

BMN HIKE REPORT

Goat Ridge Peak (September 7, 2019)

By Mark Johnston



View from Goat Mountain summit, looking toward Crown Peak, the Camel, and, to the right of centre, Crown N1. *Sigrid Felland photo.*

Several people expressed interest in this hike but, when it came time to “pay up,” only two of us followed through. Some may have been worried about the weather, reasoning that if they were going to shell out a few tens of dollars for the Grouse Mountain Skyride, they wanted to make sure they would be able to see something. And truth be told, even those of us who were still in the game came to wonder whether we would see anything, for although when we left Coquitlam the clouds were high and there were a few streaks of light in the sky, as we travelled along the Barnet Highway and looked toward the North Shore mountains, we saw that the clouds had lowered and we might be hiking in fog.

When we arrived at the Grouse Mountain parking area, the clouds seemed especially low. Wondering what lay ahead, we bought our tickets, boarded the gondola, and soon were on our way up the mountain. But as we rose ever higher, to our unexpected delight we cleared a band of low cloud and found ourselves in bright sunshine! One moment we could see Vancouver spreading out in every direction; the next moment we were looking out over a sea of cloud that completely obscured the urban sprawl. Above us there was still a fair bit of high cloud, but we could see distant peaks clearly, their summits and slopes well defined.

From the top of the Skyride, we followed the grizzly bear footprints, painted on asphalt, north past various Grouse Mountain attractions, including the grizzly bear pen itself.



A gravel service road runs along the west side of Grouse Peak, and provides glimpses of Capilano Lake. *Sigrid Felland photo.*

Reaching the end of the asphalt, we continued north, first on the gravel service road that runs along the west side of Grouse Peak and then on the well-worn footpath that provides access to the backcountry. At a junction, we chose Alpine Trail over Ridge Trail as the most expeditious way to reach Goat Ridge. Alpine Trail is up and down, mostly up, and quite rocky with many protruding roots. But by taking Alpine Trail, we avoided having to climb over two peaks, Dam and Little Goat, instead skirting them on their eastern flanks. Taking care, we made slow and steady progress, our eyes and ears attentive to any bird life. We

saw a junco and heard both the grouse's "low, muffled, booming notes" and the red-breasted nuthatch's nasal *ank ank*.

At one point we stepped off the trail to where there are a couple of makeshift plank benches. From here we had a good view of our destination, Goat Ridge Peak.

In fact we could see all of Goat Ridge, from Goat Mountain on our left, to Goat Ridge Peak on our right. My plan was to bypass Goat Mountain summit (saving the peak for our return) and head directly for the ridge.

But as our eyes swept from one high point to the other, we noticed another, intermediate, prominence. I knew it was possible to bypass Goat Mountain summit but couldn't remember whether the lower trail would take us around this other prominence as well.

The looming prominence between Goat Mountain and Goat Ridge Peak.
Sigrid Felland photo.



After passing the last of three junctions with Ridge Trail, we walked the narrow “land bridge” toward Goat Mountain. On our left the ground sloped steeply toward Crown Creek; on our right it fell away equally steeply toward Kennedy Lake and its outflow. Continuing on, we noted the side route to Crown Mountain, walked past small tarns, and came to a helicopter pad and North Shore Rescue storage tower. Sitting down on the pad, we drank some water, had something to eat, and took in the view to the east of Cathedral, Burwell, and Coliseum mountains.

After our break we finished walking the land bridge and began to climb ever more steeply up Goat Mountain. On one stretch we needed our hands and sometimes made use of sets of chains. As we climbed, we kept an eye out for the bypass trail. We came upon an inconspicuous side path, but could find no marker indicating that this was our route. We continued straight ahead and before we knew it had ascended Goat Mountain to its very top! Maybe it was fortuitous that we climbed Goat Mountain earlier rather than later, because we were able to have the peak to ourselves for quite a while. Two parties of two vacated the peak when we got there, and only when we were ready to leave did the next party arrive. Our views from the top were panoramic: We had middle ground views of Echo, Cathedral, Coliseum, Needles, and Seymour summits, and more distant views of Sunshine Coast, Garibaldi, Pinecone Burke, and Golden Ears peaks. But perhaps we were thrilled most with the so-close-you-could-touch-them prospect of Crown Peak and the Camel.

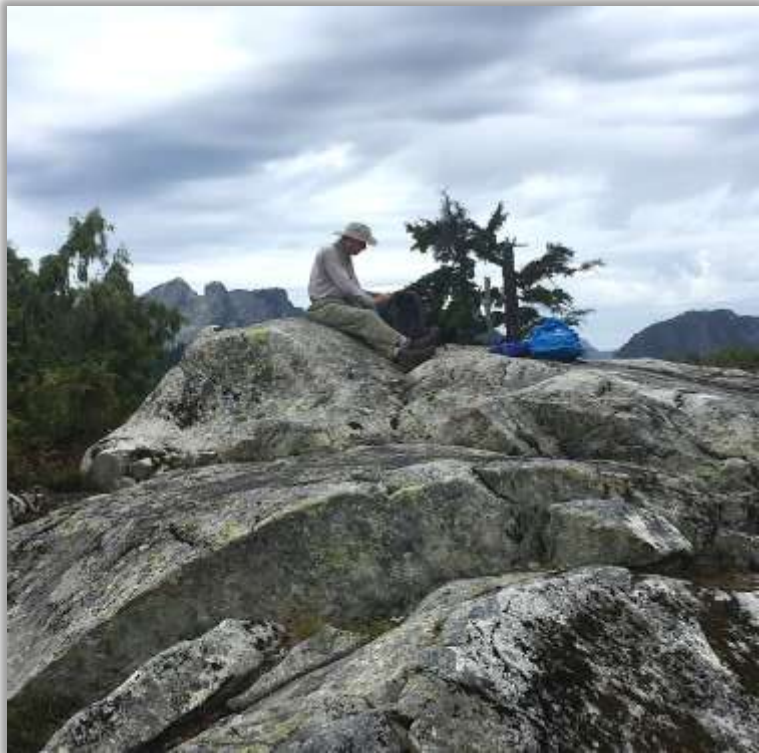
We descended Goat Mountain by the still very steep, but somewhat easier east side and then traversed Goat Ridge toward Goat Ridge Peak. Although I had walked at least some of it previously,

I hadn't remembered the ridge being as up and down as it is. We rose first to the top of the prominence that had been the subject of my earlier speculation, and then dropped down, down, down, losing elevation that I was only too aware we would have to regain on the way back. After our steep, at times precipitous descent, we finally levelled out in a particularly large grassy meadow. There are two sizable tarns here, but we only viewed them from a distance. We rose over a height of land and dropped into another meadow and then repeated the cycle once more. In this last meadow, just before the final approach to Goat Ridge Peak, we came across a black bear, maybe ten to fifteen metres off the trail. It was eating berries. Judging by the size of its head, which it lifted up to have a better look at us, it was a fairly large bear, and we could see just enough of its body to tell that it had a very shiny jet black coat. My companion spoke softly to it in her first tongue, Norwegian, and we walked past it without incident! When, a moment later, we met two hikers who had just left the peak area and were on their way back, we warned them to proceed with caution.

We ended up climbing Goat Ridge Peak's farther subpeak first, which arguably has the better views. Being at the end of the ridge, the subpeak allows views down into Lynn Creek's broad valley and across to narrower Norvan Valley.

When we arrived on the subpeak, we shared the large granite slab with another party of two. But then that party left and, as had been the case on Goat Mountain, we had the summit to ourselves for the balance of the time. Well, almost to ourselves. As we ate our lunch, there were two ravens standing on the ground nearby, apparently hoping for handouts.

Our lunch spot atop the subpeak of Goat Ridge Peak, shared only with two ravens. *Sigrid Felland photo.*



One of the ravens appeared slightly smaller in size and had a few white spots or splotches on its back and wings. While we ate our lunch, the clouds darkened above us and we felt a few drops of rain. But I had hardly zipped up my rain jacket, when the sun reappeared and stayed with us the rest of the day.

After lunch we bushwhacked up to the main peak's summit, which is not nearly as open as the subpeak's summit. We busied ourselves taking a couple of photos and only belatedly noticed the black bear again, quite close by, just below us. We decided to give it a wide berth, so retreated back down the way we had come up, and followed the trail back around the peak and to the meadow.

Although now on the way back, as previously noted we were hardly through with climbing. We climbed up and over the Goat Mountain "shoulder," in many ways as steep as Goat Mountain's

“citadel” itself, and even though, this time, we did make use of the bypass trail, we still had to negotiate Alpine Trail’s many ups and downs.

Toward the south end of the land bridge, we paused to study the sign that gives an overview of Lynn Headwaters Regional Park’s trail system. We noticed a chipmunk near a directional post opposite, the post supported by a caged pile of rocks. Like the ravens we had encountered earlier, the chipmunk seemed to be angling for a handout. Although we were inclined to give it a nut or two, before we could, it disappeared, apparently into the caged rocks.

While I am sorry more people didn’t join us on this outing, I realize now that this hike is not really one for the uninitiated, as it has a fair bit of cumulative elevation gain and a number of scrambly bits. But for those with some experience, it is an outstanding trip, with lots of variation and almost continuous spectacular views. Definitely recommended.