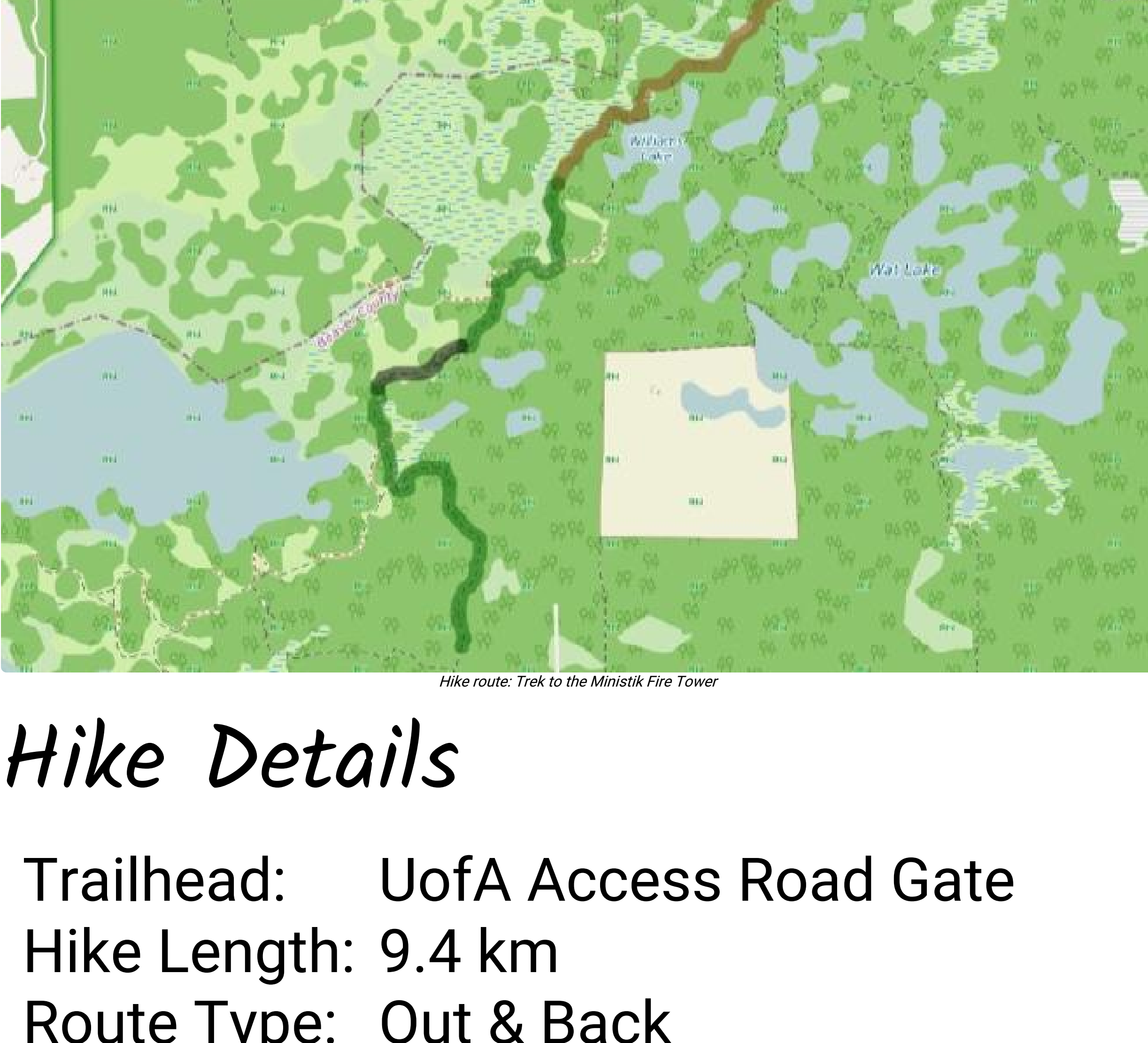




Hike the Ministik!

Trek to the Ministik Fire Tower



Hike Details

Trailhead: UofA Access Road Gate
Hike Length: 9.4 km
Route Type: Out & Back
Difficulty: Rated 131: Strenuous

Route Colour key

Brown: Road - easy going and the route is always clear.
Green: Usually a well-defined trail, occasionally overgrown.
Blue: Trail often degraded or overgrown, therefore not well-defined at times.
Black: No trail, so navigation is more difficult, yet sometimes a game trail to follow.

Description

Starting out on the U of A Access Road, and after transitioning to the Waskahagan Trail, this hike takes you to one of the few historical landmarks in the area: the Ministik Firetower.

This is a "must-do" hike for someone with some Ministik hiking experience under their belt.

Leg 1

UofA Access Road Gate → UofA Access Road / Waskahagan Trail Intersection

Distance: 1.5 km

Accumulated Distance: 1.5 km

Description

- After parking at the "UofA Access Road Gate", start down the hill and wind your way towards Williams Lake.
- Once you arrive there, you'll want to take in the nice view at "Red Chair Lookout", named after a red folding chair that was carted out to the viewpoint and remained there for years.
- This road is part of the Waskahagan Trail, a small section of which meanders through a large part of the Ministik. You might notice blue trail markers both before and after you reach Williams Lake. These mark off-road sections of the Waskahagan Trail. These sections are seldom travelled these days, so sticking to the road is your best bet, especially if you're new to the area.

Leg 2

UofA Access Road / Waskahagan Trail Intersection → Trail meets Shinjuku Meadow (NE)

Distance: 1.1 km

Accumulated Distance: 2.6 km

Description

- At the "U of A Access Road / Waskahagan Trail Intersection" waypoint, bear right off the road onto the well-worn single-track trail.
- Now you wind your way through a somewhat sparse, yet nicely shaded forest of poplar, spruce and birch. The sparseness of the trees often allows the sun to filter through branches to the ground, providing the experience the Japanese call "komorebi". Although the term literally translates to "sunlight filtering through trees" it expresses that feeling of each moment being transient, part of the flow of things and the aesthetically beautiful.
- That's why it's "The Enchanted Forest".
- Follow the trail to the "Turn onto farmer's road" waypoint.
- You'll reach an open area to your right. The trail gets a little harder to make out for a few meters here but look for the yellow Waskahagan Trail markers on nearby trees in front of you. They'll guide you to a farmer's road.
- Now turn right and follow the road around the edge of this little hay field. Your waypoint is "Intersection of Farmer's Road (N) / Waskahagan Trail".
- At "Intersection of Farmer's Road (N) / Waskahagan Trail" veer to the left to follow the spruce-lined trail and walk until you reach "Trail meets Shinjuku Meadow (NE)" (named after Shinjuku Station in Tokyo which has almost as many entrances and exits as this large, central Ministik hay field).

Leg 3

Trail meets Shinjuku Meadow (NE) → Trail meets Shinjuku Meadow (SW)

Distance: 450 m

Accumulated Distance: 3.05 km

Description

- Now you need to make your way straight ahead to the far end of the field to the east. Use the waypoints "Shinjuku Meadow 1" and "Shinjuku Meadow 2" to guide you.

Leg 4

Trail meets Shinjuku Meadow (SW) → Ministik Firetower

Distance: 1.5 km

Accumulated Distance: 4.55 km

Description

- When you reach "Waskahagan Trail meets Shinjuku Meadow (SW)" you'll see a wide section of the Waskahagan Trail. When you come to the foot of a small hill, follow the trail to the right, up the hill
- When you reach the bottom of the small hill at "Waskahagan Trail meets road to meadow", resist the urge to continue along the road to the right. Instead continue straight ahead along the single-track trail into the forest. The yellow trail markers will guide you.
- From this point until you reach the Ministik Firetower the trail will be clear. Remember, this entire area is made up of "knob and kettle" terrain: "knobs", small hills heaved up as glaciers melted and "kettles", depressed areas that retain water to form small lakes and ponds. This means there will be occasional small hills and valleys to traverse.
- When you reach the Ministik Firetower you'll see the old structure looks exceptionally rickety, so climbing it to any significant height is not recommended.
- But taking a much-deserved rest here is highly recommended!
- When you decide to return, use the same waypoints to find your way back to the parking spot at "UofA Access Road Gate"
- Congratulations! You've traversed a lot of ground today and experienced one of the "must do" hikes in the Ministik!