

Accordingly, the shortest of the three northern routes, is that by Peace River.

Starting from a common point, such as Fort Saskatchewan, east of the mountains, all exceed in length the line to Burrard Inlet.

To Port Simpson, <i>via</i> Peace River Pass, is....	190 miles longer.
“ “ “ Yellow Head Pass, is....	225 “ “
“ “ “ Pine River Pass, is.....	255 “ “

All are equally affected by climatic considerations, which, in this latitude, are of paramount importance. There is no difference of opinion among the explorers respecting the extent of fertile land. West of the Rocky Mountains it is inconsiderable. The fertile tracts are indeed the exception. To the east of the mountain chain the Peace River plateau is marked by great fertility of soil over a wide area.

The Peace River region, as far as examined, may be considered to extend from the foot hills of the Rocky Mountains easterly to Lesser Slave Lake, and from latitude 54° to latitude 57°. The whole area within these boundaries is not fertile, but they set forth generally the limit within which the region of fertility is found. To the north of this, however, bordering the valley of the Peace River, even to latitude 59°, there is a considerable tract of country that is reported to be fertile; but, as this northern district, though properly speaking included in the Peace River country, has not yet been examined, and as it was not embraced in the explorations of the past season, it is not here further referred to.

The fertile district is described as a plateau elevated generally about 2,000 feet above the sea. The rivers which pass through, or have their sources in the Rocky Mountains, and which drain the plateau, run in deeply eroded channels, ranging in many places from 600 to 700 feet below the general level. Peace River itself rises in Northern British Columbia and flows through the Rocky Mountains by a low passage about latitude 56°. It is described as a noble stream, indeed one of the most beautiful of rivers. It is fed from the south by a number of tributaries, the chief of which are Pine River and Smoky River, its confluence with the former being about longitude 120° 30', and with the latter about three degrees further east.

West of Smoky River, both to the south and north of Peace River, there are extensive areas of prairie country, either perfectly open and covered with more or less luxuriant grass, or dotted with patches of copse and trees.