The Grassi Grind follows the safest route up through a challenging scree and boulder slope. This section ends in a narrow crack. This is the highest point of the circular route, which descends from here through a beautiful dry valley with more views, a cave, and boulders.

Babcock Falls (#34)

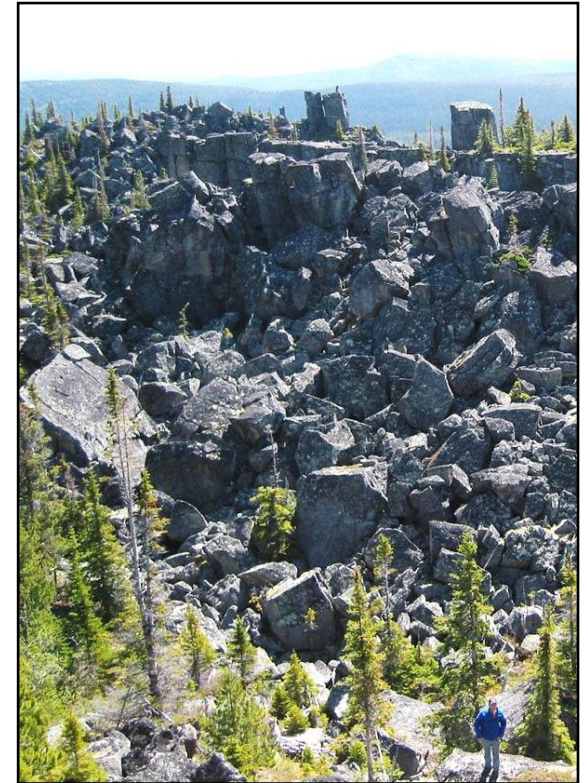
Time/Distance: 1-2 hours/2 km return
Rating: Easy ●

A short trail leads through pine forests and wetlands to 8 metre high Babcock Falls. The wet sections have wooden boardwalks thanks to donations from the Peace River Regional District. Some unique wetland flowers are found along the trail.

The trailhead is 200 metres before the Core Lodge, with the parking lot on the left side of the road at km 13.8. The trail crosses a small creek, crosses the mine access road (watch for truck traffic), descends through swampy willow thickets, then joins a reclaimed exploration road and passes into wet subalpine meadows. The tree and plant species found here contrast with those on the drier slopes of the Boulder Gardens.

The developed trail ends overlooking the falls, but a short steep path leads to the pool right at the base of the falls, which are formed from a lip of resistant sandstone. A permanent rope has been installed to help hikers on this section. Fossilized logs can be found in these rocks, especially around one small overhang with a good view of the falls.

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#35 Boulder Gardens

Rating: Moderate ■

Time: 2-3 hours

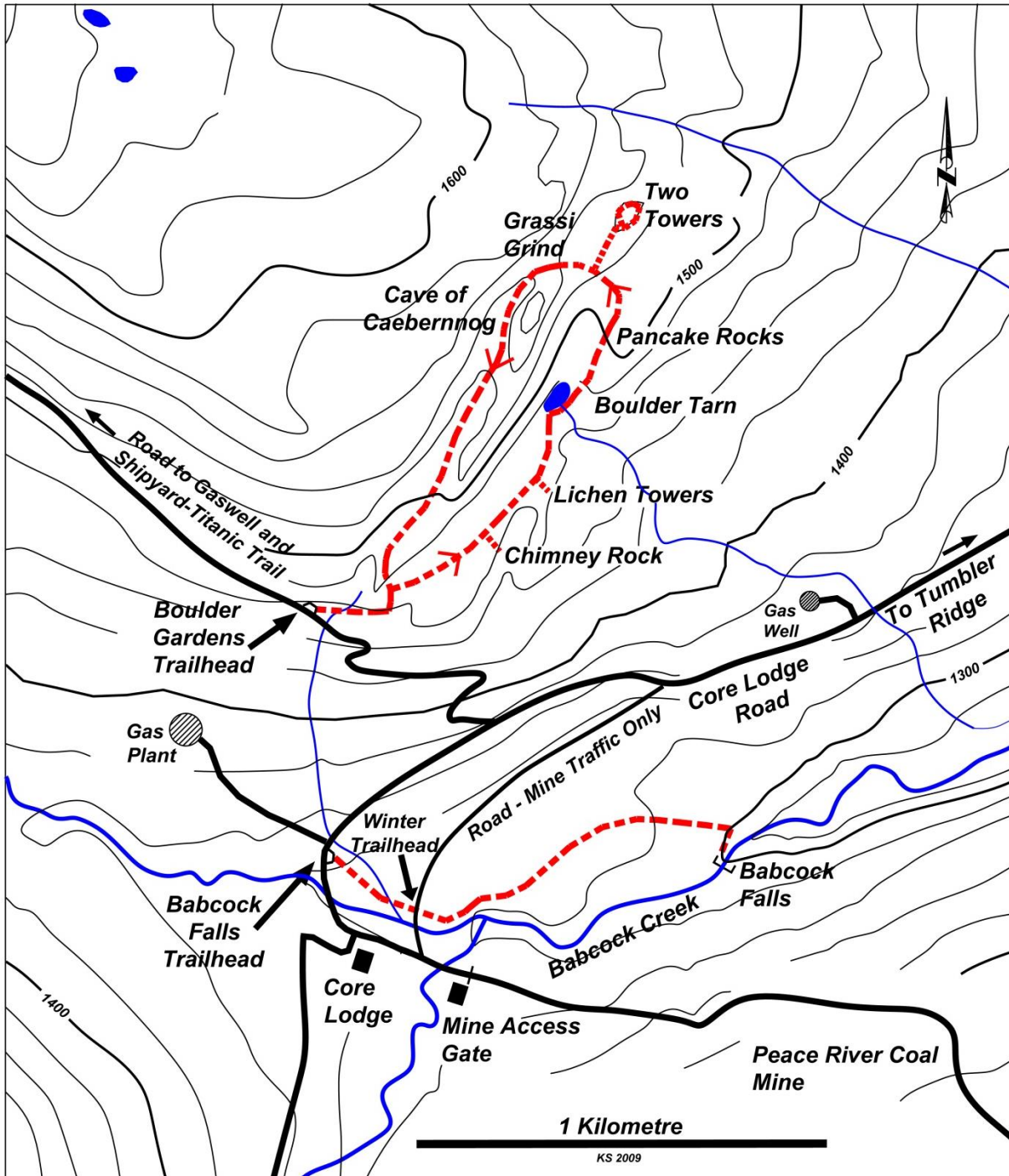


#34 Babcock Falls

Rating: Easy ●

Time: 1-2 hours





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Babcock Falls

- **Use caution near cliff edges**
- **These trails are in bear country; travel in groups and make noise**
- **Please pack out what you packed in**

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Photo Gallery website: www.wnms.ca

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Tourism website: www.TumblerRidge.ca

Photo Credit: Kevin Sharman



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