

# Just

## Around the Bend

A towing tour of British Columbia's best lakes via a GMC Sierra 2500HD Denali and a Sea Ray 185 Sport

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tanding before my new ride, my heart embarks on a mission to escape my rib cage. **Have I ever had this much power at my fingertips before?** The milk froth in my portable mug makes me scoff. I'll be driving a GMC Sierra 2500HD Denali Crew Cab. From here on, I'll take my coffee black.

My already-caffeinated veins now surge with adventure-fueled adrenaline. Towing a Sea Ray 185 Sport, I cross the U.S.-Canadian border at Surrey and begin to traverse southern British Columbia. My B.C. lakes expedition will take me up winding mountain switchbacks, on narrow logging roads, across stretches of valley ranchland and along the high shores of glacier-fed waters. I've had only an average amount of trailering experience, mostly garnered in the Plains. So while I'm excited to ramble along the elevated mountain twists and turns, I have to admit, I'm a bit anxious.

Rain patters against the windshield just as I begin the climb out of the Fraser Valley on Highway 5—aka the Coquihalla or just “Coke” for short. The road follows the Coquihalla River to a summit of the same name. Summer has officially begun here, but the highest of the granite slopes

still hide under cloaks of snow. Others reveal fresh avalanche wounds. The highway ducks under the Great Bear Snow Shed, a structure built to protect it from the peaks' most treacherous slides. The temperature on the dash's touch screen plummets nearly 20 degrees at the crest of the pass, but the Sierra HD's heated steering wheel and seats keep me guiltily cozy as I gape at a soggy black bear nibbling foliage on the road's shoulder.

A heavy fog replaces the rain, and beneath a darkening sky, I'm faced with the combination of limited visibility and slick, curvy roads—the kind shown in car commercials. My giant rig manages the steep grade with ease thanks to the 352-hp Vortec 6.0L engine. One of GM Powertrain's newest engines, it delivers all the get-up-and-go you need. Sierra HD's intuitive new braking system provides extra assurance,



(Clockwise from above) Cloud-piercing peaks; Wells, British Columbia, proves an artful stopover with galleries and cafés; open skies and open roads; rearview eye candy.



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“The 185 is a great all-purpose, family-fun recreation boat. And it’s a very good-looking boat, both in and out of the water.”

-Gary Rawlings, marine sales manager at NR Motors



SEARAY  
TIPS

## Check it Twice

**Before hitting the road, make sure you:**

Fuel your vehicle and check the oil / Have the right size coupler, hitch and hitch ball / Properly secure the coupler and safety chains / Securely tie your boat to your trailer / Tighten fasteners and wheel lug nuts / Properly adjust the wheel bearings / Do not exceed your tow vehicle’s maximum carrying capacity / Properly inflate the tires / Check your trailer lighting / Check your trailer breaks / Obey all trailering laws of your state

especially in these conditions. Automatic Grade Braking technology detects when the truck is heading downhill and, if necessary, it downshifts to maintain a desired speed. My nerves, once tense about the weather and terrain, relax to the rhythm of the satellite radio.

At the town of Merritt, I pause to check on the Sea Ray that's been following me up and down the mountain. Although I've caught glimpses of its bright orange hull in the rearview mirror, I've barely been aware of its presence. The Sierra HD's trailer-sway control uses built-in StabiliTrak® sensors to keep everything in line. The sensors detect changes in ride motion and apply braking as needed, making towing pretty darn easy, even for someone with limited experience.

At sunrise, I'm treated to a panoramic view of Okanagan Lake from my perch just north of Kelowna. The Okanagan Valley can best be described as a giant fruit-and-veggie tray. "There's always something delicious in season," says resident Gaylene Smith, before taking a bite of an heirloom tomato salad. I've joined her for lunch at the Kelowna Yacht Club, along with her husband, Bob Smith, the club's former commodore, and John Sharples, the sales manager at Dockside

Marine, the local Sea Ray dealer. From famed Okanagan cherries to the grapes that populate the valley's renowned vineyards, warm temperatures and a long growing season make the Okanagan's fertile grounds a top destination for foodies and oenophiles.

With the sprawling and sparkling Okanagan Lake on the valley floor, residents and visitors enjoy the on-water lifestyle here, as well. The Kelowna Yacht Club is a hot spot for sailors, stand-up paddleboarders and, of course, Sea Ray boaters. "Sea Ray makes an all-around great-looking boat," John says. "I've sold a lot of them here in the valley, and people just love to get out and enjoy the sunshine."

Kelowna offers a plethora of hotels: your average chains, quaint waterside lodges, bed and breakfasts, and luxury boutiques. After a cruise on the water touring waterside picnic spots (perfect for munching all of the fruits of the region), I'm tempted to spend the night. But, alas, the open road calls.

Warning me first that the drive is extremely winding, John suggests a scenic route out of the valley. I don't have to be told twice. Plus, if I get lost, I have the Sierra HD's very handy built-in, touch-screen navigation system at my



The wildlife: Mr. PG greets at Prince George, and furrier friends spy from beyond.



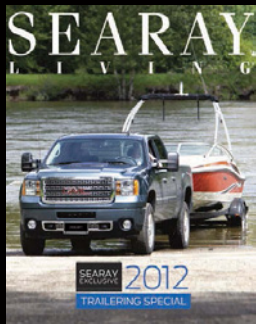


SEARAY  
RESOURCE

## Trailer How-To

Sea Ray Trailing Guide coming soon!

Boating means freedom, casting off the lines that tie us to all of the distractions and responsibilities back on land. Sport boats offer even more freedom because we can trailer them to additional bodies of water, picking our lake or launch site based upon what we want to do that day. Go fishing at one spot, beachcombing at another and wakeboarding at yet another. Plus, for many of us the best slip for our boat is actually in our garage, where it's easier to do our own upkeep (not to mention ogle the boat at midnight in our pajamas).



Trailing adds another dimension to the sport of boating, including trailer maintenance and road safety. The trailer also adds a substantial piece of equipment that needs attention and upon which we place great demands. Traveling to and from the lake takes extra consideration, as well.

Sea Ray has developed this new extension of *Sea Ray Living* to help you understand the ins and outs of trailing. Sea Ray wants you to hit the road with confidence, ready to tackle all of the boating hot spots that are calling your name. This guide will cover everything you need to know to keep your rig in tip-top shape, and to feel on top of your driving, launching and retrieving techniques.

The *Sea Ray Living Trailing Guide* will make your boating life easier and more enjoyable. It will free your mind of worry, just as boating frees you from your shorebound distractions. Look for this free guide in the near future.

service. I head north on the very convenient Westside Road, winding my way along the lake while climbing high out of the Okanagan. The leather bucket seat, which I set for perfect comfort with its 12-way power control, eases any strain on my back and puts me in the right position to see clearly out the windshield. The StabiliTrak control system comes in handy here, too, not only for towing, but also for managing those unexpected curves on such a tight road. The system senses when your vehicle is not responding to your steering inputs, then adjusts engine speed and braking pressure to an individual wheel to help maintain directional control.

Finally, I reach cowboy country. The open ranchlands offer a bit of reprieve and allow me to contemplate the legendary, much-debated Kamloops trout. Said to be bigger and feistier than other rainbows, the Kamloops trout can be caught on many lakes or rivers around the British Columbia interior. The town of Kamloops and its surrounding area proves a boater's mecca, whether for fishing or watersports. Swimmers and wakeboarding enthusiasts favor the warmer Kamloops Lake and use the new Tobiano boat launch.

Jumping back on Highway 97, named the Cariboo Highway for the region it runs through, I make my way north. Semi trucks whiz by, reminding me that this road is a huge British Columbia artery. Just beyond the town of Quesnel lies Ten Mile Lake Provincial Park. Perfect for camping, fishing, boating, watersports and swimming, this lake is the ultimate choice for families looking for an on-water wilderness getaway. At the launch, I'm thankful for the Sierra HD's rearview camera system, which displays video on the NAV touch screen. I don't have to rely on anyone's sketchy hand signals when backing the 185 Sport into the water and, best of all, I look like a pro doing it all by myself. The 185 Sport turns heads and earns thumbs-up signs when I take a few turns around the lake. Great throttle response, for sure, but I'm more interested in catching a few rays. I kill the engine and get cozy on the generous sunpad.

Before long, the urge to explore gets the best of me. Scenic Highway 26 runs east out of Quesnel and is touted as a spectacular stretch of sights. A mile in, I notice a sunbathing black bear. Then another and another—one on his hind legs. I'm glad my peanut butter and jelly are secure in the sturdy truck's roomy cab. Barkerville, a restored ghost town, operates as a tourist attraction. With roots in the gold rush, it was once the largest town north of San Francisco and west of Chicago. It offers all the delights one might expect: ice cream, candy, faux shoot-outs, saloon gals and the opportunity to pan for gold. The riches of the side trip, though, are probably the wildlife viewing opportunities. I even spy a moose slurping liberally from a creek.


Next, I meet up with Gary Rawlings, marine sales manager at NR Motors, the local Sea Ray dealership in Prince George. He's got plenty of Sea Rays in stock for the summer rush. "The 185 is a great all-purpose, family-fun recreation boat," he says. "With the deep bow and cockpit,



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TOWING**

you're very comfortable and secure. And it's a very good-looking boat, both in and out of the water. Nice lines." We talk shop for a while before taking a drive. Rippling at the base of Tabor Mountain is Tabor Lake, a tranquil body of water that, despite its proximity to town, feels far from civilization. A spin on the Sea Ray is the perfect complement to a day of horseback riding and hiking on the area trails. Those looking to venture farther out can follow Highway 16 to the Purden Lake Provincial Park and take advantage of a separate beach designated for water-skiers. West Lake Provincial Park south of town features a special boater's beach, as well. Oh, and then there's Ness Lake to the north... "Fortunately, we have lots and lots of lakes," Gary says. "There's pretty much one around every corner you turn."

My return route includes Highway 99, nicknamed the "Sea to Sky" and, in my opinion, the epitome of "scenic route." By now I have complete confidence in the trusty Sierra HD, its Vortec engine and its array of smart features. But the Sea to Sky's bends reveal such amazing vistas that my enthusiasm causes me to grip the wheel. Gargantuan white-tipped mountains shoot high above emerald lakes. It's so beautiful, it almost looks fake. I pull over at a turnout to take it all in.

With my newfound confidence, I'm overwhelmed with possibility. The village of Pemberton, known for cycling, is just around the bend. I look back at the truck. Hmm... I wonder if I can find a mountain bike with StabiliTrak. 

## Keep on Truckin'

**GMC Sierra 2500HD Denali Crew Cab –  
the safe, reliable and fun family tow vehicle**

StabiliTrak stability control system / Rearview camera system / Ultrasonic rear parking assist / XM NAV Traffic® / XM Radio / 12-way power control leather bucket seats / Automatic Grade Braking technology / Tire pressure monitoring system

