



Kootenay Lake lies in the Central Kootenay Region of British Columbia at 530 metres (1736') above sea level. The valley is bounded by the Selkirk Mountain range to the west and the Purcell range to the east. Peaks ranging from 2100 - 2750 metres (7000' - 9000') dominate the terrain, with year-round ice fields on the northernmost mountains. The ranges here are relatively young, geologically, uplifting from what was once a shallow inland sea about 170 million years ago. The area is categorized as an [Interior Rain Belt](#), and the generous yearly precipitation supports a rich biological diversity, including mountain slopes heavily forested with a mix of pine, douglas fir, hemlock and cedar, and a broad range of flora and fauna.

The lake is about 144 km (90 miles) long, and up to 152 meters (500') deep, with an average width of 4 km (2.5 miles), and is 8 km (5 miles) across at its widest. It was formed during the Ice Ages, when glacial advances deposited till to the south, creating the rich farmlands around Creston and a large basin to the north. At one time ice also blocked the western outflow, near Nelson, causing the lake to drain to the south. Kootenay Lake's major source of water is the Kootenay River, which originates in the Rocky mountains and passes through Montana and Idaho before emptying into the lake. It is the second largest tributary of the Columbia River.



Kootenay Lake is also fed by numerous creeks and its rocky shores encompass hundreds of tiny bays and beaches, intriguing to explore by kayak or canoe. It is not uncommon to find yourself the only boater visible across the lake's expanse! The water here is pure enough to drink straight from the lake, and provides a home for Kokanee salmon (a land-locked sockeye), Sturgeon, Dolly Varden and trout, including the world's largest species, the Gerrard Rainbow. Approximately half of the lakeshore has roads, with the balance being accessible only by boat. You can take a guided excursion on the lake with Kootenay Lake Heritage Boat Tours, which will explore its historical and geographical features.

Settlements are strung along a thin band where the roads follow the lakeshore. Wilderness is always close at hand and human residents share the landscape with large populations of deer, elk, moose, bear, mountain goat, cougar, and coyote. Kootenay Lake remains ice-free in winter, and wetlands at both ends of the lake and at Crawford Bay, including the 7000 hectare Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area, host over 260 species of migrating and nesting birds - even

wild swans and pelicans! Come experience all of this and more, at the last undeveloped large lake near the US border.