

Bella Coola Petroglyphs

Thorsen Creek, Bella Coola

An absolute MUST for Valley visitors is the short hike to the Petroglyphs at Thorsen Creek. Here, hidden in the lush rainforest moss and ferns of a canopy forest, you will discover rock carvings on the forest floor believed to be at least 3,500 years old. These marvels are firmly rooted in today's Nuxalk culture like the over-arching hemlock and cedar trees in this hallowed place where winter dances were performed by countless generations.



Here, Nuxalk chiefs taught their successors in a landscape that evokes a sacred, cathedral-like awe, a landscape viewed by many as the spiritual heart of the Bella Coola Valley.



While the origins of these petroglyphs may never be known for certain, one theory developed after a visit in 1939 by Norwegian archaeologist and explorer Thor Heyerdahl, better known for his 1947 Kon Tiki expedition which involved rafting from Peru to the South Pacific. Heyerdahl detected a similarity between these images and Polynesian art forms, and suggested that people from British Columbia may have settled Hawaii, drifting there on prevailing currents and winds. Others have speculated that the ancestors of the Nuxalk might have come in the opposite direction – from the South Pacific to this coast of North America, claiming as evidence metallic objects resembling articles produced in

Asia long before the Europeans arrived on this coast. Both theories challenge the belief that First Nations peoples migrated across a land bridge from Siberia to Alaska.



Both out of due respect for this sacred site and the Nuxalk people, and to enrich the experience, visitors are strongly urged to engage a Nuxalk guide whose mission is both to protect the site and to share Nuxalk culture through authentic songs and stories. Some sections of the trail are steep and can be muddy, so visitors should be prepared with proper footwear.

Thorsen Creek Petroglyphs are sponsored by:



**Petroglyph
Gallery**

Petroglyph Gallery is the home of authentic Nuxalk Art. Located on the road to the Rock Carvings in Bella Coola, one KM south of Tallio's Gas Bar.

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