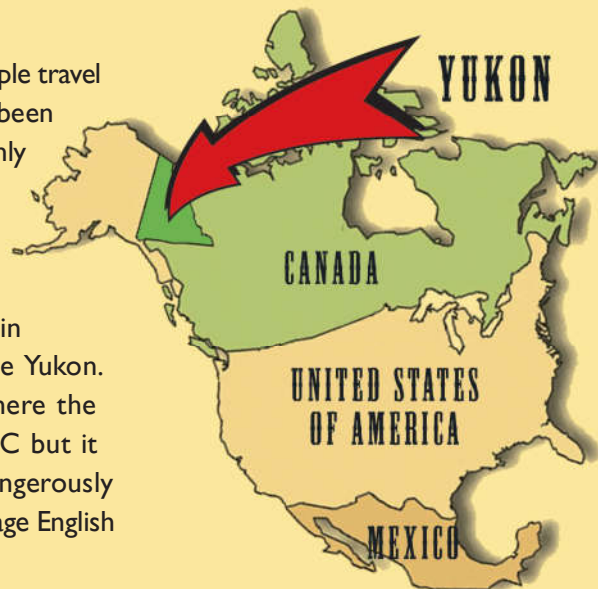


# THE RUSH FOR GOLD

Gold is a very beautiful and valuable metal and has been used for centuries in the exchange of goods. From the earliest times, men and women have searched for gold, willing to travel for hundreds of miles and live in poverty, hoping to find gold and 'get rich quick'.

A 'gold rush' is when hundreds of people travel to the same place after gold has been discovered there. It starts very suddenly when news of the discovery of gold spreads. There have been gold rushes in different places all over the world.

A famous gold rush occurred in 1897 in a remote part of Canada called the Yukon. The Yukon is a very cold region where the average winter temperature is  $-28^{\circ}\text{C}$  but it can sometimes drop to a dangerously cold  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$ . (Compare this to an average English winter temperature of  $3^{\circ}\text{C}$ .)



On 16th August 1896 a group of prospectors\* located gold in the Yukon, near a town called Dawson. They immediately claimed the area as their own. Local people then started looking for gold and were equally lucky. These early prospectors and the local people owned all the gold they found and became very wealthy.

Because the Yukon is very isolated and difficult to reach, it took nearly a year for news about the discovery of gold to leak out to people in the rest of the world. When people heard, a race to reach the Yukon began. These gold-seekers were so desperate for wealth that they travelled through harrowing and dangerous conditions to get it.

*\*People who search for gold are called prospectors.*



The journey was very long and very cold. The cheapest way of travelling was on foot or by horse. However, horses could not travel up the steep and icy mountains so the gold-seekers were forced to carry the food and supplies themselves. Mountains were not the only difficulty they had to face. There were wild animals and raging rivers as well as extreme weather conditions. Many gold-seekers died, fell ill or lost enthusiasm and either stopped where they were or turned back.

Approximately 100,000 gold-seekers set off to the Yukon. Only 30,000 completed the journey.

Unfortunately, of those who actually made it to Dawson, few found the riches they had hoped for. By the time most arrived, all the land and the gold in it had been claimed. The gold-seekers' dreams were shattered.

*Now, many people travel to the Yukon in search not of gold, but of a unique holiday experience. Instead of inns where the lucky few could celebrate their success, there are jewellery shops, whose owners are hoping to get a share of the tourists' spending money.*

**These are quotations from people who took part in the Yukon Gold Rush.**

*We got up at five this morning ... There are hundreds of people here dragging or carrying their supplies, all striving to reach the Yukon. Some have horses and still others have dog teams, but most of them act as their own horses.*  
Inga Kolloen's diary, March 21, 1898,  
on the Dyea Trail

*This may have begun as an exciting adventure, and seemed exceedingly romantic, but digging for gold is downright hard labour. I don't know anymore if it's really worth it.*

Letter written by Alfred Green

*Ice cream would be a hot drink here. Oil is frozen in the cans.*

Diary of Edward C. Adams,  
January 16, 1901, Yukon Territory