Banff National Park

Alberta

Introducing a park and an icon
Canada’s first park. It contains four basins on three oceans, and stretches from the extreme Arctic more than halfway to the equator. There is a great variety of land forms in this immense country. Canada’s National Parks have provided important examples for you and for generations to come.

The National Parks Act of 1912 specifies that National Parks are “set aside for the benefit, education, and enjoyment,” and must remain “untouched by spoliation of any generation.” With its majestic peaks, deep valleys, and glacial lakes, Banff National Park is a superb example of the Rocky Mountains. Situated some 30 miles west of Calgary, Alberta, it preserves 2,564 square miles of mountains and meadows in the highest and most popular part of Canada’s National Parks.

The park environment
Each National Park has its own character, its unique story as a living, outdoor museum. Banff is the story of an extreme landscape dominated by ice-capped mountains and great valleys. To survive, all living things have adapted to the extreme and variable conditions of topography and climate that are characteristic of the park.

How the Rockies were born
Banff National Park is situated on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. The Rockies form the spine of the continent and divide the drainage of the Rocky Mountains. The Rockies were born millions of years ago, when layers of rock were pushed up thousands of feet, folded, and were eventually compressed into solid rock by their own weight. About 75 million years ago, the flat-lying icefield, many of them dammed by moraines, or glacial rubble. Silt particles, crushed from rock by the moving glaciers, are carried by the meltwaters into the lakes.

The glaciers now present in Banff are only remnants of the great Columbia Icefield, the largest sheet of glacial ice on this continent outside the Arctic Circle, is more than 6,000 feet thick. These suspended particles give the lakes their unusual colour before its needle-like forest floor. Above treeline, the alpine life zone is characterized by stunted, wind-shaped vegetation. In this Arctic-like environment the growing season is short, cold, and unpredictable. Snowdrifts last until late summer, and frost may occur at almost any time. In spite of this, some typical alpine pastures, elk and deer the lush forest meadows, and moose the high forest meadows, and moose the high forest meadows.

The animals: each has his place in the sun
The animals of Banff National Park, like the plants, are an interesting mixture of prairie, forest, and Arctic forms. Each has its own particular requirements, and can survive only where they are adapted. In summer, the large grazing animals range throughout the mountains, each seeking its preferred habitat. In cases of waterfowl frequent the ponds, lakes, and marshes. The fur traders. In 1883, surveyors for the Canadian Pacific Railway searched for a route through the mountains to connect the then isolated colony of British Canada with the rest of the nation. Early activities in the park centred around these remarkable springs. In 1883, surveyors for the Canadian Pacific Railway searched for a route through the mountains to connect the then isolated colony of British Canada with the rest of the nation. Early activities in the park centred around these remarkable springs. The waters are used for fish, and because of its shy and secretive nature, is seldom seen by visitors. Black bears and their brown counterparts are common and should be treated with extreme caution. Deer are also common, and are rather thinly distributed throughout the park. Concentrations of birds are found in only a few places, such as the Vermilion Lakes.

The plants: a simulated voyage north
Plant life in Banff National Park reflects the wide range of climatic conditions found at different elevations across the mountainous terrain. The success of plants encountered will be compared to the sequence of plants found on a trip toward the Arctic. In Banff, the plants become more-specialized as you move higher in the mountains. In summer, the large grazing animals range throughout the mountains, each seeking its preferred habitat.

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Flushing of animals, or censuses, frequent the human-influenced areas. The Rocky Mountains are known for their bears, wolves, and some larger forms, such as coyote, wolf, deer, and moose, while smaller forms, such as rabbit, weasel, mink, and marmot, are abundant. The great Columbia Icefield, the largest sheet of glacial ice on this continent outside the Arctic Circle, is more than 6,000 feet thick. The waters are used for fish, and because of its shy and secretive nature, is seldom seen by visitors. Black bears and their brown counterparts are common and should be treated with extreme caution. Deer are also common, and are rather thinly distributed throughout the park. Concentrations of birds are found in only a few places, such as the Vermilion Lakes.

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How to get there

Banff National Park is serviced by commercial bus lines. In addition, there are some visitor services are only seasonal. Summer is the busiest season, but winter skiing is very popular. Ski passes are available at the park gate. Unlimited parking is available at all park facilities. Day-use fees are required. Fire permits are required for all open fires during trail travel.

Where to stay

Most campgrounds and major visitor centres are interrelated, and your stay will be more rewarding. Free interpretive pamphlets provide more detailed information, and free interpretive programs, conducted by a park naturalist and his staff, will provide you with an insight into how climate, land formations, plants and animals are interrelated, and you will see many of the park's natural features, and your stay will be even more rewarding. Detailed information may be obtained from park information centres at Lake Louise and Banff townsite. Uniformed staff will answer questions, provide maps, outline travel routes, and refer visitors to various areas and facilities in the park. Special events are posted on bulletin boards. Park warden, naturalists, and visitors are urged to take advantage of these services when possible.

A park motor vehicle permit is required for all vehicles not camping. Nearly all the facilities of a modern town, including groceries, drug stores, and restaurants, are found within the park. The major activity at Banff townsite is the Banff-Trans-Canada Highway. There are three commercial airports in the park, details of which are available at all park information centres. Reservations can be made through commercial booking services in Banff.

Fire

Camping facilities are provided at 11 campgrounds, the nearest one of which is at Lake Louise, Tunnel Mountain, Two Jack Lake, and Johnston's Canyon. Daily fees at campgrounds may depend on the type of site. A wide variety of commercial accommodation is offered in the park. A park motor vehicle permit is required for all vehicles not camping. Nearly all the facilities of a modern town, including groceries, drug stores, and restaurants, are found within the park. The major activity at Banff townsite is the Banff-Trans-Canada Highway. There are three commercial airports in the park, details of which are available at all park information centres. Reservations can be made through commercial booking services in Banff.

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Canada's National Parks

1 Pacific Rim
2 Mount Revelstoke
3 Glacier
4 Yoho
5 Kootenay
6 Jasper
7 Banff
8 Waterton Lakes
9 Wapta Lakes
10 Elk Island
11 Wood Buffalo
12 Prince Albert
13 Riding Mountain
14 Prince Edward Island
15 Georgian Bay Islands
16 St. Lawrence Islands
17 La Mauricie
18 Fundy
19 Cape Breton Highlands
20 Prince Edward Island NP
21 Kejimkujik
22 Kouchibouguac
23 Fundy
24 Prince Edward Island
25 Cabot Trail
26 Kejimkujik
27 Banff
28 Waterton Lakes

Legend

Trans-Canada Highway
Secondary Road
Walking or Hiking Trail
Railroad
Lake, River, Creek
Glacier, Icefield
Mountain
Warden's Cabin
Picnic Area
Accommodation
Campground
Viewpoint
Interpretive Trail
Youth Hostel
Ski Area
Mountain Lift
Highway Number

Note: This is but a reference map, designed to give you a general idea of what you will find in this park. It is not a hiking, boating or road map.