Jasper National Park

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 was established as a National Park because of its magnificent mountainous area, the valleys carved by the Ice Age, the primitively beautiful Maligne Lake, the puzzlingly hidden peaks of the Jacques and De Smet Ranges.

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 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 travertines, 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 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 Paleozoic limestone by centuries of ceaseless wear by a small stream of running water.

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. 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 Tonquin 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 à 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 castellated 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.

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Plantlife
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 arctics in the higher altitudes to intrigue the botanist. The flowers present an ever-changing carpet of colour for most of the summer season.

Some very interesting flowers are found around and above timberline (approximately 7,000 feet altitude) among them red and pink mountain-heath, white mountain-heather, forget-me-not, mountain rhododendron, Arctic heath, over-flowered wintergreen, moss-campion, and northern gentian.

Some of the more common shrubs found in the Park are wild rose, buffaloberry, willow, alder, juniper, shrubby cinquefoil, silverberry, Saskatoon berry, Labrador tea, red oiser dogwood, and two kinds of bearberry.

A young cow moose in sanctuary.
Most of the trees in the Park are evergreen. At the higher altitudes Engelmann spruce, westerm larch and alpine fir can be found. In some valleys, and creeping up to the lower benches of the mountains may be found aspen, Engelmann spruce, sam poplar and birch which turn a brilliant gold in the autumn and make a striking contrast to the dark evergreens, while above, on the north-eastern slopes may be seen cypress-hued shrubs. Club-mosses, miniature forms of the giants of the coal age, are to be found at Sunwapta Falls and other localities in the Park. Small firs are quite rare.

Wildlife

The Park is a wildlife sanctuary in which wild animals 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 and photographed with caution. The larger mammals native to the Park are black bear, grizzly bear, cougar, elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain sheep, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain deer, in Jasper National Park names almost 200 varieties of mammals. Snowshoe hare, hoary marmot, several types of weasel, lynx, wolverine, skunk, bobcat, pika, marmot, and campgrounds. Small firs are quite rare.

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 great blue heron to the impudent whiskey jack (gray jay) 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 songbirds are but a few of the many other birds which are frequently seen.

How You Can Learn More About the Park

To help you understand and obtain greater enjoyment from your park visit, a park naturalist 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 nature subjects are presented at various locations in the evenings at the various campgrounds. Well marked nature trails of a self-guiding type are laid out in various areas. Detailed information about the park and the naturalist's program is available at the park information office.

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 walking or riding over the more than 600 miles of trails. Many areas of exception are on certain trails. One may spend 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 outfitting centres for trail riding expeditions in the Canadian Rockies. Saddle and pack horses may 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.

General Information

Park Administration

A resident Superintendent is in charge of the Park. The protection of the Park and the visitor is in the hands of the Warden Service assisted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Visitors may obtain detailed information from the nearest Park Warden.

Season

The Park is open throughout the year, but it is only from May to September that all the facilities are in operation. During the winter all the usual facilities of a town are available in Jasper townsite.

Fishing

Most of the lakes and streams are stocked with freshwater fish. Boating is a popular pastime in the Park, although motor boats are not permitted on Pyramid and Medicine Lakes. Boats on Maligne Lake are offered by private interests.

Mountain Climbing

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 leashes.

Motor Licence

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

Motor-Boats

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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 airfield 7.5 miles north of Jasper townsite permits landings of light aircraft during daylight. The Banff-Jasper Highway is open certain hours during the winter.

Accommodation
A variety of accommodation is offered in the Park, details of which are available at all park information offices. Reservations are not made by park staff. Nearly all facilities of a modern town are found within the park boundaries, the majority being convenient to the main townsite.

Park Enjoyment
Because Jasper has a large area of wilderness, it is ideal for the visitor who wishes to backpack or ride into the back country seeing the land in its primitive state. The Tonquin Valley with the Amethyst Lakes and the stolid Ramparts towering above them is one of many wilderness experiences awaiting the person who wishes to get away from highways. The Jasper-Banff Highway offers a splendid scenic drive. Maligne Lake is another impressive feature. Until the road is completed to the lake, visitors drive to the end of Medicine Lake and transfer to a concessionaire's bus for the final part of the trip.

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 “La Grande Traverse” by great packtrains of trade goods and fur bales. Explorers, prospectors, engineers and missionaries came to know the broad 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 park visitors. 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 1923 when Charles Grant 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. Persons wishing additional information concerning the Park may address their enquiries to:

The Superintendent
Jasper National Park
JASPER, Alberta.

or

National Parks Branch
Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources
OTTAWA, Canada.

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