

# The Mighty Fraser

## The Fraser River

The Fraser River is one of BC's great heritage rivers. It is an outstanding example of BC's natural and cultural heritage and has played a significant role in BC's history.

It starts as a trickle high up in Mount Robson, traversing through mountains, canyons, plateaus and grasslands as it makes its 860 mile or 1375 km journey to the Pacific Ocean, emptying into the Strait of Georgia.



For over 8000 years, First Nations occupied the river banks and plateaus along the river living from the fish, wildlife and vegetation. Evidence of ancient village sites marked by petroglyphs can still be viewed by the lucky visitor that accompanies a First Nation's guide. Many First Nations still practice their traditional lifestyles today and can be seen fishing for salmon by dip net from July through September.



Simon Fraser's 1808 explorations on behalf of the North West Fur Trading Company brought attention to this vast and rich territory. Trading posts were established along with new relationships with First Nation people. Simon Fraser's journal leaves details of his wild journey while making new discoveries that would be added to the map of BC.

## Gold

Gold discoveries on the Fraser River in 1858 stimulated a rapid increase in settlement and transportation along the river. As the news spread, men with a spirit of adventure headed north to stake claim on the goldfields. As the gold rush slowed down, miners took up land on the Fraser River, settling homesteads and building ranches. The Fraser River is equally important today as a fishery and recreational waterway. It also maintains one of the most productive salmon fisheries in the world.

The Chilcotin section of the Fraser River off highway 20 is the only section left with no highways, railways or towns. This section of the Fraser River supports the largest California Bighorn Sheep population in the world. The geography of the Fraser River in this section is considered to be the most northern desert in BC. The southern slopes are an arid desert climate scattered with unusual hoodoo formations with plant species such as prickly pear cactus, sagebrush and wild grass varieties. Today Tourism is growing in the area and tourists can now book river tours and experience the Fraser much like it was in the old days.



The communities along the Fraser River and Highway 20 today, are made up of native Indian villages, ranches, and the story of cowboys and Indians here, is still being written. This is truly the last of the Wild West in BC.

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