Jasper National Park
Alberta

Location
Jasper National Park lies along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains with its townsite 235 miles west of the City of Edmonton. Its southern boundary crosses the vast Columbia Icefield and the total Park area of 4,200 square miles makes it the second largest of the National Parks in Canada.

The detailed map in this folder has been prepared especially to assist visitors to identify readily the various features of the Park.

Purpose
Jasper National Park is one of Canada’s 18 National Parks which form a chain of nature sanctuaries extending from Mount Revelstoke in British Columbia to Terra Nova in Newfoundland. These parks have been established for the benefit, education, and enjoyment of present and future generations of Canadians. These parks have been established for the benefit, education, and enjoyment of present and future generations of Canadians.

This vast area of nearly 29,350 square miles is administered by the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources.

Natural Features

Geological
The great movements within the earth’s crust which have formed the mountains of Jasper National Park have exposed rocks ranging in age from the most ancient to the most recent. Some of the rocks were laid down in the earliest defined era in the history of this planet, the Precambrian. At this time in earth’s history the lands were naked of vegetation and in the seas there lived only a very few primitive invertebrates and algae. Many of the mountains in the Park display great thicknesses of rocks which were laid down in the next era, the Palaeozoic. This was a time of rapid development of living things with plants spreading over the lands and a vast increase in animal life. Fishes swarmed in the seas and the reptiles had appeared. A third major chapter in the history of the earth is represented in the rocks which were laid down in the Mesozoic, the time when reptiles dominated the earth and forests gradually approached those that we know today.

The latest chapter in earth’s history, the Cenozoic, a time when mammals appeared and became successful and, in quite recent geological times, man appeared on the scene.

Examples of these types of rocks are as follows:
(1) Precambrian and Cambrian—
Pyramid Mountain, six miles north of Jasper, Mount Athabasca and the Ramparts of Tangle Valley, and Mount Columbia on the Continental Divide. All have characteristic pyramidal or bee-hive shaped summits.
(2) Palaeozoic—
Mountains in the eastern part of Jasper Park, Roche a Perdrix (Fiddle Range) and Roche Miette (summit of Miette Range) show folded strata, broken into large fault blocks and thrust to the east on top of each other. The same rocks appear as the rugged, precipitous cliffs and castle-like peaks of the Jacques and De Smet Ranges.
(3) Mesozoic—
These younger rocks are softer and have been stripped off the higher mountains by the processes of erosion. They tend to be preserved only in the valleys between the great palaeozoic mountain ranges, where they form areas of low, undulating relief and where they can be seen in the steep sides of some of the rivers, as for instance at Snake Indian Falls. In places they have been crumbled and folded into structures called anticlines and synclines.

The great Columbia Icefield (150 square miles) is shared by Jasper and Banff National Parks. Much of it is above 8,500 feet in elevation and some above 10,000 feet. It is the largest sheet of glacial ice on this continent outside of the Arctic Circle.

From this icefield many valley glaciers reach down to about 6,000 feet. One of the most spectacular of these, Athabasca Glacier, is easily accessible from the Banff-Jasper Highway near the southern entry to the Park. Here there are crevasses, cascades of meltwater, interesting water channels in the ice, rock tables, and moraines of several kinds. These and other interesting glacial features may also be seen at Angel Glacier, on the flank of Mount Edith Cavell. The great masses of rock debris or moraines at both these places give a startling impression of the power of erosion of glaciers.

A prime example of water erosion is Maligne Canyon. This great gash, almost 200 feet deep with nearly vertical walls less than 10 feet apart in some places, has been cut through Palaeozoic sedimentary beds by centuries of ceaseless wear by a small stream of running water.

Plant Life
The Park is in the montane plant zone, making it botanically one of the most interesting areas of the country. Plants characteristic of both the prairies and the mountains grow in profusion throughout the Park, with a few arctic flowers in the higher altitudes to intrigue the botanist. The flowers present an ever-changing carpet of colour for most of the summer season.
Most of the trees in the Park are evergreen. At the lower altitudes Douglas fir, lodgepole pine, black and western white spruce are common. At the higher altitudes Englemann spruce, western larch, and mountain caribou.

Wildlife

The Park is a wildlife sanctuary in which wild animals and their environment are protected from hunting and trapping; consequently, many have become accustomed to close association with humans and have lost their fear of man. This permits observation of them at close range, but they are still wild animals and should be viewed from a distance. The larger mammals native to the Park are black bear, grizzly bear, cougar, elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and mountain caribou.

Some of the smaller mammals characteristic of the Park are coyote, fisher, marten, short-tailed weasel, lynx, wolverine, skunk, beaver, pikas, snowshoe hare, hoary marmot, several types of squirrels, pocket gopher, beaver, and muskrat.

Birdlife

A Provisional Check-List of Birds to be found in Jasper National Park names almost 200 varieties and is available upon request. These range from the rarely seen, grotesque, stilt-legged golden eagle to the ubiquitous jack pine, which congregate around picnic areas and campgrounds.

Golden eagles and bald eagles are year-round residents. The bald eagle is not commonly sighted but the golden eagle can often be seen utilizing updrafts along the mountain slopes to soar effortlessly beyond the range of most birds. Hawks, woodpeckers, ptarmigan, warblers, and grouse are also abundant. Of the many other birds which are frequently seen...

White-tailed ptarmigan in winter dress.

Fish

Modern methods of fish management are followed to improve the angling in lakes and streams in the Park. A regular stocking program is carried out from the fish hatchery under the guidance of the Canadian Wildlife Service. Rainbow, Eastern Brook, lake trout and splake (which is a hybrid of the Maligne River, a half mile above its confluence with the Athabaska River) are distributed in Park waters. These are distributed according to fishing pressure and productivity of water stocked. The fish hatchery is situated beside the Maligne River, a half mile above its confluence with the Athabaska River just five miles east of the townsite. Visitors are welcome to inspect the hatchery during working hours.

During the angling season Fishing Bulletins are issued regularly to provide anglers with current information on the angling conditions in various waters. These and fishing licences are available at the National Park Information Bureau, sporting goods stores, and Park Wardens or campground attendants. Fishing Regulations change periodically and anglers are advised to consult Park Wardens or the Park Information Bureau concerning these changes.

How You Can Learn More About the Park

To help you understand and obtain greater enjoyment from your park visit, the National Parks provide an Interpretation Service. This includes an Interpretive Officer during the summer months who conducts tours and campfire talks to explain the purpose and natural features of this National Park. Many of these nature talks are illustrated by colored slides and motion pictures. Interesting films, of an interpretative nature, are presented frequently in the evenings at the various campgrounds. Well marked nature trails of a self-guiding type are laid out in various areas.

Dogs and cats are not allowed on the northeastern slopes may be found coppery-hued shrubs. Club-mosses, miniature forms of the giants of the forest, are to be found at Speaker's Tree and other localities in the Park. Small ferns are quite rare.

How to See the Interesting Features

While roads lead to many of the interesting Park features, the best way to gain a full appreciation of nature in the Park is to use the trails. A large number of visitors gain considerable satisfaction from wandering around the Park over trails which are more than 600 miles of well kept trails. Many areas of exceptional natural interest and beauty are within a day’s travel along the trails to the high lakes and alpine meadows. For those with the time and inclination, Jasper is one of the chief winter centres for trail riding equipped with the Canadian Rockies. Saddle and pack horses can be hired locally and guides are available if required.

For those visitors who must be satisfied with shorter trips, interesting trails radiate from the townsite. These trails (10 main ones in all) vary from three to 20 miles. Detailed descriptions of each are contained in the folder Trail Outings at Jasper which includes a large scale map of the area.

Camping

There are 11 campgrounds readily accessible to motoring visitors. Two of these, at Cottonwood Creek and Miette Hot Springs, are serviced campgrounds and a nominal charge is made for their use.

At Cottonwood Creek there are kitchen, laundromat, and campfire facilities. Electric plug-ins for trailers are available.

At Miette Hot Springs, kitchens, washroom facilities and drinking water are available.

No charge is made for use of the other nine campgrounds which provide individual tent sites, cooking facilities, drinking water and sanitary arrangements.

Preservation

National Parks are selected areas set apart as nature sanctuaries, and special care is taken to maintain them in their natural state. For this reason all birds, animals, wildlife, trees, rocks, and fossils are to remain undisturbed. Even the wildflowers are not to be plucked; they are to be left for others to enjoy. Feeding, touching or molesting wild animals is not permitted. This is in the interest of the animal, as well as the human who could receive serious injury.

Please help protect your own Park for future enjoyment. It is part of your national inheritance.

Prevent Fire

Campfires may be kindled only in fireplaces provided for this purpose and must be completely extinguished before campers leave the site. Visitors observing any fire which appears to be in danger of starting should attempt to extinguish it if possible and promptly report it to the nearest Park Warden.

Fire in a National Park can cause damage which cannot be repaired in a hundred years.

Mountain Climbing

For the protection of mountain climbers, all travel off the Park trails must be registered with the District Warden, before and after the climb.

Inexperienced climbers should obtain the services of a guide and full information concerning the necessary equipment.

Pets

Dogs and cats may accompany visitors into the Park. For the protection of park animals however, dogs must be kept on leash.

Motor Licence

Motoring visitors entering the Park are required to obtain a Park motor vehicle licence at the entrance. This licence is good in all the National Parks for the entire season.

Motor-boats

Boating is a popular pastime in the Park, although visitors may operate motor-boats only on Pyramid and Medicine Lakes. Boat trips on Medicine and Maligne Lakes are offered by private interests.

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All boats operating in the Park must carry proper safety equipment and conform with Federal Navigation Regulations.

How to Reach the Park
The Park is served by all usual methods of transportation—rail, air, bus, and motor car. As indicated on the accompanying map, a small landing field 7½ miles east of Jasper townsite permits landings of light aircraft during daylight. During winter months, however, the Banff-Jasper Highway and the Yellowhead Road are closed.

Accommodation
A variety of accommodation is offered in the Park, details of which are listed in the Accommodation Directory for Canada’s National Parks available at all Park Information Offices. Nearly all facilities of a modern town are found within the park boundaries, the majority being convenient to the main townsite.

Park Enjoyment
Although the Park was established and is maintained primarily to preserve its natural state for the enjoyment of this and future generations, facilities have been provided to help visitors obtain greater benefits from their stay. For example, at Miette Hot Springs an outdoor bathing pool offers greater convenience for healthful enjoyment of these mineral waters. Specially selected trails have been developed as Nature Trails where various species of trees, shrubs, and wildflowers are identified by labels. Many miles of other trails are maintained to enable visitors to escape from the pressure of modern living and seek the peace and quietness of forested glades.

To secure the maximum benefit from their park experience, visitors will find the use of these and other trails into areas of unspoiled nature most rewarding. A journey into the more secluded sections of the Park can contribute greatly to the restoration of the human spirit. It is a sanctuary for man, as well as the wild creatures.

Private interests offer alternative recreational activities in both winter and summer, with sightseeing tours via motor car, boat, skis, or saddlehorse, as well as other facilities customarily found in most vacation areas.

A Brief History of the Park
Jasper was established as a National Park in 1907 and for the earlier history of the area we must turn to the diaries and reports of the early explorers and fur traders. Nearly 100 years before this, David Thompson, the pioneer explorer of the western part of Canada, discovered the Athabasca Pass and a practical route to the Pacific Coast. Over the years rivalry for the fur trade between the Hudson’s Bay and Northwest Companies stimulated the use of this route known as the “Grande Traverse” by great packtrains of trade goods and fur bales. Explorers, prospectors, engineers and missionaries came to know the valley of the Athabasca, en route to Boat Encampment and, via the mighty Columbia River, to Astoria on the Oregon Coast. Among these was an employee of the Northwest Company, Jasper Hawes, who took charge of the first trading post at the outlet of Brule Lake. He soon moved the post upstream to the outlet of Jasper Lake where it became known as “Jasper’s House.” When in 1907 several names for this new Park were suggested “Jasper” finally won out over “Athabasca.”

The present townsite, located on a boulder strewn flat, was originally named “Fitzhugh” and the first building was erected in 1911. In that year the first road—to Pyramid Lake—was constructed and in the winter of 1912-13 the first bridge in the Park—a log suspension type—was built by volunteers to cross the Athabasca River near Old Fort Point.

On the shore of Lac Beauvert in 1915 Jack and Fred Brewster erected eight tent houses for summer use by Edmonton interests. In 1921 these were purchased by the Canadian National Railways, which in the same year began construction of Jasper Park Lodge.

The first trip into the Park by automobile occurred in 1933 when Charles Gratt and R. L. Greene journeyed from Edmonton on the abandoned railway grade of the Grand Trunk Pacific. In that year a scenic road was built to Mount Edith Cavell. In 1929 work commenced on the Jasper end of the Banff-Jasper Highway and this was officially opened in 1940. In the eastern section of the Park a road was built in 1938 to provide convenient access for visitors to Miette Hot Springs. One of these four springs gushes from the rocks at a temperature of 126°F.