

## HIT THE ROAD

# Yellowhead

A breathtakingly unique ribbon of Canadian highway

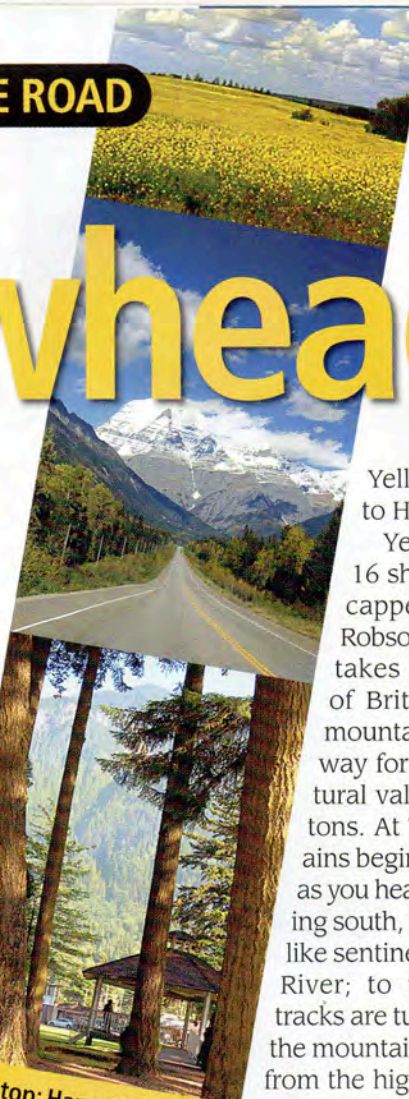
If anyone had told me you could become passionate about a highway, I would have thought they were daft. But that's exactly what happened to my husband, Stan, and I during back-to-back summer road trips in July 2001 and June 2002. We fell in love with the Trans-Canada Yellowhead Highway, and highly recommend the drive.

Dubbed Canada's park to park highway, the route stretches 3,500 kilometres across four western provinces and provides direct access to five national parks, 90 provincial parks and three national historic sites. It's also a fabulous way to Alaska, along Highways 40 and 43 in Alberta and Highways 97 and 37 in British Columbia, or via the ferry in Prince Rupert, B.C.

Yellowhead was named after a Metis fur trader and trapper who guided a Hudson's Bay Company team across the Rocky Mountains in 1819. The guide's real name was Pierre Hasting (also recorded as Pierre Bostonais), but French voyageurs called him *Tete Jaune*—yellow head in French—because of his blond hair.

The eastern Mile 0 of the Yellowhead adventure is The Forks in Winnipeg, where three historic rivers—the Red, Assiniboine and Seine—come together. As you embark on your journey, it's easy to imagine what it was like to be among Canada's early settlers moving west in their Red River carts. You can keep watch for the few grain elevators still standing, join in the excitement of friendly community festivals and enjoy the offerings of major urban centres such as Saskatoon, Lloydminster (Canada's border city situated in both Saskatchewan and Alberta) and Edmonton.

As fields of prairie gold give way to vivid green foothills, you'll soon find yourself surrounded by the majestic Rocky Mountains. At Tête Jaune Cache, where our yellow-headed trapper once stored his furs, the Yellowhead Highway splits. Depending on your destination, you'll either continue west along Yellowhead Highway 16 to its western Mile 0 at Masset, B.C. in the Queen Charlotte Islands, or you'll head south along



From top: Harvest time near Sherwood Park, Alta.; a view of Mount Robson, B.C.; a quiet moment in the park at Hope, B.C.

Yellowhead Highway 5 to Hope, B.C.

Yellowhead Highway 16 showcases the snow-capped peak of Mount Robson (3,954 metres) and takes you into the heart of British Columbia. The mountains gradually make way for a beautiful agricultural valley near The Hazeltons. At Terrace, the mountains begin to draw near again as you head to the coast. Looking south, the mountains stand like sentinels along the Skeena River; to the north, railway tracks are tucked into the side of the mountains, just a few metres from the highway. At Prince Rupert, you can catch a ferry to Alaska or head over to the Queen Charlotte Islands to trek through the rainforests or visit the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve.

Yellowhead Highway 5 meanders south through the province's Interior to Hope, B.C. In the village of Valemount, the panoramic view of Mount Terry Fox, Mount Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Mount John Diefenbaker and Canoe Mountain is incredible. Travelling toward Kamloops, you can almost touch the clouds. You'll think you've found a little piece of heaven as you gaze on Helmcken Falls in Wells Gray Park and experience the warmth and charm of the city of Merritt in the Nicola Valley. Descending from these lofty heights, you'll come to Hell's Gate, where the rushing water of the Fraser River gushes through a narrow gorge and escorts you through the Cascade Mountains to the city of Hope. From there it's an easy drive to Vancouver. Happy Trails!

**Irene Davidson-Fisher, Minden, Ont.**

**HIT THE ROAD:** It's not the destination, it's the journey! Tell us all about your favourite road trip at [ourcanada.ca](http://ourcanada.ca) or turn to page 64 for our address.