

Regional Centre *of the* Kootenays

Population: 18,500
www.cbkchamber.com

Surrounded by miles of lush forests and over 100 crystal-clear lakes, Cranbrook is located in the heart of the East Kootenay.

Only 45 miles from the US/Canada border, Cranbrook has immediate access to centres in the western USA, Alberta, and British Columbia. Cranbrook has a long history of prosperity and is still the largest centre in the Kootenay and Boundary regions of our province; more than 20,000 people call it home.

Mild winters and more sunshine hours than any other city in BC have made it a favoured spot to work, play, retire, or raise a family.

Forestry, mining, manufacturing, tourism, trade, service, and transportation make up the economic backbone of the East Kootenay region. The Rockies make the region a first-class four-season resort destination. Visitors from around the world experience the “Rocky Mountain High” while camping, fishing, boating, and hiking. During the winter, Canada’s finest ski resorts come alive at Kimberley, Banff, Panorama, Snow Valley, and Lake Louise—all short drives from Cranbrook.

Cranbrook serves a retail trading-area population that exceeds 56,000. It has two major shopping centres, an active central business district, a wide variety of hotels and motels, campgrounds, and more than 60 eating establishments.

The City of Cranbrook boasts a well-

rounded menu of community facilities including a community college; 10 public schools; three Christian schools; an acute, intermediate, and extended care hospital; senior citizen homes; 16 parks; golf courses in stunning natural settings; a curling rink; performing arts theatre, cineplex theatre; library; daily and weekly newspapers; two radio stations; cable TV; recreation complex with a swimming pool, water slide, and arena; Casino of the Rockies; and Fort Steele Heritage Town.

The Canadian Museum of Rail Travel has received accolades from railway buffs from all over Canada and around the world. The new museum boasts as its centrepiece the Royal Alexandra Hall, which was built in 1906 as the café of the Royal Alexandra Hotel in Winnipeg. It was restored here as a Millennium Project for Cranbrook, in precise, original, and beautiful detail.

Cranbrook is a city big on sports. There are a wide variety of trails in the area, from a paved hiking/biking path to climbing a mountain. Every level of fitness can be accommodated. There’s something to do every season in Cranbrook. In 2002, the Kootenay Ice were Memorial Cup winners—the best junior hockey team in Canada!

Vegetation

Vegetation varies with elevation. Valley bottoms are dominated by ponderosa pine, rocky mountain douglas fir, lodgepole pine, and trembling aspen. Extensive grasslands are found in the southern part of the region. Other species of trees include black cottonwood and, in wetter areas, white spruce.



Above the valley floor, at approximately 1300 metres, forest cover includes engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine, western larch, and trembling aspen. In the western part of the region, higher precipitation allows western red cedar and western hemlock to grow.

In the sub-alpine areas, above 1530 metres, there are whitebark pine and alpine larch. Alpine meadows include wildflowers, shrubs, and alpine larch.

Industry

Cranbrook serves as the leading distribution and service centre for the region. It is also headquarters for Tembec Industries Ltd., which operates two large sawmills, one pulp mill, and a value-added centre in the region. Tembec employs some 1200 employees; 97 percent of their lumber is exported to the USA.

In the Elk Valley, Westar Mining and Fording Coal produce and export metallurgical and thermal coal to Japan and other world markets. Coal-bed methane exploration is taking place. New lead-zinc activity in Kimberley has excited that community.

Local manufacturing primarily focuses on lumber and wood products, machinery, equipment, fabricating, and food and beverage products. Cranbrook recently attracted Ice River Springs (water bottling company) to the city; that company will employ 50 people. There has been substantial growth in the retail industry in the last two years.

Cranbrook is poised to mark its centennial in 2005 and, while the City looks with optimism to the future, the past is still celebrated. ▲