

Hidden Valley

Surprisingly few have been to this magical spot just a kilometre from “downtown” New Minas.

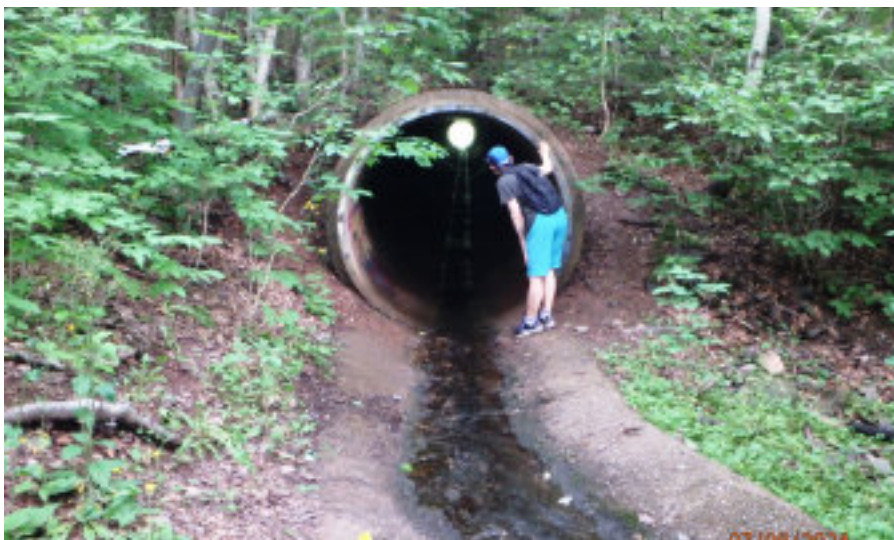
BY PETER WALLACE

Hidden Valley is a wonderful, small, north-facing, U-shaped valley with a small intermittent waterfall originating out of a notch in its south wall. It’s not that “hidden,” but surprisingly few have been here given that it is no more than a kilometre from Commercial Street in New Minas. It’s a magical little valley with the unsubstantiated rumour that Acadians sheltered here from the British during the Expulsion, but I think that is a rumour made up by scouts or their parents years ago to make it more exotic (it’s too small to shelter a family with animals for more than a day).

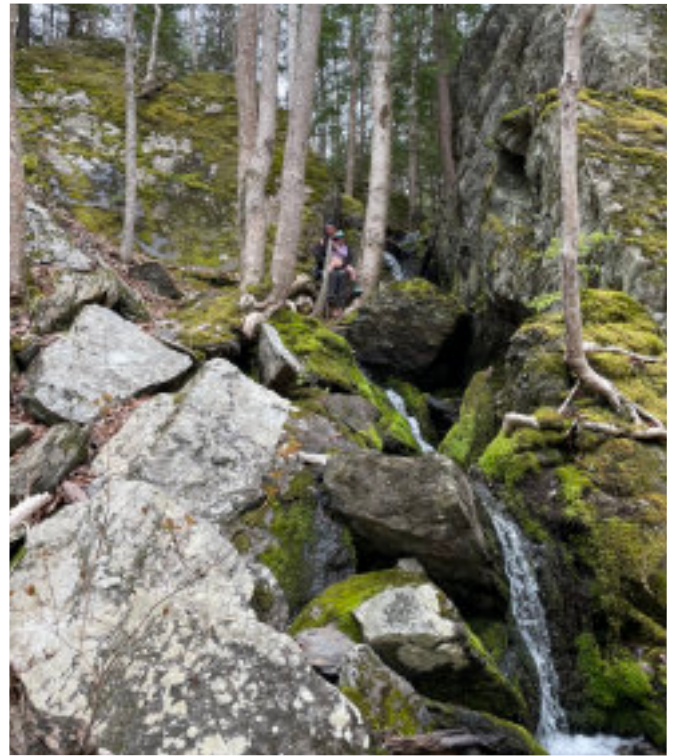
There are multiple access points but I only describe my favourite approach from the north, which is the shortest and easiest (see the map). You’ll find the others if you study Google Earth. This approach takes you under the Highway 101 using a five foot diameter drainage tunnel, a hoot for children, but a stoop for adults. Don’t cross over the highway!

Directions and Trail Description

The trailhead is on Cloverleaf Drive in New Minas and can be accessed off Milne Avenue, which parallels



The tunnel is a hoot for kids, but a stoop for adults.



There are lots of fun places to climb. PHOTO: A. WARNER

Highway 101 on its north side. The parking area is at the ninety degree turn on Cloverleaf Drive. The trail is an unmaintained county road that goes from Cloverleaf Drive to White Rock Road, but the valley itself is on private land. Take the trail going south into the tunnel and let the fun begin!

The tunnel exits onto an ATV trail; go left and stay on the main trail, which turns east and then south. About 250 m along is a brook which crosses the path from the right, with water cascading 2 m down over moss-covered rocks—a photo op if I’ve ever seen one. Keep going, the brook eventually crosses again from the left. About 200 m further along, take an old overgrown trail angling off to the right. This trail takes you right to the valley, approximately another 200 m, where the entrance is well disguised (hidden?). It’s another fun place. First, there is a cliff, three to four metres high, with the trail passing through a lower notch. Watch for slippery rocks if it’s wet. Immediately beyond the notch, there is a large, fallen, yellow birch tree across the trail, which is best to

scramble under (as of spring 2024). You are there! To exit, reverse your steps, or bushwhack up the eastern cliff bank from the fire pit in the valley to the ATV road about 100 m away. There is a trail on this cliff bank, but it is difficult to locate, so dead reckon. Once on top at the ATV trail, go left down the hill to where the brook crossed the road, and then back to the tunnel.

Description

Hidden Valley is a flat area about 20 m in diameter with a shallow stream flowing through it. The ridge to the north and the cliff to the south are composed of metamorphosed quartz sandstone, making them quite hard and resistant to erosion, whereas the valley is composed of slate, which is much softer, so the brook carved the valley through it. Most of the rocks around the fire pit are slate with flat surfaces, which make them easy to sit on, and I suspect they came from the western cliff or the brook bed. The more angular boulders are from the metamorphosed sandstones and are most prominent in the notches. Almost all the rocks, including the slates, are moss-covered, which make them very slippery when wet, but they grip well when dry.



The entrance notch to Hidden Valley.

Walking in you will notice that the forest floor is fairly open due to the dense overstory of tree branches; in some places you could probably run through the forest with very little trouble. It is mostly modest-sized hard wood with very few large trees, indicating the area was likely cut in the last 50 to 100 years. Where light is reaching the ground, there are plenty of brambles and other shrubs (e.g., honeysuckle, hazelnut, and glossy buckthorn), and the usual perennials such as lilies, starflower, partridge berry, asters, etc.

Most of the vegetation is on the rims of the valley, whereas the valley floor is quite open and shaded when the sun is low or the trees are in leaf. It is quite cold and dark in the winter due to the low sun and high walls. Whatever the season, you can relax and sit on the flat rocks and logs around the fire pit while eating a snack and telling stories. There are lots of fun places for kids to climb about while you watch them from below. If there is snow, use snowshoes because it is a difficult path for skiing. If it is freezing with no snow, have crampons on your boots. There is no garbage bin so pack out everything you take in. Enjoy this special place in all four seasons!

Peter Wallace is a retired geologist and leads a weekly hiking group of retirees to areas of natural beauty and interest in the region. Peter contributed the map and photos unless otherwise noted.



Map of the trail to Hidden Valley.