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 from 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 future generations.”

Waterton Lakes National Park in the south-west corner of Alberta. Set apart as a national park in 1895, it covers an area of 203 square miles along the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains immediately north of the Canadian-United States boundary. Glacier National Park, Montana, joins it to the south and the two parks together form Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park.

The park environment
Each national park has its own character, its unique story as a living outdoor museum. The theme of Waterton Lakes is “where the mountains meet the prairie.”

The mountains
The mountains in the park have been carved out of a series of layered sedimentary rocks over a mile thick and include some of the oldest known rocks in the Canadian Rockies. Some structures found in these rocks are believed to be fossilized algae. The old sedimentary rocks were shivered and displaced horizontally in relatively late geological time. These now lie adjacent to much younger rocks on the west and south-eastern sections of the park, which have yielded fossil shells. The sharp, narrow ridges and interlocked-U shaped valleys are the result of water erosion and glacial deposition. The highest peak is Mount Blakiston (9,060 feet).

A great overthrust fault which affected mountains on the eastern slope of the Rockies, the Front Range, is also found in the park. The pressure along this fault during mountain building spread the Front Range overrode younger rocks and thus form a few narrow stripes that are ideal escape terrain for the deer, elk and hawk.

The prairie
The prairie region of the park occurs in the northeast part of the park. Adjacent to the Rocky Mountains, the flora and fauna here are quite different from that of the surrounding prairie and many mountain species are found. This corner of Alberta probably bears the most luxuriant plant life of the entire province.

The vegetation
Waterton Lakes National Park is different from the other Canadian parks because two major regions, the prairie and the Rocky Mountains, distinct in every way and vastly different from one another, meet and lie immediately adjacent to one another within the confines of the park. The Cordilleran or mountain flora stands in great contrast to the prairie flora. This is further emphasized by the sudden and drastic change in topography. There is only a narrow belt of what can be termed transitional vegetation between the two regions.

The flowers present an ever-changing carpet of colour for most of the summer season. Among the better-known flowers of the park are Jacob's ladders and bear grass are found in the moun-
ding prairie. False hellebores, yellow columbines, avalanche lilies, balsamroot. Because of their nocturnal activities and secretive habits, most animals, especially the smaller kinds, are seldom seen by park visitors, but some diurnal (daylight) species allow themselves to be clouted at close quarters.

Hikers on the higher trails near timberline and the alpine meadows often have the opportunity to watch a band of bighorn sheep grazing or resting on a sunny slope. Rocky Mountain goat with its near-white coats may also be seen, silhouetted against the dark rock walls that make up their favourite haunts. Ptarmigan, marmot, pika and ground squirrels take advantage of the open alpine meadows and widespread, which may sometimes be seen grazing on the lush green vegetation of the alpine meadows. Many of the larger mammals prefer the shade and protection offered by the forests at middle elevations. Among them are the bear, moose, elk and deer. Black bear which is found principally in those habitats most suitable to their survival, whether it be summer or winter.

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White-tailed deer and their predators the cougar and hibernation. Hundreds of elk and mule deer, for example, this habitat suitable to their needs. Several species of descend into this lower region of the park every winter species of the higher life zones, which are not adapted to the sky and songbirds add their notes to the aspen forest. conditions make survival almost impossible for animal coyote can be found here. Skunk, badger and mink are, for example, this lower region of the park every winter ground squirrel make their home here, while hawks patrol the lower and shallower lakes experience a major transformation. Literally thousands of ducks and geese rest up here before continuing their migration, while swans, geese and alge are also present.

Fish, native and stocked, delight angler and diving bird alike. Pike spawn in the shallow, warm waters of these lakes, while whitefish are found in the Waterton Lakes and the Waterton River. Several species of trout are found in the lakes, and in the fast-moving cold creeks.

A brief park history

Waterton Park derives its name from the lakes in the main valley. These lakes were named after Charles Waterton, Thomas Blakiston, of the Palliser Expedition, who dis-famed 18th century English naturalist, by Lieutenant George "Kootenai" Brown, who was later to become the most active in the promotion of this objective was John Kootenai Brown lies buried between his two sons. His name is etched on the monument of this officer. The expedition marked the turning point in the history of this region, which hitherto had been practically un-known territory and a stronghold of the hostile Blackfoot.

The park’s name was formally changed to Waterton Lakes National Park by car. Alberta Highways 5 and 6 lead into the park from the north and east and Montana route 17 enters from the south. Buses run twice daily from Calgary and Lethbridge during the summer months only. Visitors travelling by train should make bus connections at Lethbridge or Fort Macleod. No aircraft may land in the park.

How to enjoy the park

Season – The park is open all year, although commercial tourist services are available only during the summer months. Summer is the busiest time. Swimming, boating, golfing, hiking, climbing and camping are popular. Boating – Rowboats and canoes are permitted on most of the park’s larger lakes. Motor boats are restricted to the Lower, Middle and Upper Waterton Lakes. Boats must conform with federal navigation regulations and carry proper safety equipment.

Fishing – Fishing in the park is by permit, available at a nominal charge at the park information center, administration building or from any park warden. Fishing regulations are available at the same places. Hiking – This is one of the best ways to explore the park. There are over 110 miles of park trails covering all the main valleys. Many trails to remote areas have primitive campgrounds for overnight bivouacs. All areas are readily accessible for day walking or riding. A public giving information on distances, altitudes and other details is available free at the park information center. Directional signs have been placed at the beginning of every trail and at every trail junction. A topographical map showing all park features and trails may be purchased at the information centre.

All climbers and anyone travelling off park trails must register with a park warden before and after such travel (no charge). Snowmobilers – Self-registration is necessary at the beginning of the trails designated for snowmobiling use. All other motorized land vehicles are restricted to public roads.

Some don’ts

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, including birds and animals, and all plants, trees, rocks and fossils are to be left undisturbed. Even the wild-flowers are not to be picked; they must be left for others to enjoy. Feeding, touching or taking any wildlife is prohibited.

Dogs and cats may accompany visitors into the park. For protection of park animals, however, dogs must be kept on leash. No permit or vaccination certificate is needed. Because dogs have been known to cause bears to attack, hikers should refrain from taking their canine friends into the back-country.

Where to stay

Camping brings you into the closest contact with the park’s natural environment. Modern facilities are provided at two campgrounds: Upper Waterton Lake and Cranell Mountain. Daily fees at campsites vary and depend on whether the site is unserviced or is equipped with electricity. Campsites are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Campfires are open only about May 15 and close about September 15, depending on weather conditions. The maximum allowable stay in a campground is two weeks. It is illegal to pitch a tent in the migration period here, whileh shallower lakes experience a major transformation. Literally thousands of ducks and geese rest up here before continuing their migration, while swans, geese and gulls are also present. Fish, native and stocked, delight angler and diving bird alike. Pike spawn in the shallow, warm waters of these lakes, while whitefish are found in the Waterton Lakes and the Waterton River. Several species of trout are found in the lakes, and in the fast-moving cold creeks.

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- Highway
- Secondary Road
- Walking or Hiking Trail
- Lake, River, Creek
- Mountain
- Warden's Cabin
- Picnic Area
- Accommodation
- Campground
- Overnight Camp
- Nature Trail
- On-site exhibit