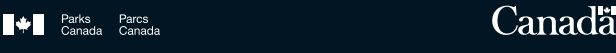


# Backcountry Trails in Banff National Park



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.

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](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.



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](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-brochures) or pick up a copy of the *Fishing Regulations Summary* brochure from any Parks Canada visitor centres.

## BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING

### Passes, Permits and Reservations

A **backcountry permit is mandatory** for anyone planning an overnight trip into the backcountry of Banff National Park. You can purchase your backcountry permit online at [parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry) or by calling **1-877-RESERVE (1-877-737-3783)**.

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 Pass to enter Banff National Park.



Indian Paintbrush

### Campgrounds

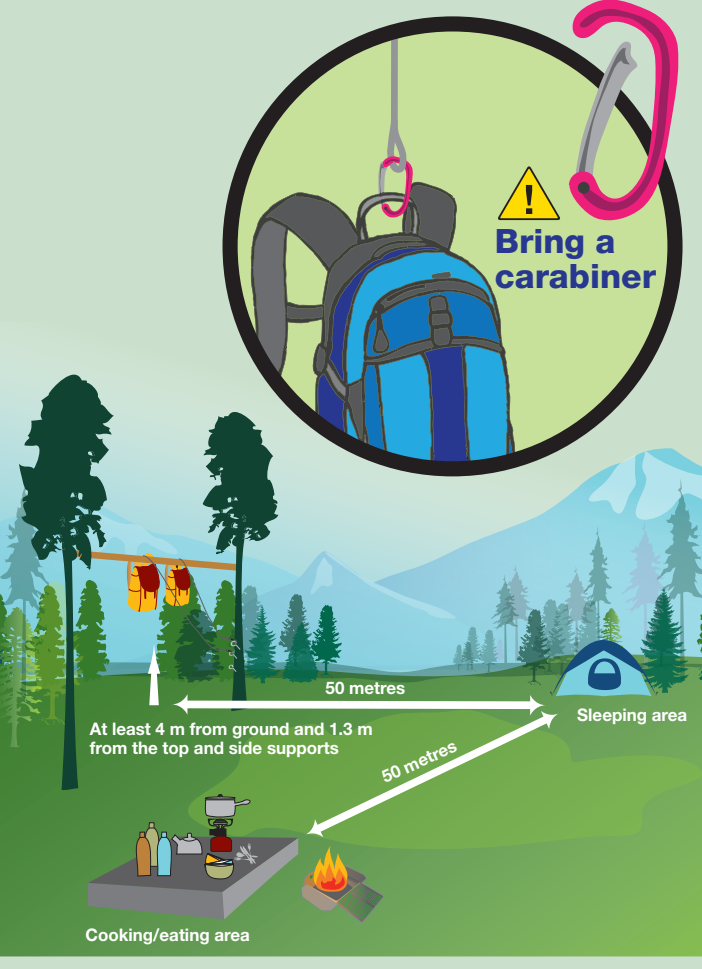
Camp in designated campgrounds as indicated on your backcountry permit and use the tent pads provided to minimize impact on vegetation. The maximum length of stay for any campground is three consecutive nights.

### 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 and can only be obtained 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.

### 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.



Bring a carabiner

At least 4 m from ground and 1.3 m from the top and side supports

50 metres

50 metres

Sleeping area

Cooking/eating area

## 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.

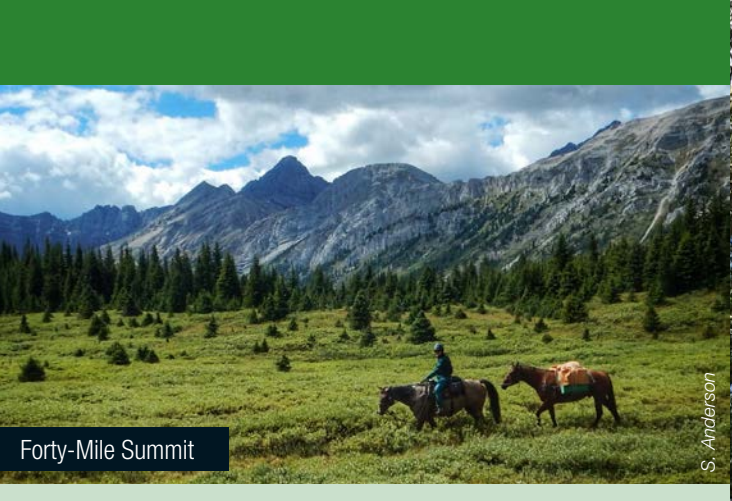
*Giardia lamblia* is a water borne parasite that can be present in any surface water. Boil, filter or chemically treat all water before drinking.

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

Dogs or other pets cause stress for wildlife. Dogs, like wolves and coyotes, may be seen as a threat. Off-leash dogs can trigger aggressive behaviour from wildlife such as grizzly bears and elk. To prevent unsafe situations, it is your responsibility to:

- Ensure your dog is on a leash and under control at all times.
- Pick up and dispose of your pet’s waste in a garbage bin.
- Dogs are not allowed on some trails: [parksCanada.gc.ca/banfftrails](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banfftrails)

Consider leaving your dog at home if you plan to camp, hike or go into the backcountry.



Forty-Mile Summit

### 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.



Lake Minnewanka

## BACKCOUNTRY TRAIL SHELTERS, HUTS AND LODGES

Rustic trail shelters located at Egypt Lake and Bryant Creek can be booked online at [parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry).

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)



Skoki Lodge National Historic Site

B. Pass

## 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 and knowing how to use it for protection from wildlife.

### Take Only Photos

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.



Share the trail

Partageons le sentier

## 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](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banffnp-closures)

**Glacier Lake**  
8.9 km one way  
**Campsite:** Glacier Lake (Gl9)  
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  
**Campsite:** Egypt Lake (E13) or Egypt Lake trail shelter  
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 round trip  
**Campsites:** Night 1 – Baker Lake (Sk11); Night 2 – Merlin Meadows (Sk18)  
Beginning at the Fish Creek trailhead (near the Lake Louise ski area) this trip starts with a 4-km hike up the Temple access 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

**Molar Pass**  
52.4 km round trip  
**Campsites:** Night 1 – Mosquito Creek (Mo5); Night 2 – Fish Lakes (Mo18); Night 3 – Molar Creek (Mo16)  
This trail begins at the Mosquito Creek trailhead (along the Icefields Parkway) and takes you over two mountain passes with spectacular views of some of the most extensive alpine meadows in Banff National Park. Hiked in either direction, this loop offers a truly wilderness experience passing crystalline lakes and dominating views of Molar Mountain. Route finding might be required.



Glacier Lake

**Sunshine – Assiniboine – Bryant Creek**  
53 to 56 km  
**Campsites:** Night 1 – Howard Douglas Lake (Su8); Night 2 – Lake Magog Campground, Mt. Assiniboine Provincial Park, reservable through BC Park’s Discovery Camping Reservation Service; Night 3 – Marvel Lake (Br13) or McBride’s Camp (Br14).  
This is an iconic trip, which follows a section of the Great Divide Trail. The trailhead at Sunshine Village ski area can be reached by taking the privately run shuttle bus or by riding the ski area gondola. Be careful to stay on the trail as you hike through the ecologically-sensitive alpine area to Howard Douglas Lake Campground. On day two, prepare for a long journey to Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park via Citadel Pass. Hike over Assiniboine Pass or Wonder Pass to arrive back in Banff National Park and camp at either Marvel Lake or McBride’s Camp on night three. The trip exits via Bryant Creek at the Mt. Shark trailhead in Spray Valley Provincial Park.

**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 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.



Healy Pass

**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 Junction (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.

**Sunshine – Assiniboine – Bryant Creek**  
53 to 56 km  
**Campsites:** Night 1 – Howard Douglas Lake (Su8); Night 2 – Lake Magog Campground, Mt. Assiniboine Provincial Park, reservable through BC Park’s Discovery Camping Reservation Service; Night 3 – Marvel Lake (Br13) or McBride’s Camp (Br14).  
This is an iconic trip, which follows a section of the Great Divide Trail. The trailhead at Sunshine Village ski area can be reached by taking the privately run shuttle bus or by riding the ski area gondola. Be careful to stay on the trail as you hike through the ecologically-sensitive alpine area to Howard Douglas Lake Campground. On day two, prepare for a long journey to Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park via Citadel Pass. Hike over Assiniboine Pass or Wonder Pass to arrive back in Banff National Park and camp at either Marvel Lake or McBride’s Camp on night three. The trip exits via Bryant Creek at the Mt. Shark trailhead in Spray Valley Provincial Park.



Mystic Pass

## 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 a backcountry permit online at [parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry) or by phone at 1-877-737-3783
- Obtain a National Park Pass 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](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banfftrails)



Bison

## MORE INFORMATION

Online booking and detailed trip planning information: [parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry)

**Banff Visitor Centres**  
224 Banff Avenue, Banff, AB  
327 Railway Ave, 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, Village of Lake Louise, AB  
Tel: 403-522-1264; Fax: 403-522-1212  
[ll.info@pc.gc.ca](mailto:ll.info@pc.gc.ca)

Trail Conditions Report: [parksCanada.gc.ca/banfftrails](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banfftrails)

Guidebooks and topographic maps are available at the Banff and Lake Louise visitor centres, and retail outlets in Banff and Lake Louise.

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

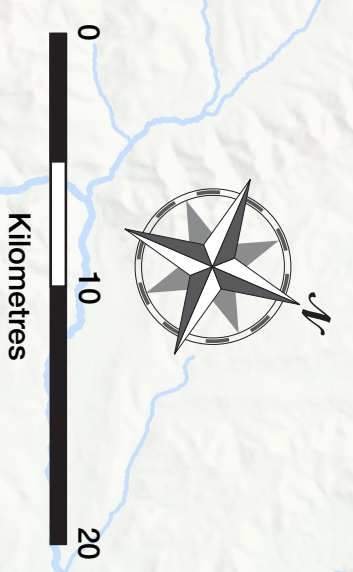
**Avalanche Bulletin (winter only):**  
[parksMountainsafety.ca](http://parksMountainsafety.ca)

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

In case of **EMERGENCY**, call **911** or satellite phone: 403-762-4506. Cell phone coverage is not reliable throughout the national park.

### 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
- Gondola
- Shuttle service
- 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 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 [parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry](http://parksCanada.gc.ca/banff-backcountry).

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

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

Campgrounds	Eastings		Northings		Sites	Hiking	Boat	Pit toilets	Fires	Food storage (cables or lockers)	Biking	Horses	Notes
	UTM Zone 11U												
<b>Bygone Creek Area – Banff</b>													
Bt9	607078	5657159	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Bt13	604389	5659803	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	*Trail restrictions and closures in Area 20. Visit <a href="http://pc.gc.ca/trailinfo">pc.gc.ca/trailinfo</a> for up-to-date information.
Bt14	604026	5659892	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Bt17	601167	5641943	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Bw10	594319	5652010	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Bw16	602964	5665092	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Us15	610597	5627882	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Us18	611746	5624720	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
<b>Egypt Lake Area – Banff</b>													
E13	582419	5681010	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
E15	577142	5662446	15	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R66	578319	5671610	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R614	578804	5669106	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R616	576719	5665610	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
R621	572219	5665410	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
S66	587919	5654609	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Tv7	571219	5673910	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
<b>Lake Minnewanka Area – Banff</b>													
Lm8	609719	5681710	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Lm9	617002	5682104	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Lm11	612419	5681710	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	*July 10: Start to no dogs and horses is required. For up-to-date information visit <a href="http://pc.gc.ca/trailinfo">pc.gc.ca/trailinfo</a>
Lm20	618650	5678610	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Lm22	619995	5679356	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Lm31	620920	5679110	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
<b>Cascade/Sawbak Area – Banff</b>													
Ba1c	580127	567203	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	Trail access only
C6	602119	5682910	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Cr15	597566	5689920	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
C31	586053	5686064	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
C37	581419	5683710	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Ek13	595019	5681910	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Ek15	592219	5676810	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Fm10	589533	5683782	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Fm19	5676810	5683782	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Fm29	586619	5690410	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Fm29	581990	5683278	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Jc9	581990	5683278	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Jc18	572019	5688410	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Jc19	576319	5688410	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Jc29	573619	5683910	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
M22	588203	5682330	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
<b>Shoakt Area – Lake Louise</b>													
Ba15	568600	5700300	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Sb5	562861	5703280	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
SK11	567200	5704900	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
SK18	563298	5709414	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
SK19	563341	5710081	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
<b>Moraine Lake Area – Lake Louise</b>													
Pa10	552259	5689661	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	*Trail restrictions in Area 10. Visit <a href="http://pc.gc.ca/trailinfo">pc.gc.ca/trailinfo</a> for up-to-date information.
Ta6	565363	5683367	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
<b>Icefields Parkway Area – Lake Louise</b>													
C3	483451	5789631	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	No fishing
GI9	511415	5752781	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
HI5	546234	5714654	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
M55	548300	5724000	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Ma18	555500	5715400	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Ma18	555610	5721888	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	No fishing
N5	507081	5770382	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
SI	544180	5735139	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	

