EASY · POINT-TO-POINT · ALTA LAKE TO GREEN LAKE · SUMMER

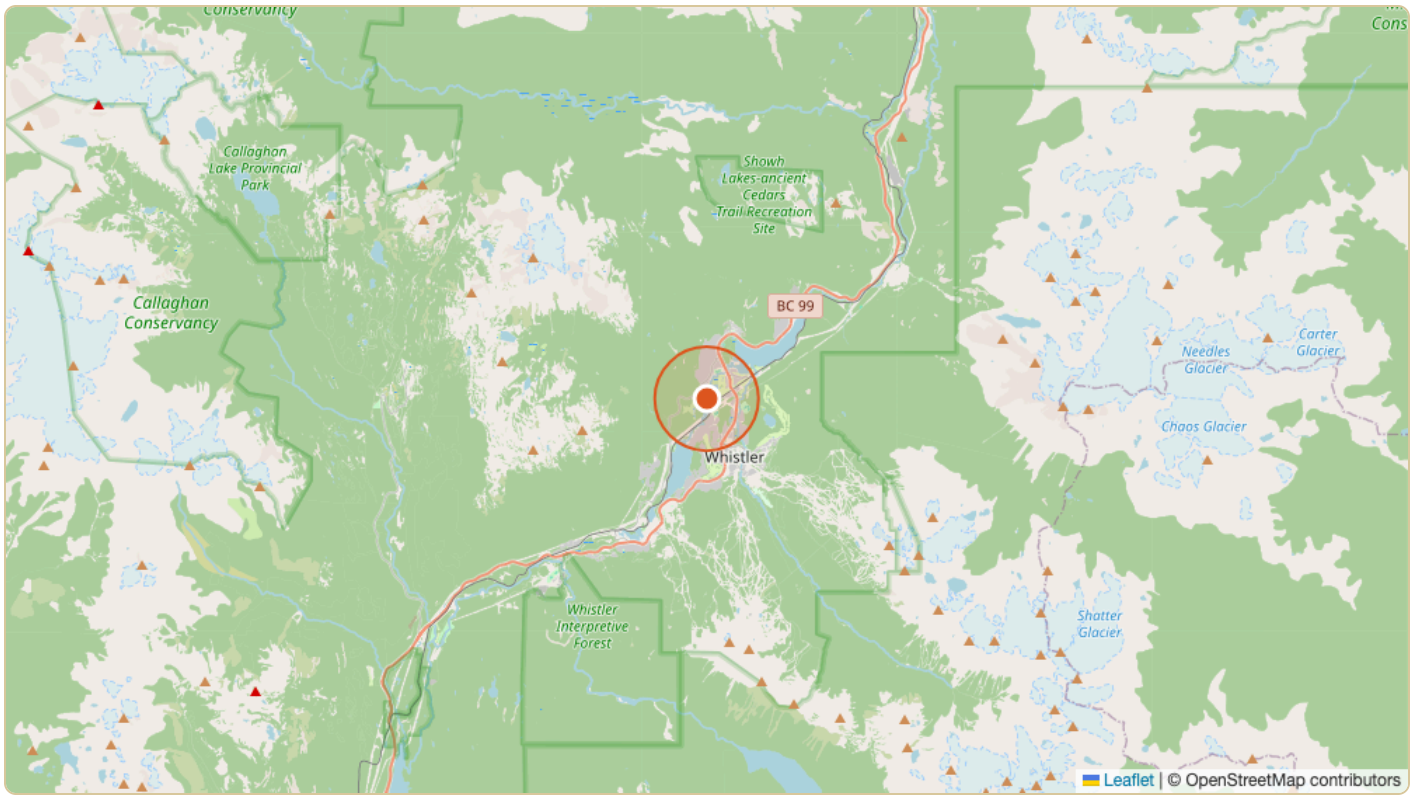
River of Golden Dreams

A slow, winding river paddle from Alta Lake to Green Lake. Plan a shuttle, and a morning when the lake is calm.

DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH FIRST. This is not a navigation tool and must not be your only source. Confirm everything with the land manager.

DIFFICULTY	RIVER LENGTH	LAKE LEG
Easy–Mod	**≈ 5 km**	**≈ 2 km**
Calm river; lake crossing	≈ 3 km straight-line	≈ 20–30 min across Alta Lake

TIME	LAUNCH	ROUTE TYPE
2–3 h	**Wayside / Lakeside**	**Point-to-point**
Typical estimates	Parks on Alta Lake	Needs a shuttle



Approximate area only, not a trailhead or route. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

Start	Wayside or Lakeside Park, Alta Lake
End	Green Lake
Lake crossing	≈ 2 km, 20–30 min
River	≈ 5 km of meanders
Total	≈ 2–3 hours

Return	Shuttle or arranged pickup

Overview

The River of Golden Dreams connects Alta Lake to Green Lake in Whistler. Wikipedia gives the river's meandering length as over 5 km, with only about 3 km between the two lakes in a straight line. Most guides start with a lake paddle of about 2 km (20 to 30 minutes) across Alta Lake from Wayside Park or Lakeside Park.

Estimates for the whole trip run about 2 to 3 hours, and tour operators often advertise a three-hour trip. The trip is point-to-point, so you need a shuttle or a return plan.

≈ 5 km of river · ≈ 2 km lake leg · 2–3 hours · Shuttle needed

Planning the day

Put-in Guides commonly launch from Wayside Park or Lakeside Park on Alta Lake.

Take-out The river ends at Green Lake. Sources report free parking at both ends.

Return This is a point-to-point trip. Arrange a shuttle, a second vehicle or a pickup before you launch.

Know before you go

Wind on Alta Lake The lake crossing is exposed to wind. Cross early and stay near shore.

Life jackets Wear a PFD for the whole trip.

Wildlife Give wildlife plenty of room, and do not approach nests or animals on the banks.

Sources vary Distances and times come from secondary sources and vary with how they measure. Check with a local operator or the Resort Municipality of Whistler for current conditions.

Questions

How long is the River of Golden Dreams?
About 5 km of meandering river, about 3 km in a straight line between the lakes, plus a lake crossing of about 2 km, according to Wikipedia and Whistler.com.

How long does it take?
Most estimates are 2 to 3 hours of paddling. Tour operators often advertise three hours.

Where do I launch?
Commonly at Wayside Park or Lakeside Park on Alta Lake, ending at Green Lake.

Do I need a shuttle?
Yes. The trip is point-to-point.

Safety checklist

Tell someone your plan Leave your route, group size and expected return time with someone you trust, and check in when you are back. BC AdventureSmart (adventuresmart.ca) has a free trip-plan form.

Check conditions the same day Look at the weather, road and trail conditions, closures and (in snow season) the avalanche forecast on the day you go, not last week. Use the land manager's page for this guide.

Set a turnaround time Pick a time to turn back whatever happens, start early, and carry a headlamp. Most trips go wrong in the last hours of the day.

Carry the essentials Water, food, navigation (map and offline GPS), light, first aid, extra layers, sun protection, a whistle and fire or shelter. A phone alone is not a plan.

Emergencies Call 911. Cell coverage is unreliable or absent in much of the Sea to Sky backcountry, so consider a satellite messenger and know your location.

Water and wildlife Wear a life jacket on the water: cold water can disable you in minutes. Carry bear spray where bears are present, keep food secured and give wildlife space.

Sources & disclaimer

This guide draws on Wikipedia: River of Golden Dreams; Whistler.com: River of Golden Dreams; The Outbound.

Last checked November 18, 2026. Figures marked ≈ are approximate, and sources sometimes disagree. Always confirm with the land manager before you go.

Outdoor recreation involves risk, including serious injury and death. This guide is general information compiled from the public sources listed above and was last checked on November 18, 2026. Conditions, access, closures, fees and rules change, and some figures differ between sources. It is not a substitute for current information from the land manager, for proper skills, equipment and preparation, or for your own judgment. You are responsible for your own safety and decisions. To the extent permitted by law, Sea to Sky Trails and its authors accept no liability for loss, injury or damage arising from use of this guide.

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