

# The Painted Chasm

SITE #030201

GC1TTW8

Written & Researched by Angela Wynton

## SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Clinton, V0K 1K0  
 Location/Parking: N 51°13.212'  
 W 121°28.260'  
 Geocache Location: N 51°13.096'  
 W 121°28.882'  
 Accuracy: 6 meters  
 Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page  
 UTM: East 0606059;  
 North 5675193 10U  
 Geocache altitude: 1,082 m./3,549 ft.  
 Overall difficulty: 1.5  
 Terrain difficulty: 2  
 (1=easiest; 5=hardest)  
 Date Established: 1940  
 Ownership: BC Provincial Park  
 Access: • Public Road  
 • Year-round  
 • Vehicle accessible  
 • *Detailed access information on next page.*

For more information or to report a problem with this site please contact:  
 Gold Country Communities Society  
 P.O. Box 933 Cache Creek, B.C. V0K 1H0  
 Tel: 1-877-453-9467  
 email: info@exploregoldcountry.com

For more site pages go to:  
[www.goldtrail.com](http://www.goldtrail.com) or  
[www.GeoTourismCanada.com](http://www.GeoTourismCanada.com)

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As the Gold Rush and the Cariboo Wagon Road progressed further north from Clinton to Barkerville, so did the gold seekers and adventurers. Men and women wise to the travelers' needs for creature comfort, food, supplies and entertainment along the way, began building and providing services and supplies along the gold rush trail. Three such savvy businessmen were the Saul Brothers, Isaac & John and William Innes, who were working with G.B. Wright to build the Cariboo Wagon Road. At 59 Mile, Saul & Company built the first roadhouse north of the Pollard Guest Ranch in Clinton.

The two-story structure was erected in the 1860s on the flat land of the Fraser Plateau with breath-taking views of a scenic and colourful chasm. The location attracted many travelers who could picnic over-looking the colourful walls and gaze in amazement on the grandeur. Unfortunately, in 1948 the roadhouse burned down in a spectacular fire. It was never replaced.

The Painted Chasm, as it was soon to be known, brimmed with life. Travelers looking down into the Chasm Creek valley watched and listened to an abundance of wildlife, including bighorn sheep, moose, mule deer, black bear, coyote, small mammals, songbirds and remarkable birds of prey such as osprey and eagles.

However, what our pioneers did not know at the time was the rich history and untold geology of





this splendid canyon. They were gazing at a colourful geological wonder, beautifully detailed bands of sediment, which had been forming for more than 16 million years. The area became most active over 10 million years ago, resulting in successive basalt lava flows. The 'grand' painted canyon itself was created over a period of 10,000 years. The Painted Chasm views and layers allow the observer to look back to the Miocene and Pliocene Epochs.

The Painted Chasm canyon runs 8 kilometers long, 600 metres wide and is 300 metres deep from the top of the plateau. As the ice age glacial melt traveled through British Columbia, the glacial waters carried much silt. This silt was deposited as a ridge of gravel, called an esker, and stretches 40 kilometers upstream from the head of the chasm. The pressures and movement of the glacial ice and the resulting melt of the massive ice fields carved out the canyon you see today. The waters and silt exposed the deep colourful walls of many lava flows. These flows created strata of columnar-jointed rope lava (pahoehoe), thick-tiered lava flows, and minor pillow lava flows (formed in water) and pillow rock fragments (breccias). Rare airborne fire fragments (pyroclasts) are also evident as layers (silicic tephra).

In 1940, the Province of British Columbia declared 141 hectares of the painted canyon as a provincial park to protect its beauty and geology. In 1995 that area was expanded to 3,067 hectares to protect not only the chasm but also the sensitive ecosystem that surrounds it. Just as the pioneers 150 years ago gazed upon the magnificent colours of red, orange, pink and purple, today the Painted Chasm yields up its story rich in the history, geology and wildlife of Gold Country, British Columbia.

**Detailed access information:**

- Follow the signs to Chasm, north of Clinton on Hwy 97N.
- Please park in appropriate areas, indicated by coordinates.
- Respect all fences and other safety barriers.

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES**

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