

Garibaldi Lake

British Columbia, Canada

 6 Hours / 19 KM  Out and back  Medium



Garibaldi Lake © Karl Woll

Garibaldi Lake in Garibaldi Provincial Park is a stunning, glacier-fed lake that sits 1450m high, surrounded by snow-capped mountains, glaciers, alpine meadows and volcanic structures. It is a great day hike, and even better camping destination.

ASCEND AND DESCEND

 810m  810m

SCENERY



Why Garibaldi Lake

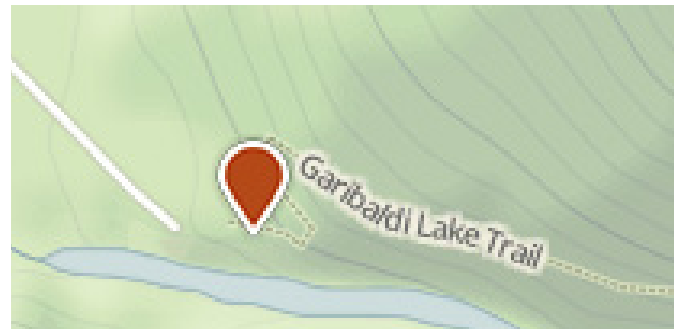
Garibaldi Lake is one of the true classic hikes around Vancouver. The trail wends through a serene forest, and is groomed and well-marked, allowing beginners to make the trek with confidence. And then there's the lake itself. The glacier-fed, turquoise water of Garibaldi lake is surrounded by glaciers, mountains and meadows in all directions, making for one of the more spectacular scenes around.

When to go

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

Garibaldi Provincial Park receives a lot of snow in the winter. The snow will persist into the early summer near the lake. If you want to go when the trails are dry, late summer is the best time.

Starting point

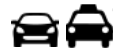


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STARTING POINT

Rubble Creek Road Parking Lot, Squamish

TRANSPORT TO START



Take Highway #99 heading north past Horseshoe Bay towards Squamish. Keep driving along the Sea to Sky highway all the way to Squamish. Once you've hit downtown Squamish, watch your odometer and keep driving north for about another 37km. Keep a sharp eye out for the Garibaldi Provincial Park sign on your right. Just over the Rubble Creek Bridge you will take a right onto a small paved road that is not hard to miss.

Continue on for a few kilometers until you reach the Rubble Creek parking lot. The trailhead is well marked at the parking lot.

Don't leave valuables in your car, as this remote parking lot has been targeted for break-ins before.

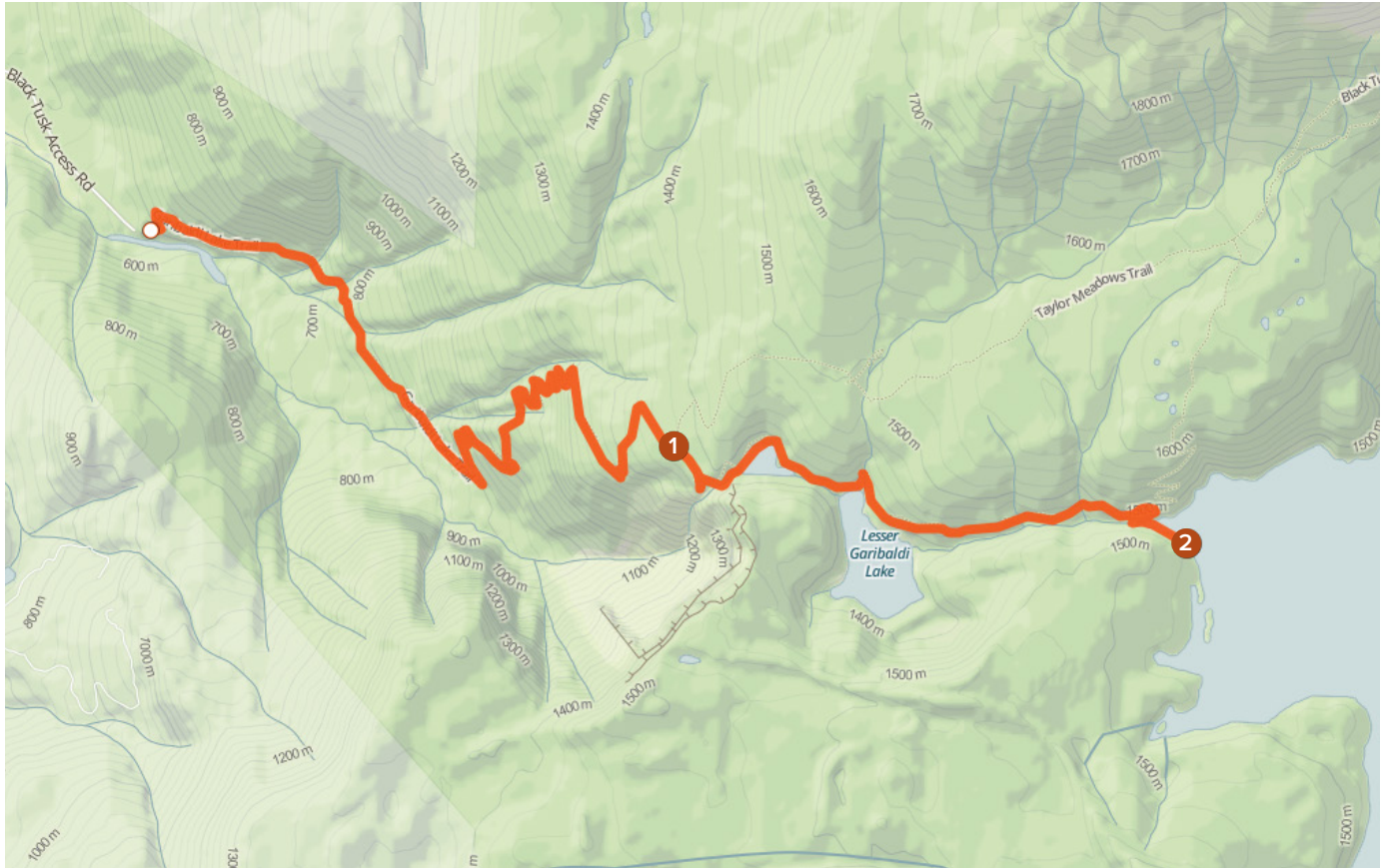
How hard

The trail is wide and well-maintained, so navigation is very easy. It is challenging enough that you'll have a strong feeling of accomplishment at the end of the day, but not so technical that you can't bring fit children. The climb to the lake is, however, steep and unrelenting.

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It is a 9km hike to reach Garibaldi Lake from the parking lot. You will start the hike from the Rubble Creek parking lot, alongside Rubble Creek. The first 6km of the Garibaldi Lake Trail take you up through a forest of plentiful Western Red Cedar and Douglas Fir trees.

Around the 30 minute mark of the initial ascent, there is a creek crossing, and the only opportunity for water for a long while. The next hour or so of climbing is not very noteworthy - just a relentless uphill battle. If you are camping and have your heavy backpack, the continuous switchbacks on the steep trail can be especially grueling. Put your head down and count off the kilometer markers: 3. 4. 5...

A few minutes past the 5km marker you will get a nice view of The Barrier, which is a lava dam that contains the Garibaldi Lake system. The Barrier is an impressive 300m thick on the containing wall. The sheer cliff you see here was formed during a massive landslide in 1885, which is also how Rubble Creek received its name.


Continuing on towards the 6km marker there is a major junction **1**, with a turnoff for Taylor Meadows campground or Garibaldi Lake. Be careful here, because there may be a sign saying “campground full, use Taylor Meadows”. This may or may not actually be the case, and if you are planning on camping at the lake you may be rewarded with a few campsites to pick from. (If there truly are no campsites available at Garibaldi Lake, you can later take another route from the lake to Taylor

Meadows).

This junction is a good point to take a break. If you bring some bird-seeds, the whisky jacks here are accustomed to people and will eat out of your hand. Please don't feed them human food.

Following the trail from the junction, most of the elevation gain is behind you. From here, there are a few creeks (good places to fill up on water), that feed into Lesser Garibaldi Lake. You will pass alongside Barrier Lake and Lesser Garibaldi Lake. Both are beautiful, but only provide a taste of what's to come. After leaving Lesser Garibaldi Lake you will cross a wooden bridge over Taylor Creek.

20 minutes later you will come to another fork which can take you into Taylor Meadows. Stay on the path for Garibaldi Lake and you will quickly arrive at the lake. Once you get around the final bend, you are rewarded with the spectacular view of the pristine, turquoise Garibaldi Lake, and Sphinx Glacier hovering above it.

Garibaldi Lake is 5km deep, 4km wide, and 300m in depth. Alongside the lake you will find a few day-use cooking shelters, pit toilets and the campground . Now you can set up your tent, have lunch, and take a dip in the chilly lake if you wish to cool down. 'Chilly' might be an understatement. There are also trout in the lake which were introduced in the 1920s, so fishing is fairly popular here.

If you are camping overnight, you should still have ample time to climb up nearby Panorama Ridge or Black Tusk and return to the campsite before sunset.

To return to the parking lot from Garibaldi Lake, simply retrace your steps. If you wish to take a slightly different route back, you can also return via Taylor Meadows (by taking the Black Tusk Trail from the lake, and turning left at the Taylor Meadows Trail junction), joining the main trail again at the 6km junction for the Garibaldi Lake Trail.

About the author

Karl Woll

Born and raised in Vancouver, has been passionately exploring the area's local mountains over the last decade. Beyond hiking, Karl fulfills his desire to be in the outdoors by kayaking, cycling, scuba diving, snowboarding, and most frequently, trail running.

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