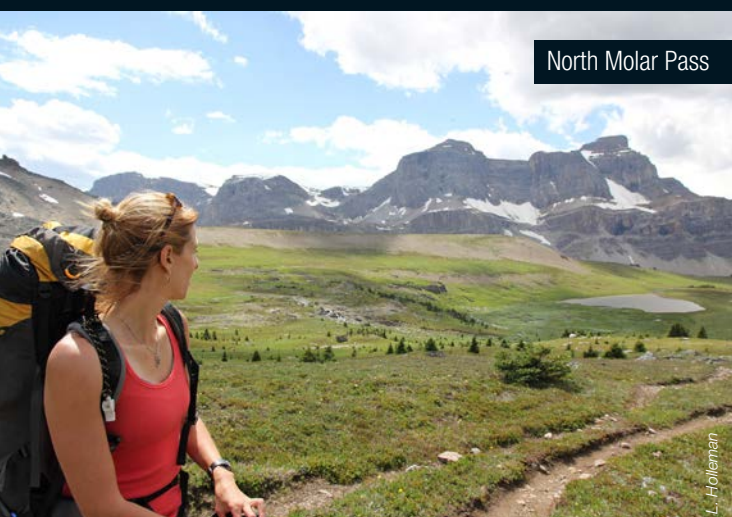


# Backcountry Trails in Banff National Park



Banff National Park is a very special place to enjoy a backcountry experience. As a backcountry user, you can access treasured natural wonders not seen by most park visitors—and experience them without the crowds associated with the park’s more accessible attractions.

This guide is designed to help you plan a safe and enjoyable visit of Banff National Park’s backcountry, while keeping the natural environment as healthy as possible.



## What to Expect

In more popular and accessible areas of Banff’s backcountry, you will find maintained hiking trails and designated campsites with outhouses, tent pads, food storage cables, picnic tables and metal fire rings where fires are allowed. More remote areas of the park provide a greater opportunity for solitude, although trails may not be regularly maintained and hikers must be self-reliant. Route finding and navigation skills are required and hikers should be prepared to safely ford streams. Pre-trip planning and preparedness is essential for travel in the backcountry.

## When to Go

The main hiking season in Banff National Park is from May to October. Until late June, many trails at higher elevations remain snow-bound. Stream flows are highest during June and July; more remote trails have few bridges and require stream fording. July and August are the prime backcountry hiking months, although even in summer snow is not uncommon at higher elevations. September is generally drier than July and August, although temperatures are lower and there is a greater chance of snowfall.

Regardless of the season, the weather in Banff National Park is unpredictable. Being prepared for rain, snow or high winds at any time of year is especially important in the backcountry.

## EXPLORING THE BACKCOUNTRY

Most visitors to the backcountry of Banff National Park are hikers. Travel by horseback or bicycle is also possible on designated trails.

### Cycling

Cycling is permitted only on designated trails. For more information on cycling in the park, ask for a biking trail brochure at a Parks Canada Visitor Centre or online at [parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-brochures](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-brochures).

### Horse Use

Horse travel is permitted throughout most of the park. If you are planning a trip with your own horse, visit [parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-horse](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-horse) for information on where to ride and the required grazing permits, fees and regulations. This website also provides links to companies offering guided horseback trips within the park.

### Climbing, Mountaineering and Glacier Travel

Mountaineers require a Backcountry Permit to bivouac, and may do so in non-vegetated areas only. Alternatively, the Alpine Club of Canada (403-678-3200, [alpineclubofcanada.ca](http://alpineclubofcanada.ca)) operates several mountaineering huts in the park that are ideally located for mountaineers.



### Fishing

A National Park Fishing Permit is your ticket to enjoy one of Banff National Park’s most rewarding traditions.

Fishing is permitted during specified seasons in most backcountry lakes, rivers and creeks, however some areas are catch and release only. To fish in Banff National Park, everyone aged 16 or older is required to have a National Park Fishing Permit. Children under 16 do not require a permit but must be accompanied by a permit holder 16 years of age or older. These permits can be purchased at a Parks Canada Visitor Centre or at most local retail outlets that sell angling supplies.

For regulations visit [parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-brochures](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-brochures) or pick up a copy of the *Fishing Regulations Summary* brochure from any Parks Canada Visitor Centre. Seasonal closures may be in effect for some lakes to allow fish populations to recover from over-fishing and these are generally not posted at the lake, so you must be familiar with the regulations.

## BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING

### Passes, Permits and Reservations

A **Backcountry Permit** and campground reservations are mandatory for anyone planning an overnight trip into the backcountry of Banff National Park. It specifies the campgrounds you have booked, as well as the number of people (maximum 10) and tents in your group.

There are two ways to pay for your Backcountry Permit. For shorter trips, you can purchase your Backcountry Permit based on a nightly rate. If you will spend more than 7 nights in the backcountry of Banff, Jasper, Kootenay and Yoho national parks this year, an **Annual Wilderness Pass** is a better choice.

All backcountry visitors, including annual Wilderness Pass holders, must make **reservations** for overnight backcountry trips, specifying which campgrounds or shelters you will stay at on which dates. Reservations can be made in person at Parks Canada Visitor Centres in Banff and Lake Louise, or by calling 403-762-1556 in Banff or 403-522-1264 in Lake Louise, up to three months in advance of your trip. Advance reservations are highly recommended for July and August. A non-refundable reservation fee applies to all bookings.

You will also require a **National Park Day Pass** or annual **National Park Discovery Pass** to enter Banff National Park.

### Campgrounds

Camp in designated campgrounds as indicated on your Backcountry Permit and use the tent pads provided to minimize impact on vegetation. The maximum length of stay for any one campground is three consecutive nights.



### Random Camping

Random camping is permitted in designated areas only, see reverse for map. Make sure you camp 5 km or more from either the trailhead or any designated campground. Pitch your tent at least 50 m from the trail and at least 70 m away from the nearest water source. Cook and store food well away from your tent. If you have a campfire, remove all trace before moving on.

### Food Storage

To avoid attracting bears and other wildlife to your campsite, all food, garbage, toiletries and cooking equipment must be suspended from the food storage cables provided at designated campgrounds. For areas where random camping is permitted bring bear-resistant canisters, rope or hang your food downwind of your campsite as illustrated on right.

## BACKCOUNTRY TRAIL SHELTERS, HUTS, AND LODGES

Rustic trail shelters located at Egypt Lake and Bryant Creek can be booked through the Parks Canada Visitor Centres in Banff or Lake Louise.

Alpine huts maintained by the Alpine Club of Canada are available to club members and non-members. Reservations are required: 403-678-3200 or [alpineclubofcanada.ca](http://alpineclubofcanada.ca)

There are four commercial lodges located in the backcountry of Banff National Park. For reservations and information: [banfflakelouise.com](http://banfflakelouise.com).

Shadow Lake Lodge  
[shadowlakelodge.com](http://shadowlakelodge.com)

Skoki Lodge  
[skokilodge.com](http://skokilodge.com)

Sundance Lodge  
Halfway Lodge  
[horseback.com](http://horseback.com)



## BACKCOUNTRY ETIQUETTE

### Stay on the Trail

Shortcutting between trail switchbacks damages both the soil and vegetation. This not only impacts the area, but also makes it susceptible to further damage by erosion.

### Garbage

If you pack it in—pack it out. Littering is unlawful and hazardous to wildlife. Do not dispose of garbage in outhouses.

### Human Waste

Use the outhouses provided. If there are no outhouses, select a spot away from trails, campsites and at least 70 m away from water sources. Dig a hole 12 to 16 cm deep to reach the dark-coloured biologically active soil layer. When filling the hole with soil, do not pack it down. Pack out toilet paper and used feminine hygiene products.

### Collecting Natural or Cultural Objects

Leave all rocks, fossils, horns, antlers, wildflowers, nests and other natural or historic objects where they are for others to enjoy. It is unlawful to remove, deface, damage or destroy any natural or cultural resources within Canada’s national parks.

For information on low-impact backcountry travel, visit [leavenotrace.ca](http://leavenotrace.ca)



### Share the Trail

Backcountry trails are shared by hikers, trail runners, mountain bikers and horseback riders. Please respect other users and yield the right of way to ensure safety. If you wish to avoid trails that are busier due to shared use, plan ahead and check with staff at a Parks Canada Visitor Centre.

## SAFETY

When planning a trip into the backcountry of Banff National Park, at least one person in your party should be able to recognize natural hazards and have experience in wilderness first aid. Caution and self-reliance are essential.

*Giardia lamblia* is a water borne parasite that can be present in any surface water. Boil, filter or chemically treat all water before drinking.

Ticks carrying Lyme disease may be present in the park. Learn how to protect yourself and pets.

Dogs are considered as either predator or prey by many wild animals. This can provoke confrontations with wildlife and may affect your safety, so consider leaving your dog at home. Dogs must be kept under control and on a leash at all times.

Any wild animal can become aggressive if it feels threatened. Keep a distance of at least 30 m from most species and at least 100 m from bears. Carry bear spray at all times, keep it accessible and know how to use it.

Learn how to reduce the risk of bear encounters by reading wildlife brochures available at all Parks Canada Visitor Centres or visit [parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-bears](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-bears).

## INFORMATION SOURCES

### Banff Visitor Centre

224 Banff Avenue, Banff, AB  
tel 403-762-1556; fax 403-762-1551  
[banff.vrc@pc.gc.ca](mailto:banff.vrc@pc.gc.ca)

### Lake Louise Visitor Centre

Samson Mall, Hamlet of Lake Louise, AB  
tel 403-522-1264; fax 403-522-1212  
[ll.info@pc.gc.ca](mailto:ll.info@pc.gc.ca)

For detailed trip planning information visit:  
[parksCanada.gc.ca/banff](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banff)

Guidebooks and topographic maps are available at the Banff Visitor Centre and outdoor retailers and bookstores in Banff and Lake Louise.

**Environment Canada Weather Forecast:**  
403-762-2088  
[weather.gc.ca](http://weather.gc.ca)

**Avalanche Bulletin (winter only):**  
[parksMountainsafety.ca](http://parksMountainsafety.ca)

**Banff Dispatch:**  
403-762-1470

In case of **EMERGENCY**, call **911** or Banff Dispatch at 403-762-4506, but remember cell phone reception in the backcountry is not reliable.

## SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

### Two Day Trips

#### Lake Minnewanka Shoreline Trail

8 km one way; elevation gain: nil  
Campsite: Lm8 Aylmer Pass Junction.  
Topographic map: 82 O/6. Gem Trek recreational map: Banff and Mount Assiniboine

A popular early or late season hike or bike along the lakeshore. The trail departs from the trailhead at the Lake Minnewanka Day-use Area and returns by the same route. During the summer, Lake Minnewanka is a popular destination for motorboats. Stay an extra night and explore Aylmer Pass or Aylmer Lookout.  
**Seasonal restrictions in area during buffaloberry season (July 10-September 15).**

#### Glacier Lake

8.9 km one way; elevation gain: 210 m  
Campsite: G1 9 Glacier Lake.  
Topographic map: 82 N/15.

**Gem Trek recreational map: Bow Lake Saskatchewan Crossing**  
A popular early season hike that departs from a trailhead north of Saskatchewan Crossing on the Icefields Parkway (93N) which brings hikers to a campsite at one of the largest backcountry lakes in Banff National Park.

### Three Day Trips

#### Egypt Lake

12.4 km one way; elevation gain: 655 m  
Campsite: E13 Egypt Lake or Egypt Lake trail shelter.  
Topographic map: 82 O/4.

**Gem Trek recreational map: Banff and Mount Assiniboine**  
Hike from the Sunshine Village ski area parking lot via Healy Pass to the Egypt Lake Campground or trail shelter. Stay two nights if possible to explore the wonders of the area.

#### Skoki Loop

34 km; elevation gain: 1,136 m  
Campsites: Sk11 Baker Lake (night 1); Sk18 Merlin Meadows (night 2).  
Topographic maps: 82 N/8, 82 N/9, 82 O/5, 82 O/12.

**Gem Trek recreational map: Lake Louise – Yoho**  
Beginning at the Fish Creek trailhead (near the Lake Louise ski area) this trip starts with a 4 km hike up the Ski Louise maintenance road (no vehicle access). Climb over aptly named Boulder Pass and pass by Ptarmigan Lake before descending to Baker Lake. The second day involves travelling around Fossil Mountain and past Skoki Lodge National Historic Site to Merlin Meadows. After climbing Deception Pass, re-join the access trail at Ptarmigan Lake.

### Four Day or Longer Trips

#### Assiniboine Loop

55 km  
Campsites: Br 14 McBride’s Camp (night 1); Lake Magog Campground or the BC Parks trail shelter, Mt. Assiniboine Provincial Park (nights 2 and 3) where separate BC Parks campground fees will be collected on-site; Br 13 Marvel Lake, or stay at the Bryant Creek trail shelter (night 4).  
Topographic maps: 82 J/14, 82 J/13.

**Gem Trek recreational map: Banff and Mount Assiniboine**  
The trail begins and ends at the Mt. Shark trailhead in Spray Valley Provincial Park. Travel through three contiguous protected areas and behold the beauty of the sixth highest mountain in the Canadian Rockies (Mt. Assiniboine).  
**Seasonal trail restrictions on Allenby Pass and Assiniboine Pass during buffaloberry season.**



#### Sunshine – Assiniboine – Bryant Creek

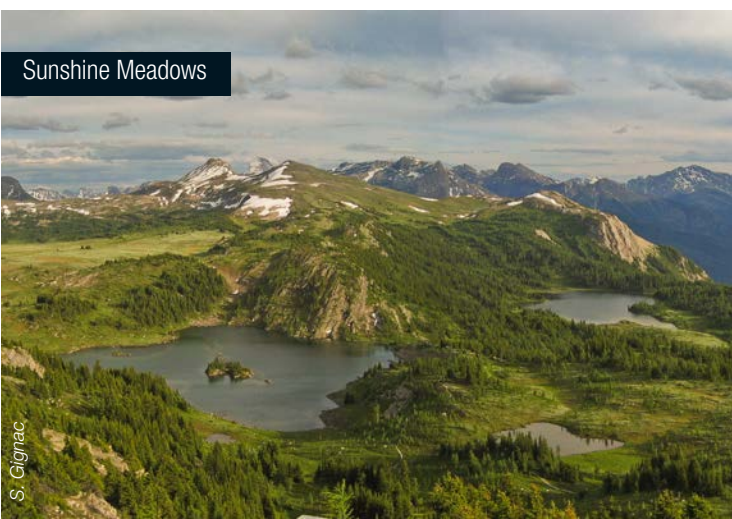
55.7 km  
Campsites: Porcupine Campground, Mt. Assiniboine Provincial Park (night 1); Lake Magog Campground, Mt. Assiniboine Provincial Park (night 2), where separate BC Parks campground fees will be collected on-site; Br 13 Marvel Lake or Br 14 McBride’s Camp (night 3).  
Topographic maps: 82 O/4, 82 J/14, 82 J/13.

**Gem Trek recreational map: Banff and Mount Assiniboine**  
This trip is best suited for parties with two vehicles. Mt. Assiniboine can be reached from the Sunshine Village ski area via the alpine meadows of Citadel Pass. Either walk up the Sunshine Village ski area maintenance road (no vehicle access) or ride the privately run shuttle up the 6.5 km to the base village. The trip exits via Bryant Creek at the Mt. Shark trailhead in Spray Valley Provincial Park.  
**Seasonal trail restrictions on Allenby Pass and Assiniboine Pass during buffaloberry season.**

#### Sunshine – Vista Lake

40 km  
Campsites: E13 Egypt Lake (night 1); Re14 Shadow Lake (night 2); Tw7 Twin Lakes (night 3).  
Topographic maps: 82 O/4, 82 N/1.

**Gem Trek recreational map: Banff and Mount Assiniboine**  
A series of high country trails link the Sunshine Village ski area (access via foot or the privately run shuttle) to the Vista Lake viewpoint on Highway 93S. Explore the Egypt Lake area en route. After climbing over Gibbon Pass, the trail meanders past a series of scenic lakes before the final ascent to the highway.



#### Sawback Trail

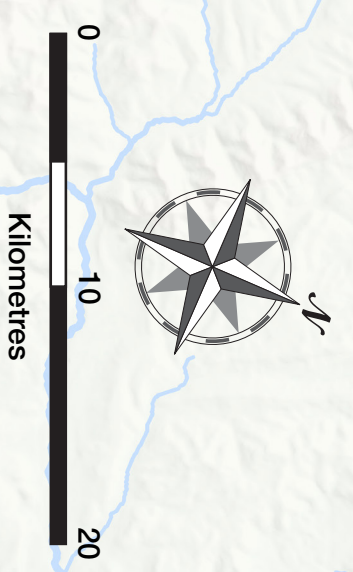
74 km  
Campsites: Fm 19 Mystic Junction (night 1); Jo 9 Larry’s camp (night 2); Jo 18 Johnston Creek or Jo 19 Luellen Lake (night 3); Jo 29 Badger Pass (night 4); Ba 15 Wildflower Creek (night 5); Sk 11 Baker Lake (night 6).  
Topographic maps: 82 O/4, 82 O/5, 82 N/8.

**Gem Trek recreational map: Banff and Mount Assiniboine**  
This trip takes you over three spectacular mountain passes. The trail traverses a good portion of Banff National Park, linking the Town of Banff with the hamlet of Lake Louise. Trailheads are located at Mt. Norquay ski area and the Fish Creek trailhead (near the Lake Louise ski area). **Portions of this area are frequented by commercially guided horse trips.** Various routes are possible, a suggested 7-day itinerary is provided above.



### LEGEND

- Random Camping Area — Stream fording required
- Hiking Trail — Horses may be present
- Hiking Trail — Frequent Horse Use
- Suggested itineraries (see description on reverse)
- Backcountry Campground — Fires permitted
- Backcountry Campground — Fires not permitted
- Trailhead Parking Lot
- Commercial Accommodation
- Parks Canada Backcountry Shelter
- Alpine Club of Canada hut



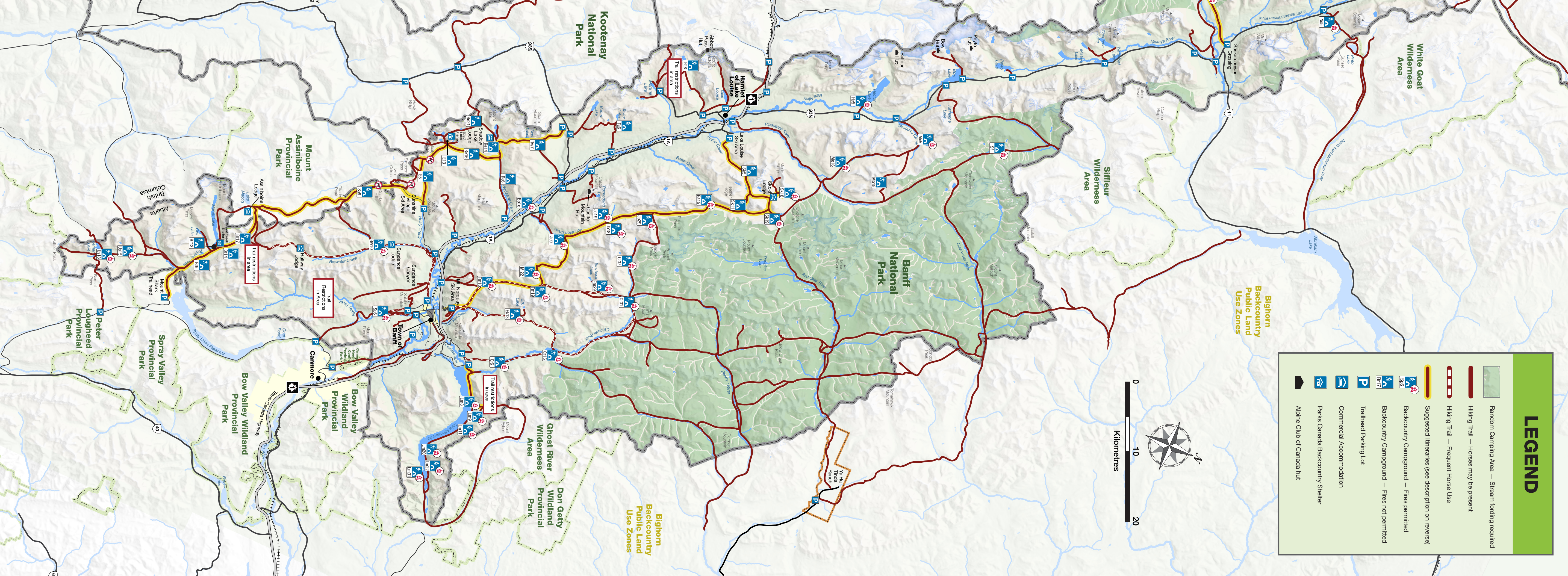
### NOTE TO USERS

This publication is a summer trip planning tool. It is not suitable for navigation. The map features officially maintained hiking trails in Banff National Park, plus commonly used access routes from outside of the park. For information on trails and required permits outside of Banff National Park, consult with the appropriate land authorities. For information on winter use of backcountry trails in Banff National Park, visit a Parks Canada Visitor Centre or [parks.canada.gc.ca/banff](http://parks.canada.gc.ca/banff).

Have ideas or information to improve this trail guide? Email: [banff.vrc@pc.gc.ca](mailto:banff.vrc@pc.gc.ca)

**Contains information licensed under the Open Government Licence – Alberta.**

Campgrounds	Eastings	Northings	Sites	Facilities										Notes	
				Hiking	Dogs permitted on leash	Pit toilets	Fires	Food storage cables	Biking	Horses					
<b>Bryant District – Banff</b>															
Bt17	Alebyy Junction	601167	5641948	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Bt9	Big Springs	607078	5637159	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
U515	Birchwood	610597	5627882	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Bw10	Brewster Creek	594319	5660210	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
U518	Burstal (Leman Lake)	611746	5624720	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Bt13	Mareel Lake	604389	5639803	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No fishing
Bt14	McBride's Camp	604028	5639892	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
S96	Spray River (Mount Rundle)	602964	5659092	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
<b>Egypt District – Banff</b>															
Bt21	Ball Pass Junction	572219	5665410	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
E13	Egypt Lake	577142	5662446	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
E5	Healey Creek	562419	5661010	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Su8	Howard Douglas	567319	5654809	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Ru6	Lost Horse Creek	578219	5671610	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Re14	Shadow Lake	573904	5669106	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Tw7	Twin Lakes	571219	5672910	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Re16	Pheasant Creek	576719	5656510	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
<b>Lake Minnewanka District – Banff</b>															
Lm9	Alymer Canyon	611002	5682104	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	*July to Sept 15, no dogs, groups of 4 required, first-come, first-served
Lm8	Alymer Pass Junction*	609719	5681710	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	*July to Sept 15, no dogs, groups of 4 required and groups of 4 required
Lm3	Ghost Lakes	620920	5679310	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Lm20	Mount Castigan*	618620	5678510	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Lm11	Mount Inglismaldie*	612419	5681710	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Lm22	The Narrows*	619956	5679356	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
<b>Cascade District – Banff</b>															
Jc29	Badger Pass Junction	573619	5693010	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
C37	Beck Lake Junction	564419	5693710	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Bo1c	Bow River	560127	5672203	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	River access only
C6	Cascade Bridge	602119	5681910	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
EK13	Eik Summit	595019	5681910	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Cc31	Fire's Park	566033	5696064	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Jc18	Johnson Creek	567019	5688410	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No fishing
Jc8	Larry's Camp	561900	5683278	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Jc19	Lutellier Lake	576319	5686410	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Fm10	Mount Cockscornb	562219	5676810	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Fm19	Myate Junction	568933	5683782	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
M22	Myate Valley	568203	5682330	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Fm29	Sawback Lake	566619	5690410	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No lakes after this junction before C175
C15	Stony Creek	567566	5689362	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
<b>Skoki Area – Lake Louise</b>															
Sk11	Baker Lake	567200	5704900	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Sk5	Hidden Lake	562661	5703280	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Sk18	Main Meadows	563298	5709414	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Sk19	Pied Deer Lakes	566341	5710081	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Sk15	Wildflower Creek	568900	5700300	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
<b>Moaine Lake – Lake Louise</b>															
Pa10	Paradise Valley	562239	5689661	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Ta8	Taylor Lake	563323	5683367	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
<b>Icefields Parkway – Lake Louise</b>															
Cs	Castleguard	N/A	N/A	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No fishing
Mo18	Fish Lakes	565610	5721888	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No fishing
G9	Glacier Lake	511415	5752781	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Hu6	Hector Lake	54634	5714554	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Mo16	Moir Creek	565500	5715400	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Mo5	Mosquito Creek	548900	5724000	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
No5	Norman Lake	507381	5770382	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Sf	Siffleur River	544180	5735139	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	



**Jasper National Park**

**Yoho National Park**

**Kootenay National Park**

**Banff National Park**

**White Goat Wilderness Area**

**Siffleur Wilderness Area**

**Bighorn Backcountry Public Land Use Zones**

**Bighorn Backcountry Public Land Use Zones**

**Bow Valley Wildland Provincial Park**

**Spray Valley Provincial Park**

**Peter Lougheed Provincial Park**