

Big Horn Tour

We embarked on an epic summer adventure in the Canadian Rockies.

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The Big Horn Tour, organized by the CWR Porsche Club, was an absolutely unforgettable summer adventure in the Canadian Rockies. It featured awe-inspiring landscapes with stunning geological marvels, vibrant turquoise rivers and lakes fed by glaciers, wild herds of big-horn sheep, and captivating mountainous roads.

This multi-region event brought together nearly 45 Porsche club members from CWR, the BC Interior, and the Inland Northwest Club, based in eastern Washington State. Several multi-regional events are held annually between the CWR and American clubs, demonstrating our valued cross-border friendship.

Over six days, we travelled over 1,000 km clockwise across British Columbia. We began our tour in Kelowna in the central Okanagan, then headed northeast to Banff National Park in the heart of the Canadian Rockies in Alberta. We then headed south towards the Canada—USA border and swept back up north to conclude our trip in Nelson on the west arm of Kootenay Lake.

On our first day, we woke up early because it was a travel day. We agreed to meet our fellow club members in Hope at 8:30 a.m. before embarking on a 5-hour scenic drive to Kelowna via mountain back roads. The Big Horn tour officially starts this evening in Kelowna

with a welcome reception to reconnect with old friends and make new friendships.

Our destination was the Hotel Eldorado, a Victorian-style inn in the Mission area of Kelowna on the east bank of Okanagan Lake. Upon arrival, we observed a lot of activity in the hotel parking lot. It was clear that our Porsches were the stars of the tour. Many owners had diligently cleaned their vehicles earlier, drawing admiration from locals and fellow members.

The Eldorado, originally the Eldorado Arms Hotel, was founded in 1926 by Countess Bubna, an aristocratic English woman. It was a social hub during the 1950s and 1960s, hosting British-style garden parties, dog shows, and croquet matches with the town's political elite.

We found it an intimate property with 53 guest rooms, many with panoramic lake views from their balconies. Our room was spacious and had a quaint old English charm. The hotel offers several restaurants, a spa, a marina, and a short boardwalk along the lake.

On the second day, we were all invited for morning coffee at August Luxury Motorcars in Kelowna and had our tour decals installed.

We formed a single line upon arrival as we eagerly waited to enter their service building. Once inside,

ABOVE: Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel, known as the 'Castle in the Rockies.'



The multi-region Big Horn tour, organized by CWR, brought together members of PCA from the United States and Canada.

LEFT: The Rundle Bar, Banff Springs Hotel.

we witnessed over a dozen employees installing our Big Horn tour decals on six Porsches simultaneously. This included a large tour decal on both doors, driver and co-driver names and an August Luxury Motorcars sticker on the rear of each vehicle.

Afterwards, we ventured across the street to the August Motorcars showroom, filled with over 100 used luxury, exotic, and classic cars such as Porsche, Lamborghini, Ferrari, McLaren and more. I admit I did not want to leave without taking a closer look at a red Porsche 356 coupe at the back of the showroom. Special thanks to President and CEO Matt August and his friendly staff for their generous hospitality during our visit.

Today's drive goes north along Okanagan Highway BC 97 to Radium Hot Springs. It includes twisty single-lane mountain roads with short, divided highway sections. As per the tour book, it covers 438 km in about 6 hours.

Before noon, we encountered a construction zone, which reduced traffic to an alternative single lane over a small bridge. I noticed a semi-truck with hazard lights flashing in the right lane as we approached the two-lane line-up. So, I quickly moved into the left lane and was relieved to discover that the left lane

continued to move slowly forward.

As we arrived in Revelstoke for lunch, we had not seen any other Porsches from our group that morning. We were nearly one hour behind schedule, so we figured everyone was ahead of us. After a quick lunch, we returned to the highway, continuing north into the Rockies.

With light traffic, we enjoyed a spirited drive to Radium Hot Springs and checked in at Big Meadows Resort for our two-night stay. To our surprise, we were only the second Porsche to arrive, so I used the car wash station and explored the resort grounds.

Bighorn Meadows Resort is in the Columbia Valley, surrounded by the Rockies and the Purcell Mountain ranges. The luxury suites are on a 9-acre site surrounding the lush green Springs Golf Course. That evening, we all had a casual dinner in the golf clubhouse, where we met members of the Inland Northwest Club.

On day three, we could visit the Radium Hot Springs geological thermal pool, chill at the resort or explore Banff National Park, now a UNESCO heritage site. We decided to visit the town of Banff, so we headed east for 130 km, which takes about 90 minutes one way due to the park's maximum posted speed limit of 90 km/h.

TOP: Radium Hot Springs Hotel

CENTRE: Porsches at the Eldorado Hotel

BOTTOM: Hotel Eldorado, Kelowna, BC.



Outside of Radium Hot Springs, we discovered a herd of Bighorn Sheep along the highway. Several large Bighorn sheep were leading younger lambs alongside the rocky hillside above us; we counted over 15 sheep.

I grew up in British Columbia and have visited Banff several times. It is no longer the quiet, rustic Rocky Mountain town I remember from childhood. Today, the touristy souvenir shops along Banff Ave have been replaced by outdoor fashion stores, art galleries, and a more diverse food scene catering to international visitors. I'm delighted to discover that The Spirit of Christmas, my favourite store in Banff, is still open for business in the village.

My favourite pastime is visiting the Rundle Bar in the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel on the edge of town. Known as the "Castle in the Rockies," it was opened in 1888 by the Canadian Pacific Railway as one of Canada's earliest grand railway hotels.

Located on the second floor, the Rundle Bar was awarded the 'Best Patio Award 2024' by Canada's 100 Best, the definitive guide to the nation's top restaurants, bars, and chefs.

It offers a breathtaking view of the snow-capped Mount Rundle, named after Reverend Robert Rundle, a Methodist who the Hudson's Bay Company invited to conduct missionary work in western Canada in the 1840s.

Due to strong winds, we chose a seat inside the bar with mountain range views. The interior design resembles a cozy living room with bespoke furniture and intimate lighting pockets, creating a unique and inviting atmosphere.

One of the greatest pleasures of the tour was spending that afternoon with fellow club members in the bar of a grand hotel. Sharing our Porsche adventures is a

memory I will cherish for a long time.

The following day began with a time-distance challenge to Nelson. Our mission was to find Tour Host Francis Chin's bright orange GT3 ahead on Highway 93 South. During the time-distance challenge, Francis made a breakfast stop and took scenic photos. Since we had already had breakfast before departing the Resort, we found him first and was about 45 minutes too early.

That morning, our route for day five would cover nearly 400 km in about 4.5 hours. It began with scenic canyon driving, almost reaching the Canada - USA border, and then swept north to Nelson towards the pristine Kootenay Lake.

Upon arrival that afternoon, we learned that Nelson is home to ancient rainforests and iconic species, including the grizzly bear and Kokanee salmon.

Our accommodations for the last two nights on tour were at the Nelson Prestige Lakeside Resort. Our room had views of the Lake and mountains and was within walking distance of downtown.

With a population of only 11,000, Nelson has more restaurants per capita than foodie landmarks such as San Francisco, Vancouver, and Manhattan. That evening, we explored the downtown district and found Marzano restaurant on Baker St. It offers a genuine Italian dining experience with delicious artisan pizza, homemade pasta, and creative desserts.

On our final day, we had more driving tour options. We chose a relaxing half-day counterclockwise loop that followed the Kootenay Lake shoreline on Highway 3 North to Kaslo, then east along Highway 31A to New Denver and returning south on Highway 6 to Nelson.

The day's highlight was our visit to the Kohan Reflection Garden in New Denver by Roy Tomomichi Sumi, a former Japanese internee at Tashme, Rosebery, and New Denver. He is a renowned master of bonsai and traditional Japanese gardens and an educator, designer, and builder. His Japanese gardens can be found throughout western Canada, and he was instrumental in creating the Nitobe Memorial Garden at UBC.

You should definitely visit the Kohan Reflection Garden in the Kootenay region. It is situated on the shores of Slocan Lake and is a remarkable living work of art. Moreover, it serves as a venue for horticultural education and a place for reflection with locals.

The highlight of our six-day tour was fully immersing ourselves in our country's rich history and actively engaging with the locals. I especially relished picturing images of the British garden parties at the elegant Hotel Eldorado and partaking in stimulating conversations with fellow club members in the illustrious Rundle Bar at the iconic Fairmont Banff Springs. We appreciate Roy Tomomichi Sumi for creating the enriching Kohan Reflection Garden.

We initially signed up for the Big Horn Tour to drive our sporty Porsches and connect with other members in the magnificent backdrop of the Canadian Rockies. However, this journey has provided us with an experience of immersion in local history, equipping us to forge stronger connections with the places and people we encounter and to create enduring travel memories.