



Rainbow Summit P

Ptarmigan Lake Trail

Ptarmigan Lake

Harrison Lake

Gamble Creek

Ptarmigan Mountain
871

Hwy 16



Ptarmigan Mountain

🕒 May 04, 2018

Ptarmigan Mountain, a stone's throw from Prince Rupert, is a great spot to get up in the alpine and, on a clear day, check out some amazing views. It's a slog, but those views are worth the effort.

To access the beginning of the route, park in the small pullout at Rainbow Summit, about 17 kms east of the Galloway Rapids bridge.

From there, hike the old road as it climbs for about half a kilometre to where the bush closes in; turn left and head up into the open muskeg. The cleared glades here were once the site of a small ski area. In winter, this trail is used by snowmobilers and is pretty easy to follow; in summer, it's still relatively straightforward, but pay attention to your surroundings and to the map. It leads to a bench above Ptarmigan Lake. For a shorter hike you can just stop here or head down to the water's edge to check out the lake, but for those wanting to bag Ptarmigan's summit, gather your strength.

There are two routes to the peak: you can head into the bush directly in front of you to follow the long north-facing ridge to the summit, or make your way to the terrace in front of the mountain to access the summit from its south ridge. Either way, hikers must be self-reliant from this point on—there are no defined trails, only routes.

To travel up the ridge, follow the map carefully—there is flagging to mark the way, but initial entry into the trees can be tricky. Once on the ridge, make your way slowly to the summit and enjoy the panorama. This route is 6.8 km return. Alternatively, follow the bench to get at the steeper south-facing ridge of the mountain. In winter, snowmobilers travel this way to access an open basin behind the mountain. That makes it pretty easy going. (Summer is a different story, of course.)

When you get to the basin—an expansive area bordered on its eastern side by a spectacular cirque—pick a route up the steep slope.

From the summit, follow the north ridge back down to complete a circular route. This way is 10.5 km return.

— *Matt J. Simmons*