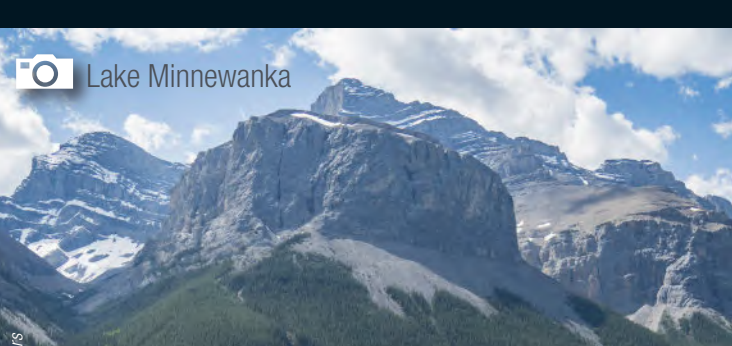




Backcountry Trails in Banff National Park

This guide is designed to help you plan a safe and enjoyable visit to Banff National Park's backcountry, while keeping the natural environment as healthy as possible.



What to Expect

In more popular and accessible areas of Banff's backcountry, you will find maintained hiking trails and designated campsites with outhouses, tent pads, food storage cables or lockers, picnic tables and metal fire rings where fires are allowed. More remote areas of the park provide a greater opportunity for solitude, although trails may not be regularly maintained and hikers must be self-reliant. Route-finding and navigation skills are required and hikers should be prepared to safely ford streams. **Pre-trip planning and preparedness are essential for travel in the backcountry.**

When to Go

Regardless of the season, the weather in Banff National Park is unpredictable. Being prepared for rain, snow or high winds at any time of year is especially important in the backcountry. The main hiking season in Banff National Park is from May to October. Until late June, many mountain passes and trails at higher elevations remain snowbound and may be impassable. Stream flows are highest during June and July; more remote trails have few bridges and require stream fording. July and August are the prime backcountry hiking months but even in summer, snow is not uncommon at higher elevations. September is generally drier than July and August, although temperatures are lower and there is a greater chance of snowfall.

Plan Ahead, It Be Prepared

Safety

Safety is your responsibility. There are always hazards associated with outdoor recreation. When planning a backcountry trip to Banff National Park, at least one person in your party should be able to recognize natural hazards and have training in wilderness first aid. Caution and self-reliance are essential. Minimize your risk by planning ahead.

- Ask for advice at a Parks Canada visitor centre or visit parks.canada.gc.ca/banfftrails for current trail conditions, warnings and closures.
- Be prepared for emergencies. Mountain weather changes quickly and it can snow any month of the year. Ensure that you have adequate food, water, clothing and equipment for your trip. Don't forget essentials, including toilet paper. Visit parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-equipment for a complete list of suggested equipment to bring on your backcountry trip.
- Study trip descriptions, topographic maps and expected hazards before heading out. Do not solely rely on web or mobile applications.
- Know your physical limits. Always choose a trip suitable for the least experienced member in your group.
- Boil, filter or chemically treat all water before drinking. Surface water may be contaminated and unsafe for drinking.
- Carry a first aid kit, bear spray and a satellite emergency communication device like SpotX, inReach or Zoleo, and know how to use them.
- Tell a reliable person where you are going, when you will be back, and who to call if you do not return: **Banff Dispatch – 403-762-1470.**
- Prepare gear and supplies for at least one day longer than your planned trip.
- Ticks, which could carry Lyme disease, may be present in the park. It is important to check yourself and your pet after hiking.
- Be alert for wildlife at all times. Avoid wearing earbuds or headphones.

Snowy Trails

Snow can remain on some trails well into the summer. When trails are snow covered, route-finding can be difficult and travel through deep or hard snow and ice can be unsafe. Be prepared and visit parks.canada.gc.ca/banfftrails to check trail conditions or call a Parks Canada visitor centre before heading out.

Seasonal Avalanche Risk

Avalanches are possible from early winter to early summer. Travel only in terrain appropriate for your group's experience, abilities and equipment. Training and experience can help you recognize and avoid dangerous avalanche conditions. For more information on avalanche conditions: avalanche.ca, parks.mountainsafety.ca or visit a Parks Canada visitor centre.

Roam Public Transit and Shuttle Services

Suggested itineraries with a bus symbol indicate that the trailhead is accessible by Roam Public Transit and/or private shuttle service.

Visit parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-transit or pick up a public transit brochure and find out more at a Parks Canada visitor centre.



Exploring the Backcountry

Most backcountry users in Banff National Park are hikers. However, travel by horseback or bicycle is also possible on designated trails.

Cycling

Cycling is permitted only on designated trails. Pedal assist E-bikes are only allowed on roads and select trails. For more information, visit parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-brochures or ask for a biking trails brochure at a Parks Canada visitor centre.

Horseback riding

Horse travel is permitted throughout most of the park. If you are planning a trip with your own horse, visit parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-horse for information on where to ride and the required grazing permits, fees and regulations. This website also provides links to companies offering guided horseback trips within the park.

Climbing, mountaineering and glacier travel

Mountaineers require a backcountry permit to bivouac, and may do so in non-vegetated areas only. Get your permit in person at Parks Canada visitor centres in Banff or Lake Louise, or by calling 403-762-1556 or 403-522-1264. Alternatively, the Alpine Club of Canada (403-678-3200, alpineclubofcanada.ca) operates several alpine huts in the park that are ideally located for these pursuits.

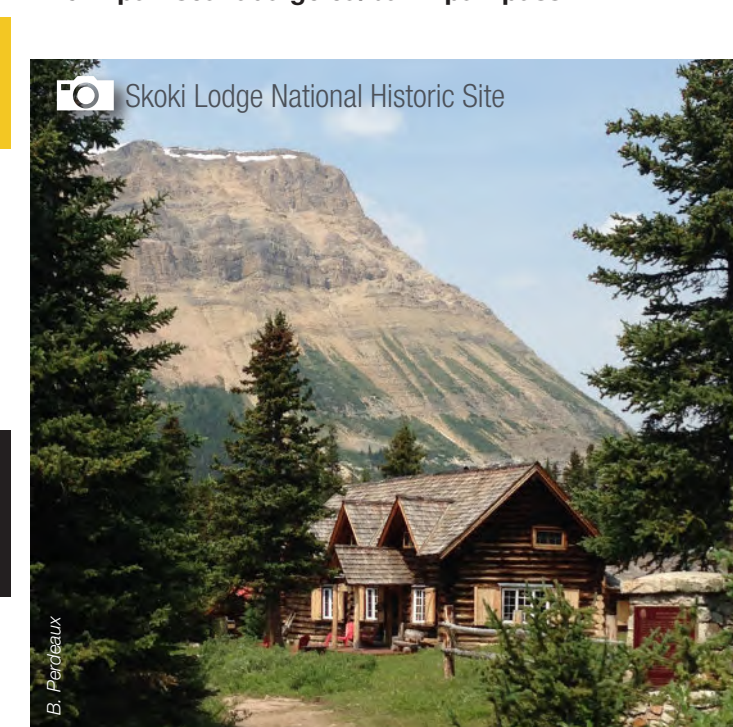
Passes, permits and reservations

A **backcountry permit is mandatory** for anyone planning an overnight trip into the backcountry of Banff National Park. Campers must have a copy of their permit (paper or screenshot) and present it to Parks Canada staff when requested. Advance reservations are required. Purchase your backcountry permit online at parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry or by calling **1-877-RESERVE (1-877-737-3783)**.



Random camping is restricted and permits must be purchased in person at Parks Canada visitor centres in Banff and Lake Louise, or by calling 403-762-1556 or 403-522-1264.

A non-refundable reservation fee applies to all bookings. You also require a National Park Pass to enter Banff National Park: parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-parkpass.



Backcountry Trail Shelters, Huts and Lodges

Rustic trail shelters are located at Egypt Lake and Bryant Creek. Visit parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry for information and booking.

Alpine huts and the Shadow Lake Lodge maintained by the Alpine Club of Canada are available to club members and non-members. Reservations are required: alpineclubofcanada.ca or 403-678-3200.

There are commercial lodges located in the backcountry of Banff National Park:

- Skoki Lodge skoki.com
- Sundance Lodge
- Halfway Lodge
- horseback.com

Suggested Itineraries

Two-day trips

Lake Minnewanka Shoreline Trail

7.8 km, 9 km or 11.1 km one way
Campgrounds: Aylmer Pass Junction (Lm8), Aylmer Canyon (Lm9), Mount Inglismaldie (Lm11)
Roam Route 6 (summer service) from Banff

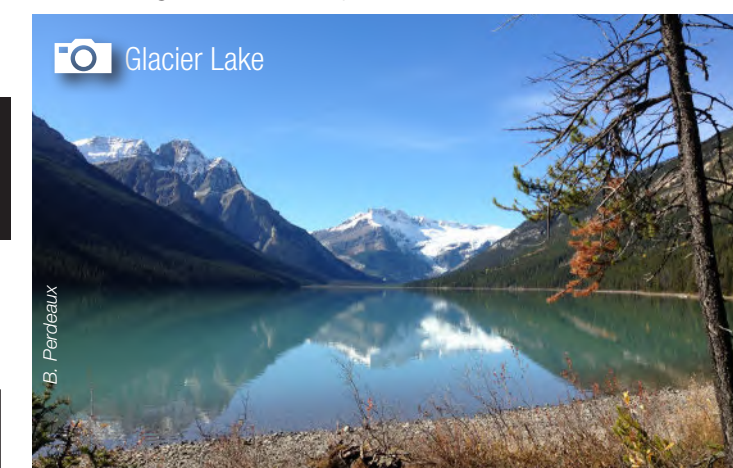
This is a popular early or late season hike or bike along the lakeshore. The trail starts from the trailhead at the Lake Minnewanka Day-use Area and returns by the same route. Stay an extra night and explore Aylmer Pass or Aylmer Lookout. If paddling to these campgrounds, be aware of strong unexpected winds which can make travel difficult or dangerous.

July 10 to September 15 - Trail restrictions are in effect to minimize disturbance to grizzly bears. No dogs and no bikes allowed. Bear spray and groups of 4 are required. Visit parks.canada.gc.ca/minnewanka-restrictions for more information.

Glacier Lake

8.9 km one way
Campground: Glacier Lake (G19)

A popular early season hike that departs from a trailhead north of Saskatchewan Crossing on the Icefields Parkway (93N). This trail brings hikers to a campsite at one of the largest backcountry lakes in Banff National Park.



Three-day trips

Egypt Lake

12.4 km one way
Campground: Egypt Lake (E13)
Sunshine Shuttle (summer service) from Banff

Hike from the Sunshine Village ski area parking lot via Healy Pass to the Egypt Lake Campground. Stay two nights if possible to explore the multiple lakes and stunning mountain views.

Skoki Loop

36.8 km round trip
Campgrounds: Night 1 – Baker Lake (Sk11); Night 2 – Merlin Meadows (Sk18)
Roam route 8X to Lake Louise Village from Banff. Trailhead is a 40 minute/3.5 km walk from the village of Lake Louise.

Beginning at the Fish Creek trailhead near the Lake Louise ski area, this trip starts with a 4 km hike up the Temple access road (no vehicle access). Climb over aptly named Boulder Pass and pass by Ptarmigan Lake before descending to Baker Lake. The second day involves travelling around Fossil Mountain and past Skoki Lodge National Historic Site to Merlin Meadows. After climbing Deception Pass, re-join the access trail at Ptarmigan Lake.

Mystic Pass/Sawback Trail

74 km
Campgrounds: Night 1 – Mystic Junction (Fm19); Night 2 – Larry's Camp (Jo9); Night 3 – Johnston Creek (Jo18) or Luellen Lake (Jo19); Night 4 – Badger Pass Junction (Jo29); Night 5 – Wildflower Creek (Ba15); Night 6 – Baker Lake (Sk11).
Norquay Shuttle to Cascade Amphitheatre trailhead (summer service)
Roam Public Transit in the village of Lake Louise, 40 minute/3.5 km walk from the Fish Creek trailhead.



Four-day or longer trips

Sunshine – Assiniboine – Bryant Creek

53 to 56 km
Campgrounds: Night 1 – Howard Douglas Lake (Su8); Night 2 – Lake Magog Campground (Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park*); Night 3 – Marvel Lake (Br13) or McBride's Camp (Br14).
Sunshine Shuttle to Healy Pass trailhead (summer service) – No public transportation or shuttle back available from Bryant Creek trailhead

This is an iconic trip, which follows a section of the Great Divide Trail. The trailhead at Sunshine Village ski area can be reached by riding a fee-based gondola. Be careful to stay on the trail as you hike through the ecologically sensitive alpine area to Howard Douglas Lake Campground. On day two, prepare for a long journey to Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park via Citadel Pass. Hike over Assiniboine Pass or Wonder Pass to arrive back in Banff National Park and camp at either Marvel Lake Campground or McBride's Camp on night three. The trip exits via Bryant Creek at the Mount Shark parking lot in Spray Valley Provincial Park.

August 1 to September 30 - Trail restrictions and closures on Allenby Pass and Assiniboine Pass are in effect to minimize disturbance to grizzly bears.

Visit parks.canada.gc.ca/bryant-restrictions for more information.

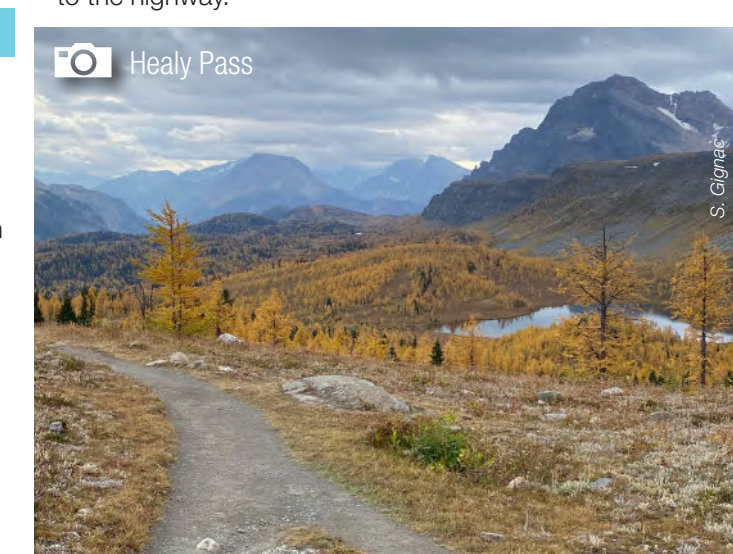
This trip traverses three different districts including BC and Alberta provincial parks. Make sure to get the appropriate backcountry permits and passes required for each district.

***Lake Magog Campground is only reservable through BC Park's Discover Camping Reservation Service: discovercamping.ca or 1-800-689-9025.**

Sunshine – Egypt Lake – Vista Lake

41.5 km
Campgrounds: Night 1 – Egypt Lake (E13); Night 2 – Ball Pass Junction (Re21); Night 3 – Twin Lakes (Tw7).
Sunshine Shuttle to Healy Pass trailhead (summer service) – No public transportation or shuttle back available from Vista Lake trailhead

A series of beautiful, high country trails link the Sunshine Village ski area (access by riding a fee-based gondola) to the Vista Lake viewpoint on Highway 93S. Explore the alpine lakes of Simpson Pass, Healy Pass and the Egypt Lake area en route. Hike to Ball Pass Junction Campground, along a majestic section of the Great Divide Trail, which travels over Whistling Pass. This area boasts incredible views of the Ball Range—be sure to listen for the whistle of the local hoary marmots! Make your way over Gibbon Pass to a campground at Twin Lakes. The remainder of the trail meanders past a series of scenic lakes to the highway.

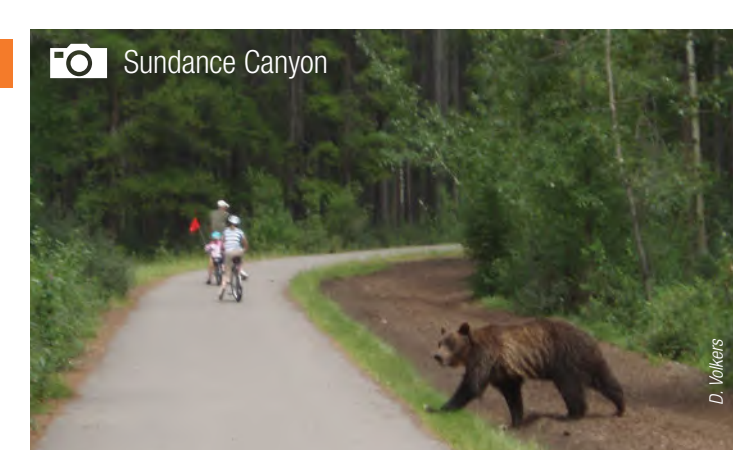


Sawback Trail

74 km
Campgrounds: Night 1 – Mystic Junction (Fm19); Night 2 – Larry's Camp (Jo9); Night 3 – Johnston Creek (Jo18) or Luellen Lake (Jo19); Night 4 – Badger Pass Junction (Jo29); Night 5 – Wildflower Creek (Ba15); Night 6 – Baker Lake (Sk11).
Norquay Shuttle to Cascade Amphitheatre trailhead (summer service)
Roam Public Transit in the village of Lake Louise, 40 minute/3.5 km walk from the Fish Creek trailhead.

This challenging trip takes you over three spectacular mountain passes. The trail traverses a good portion of Banff National Park, linking the Town of Banff with the hamlet of Lake Louise. Trailheads are located at Mount Norquay ski area and the Fish Creek trailhead (near the Lake Louise ski area). Various routes are possible, a suggested 7-day itinerary is provided above. **Portions of this area are frequented by commercially guided horse trips.**

Wildlife and People



Banff National Park is home to wildlife including elk, wolves, cougars, grizzly bears and black bears. To successfully raise their young and sustain a healthy population, wildlife need access to as much quality habitat with as few human surprises as possible. Be aware of possible encounters with wildlife in all areas of the park, including paved trails and roads.

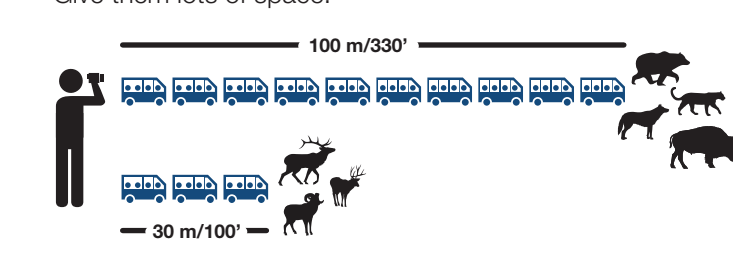
Tips:

- Always carry bear spray, ensure it is accessible, and know how to use it. Visit parks.canada.gc.ca/bearspray for more information. Bear spray is available at Parks Canada visitor centres and some retail outlets in Banff and Lake Louise.
- Make noise. Being quiet puts you at risk for sudden wildlife encounters. Be alert through shrubby areas, near running water and when approaching blind corners. Travel in tight groups and always be aware of your surroundings.
- Report bear, cougar, wolf and coyote sightings and encounters to Banff Dispatch when possible and safe to do so: 403-762-1470.

Visit parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-wildlifesafety to learn more about keeping yourself safe.

Give Wildlife Space

If you approach wildlife, you put yourself in danger. You may also cause animals to lose their natural fear of people. Give them lots of space:



Dogs

Consider leaving your dog at home if you plan to camp, hike or go into the backcountry. Dogs cause stress for wildlife as they may be seen as a threat. Off-leash dogs can trigger aggressive behaviour from wildlife such as grizzly bears and elk. To prevent unsafe situations for yourself, your pet, wildlife and other people, it is your responsibility to:

- **Ensure your dog is on a leash and under physical control at all times.**
- **Pick up, pack out your pet's waste and dispose of it in a wildlife-proof garbage bin.**

Dogs are not allowed in backcountry shelters and on some trails: parks.canada.gc.ca/banfftrails

Wild Bison

Bison are freely roaming a 1200 km² area in Banff's eastern slopes. If you encounter bison, give them space.

Respect all warnings, area closures, and travel restrictions.



Backcountry Etiquette and Regulations

Stay on trails

Shortcutting between trail switchbacks damages both the soil and vegetation, making the area susceptible to further damage by erosion. You must stay on designated trails at all times.

Campgrounds

Camp in designated campgrounds as indicated on your backcountry permit and use the tent pads provided to minimize impact on vegetation. The length of stay for any campground cannot be more than three consecutive nights. The maximum group size for a reservation is 10 people and 5 tents. Only 4 people and 1 tent are allowed per tent pad/site.

Random camping

Random camping is permitted in designated areas only, see reverse for map. Make sure you camp 5 km or more from either the trailhead or any designated campground. Pitch your tent at least 50 m from the trail and at least 70 m away from the nearest water source. Cook and store food well away from your tent. **Bear-resistant food containers are mandatory between April 1 and November 15.** Remember to bring a stove and fuel as campfires are not permitted in random camping areas.

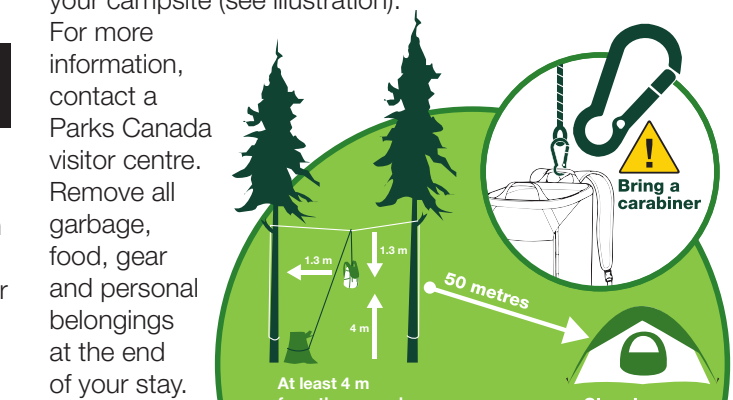
A **backcountry permit is required** for random camping and can only be obtained in person at Parks Canada visitor centres in Banff and Lake Louise, or by calling 403-762-1556 or 403-522-1264.

Cooking and campfires

All backcountry travellers should carry a portable fuel or propane stove for cooking. Cook and eat in the designated cooking area. Campfires are permitted only in the shared metal fire rings provided. Rock rings are prohibited. Not all campgrounds allow fires, see reverse for map. If you have a campfire, use only downed deadwood, keep it small and do not leave it unattended. Be sure fires are fully extinguished by using the soak, stir, soak method.

Food storage

To avoid attracting bears and other wildlife to your campsite, all food, garbage, toiletries and cooking equipment must be stored in the food lockers or on bear poles provided at designated campgrounds. For areas where random camping is permitted, bear-resistant food containers, approved by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, are mandatory between April 1 and November 15 and should be hung when possible. Bring a rope to hang your food downwind of your campsite (see illustration).



For more information, contact a Parks Canada visitor centre. Remove all garbage, food, gear and personal belongings at the end of your stay.

Fishing

To fish in Banff National Park, everyone aged 16 or older is required to have a National Park Fishing Permit. Children under 16 do not require a permit but must be accompanied by a permit holder. Any harvest by the child counts towards the permit holder's limit. These permits can be purchased at a Parks Canada visitor centre or at most local retail outlets that sell angling supplies. Provincial fishing licenses are not valid.

Where fishing is permitted, most areas are catch and release only. In these areas, **the possession limit is zero.** Lake Minnewanka reservoir is the only exception: the possession limit for lake trout is two (2) fish per licensed angler.

Anglers must clean, drain and dry all fishing gear, waders and watercraft before moving from one water body to another, to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species. Regulations apply for all watercraft and water related equipment such as angling and wading gear. Visit parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-boating-rules for more information.

Seasonal closures and closed waters may be in effect for some lakes or at lake outlets, to protect fish populations. These are generally not posted at the lake, so you must be familiar with the regulations.

Visit parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-brochures or pick up a copy of the Fishing Regulations Summary brochure from any Parks Canada visitor centre.

Washing

Wash well away from any water sources and keep the use of soap to a minimum (even biodegradable soaps are pollutants). When washing dishes, strain bits of food waste and pack them out. Disperse strained water on the land.

Pack out garbage

If you pack it in—pack it out. Littering is unlawful and hazardous to wildlife. Do not dispose of garbage in outhouses or in food lockers.



Properly dispose of human waste

Use the outhouses provided. If there are no outhouses nearby, select a spot away from trails and campsites, and at least 70 m away from water sources. Dig a hole 12 to 16 cm deep to reach the dark-coloured soil layer. When refilling the hole with soil, do not pack it down. Pack out toilet paper and used hygiene products.

Take only photos

Leave all rocks, fossils, horns, antlers, wildflowers, nests and other natural or historic objects where they are for others to enjoy. It is unlawful to remove, deface, damage or destroy any natural or cultural resources within national parks. Visit leavenotrace.ca for information on low-impact backcountry travel.

Firearms are prohibited

Firearms, including pellet guns, bear bangers, bows, slingshots and similar devices, are prohibited in national parks. For protection from wildlife, Parks Canada recommends carrying bear spray and knowing how to use it.

Share the trail

Backcountry trails are shared by hikers, trail runners, mountain bikers and horseback riders. Please be respectful and let others pass to ensure safety.

Drones Disturb Wildlife

Drones/UAVs are prohibited in all national parks as they disturb wildlife. Leave your drone at home or in your vehicle. **If you witness the use of a drone in Banff National Park, please report the incident to Banff Dispatch: 403-762-1470.**

More Information

Online booking and detailed trip planning information: parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry

Banff Visitor Centre
 224 Banff Avenue, Banff
 Tel: 403-762-1556
banffinfo@pc.gc.ca

Lake Louise Visitor Centre
 Samson Mall, Village of Lake Louise
 Tel: 403-522-1264
ll.info@pc.gc.ca

Trail Conditions Report:
parks.canada.gc.ca/banfftrails

Mountain Safety:
parks.mountainsafety.ca

Environment Canada Weather Forecast
 403-762-2088 / weather.gc.ca

Banff Dispatch: 403-762-1470

Guidebooks and topographic maps are available at visitor centres and retail outlets in Banff and Lake Louise.

In case of **EMERGENCY**, call **911** or satellite phone: 403-762-4506. Cell phone coverage is not reliable throughout the national park.

Trail maps for day hikes in Banff National Park are available at Parks Canada visitor centres or at parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-brochures

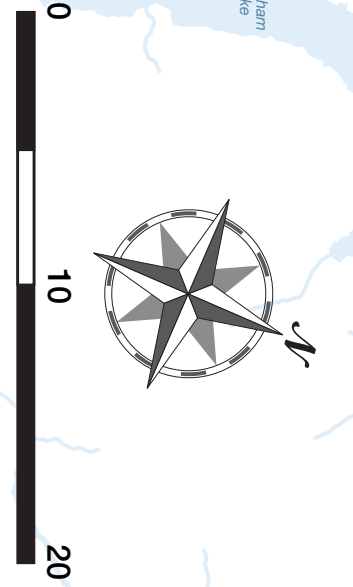
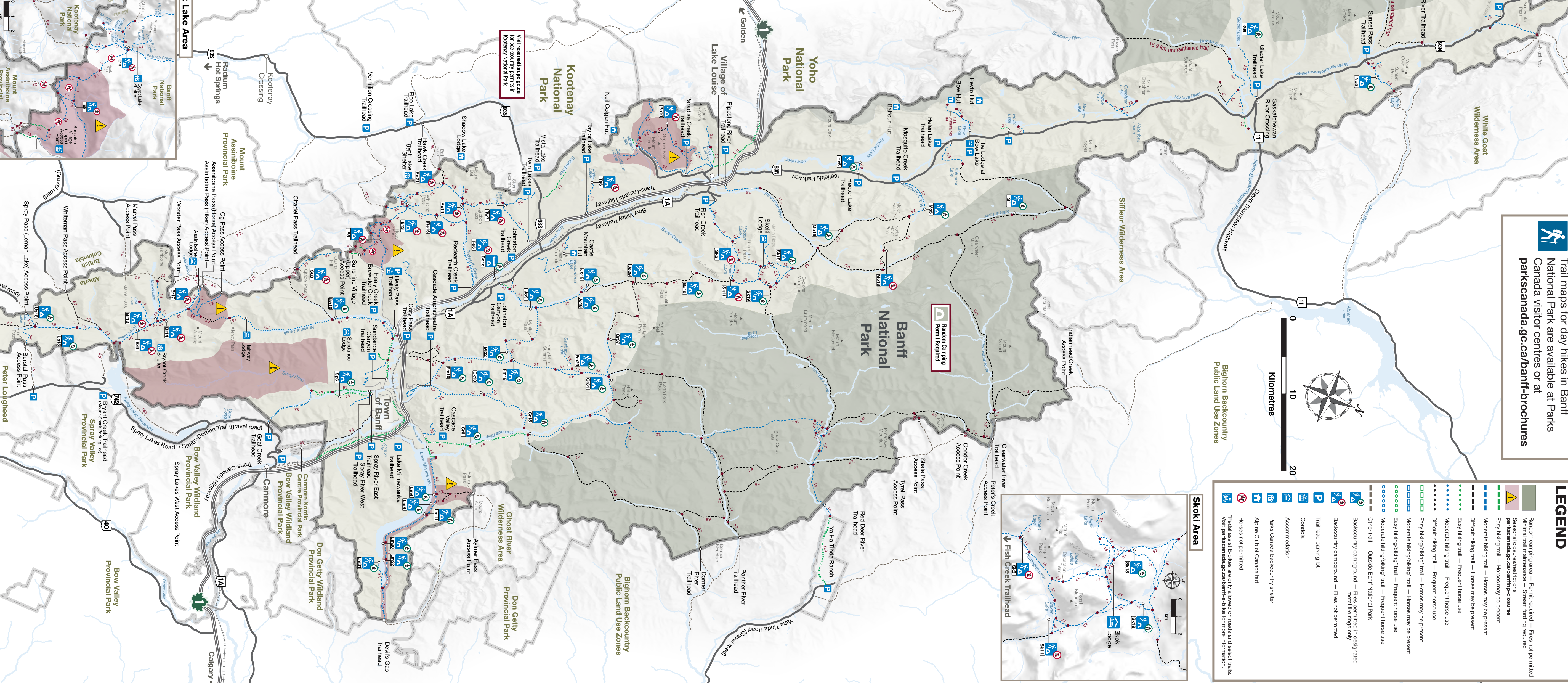


NOTE TO USERS

This publication is a summer trip planning tool and is not suitable for navigation. The map features officially maintained trails in Banff National Park, plus commonly used access routes located outside of the park. For information on trails and required permits outside Banff National Park, consult with the appropriate land authorities. For Banff National Park backcountry winter trail information, visit parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry or a Parks Canada visitor centre. Have ideas or information to improve the trail guide? Email: banffinfo@pc.gc.ca

Contains information licensed under the Open Government Licence - Alberta.

Trail Name	Start	End	Length (km)	Difficulty	Boat access	Biking allowed*	Horses allowed	Fires allowed**	Food storage (lockers)	Food storage (cables)
Compground										
Bryant Creek Area										
Bt9	Big Springs	5637269	5	2A						
Bt13	Manuel Lake	5639803	10	2A						
Bt14	McGee's Camp	5639802	10	2A						
Bt17	Alteny Junction	5641943	5	2A						
Bt10	Brewster Creek	5660210	5	2A						
Bt6	Mount Rundle	5665092	10	2A						
U15	Birdwood	5627882	5	2A						
U18	Burnell	5624270	5	2A						
U18	Burnell	5624270	5	2A						
Bryant Creek Shelter		5639551	12 persons	2A						
Egypt Lake Area										
E3	Heavy Creek	5661010	5	2A						
E13	Egypt Lake	5624446	15	2A						
R66	Lost Horse Creek	5671610	5	2A						
R64	Shadow Lake	579804	5	2A						
R616	Parashot Creek	5665610	5	2A						
R621	Ball Pass Junction	5665410	5	2A						
S48	Howard Douglas Lake	5654809	5	2A						
T47	Twin Lakes	5673910	5	2A						
Egypt Lake Shelter		5662454	12 persons	2A						
Lake Minnewanka Area										
Lm8	Alymer Pass Junction	5691719	10	2A						
Lm9	Alymer Canyon	611002	5	2A						
Lm11	Mount Highmide	5681710	5	2A						
Lm20	Mount Cossigan	618620	5	2A						
Lm22	The Narrows	5679366	5	2A						
Lm31	Ghost Lakes	620920	5	2A						
Lm31	Ghost Lakes	5679110	5	2A						
Cascade/Swaback Area										
C61	Bow River (at)	589127	5	2A						
C6	Cascade Bridge	602119	5	2A						
C15	Stony Creek	597596	5	2A						
C31	Firth Park	589053	5	2A						
C37	Black Lakes Junction	581419	5	2A						
E13	Ekt Summit	5691919	5	2A						
Fm10	Mystic Junction	56219	5	2A						
Fm19	Mystic Junction	585533	5	2A						
Fm29	Swaback Lake	586619	5	2A						
J69	Larry's Camp	581990	10	2A						
Jo18	Johnson Creek	572019	5	2A						
Jo19	Lunellen Lake	578319	5	2A						
Jo29	Badger Pass Junction	573619	5	2A						
M22	Mystic Valley	5693010	5	2A						
M22	Mystic Valley	5892350	5	2A						
Skoki Area										
Sk5	Wildflower Creek	568600	5	2A						
Sk5	HIDDEN Lake	5670360	10	2A						
Sk11	Baker Lake	5670490	10	2A						
Sk18	Martin Meadows	565288	10	2A						
Sk19	Road Diver Lakes	565341	10	2A						
Moraine Lake Area										
M20	Paradise Valley	552259	10	2A						
Pa10	Taylor Lake	565323	5	2A						
Icefields Parkway Area										
G9	Castleguard	483451	5	2A						
G19	Glenora Lake	511415	5	2A						
H45	Hector Lake	545234	5	2A						
M65	Moose Lake	548300	5	2A						
Mo16	Moose Creek	555500	5	2A						
Mo18	Fish Lakes	555610	5	2A						
Mo5	Norman Lake	507081	4	2A						
SI	Siffleur River	544180	5	2A						



LEGEND

- Random camping area — Permit required — Fires not permitted
- Minimal trail maintenance — Stream fording required
- Seasonal closures/restrictions parks.canada.gc.ca/banff-closures
- Easy hiking trail — Horses may be present
- Moderate hiking trail — Horses may be present
- Difficult hiking trail — Horses may be present
- Easy hiking/blimbing trail — Frequent horse use
- Moderate hiking/blimbing trail — Frequent horse use
- Difficult hiking/blimbing trail — Frequent horse use
- Easy hiking/blimbing trail — Horses may be present
- Moderate hiking/blimbing trail — Horses may be present
- Difficult hiking/blimbing trail — Frequent horse use
- Backcountry campground — Fires not permitted
- Backcountry campground — Frequent horse use
- Other trail — Outside Banff National Park
- Trailhead parking lot
- Gondola
- Accommodation
- Parks Canada backcountry shelter
- Alpine Club of Canada hut
- Horses not permitted
- Horses permitted

