The land: canyons and hot springs
Kootenay stretches for approximately 6 miles parallel with the northwest-southeast direction of the Rocky Mountains and surrounds a section of the Banff-Winder­mere Highway between Vernon Valley and the Columbia Valley. The highway follows two main river valleys, the Vermilion in the north and the Kootenay in the south, creating the Vermilion, Mitchell and Brisco Ranges and two passes, Vermilion (5,146 feet) and Sinclair (4,875 feet). The southwestern section of the park extends westward from Kootenay National Park and follows Sinclair Creek down the eastern slope of the Columbia River Valley. The U-shaped valleys of the Kootenay and the Vermilion range along the park’s northeastern boundary consist of nearly flat-lying rocks and their peaks look like layer cakes or ancient castles. The remainder of Kootenay’s mountainous, however, are not into rock masses that have been severely folded or faulted to produce peaks in a wide variety of shapes.

Mountains on either side of the Vermilion Valley are sufficiently high to support numerous snowfields and glaciers. In summer these feed swift-flowing mountain streams that rush down steep valleys to join the principal rivers. There are also several beautiful lakes among the lofty peaks.

The park environment
Each national park has its own character, its unique story as a living outdoor museum. The Kootenay story is the influence of climate, mountains and valleys on the variety of vegetation and wildlife found in the park.

The plants: alpine and subalpine
The U-shaped valleys of the Kootenay and the Vermilion are well forested and provide a variety of habitat. The climate of the park’s southern portion within the Columbia and Kootenay valleys is characterized by hot, dry summers, moderate winters, and low annual precipitation. In contrast, the Vermilion Valley, in the northern portion of the park, experiences moderate summer temperatures and rainfall, and more severe winters.

This marked difference in climate, combined with differences in elevation, has resulted in distinct environ­ments or life zones. The park visitor moves through three life zones while travelling north along highway 93 from Radium Hot Springs. At the southern end of the highway along Sinclair Creek is the dry Douglas fir zone, and the trees here include Douglas fir, western larch, western red cedar, Douglas maple, lodgepole pine, trembling aspen and Rocky Mountain juniper

The Vermilion Valley elements of both the Douglas fir and subalpine spruce-fir zones have combined to create a transitional zone. Disturbances such as forest fires, wind storms and insect infestations in this transitional zone have resulted in a mixed environment.

Mount Wardle at 9,218 feet is the southernmost exten­sion of the Vermilion mountain range which acts as a boundary between the two life zones. It contains elements of both, which results in a diversity of flora and fauna.

The Vermilion Valley is a subalpine spruce-fir zone. Engelmann’s spruce is dominant at lower levels and alpine fir at higher elevations. Other trees within this zone in­clude the lodgepole, whitebark and limber pine, western red cedar, Douglas maple, alpine larch and various species of willow.

From the highway, visitors can see, on the mountains above them, the alpine zone, an area above the timberline or in excess of 6,500-7,000 feet in elevation, consisting of high windswept meadows and exposed plateaus or barriers. The climate is extreme and variable and few trees survive here. Dominant shrubs and flowers include red mountain beach, white mountain heather, dwarf wil­lows, bog laurel, black crowberry, yellow mountain avens and coiled rebe煸he.

Small lakes and ponds are found in the Kootenay Valley. Most occur as a result of glaciation: pools, marshes and small lakes have become established in glacial kettles. Wildflowers are found in abundance throughout these zones, in alpine meadows and on mountain slopes. Even the names promise visual delights - mariposa lily, purple clematis, dwarf Canadian primrose, western anemone, white globe-flower, balsamroot, avalanche or snow lily, alpine saxifrage, butterwort and Venus’s slipper orchid.

The animals: each seeks its own habitat
Animals frequent those areas which best supply their food and shelter needs. Like plants, they depend on suitable environment for their survival. Some of the larger mam­mals and the birds are migratory in their habits, and the places where they are found depend on the season.

The elk or wapiti and mule deer migrate up the river valleys in the spring, behind the melting snows, until they reach timberline, where they spend the summer. They retreat from these areas in the fall and pass the winter in

Introducing a park and an idea
Canada covers half a continent, fronts on three oceans, and stretches from the extreme Arctic more than halfway to the equator. There is a great variety of landforms in this immense country, and Canada’s national parks have been created to preserve important examples for you and for generations to come.

The National Parks Act of 1930 specifies that national parks are “dedicated to the people . . . for their benefit, education and enjoyment” and must remain “unimpaired for generations to come.” Kootenay National Park preserves a spectacular 543-square-mile area on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains, with two river valleys of different character, high glaciers and deep canyons, and icy alpine lakes as well as hot springs.

The park is situated in southeastern British Columbia, 91 miles north of Cranbrook, and borders on both Banff and Yoho National Parks.

The park environment
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The Ochre Beds or “paint pots” are also in this area. Springs bring a peculiar colouration of iron oxide to the surface, staining everything with a rusty red hue.

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Winter arrives. Throughout the summer they frequently moose, mountain lion, grizzly and black bear also inhabit regions of the park, and Mount Wardle is one of the best places to see them from the highway. White-tailed deer, moose, mountain lion, gray and black bear inhabit the valley bottoms and on lower mountain slopes.

A brief park history

Of land along the Columbia River, which included the valley bottoms and on lower mountain slopes. The nearest commercial airport is at Cranbrook, B.C. The park is open all year but most tourist services increase in popularity during the winter months. Fishing, mountain climbing and camping are favourite summer activities, and trail skiing and snowshoeing are increasing in popularity during the winter months. Nature study, photography and swimming are popular the year round in Kootenay. Fishing, mountain climbing and camping are favourite summer activities, and trail skiing and snowshoeing are increasing in popularity during the winter months. More information is also available from the park information reach the mountains to the Columbia River and later took development of the springs and vicinity as a public use on the park lakes. Permission from the park superintendent is required to use an unpowered boat, canoe, raft or float on the Kootenay River.

Fishing: The Vermilion, Simpson, and Kootenay Rivers, their tributaries, and several lakes provide excellent angling for various species of fish, including Dolly Varden, eel, whitefish, lake trout, brook trout, bull trout, and various other species. The Aquacourt at Radium Hot Springs is open the year round and provides two outdoor pools, dressed accommodation and showers. The waters, which have a temperature of approximately 113 degrees F. at their source, issue from shattered rocks at the base of Redstreak Mountain. There are also plunge pools, steam rooms and a massage concession in the Aquacourt. These and a coffee shop are open mid-May through September.

Some don't

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 wildlife, plants, trees, rocks and fossils are to be left undisturbed. Even the wildflowers are not to be picked; they must be left for others. Feasting touching or molesting wild animals is not permitted.

Fires Campfires may be set only in fireplaces provided for this purpose, or in outdoor portable stoves. Barbecues may be used only in campgrounds or picnic areas, and all coals must be dumped into existing campfire pits. Campfires must be obtained from the nearest park employee.

Where to go information

Information on the interpretive program is available from bulletin boards, information centres, and the park staff. Special groups, including school, science and youth organizations, may take advantage of these programs throughout the year.

How to get the most out of your visit

To help you understand and appreciate Kootenay's complex natural environment, you are urged to take advantage of the free interpretive program, conducted by the park naturalist and his trained staff. It will provide you with an insight into how climate, water, land, rocks and fossils are related, and it will make your visit more rewarding.

During the day there are conducted field trips, in the evening informative talks, illustrated with slides or film, are given in the campsite theatres. Self-guiding trails, exhibits, interpretive signs and viewpoints also explain the park's natural features. Films, are given in the campground theatres. Information on the interpretive program is available from bulletin boards, information centres, and the park staff.

Where to stay

The nearest commercial airport is at Cranbrook, B.C. The park is open all year but most tourist services increase in popularity during the winter months. Nature study, photography and swimming are popular the year round in Kootenay. Fishing, mountain climbing and camping are favourite summer activities, and trail skiing and snowshoeing are increasing in popularity during the winter months.

How to enjoy the park

Season - The park is open all year but most tourist services are available only from May through September. Summer is the best time to visit the park, however, visitors to the park at other seasons are increasing every year. Nature study, photography and swimming are popular the year round in Kootenay. Fishing, mountain climbing and camping are favourite summer activities, and trail skiing and snowshoeing are increasing in popularity during the winter months. More information is also available from the park information centre just inside the park gate.

How to get there

Visitors using Highway 95 from Golden, B.C. (67 miles south of the park entrance) or from Cranbrook, B.C. (91 miles south) should turn off the highway at Radurm Hot Springs at the intersection of Highway 95 and 93. There is a daily bus service to Radurm Hot Springs from Cranbrook and Golden.

There is a daylong landing strip for light aircraft just outside the park boundary at Radurm Hot Springs. The nearest commercial airport is at Cranbrook, B.C.

Additional information about the park is available from the Superintendent, Kootenay National Park, Radium Hot Springs, British Columbia. For informa-