

Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark

What is a Geopark?

A **Geopark** is an area recognized by the Global Geoparks Network with geological heritage of international significance. The Global Geoparks Network is supported by UNESCO. The geology in a Geopark is linked to sites with interesting archaeology, wildlife, history, folklore and culture. Tourism industry promotion in a Geopark focusses on highlighting the geographical character of a place.

Geoparks also inform about the sustainable use and need for natural resources, whether they are mined (like metallurgical coal), quarried or harnessed from the surrounding environment, while at the same time promoting respect for the environment and the integrity of the landscape.

Compared with national or provincial parks which are often “top-down”, government-initiated projects, a Geopark is typically a grassroots, community-driven initiative that depends on local passion and “sense-of-place”.

Global Geopark in the Tumbler Ridge Area

The Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark Steering Committee has led the project. It is composed of volunteers, supported by scientific advisors in geology, palaeontology and archaeology. Members include the Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation, Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society, the Mayor of Tumbler Ridge and representatives from First Nations, Northern BC Tourism, industry, local tourism operators and schools.

An application by the Tumbler Ridge Aspiring Geopark Committee was sent in October of 2013 to the Global Geoparks Network to become a member of this network. In September 2014, this application was accepted, and the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark became reality. Currently there are 111 Global Geoparks, many of which are in Europe and Asia. There are now two Global Geoparks, supported by UNESCO, in North America (Stonehammer in New Brunswick and Tumbler Ridge) and two in South America.

The Canadian National Committee for Geoparks endorsed the application from the Tumbler Ridge Aspiring Geopark, saying “we are confident that the sites identified will constitute an excellent geopark. The magnificent diversity of outstanding and accessible mountain geology, extraordinary waterfalls and dinosaur

fossils and trackways will provide for an excellent geopark. The geopark will have activities suitable for everyone from the motoring tourist to hikers to those seeking adventurous backcountry experiences.”

The total area of the Geopark is 7722 square kilometers. The area has wonderfully varied geology, topography, scenery and human history, and has been catapulted to fame by the fantastic paleontological discoveries of the past decade. The Dinosaur Discovery Gallery, with its associated educational programs and field tours, forms the anchor of the proposed Geopark, supported by the network of hiking trails to geological destinations, and by tourism operators.

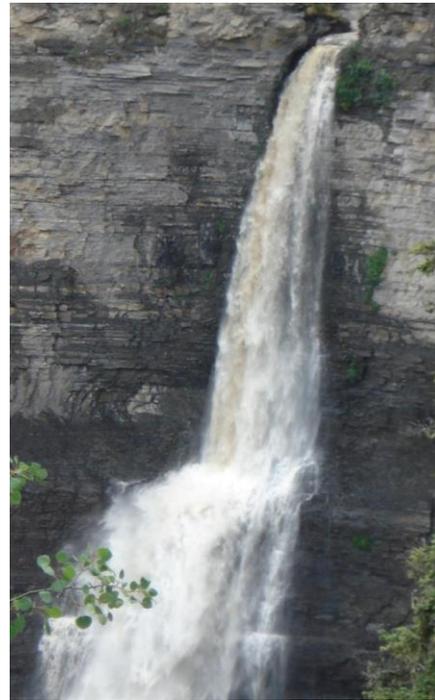
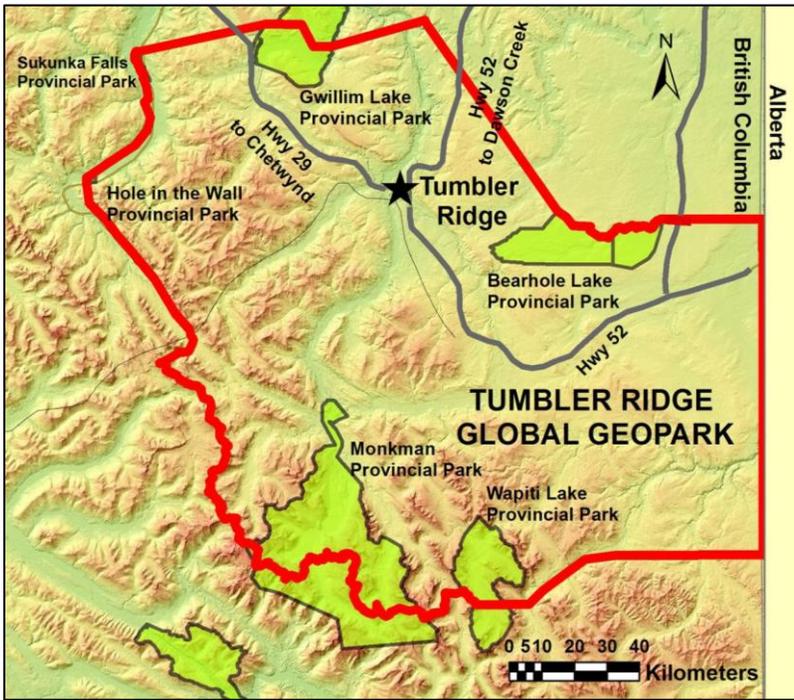
Attractions and activities for visitors and residents

A network of hiking trails leads to 21 destination areas (41 geosites) of geological and aesthetic interest, including waterfalls, rock formations, alpine meadows and lakes, canyons, mountain summits and caves. The research program of the Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre has allowed for the creation of the adjoining Dinosaur Discovery Gallery in Tumbler Ridge, which forms the centrepiece attraction for visitors in interpretation, programs and education.

- 1 - The Dinosaur Discovery Gallery houses exhibits and interpretation of the fossil discoveries from the area.
- 2 - Exhibits in the Community Centre focus more on the human history of the area, which ultimately is related to the geological history that preceded it.
- 3 - The Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation’s guided tours to dinosaur trackways close to town provide an experience of these sites in their pristine valley settings, complemented by educational camps.
- 4 - The hiking trail brochures developed by the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society describe geological phenomena. Bergeron Falls and Bergeron Cliffs, Boulder Gardens and the Shipyard, the Stone Corral, Windfall Lake, the Cascades, and the Murray Canyon Overlook hikes are of particular geological interest. In winter, skiing up Flatbed Creek allows appreciation of an anticline and sedimentary formations.
- 5 - For the motorist, the viewpoints at Kinuseo Falls allow appreciation of rock folding and a great waterfall, while trips up or down the Murray River by boat pass through canyons and rock faulting features. Helicopter tours offer another means of enjoying the geology. Many of the geosites are accessible by snowmobile in winter.
- 6 - For the adventurous, there is an abundance of wilderness, glaciers, peaks, cirques, caves and canyons.
- 7 - The book trilogy, Tumbler Ridge – the Scenery, the Fossils, the Human History, provides further information.

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Frequently Asked Questions

How will the Geopark benefit Tumbler Ridge?

Tumbler Ridge has suffered in the past from being a one-industry town, subject to boom-and-bust cycles. The Geopark can help to diversify our economy through tourism, celebrating our phenomenal strengths such as waterfalls and dinosaurs, and our unique geology-related history. We are the first Global Geopark in western North America and the designation should attract worldwide attention. Elsewhere in the world, Geopark status has led to significant local and regional economic benefits.

How will the Geopark be funded?

Funding from the Peace River Regional District in 2013 kick-started the project. We are working on funding support from many levels and partnerships including various levels of government, industry, and private donations. Elsewhere, Geopark projects of this magnitude and importance have received substantial provincial funding.

Now that the Geopark is a reality, will that mean fewer areas available for snowmobiling and ATVing?

No, a Geopark could create increased opportunities for recreation activities such as snowmobiling and ATVing.

Will the whole area become protected from mining, oil and gas and other industrial development?

No, these activities enhance the Geopark and highlight how the geology was pivotal in the creation of the town of Tumbler Ridge and sustains its economy. We are working with the local mines to try to reinstitute the public mine tours that were so popular in the 1980s and 1990s.

Will there be a gate and admission fee, as with national parks, or fees to use the trails?

No, there will be no admission fee - visitors would simply come to Tumbler Ridge and the region and stay to enjoy the attractions on offer. While commercial guided tours may be offered on the hiking trails, there are no plans to charge for regular use of the trails.

For further details: Visit the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark webpage at www.trmf.ca or contact

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