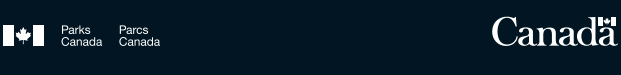


Backcountry Trails in Banff National Park

McPhee Pass



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.

North Molar Pass



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 mountain passes and trails at higher elevations remain snowbound and may be impassable. 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 go online at 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 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) operates several mountaineering huts in the park that are ideally located for mountaineers.

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

There are four commercial lodges located in the backcountry of Banff National Park. For reservations and information: banfflakelouise.com.

Shadow Lake Lodge shadowlakelodge.com	
Skoki Lodge skokilodge.com	
Sundance Lodge Halfway Lodge horseback.com	

SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

Two-Day Trips

Lake Minnewanka Shoreline Trail
8 km, 9 km or 11 km one way
Campsites: Aylmer Pass Junction (Lm8), Aylmer Canyon (Lm9), Mt. Inglismaldie (Lm11)
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. If paddling to these campgrounds, be aware of strong unexpected winds which can make travel difficult or dangerous.
July 10 to September 15, no dogs and no bikes allowed. Bear spray and groups of 4 are required.
Visit: parksCanada.gc.ca/banffnp-closures

Glacier Lake
8.9 km one way
Campsite: Glacier Lake (G19)
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.



Baker Lake

Fishing
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 and any harvest by the child counts towards the permit holder’s limit. These permits can be purchased at a Parks Canada visitor centre or at most local retail outlets that sell angling supplies.

- Fishing is permitted during specified seasons in most backcountry lakes, rivers and creeks, however most native species are catch and release only so you must know how to identify fish species: If you don’t know; let it go!
 - Seasonal closures may be in effect for some lakes or at lake outlets, to protect fish populations and these are generally not posted at the lake, so you must be familiar with the regulations.
 - Always dispose of fish offal in fast moving streams or the deep part of a lake from which the fish was caught. Never dispose of fish along stream sides, lake shores or move fish or fish parts between waterbodies.
- For regulations visit parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-brochures or pick up a copy of the *Fishing Regulations Summary* brochure from any Parks Canada visitor centre.

Skoki Lodge National Historic Site



B. Pappas

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, Yoho, Mount Revelstoke, Glacier and Waterton Lakes 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. In 2017, these passes are free.

BACKCOUNTRY ETIQUETTE AND REGULATIONS

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.

Pack Out Garbage

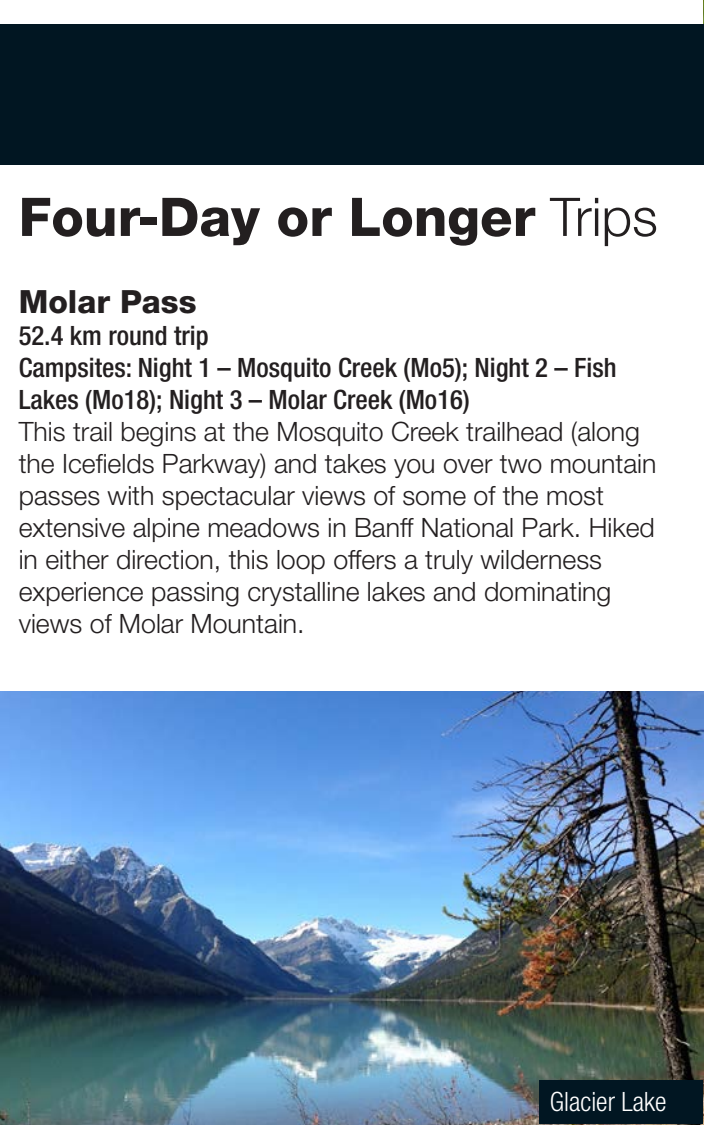
If you pack it in—pack it out. Littering is unlawful and hazardous to wildlife. Do not dispose of garbage in outhouses.

Properly Dispose of 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.

Firearms Are Prohibited

Firearms, including pellet guns, bear bangers, bows, slingshots and similar, are prohibited in national parks. Parks Canada recommends carrying bear spray for protection from wildlife.



Glacier Lake

B. Pappas

Campgrounds

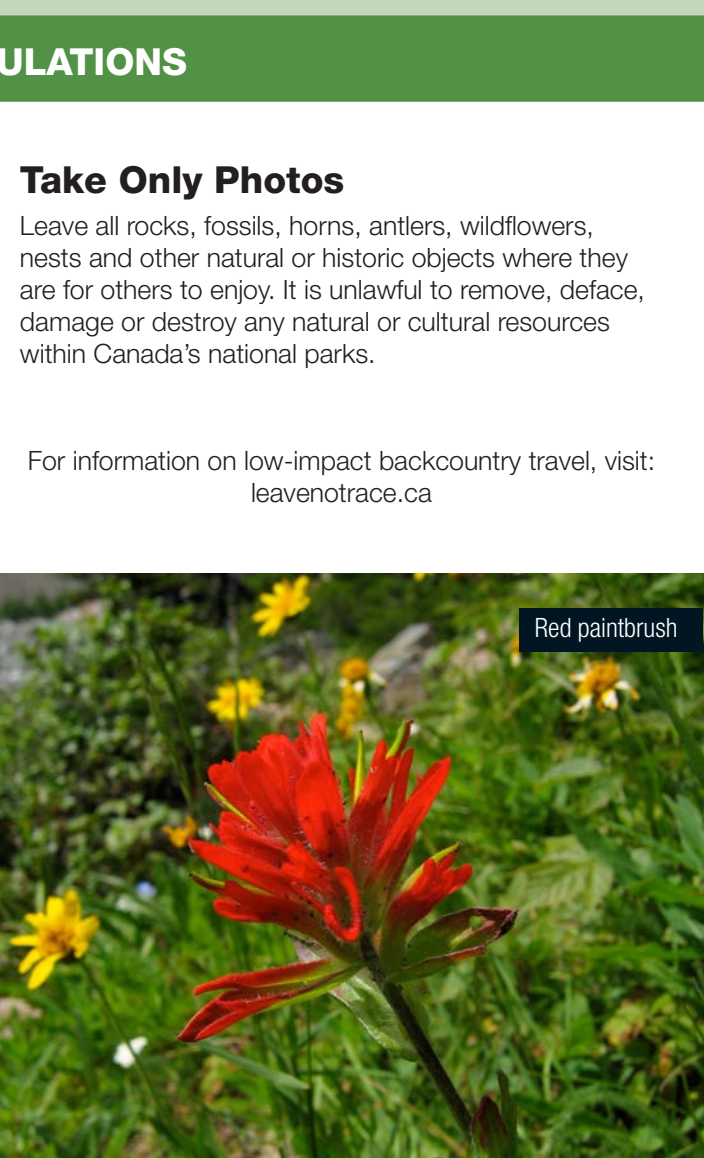
Camp in designated campgrounds as indicated on your Backcountry Permit and use the tent pads provided to minimize impact on vegetation. The maximum length of stay for any one campground is three consecutive nights.

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. Remember to bring a stove and fuel as campfires are not permitted in random camping areas. A backcountry permit is required for random camping.

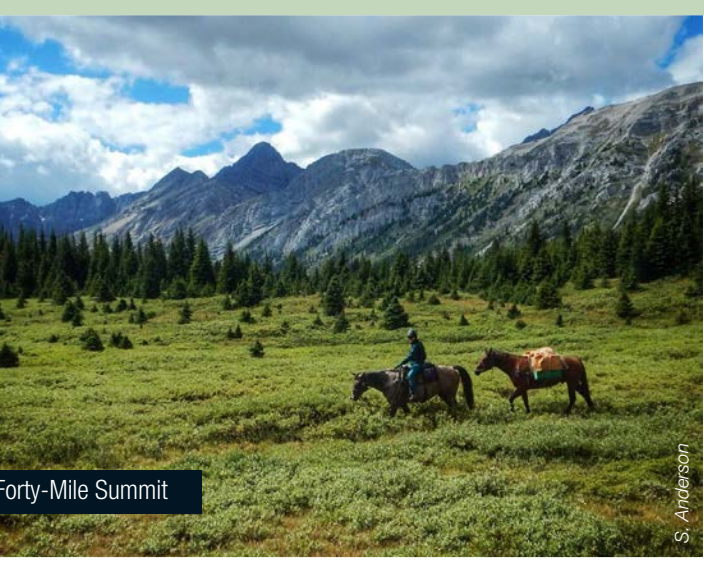
Food Storage

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, or a rope to hang your food downwind of your campsite as illustrated on right.



S. Cagnac

For information on low-impact backcountry travel, visit leavenotrace.ca



Forty-Mile Summit

S. Anderson

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.



Healy Pass

Dr. Bergmann

Sunshine – Egypt Lake – Vista Lake

38 km
Campsites: Night 1 – Egypt Lake (E13) or Egypt Lake trail shelter; Night 2 – Ball Pass Junction (Re21); Night 3 – Twin Lakes (Tw7). A series of beautiful, high country trails link the Sunshine Village ski area (access by walking up the ski area maintenance road, taking the privately run shuttle bus or by riding the ski area gondola) to the Vista Lake viewpoint on Highway 93S. Explore the alpine lakes of Simpson Pass, Healy Pass and the Egypt Lake area en route. Hike to the Ball Pass Junction Campground, along a majestic section of the Great Divide Trail, which travels over Whistling Pass. This area boasts incredible views of the Ball Range—be sure to listen for the whistle of the local hoary marmots! Make your way over Gibbon Pass to a quiet campground at Twin Lakes. The remainder of the trail meanders past a series of scenic lakes before the final descent to the highway.

Seasonal trail restrictions and closures on Allenby Pass and Assiniboine Pass (August 1-September 30).
parksCanada.gc.ca/banffnp-closures

Cooking and Campfires

All backcountry travellers should carry a portable stove for cooking. Campfires are permitted in metal fire rings provided at certain campgrounds, see reverse for map. If you have a campfire, use only deadfall, keep it small, do not leave it unattended and be sure it is fully extinguished when you are finished.

Washing

Wash well away from any water sources and keep the use of soap to a minimum (even biodegradable soaps are pollutants). When washing dishes, strain the bits of food waste and pack them out. Disperse strained water on the land.

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.

Sawback Trail

74 km
Campsites: Night 1 – Mystic Junction (Fm19); Night 2 – Larry’s Camp (Jo9); Night 3 – Johnston Creek (Jo18) or Luellen Lake (Jo19); Night 4 – Badger Pass (Jo29); Night 5 – Wildflower Creek (Ba15); Night 6 – Baker Lake (Sk11). 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.



Mystic Pass

INFORMATION SOURCES

Banff Visitor Centre
224 Banff Avenue, Banff, AB
327 Railway Ave, AB
tel 403-762-1556; fax 403-762-1551
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

For detailed trip planning information visit: 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

Avalanche Bulletin (winter only):
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.

© The Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada
Catalogue #64-445(2017)
ISSN # 078-9-660-0757-9

Également offert en français

Checklist

- Select a trip which best suits your group’s abilities, experience, interests, equipment and the time you have available.
- Familiarize yourself with the hike you have selected by using guidebooks and topographic maps.
- Obtain all required permits from a Parks Canada visitor centre.
- Check weather conditions prior to departure.
- Be prepared to be self-sufficient in all weather conditions and emergency situations.
- Ensure a friend or family member knows your travel plans.
- Before starting your hike, check the trailhead kiosk or the Parks Canada trail report for trail conditions, important updates or restrictions. parksCanada.gc.ca/banfftrails



Lake Minnewanka

Dr. Bergmann

