



Western Portraits: Western Canada

Photography and Words by Steve Salis

About this book

This book is a part of the Western Portraits series. Each displays the beauty and grandeur of a part western North America.

Western Canada's inspiring scenery begins on the coast and continues past to the plains east of the Rockies.

This volume is my attempt to inspire others to see this place for themselves.

Steve Salis
January, 2009



Western Portraits: Western Canada

Images of British Columbia, Alberta and the Yukon

If you like the great outdoors, western Canada is a place you must visit. The fiords of the coast are as spectacular as any. Its mountains are beyond compare. Its glaciers and ice fed lakes are breathtaking. The size of its open spaces and clear sky is humbling.

Many of my favorite places are displayed here. Canadian roads seem to have been designed to meander through the region's best scenery. Most of these images were captured near a roadway. A few were photographed while hiking in the backcountry. Being in the right place at the right time allowed me to capture many of my favorite images.

I like to explore this place. I've been here several times and I never know what I will see. The itinerary often changes with the weather or odd lighting conditions. Some of my favorite shots are because of a sudden weather change.

I've waited for an approaching storm and literally chased its rainbow for an hour. I've hiked on ice with blue sky and within a few minutes captured a shadow from a line of clouds before they descended, creating whiteout conditions. I've also had clear windless days where vibrant colors were just aching to be captured.

It's best to do your best with what you're given. That is what I've attempted to do.

Alberta: The Plains Meet the Mountains

Upon arrival you are immersed in the beauty and grandeur of the landscape. It is here where rolling farm and ranchland abruptly meets stunning mountains and brilliantly colored lakes.

Alberta is home to three of Canada's most visited national parks. Banff National Park is the best known. Banff's Lake Louise and its winter and summer resorts attracts those willing to pay nearly \$1,000 a night for a room, as well as, RV campers and adventurers from around the world.

Jasper National Park is a few hours to the north. The largest ice field in this hemisphere, south of the Arctic Circle, attracts hundreds each day. Many come to walk on the shrinking Athabasca Glacier. Others come to hike its many trails.

Waterton National Park is three and half-hours south of Calgary. It shares a border with Montana's Glacier National Park. Together they were formed to create Waterton Glacier International Peace Park in 1932. It was the first such park.

I've been photographing Alberta since the 1990s. During that time, some of the glaciers have noticeably receded. However, the wilderness remains as it has for generations.

Facing Page: Southern Alberta Farm





4 The rolling plains of southern Alberta on the road from Calgary to Waterton. The crisp air assures that the Rockies remain a constant companion though at times they are more than 60 miles away. Before the scenery, stop at the Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump.



For over 10,000 years native tribes put aside differences to work together to stampede large buffalo herds over this cliff. There's is the best logo ever!





Roadside scenes of Alberta.

Alberta: Banff National Park

Banff is Canada's first national park. It covers 6,600 square kilometers of unparalleled mountain scenery, nestled in the heart of the Canadian Rockies, and is only a one and a half hour drive from Calgary.

Each year, millions of visitors come to Banff to marvel at the emerald waters of Lake Louise, or to hike the back country, or to simply drive between jagged peaks on the Ice Fields Parkway. Snow capped peaks, glistening glaciers and sweeping vistas are the primary allure of Banff, another is its luxury resorts. In this wilderness, one is not restricted to campgrounds or modest hotels.

The images on these pages were captured in May, June, July, August and September. I've seen it snow in each of these months. I keep coming back not just to see amazing sites again but to see how they will look this time. I've never been disappointed.

Facing page: Lake Louise







Artists and adventurers populate Lake Louise.















Left: The glacier above Lake Louise.



Right: Above tree line on Parker Ridge.



Left: Storm meets peaks near the Banff town site.



Right: Peyto Glacier





Crowfoot Glacier above Bow Lake just off the Ice Fields Parkway north of Banff. The face of the ice in the center is more than 100 feet thick.





Peyto Lake. The amazing color of the water is proof that the lake is glacier fed. Fine rock particles scraped off by the glacier and suspended in the lake reflect vibrant color.





The view of Bow Lake near Num-ti-jah Lodge
Opposite: Bow lake from the Ice Fields Parkway



Left: Canoes for rent on Lake Louise.



Right: The Tea House above Lake Louise, which is only accessible by foot. The 11 mile hike from the parking area rises about 1,400 ft.



Left: The Num-Ti-Jah Lodge on Bow Lake. Each of its 25 rooms provide inspiring views. **Right:** The U-shaped valley near Peyton Lake

Western Portraits: The Coast of British Columbia

British Columbia has a long maritime tradition. I know of no better way to see the natural wonders of its coast than by sea.

Each day in summer cruise ships take thousands of visitors up the inside passage to Alaska. Sunsets are long at this latitude, allowing plenty of time to capture colorful scenery throughout the journey.

From the coast on the east to its border at the continental divide on the west, BC is mountainous. Banff and Jasper are just across the divide. BC has several of its own national parks. My favorite is Yoho. Yoho is less than a two hour drive north of Banff just east of the great divide. It's home to a 1,223 foot water fall, emerald hued lakes and my favorite restaurant.

Facing Page: The inside passage from the deck of the Radiance of the Seas



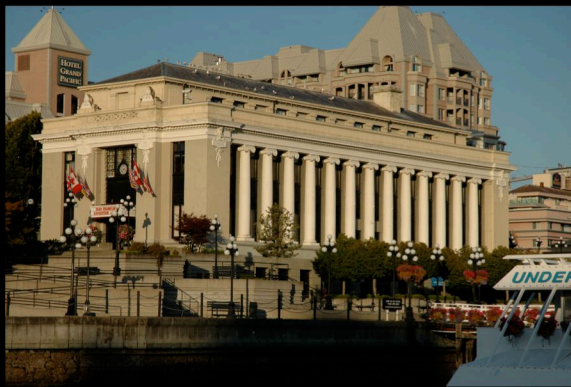




The waters of southern BC are dotted with islands. Calm waters and numerous ports make this one of the most popular sailing areas in the world.



32 Victoria is a tourist town that goes the extra mile. Most visitors enter the city from its harbor. Frequent ferries arrive from Seattle and Vancouver. Seaplanes also use the harbor as a runway. I arrived by 40' sailboat. We docked in the harbor to this view.







British Columbia: Yoho National Park

Yoho is located between Banff and Jasper National Parks on the west side of the Rockies. It attracts fewer visitors than its better known neighbors but its scenery is no less spectacular. One of its more popular attractions is Takakkaw Falls which is 1223 feet tall. A short walk from the parking area leads to the base of the falls.

Emerald Lake is the crown jewel of Yoho. The 300-degree panoramic image on the next page shows why. The outdoor bistro adjacent to the lake provides more than splendid views. It is also one of my favorite restaurants.

On the road to Emerald Lake you'll cross the Yoho River and pass many beautiful rapids.

Both the Emerald Lake and the Yoho River get their turquoise color from fine particles of rock that have been scraped off by glacier ice thousands of feet above.

Right: The 1223 foot Takakkaw Falls

Next pages: Emerald Lake











Left: The top of Takakkaw Falls

Right: Canoeing on Emerald Lake.









My favorite restaurant is on the shore of Emerald Lake
Opposite: Emerald Falls

Alberta: Jasper National Park

Less than two hours north of Lake Louise is Jasper National Park. The Columbia Ice Field is the largest ice field south of the Arctic Circle. There is easy access to Athabasca Glacier. Visitors are discouraged from hiking on the ice but few pay any heed. The ice is still several hundred feet thick and about a mile long. Walking the ice is tricky and can be dangerous. As the ice melts, crevasses become larger and deeper. Visitors have died after slipping into a crevasse.

The ice creates its own quickly changing weather. A few minutes before this image was taken the sky was a perfect cloudless blue. Minutes after it was taken, the clouds dropped to ice level and all I could see was white. Really, there was nothing but white! All reference points were far too far away to see through the fog. Its quite an odd feeling to be in a wide open space when you can't see anything but your boots. It also makes crevasse spotting more challenging.

Jasper also has excellent hiking trails. The destination of my favorite, Parker Ridge, can be seen on the next page.







Just south of the Columbia Ice Fields is the Parker Ridge trailhead. The trail is steep and less than an hour later you're above the trees looking at a glacial valley that is untouched by man.





A glacier extending from the Columbia Ice Field as seen from Parker Ridge



Athabasca Glacier in 2003. In 2000 the ice touched the marker above. The glaciers are shrinking but this one is still about a mile long.



Sedimentary rock over a lateral moraine as seen from Parker Ridge.





Left: Athabasca Glacier

Right: The foot of Athabasca Glacier



56 A deadly crevasse on Athabasca Glacier. In 2003 an eight year old boy and his father attempted to jump this gap. The boy missed and died of hypothermia.



One of the many lakes of Jasper





The Ice Field Parkway heading to the ice fields.
Left: I chased this rainbow for an hour until it capped this sunset lit mountain.





Alberta: Waterton National Park

Some of the most ancient mountains in the Rockies meet the prairie in the 54 square mile protected area known as Waterton National Park. The park is part of the Crown of the Continent ecosystem: a place with unusual diversity. This ecosystem is one of the narrowest in the entire Rocky Mountain chain, making it a critical wildlife corridor.

But that's not the main reason visitors come to Waterton. They come for the scenery.





Prince of Wales Hotel with Waterton Lake in the foreground





Boat tours are popular on Waterton Lake. The Prince of Wales Hotel can be seen in the upper right.





The Yukon

The Yukon is largely untouched wilderness. Here you can explore numerous vibrantly colored lakes and rivers, quaint and historic small villages and settlements that have changed little in generations. Remnants of the 1898 gold rush hint of more prosperous times as they lie rusting by the roadside.

It's not easy or inexpensive to get there. It takes a great deal of time to explore its vast distances. It's not a place where you can expect five or even three star amenities. It is a place where you find vast undisturbed pristine landscapes and a sense of how people survived before the rise of modern cities with modern conveniences most of us take for granted.

Facing Page: Along the Klondike Hwy. is the Yukon's Emerald Lake





70 **Left:** View along the Alaskan Highway. **Above right:** The White Pass and Yukon Line from Skagway, AK, to Whitehorse, the capital of the Yukon. **Lower right:** Float planes are as popular as cars up here.



The homestead of one of the few permanent residents.





Left: Downtown Carcross, Yukon. At the turn of the 20th century this was an important stop along the White Pass Yukon Railway.
Right: The remains of the sternwheeler Tutshi. The Tutshi was the town's primary tourist draw until it was burned by arsonists in the 1990s.







76 The Klondike paddle wheeler in Whitehorse, Yukon while undergoing reconstruction. This is one of two remaining sternwheelers in the Yukon. During the gold rush on 1898, 100's of similar boats traveled from the Whitehorse to the gold fields of Dawson.



The road sign for the Carcross Desert claims this to be the smallest desert in the world. It was once the bottom of a glacial lake.



St. Saviour's
— ANGLICAN —
DIOCESE OF YUKON
CARPOOVIC — YUKON — A.C. 1900
SEE NOTICE FOR TIME OF SERVICES.



Left: An old train trestle from the gold rush days. **Top right:** A real general store. **Bottom right:** One of the better hotels in Whitehorse, the capital of the Yukon. 79





There is little work here and many in the countryside have modest homes
Next page: Downtown Whitehorse, the capital of the Yukon







The Photographer

Steve loves the west and its national parks. He has photographed the Rockies from New Mexico to the Yukon, hiking hundreds of miles with both still and video cameras along the way.

The pristine waters of the coast, the glacier topped peaks of the rockies and the expansive open plains make Western Canada one of his favorite subjects.

He hopes these images will inspire you to see them for yourself.





Western Portraits: Western Canada

Words and Photography by Steve Salis