

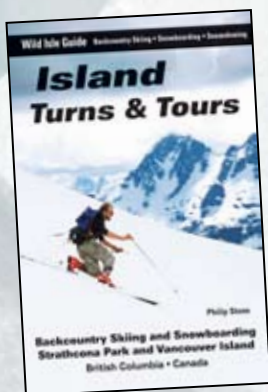
**Wild Isle Guide**

**Update to Island Turns and Tours first edition**

ISBN 0-9680766-6-1

**May 2008**

# **'Boundary' Range**



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**Backcountry Skiing and Snowboarding  
Strathcona Park and Vancouver Island  
British Columbia • Canada**

*Tobin Leopky, Alexandra Peak west bowl.*

# 'Boundary' Range



*Alexandra Peak west bowl from the west ridge, May.*

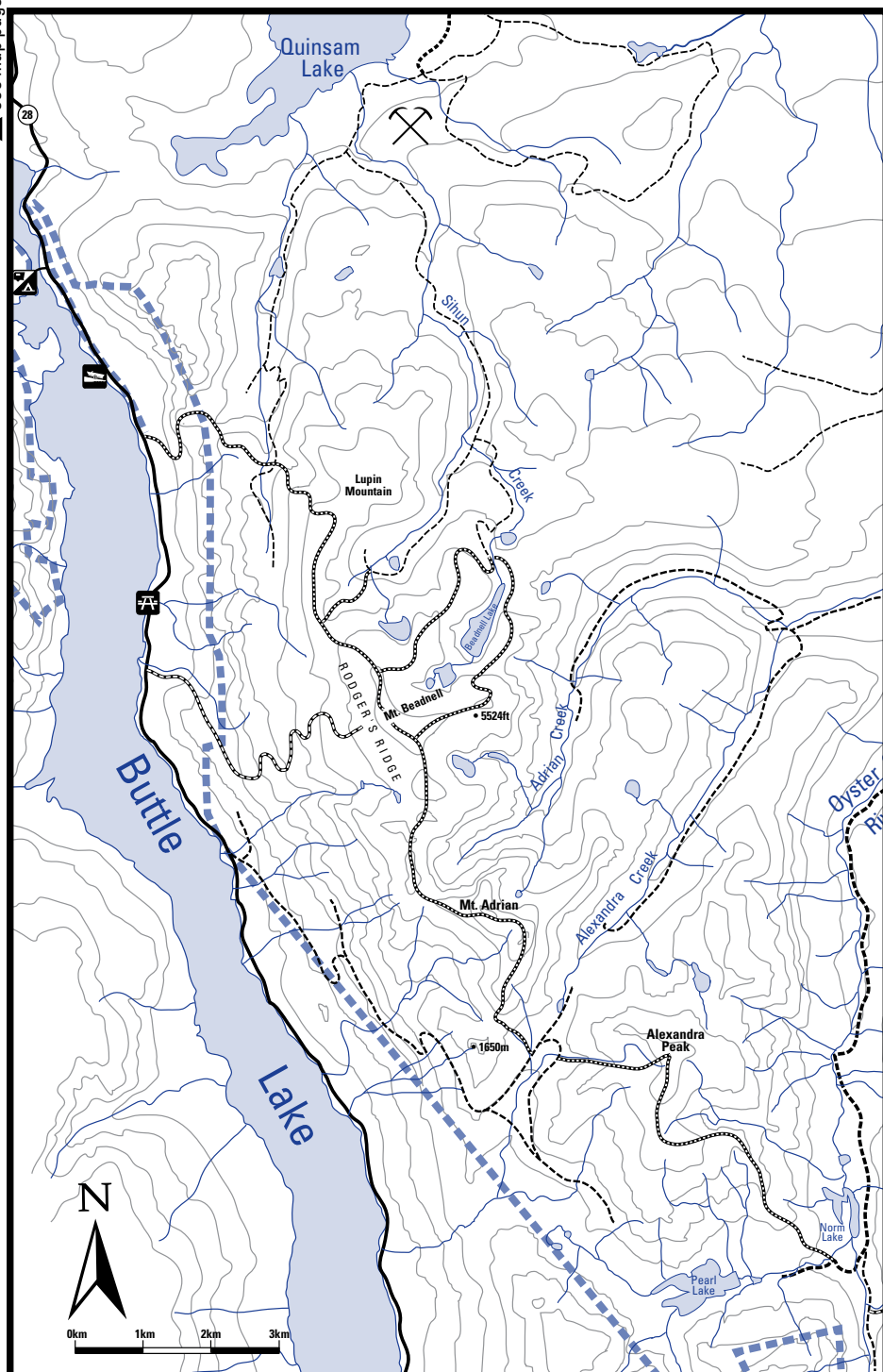
## 'Boundary' Range

From Campbell River and the neighbouring Discovery Islands the mountains of Strathcona Park are a spectacular sight. But the peak that dominates the skyline most of all, Alexandra Peak, isn't in fact within the park at all. Alexandra is the highest point of a group of mountains that includes: Mount Adrian, Mount Beadnell (Rodger's Ridge) and Lupin Mountain. This range, which backcountry skiers might sardonically refer to as the 'Out of Boundary Range', is situated east of Buttle Lake between the Oyster and Quinsam rivers and holds some excellent alpine terrain.

It is a sad twist of fate, or more accurately, the unfortunate result of a pen stroke, that placed these mountains outside the boundaries of Strathcona Park. As part of the notorious Esquimalt - Nanaimo Railway Grant they arbitrarily ended up just outside the eastern boundary of the park. Over the past century the land has changed hands multiple times as timber companies morphed through corporate sales and take overs. Today these spectacular peaks have the misfortune of 'belonging' to TimberWest who 'own' the western portion on Mount Adrian and Island Timberlands who 'inherited' the eastern side including most of Alexandra Peak. This in spite of the fact that the railway line to which they were granted with remains incomplete and neglected by the provincial government and the current land holders who care little about anything other than making millions by razing the old growth forest on the mountain flanks.



*Subsidiary ridges south of Mt. Adrian showing access & descents from 'Park' Creek logging roads.*





*Mt. Adrian (C) and Alexandra Peak (far R) west aspect from Marble Meadows, February.*

The dubious ownership of this land, geographically and ecologically tied to Strathcona Park, aside, the terrain for hiking and backcountry skiing is superb and the high ridges boast some of the most sublime views of Buttle Lake and the centre of Strathcona found anywhere. The logging roads encircling the peaks offer quick and relatively painless access despite the expansive clearcuts which luckily drop from prominence as higher ground is reached. Backcountry skiers looking for a solid weekend tour or a full day trip on terrain with both moderate and more exposed terrain would do well to pay a visit to the 'Boundary' group.

Although the newer logging roads, particularly Park Main on the east side of Buttle Lake, have put the area into a bit of a spotlight local skiers and snowmobilers have been using the area for decades. Before there was Mt. Washington, back when Green Mountain still had snow, there was even talk of a ski hill at Rodger's Ridge. Things played out differently as it turned out and Mt. Washington won the day. But the great ski terrain that first caught skiers attention on Rodger's Ridge and the surrounding mountains is still there. Rodger's Ridge refers to the high alpine ridge at the head of Sihun Creek including Mt. Beadnell.

**Highest Point:** Summit of Alexandra Peak 6,506 ft. / 1,982 m.

**Most Vertical Descent Possible:** ~600m

**Difficulty/Duration:** B2 / 1-4 days

**Map Sheets:** 92 F/13 Upper Campbell Lake, F/12 Buttle Lake, F/11 Forbidden Plateau

**Access:** The Boundary Range is to all intents and purposes encircled by logging roads and the Buttle Lake Parkway. The very best access is up Park 200 which climbs up from the Buttle Lake Parkway southward across the west flank of Mount Adrian underneath the Adrian 'bulletheads' and into a pass south of Mt. Adrian to the high hanging valley which is home to the exquisite but doomed Pearl Lake. Additional spurs, specifically Park 300 lead high up into the col between Mt. Adrian and Alexandra Peak offering excellent access to both these mountains.

Alexandra Peak and Mt. Adrian may also be reached from several roads off Oyster River Main which is found off Cranberry Road on the Island Highway 19. Some prior arrangement with the logging company is bound to be needed to use any of these roads. The longer drive, the locked gate and north aspect make approaches from Adrian and Alexandra creeks by way of the Oyster Main less attractive for winter or early spring trips. The south flanks of Alexandra Peak above Pearl Lake are slated to be logged in 2009 with accompanying road construction going even higher on the mountain.



*Alexandra Peak north east aspect from Georgia Strait, June.*





*Alexandra Peak (R) south east aspect from Mt. Albert Edward, March.*

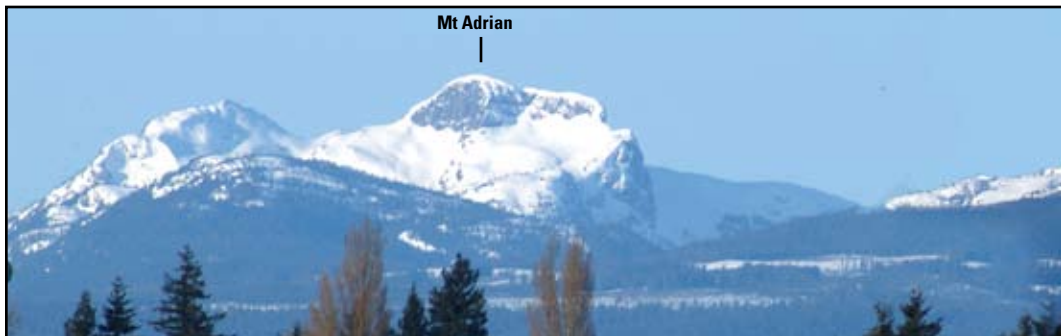
To reach the northern area of the Boundary group, Rodger's Ridge and Mount Beadnell, there is a trail which starts up an old logging road just 200m south of the Lupin Falls parking lot on the Buttle Lake Parkway. This trail, long used by Strathcona Park Lodge groups, follows the old logging road bed up onto a bench overlooking Buttle Lake where there is an excellent campsite. A flagged route continues from this bench up the hillside into the alpine near Mt. Beadnell. Ask at the Lodge reception about current trail conditions.

Other access possibilities onto Rodger's Ridge include routes from logging roads in Sihun Creek. To reach this side of the mountain drive west on Highway 28 from Campbell River toward Gold River and turn left (south) off the highway at the Quinsam Coal Mine road. Take the Argonaut Main to your right and drive it around the south shore of Quinsam Lake. Take Granite Main to the left which climbs high up into the Sihun Creek valley. Spurs off Granite Main run close to Beadnell Lake, Rodger's Ridge and Lupin Mountain giving quick access to the alpine.

## Turns

Good ski descents can be found on almost every aspect of Alexandra Peak. With the easy access off Park 300 the west bowl is particularly attractive with a 200m slope ringing the bowl off the surrounding ridges, look for a dramatic line down from the notch between the summit and thumb. The west bowl funnels in to a long 400m continuation down a gully draining into Park Creek with a variety of lines including the gully itself. The north east aspect of Alexandra has a wide open snowfield (greatly foreshortened when viewed from Campbell River) with descents up to 600m possible down to a pair of sub alpine lakes. This side of the peak is best reached from Alexandra Creek as the route around from the Adrian-Alexandra col is exposed and may not be possible with snow cover and any amount of avalanche hazard.

*Mt. Adrian (L) and Roger's Ridge (R) east aspect as seen from Quadra Island, April.*





*Alexandra Peak north west aspect from Mt. Adrian, May*

Mt. Adrian also sports some great descent terrain particularly on the north east side above Adrian Creek and also on the opposing bowl to the south-west. It is possible to ski right up and off the summit of Mt. Adrian on the south west side. The subsidiary ridge south east of the summit has great terrain to the west and there is a fantastic low angle gully that in stable conditions is a great run 300m off the ridge's south east end down to the logging road in the Adrian-Alexandra col.

On Rodger's Ridge there are lines down to the east and north-east in the bowls on those sides of the mountain. Also some good terrain is found in the meadows on the west side of the ridge but the ridge has better touring terrain than for epic turns.

## **Tours**

The obvious traverse of the Boundary Range would be from the Buttle Lake Parkway up Park 300 to the Adrian-Alexandra col, taking a side trip to Alexandra Peak via the west bowl, then continuing up the south ridge of Mt. Adrian past Adrian's summit and northward to a steep gully (caution with cornices - may be impassable in winter) and down on to the gentle terrain of Rodger's Ridge which can be exited on the SPL trail or the ridge followed all the way to Lupin Mountain and exit on logging roads off the north end of Lupin Mountain to a pass at the head of Hawkins Creek, then drop off to the west down to Buttle Narrows and back to the Buttle Lake Parkway.

There is a large area of sub alpine and alpine terrain in the cirques on Alexandra Peak's north side and several days could be spent exploring the lakes, ridges and higher bowls on Alexandra itself. Access this side of the range from Alexandra Creek or Oyster River logging roads.

Various traverses over Alexandra Peak might be made using the traditional hiking route up the south ridge from Pearl Lake and the west bowl route. Experienced ski mountaineers may be successful encircling Alexandra, travelling through some rugged and exposed terrain.

Climbing Mt Adrian makes a great tour in of itself as do Mt. Beadnell and Lupin Mountain in descending order of seriousness.

**Additional Info:** Island Alpine 1st Edition p.178-181

