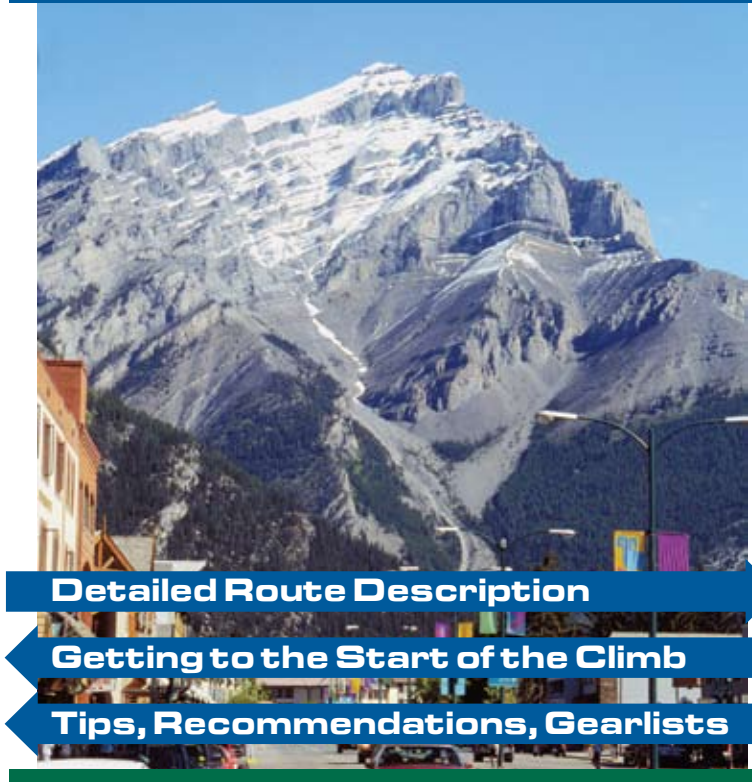
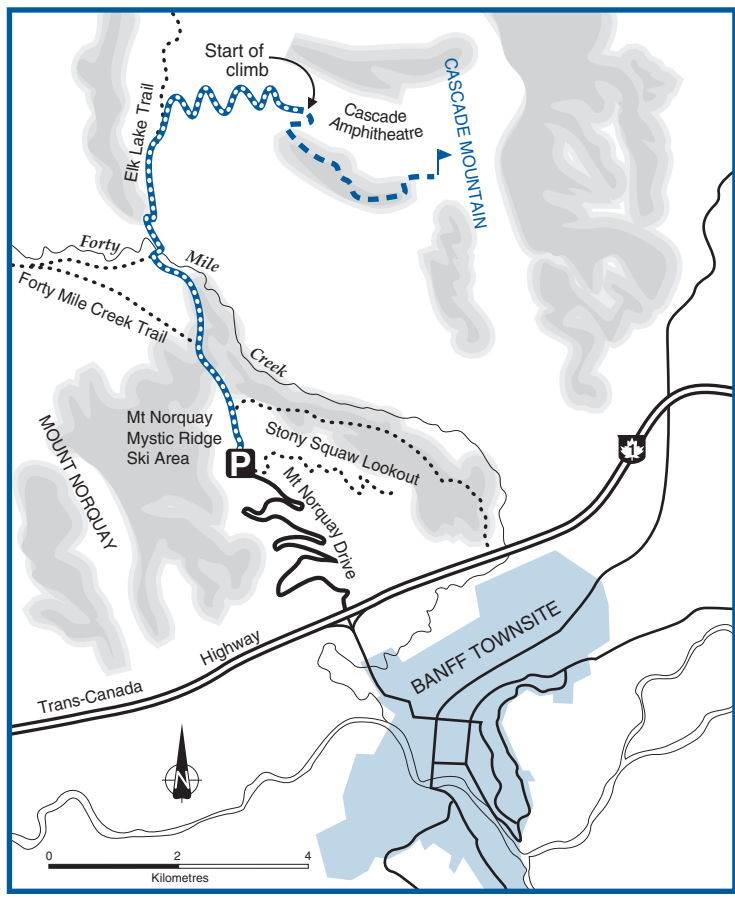




A Climber's Guide to CASCADE MOUNTAIN



- Detailed Route Description
- Getting to the Start of the Climb
- Tips, Recommendations, Gearlists



Parking and Starting

From Banff, follow Norquay Road (the west access road to Banff) up to Mt. Norquay Ski Area. The 7.4 km trail to Cascade Amphitheatre begins at the day lodge at the far end of the first parking lot on the right.

Walk by the front of the day lodge and follow a service road down through the ski area past the bases of the four chairlifts. A few metres beyond the Mystic Chair, pick up the trail heading downhill to Forty Mile Creek.

At the creek, turn right at the junction and follow the Elk Lake trail for another 2.5 km to where the signed Cascade Amphitheatre trail branches right. This forested trail climbs steadily up a series of steep switchbacks to the Cascade amphitheatre, an open meadow at the end of the maintained trail. The scramble route description begins at this location.

Climbing and Safety Tips

1. Tell someone where you are going. Always leave a detailed description of your plans with a reliable person, including where you are going and when you expect to return. A Voluntary Safety Registration service is available through the park. To register, you must visit the Banff Information Centre in person.

2. Turn-back time. Plan your day to allow enough time to get home before dark. Be prepared to turn back at a set time regardless of whether you have made it to the summit or not.

3. Keep your party together. Parties that split up during climbs are one of the most common causes of problems that result in requests for assistance from search and rescue agencies. If you must separate from your party, make specific arrangements to re-contact each other at the end of the day.

4. Weather changes. In the mountains, the weather can change quickly. It often snows at 3000 m (approx. 9000') in the summer. Climbing a 1300 m (approx. 4000') mountain is the same as traveling to a different latitude – on the summit, you are in the Arctic! No matter what the weather forecast says, always take a backpack with lightweight protective clothing. [See the Gear List]

5. Take lots of water. The higher you climb, the less likely you are to find water. Cascade is a particularly dry peak in summer.

6. Route-finding skills. The smart climber is always scouting the route ahead. This process begins when researching the route on maps and in guidebooks. It restarts again as soon as your party can see the mountain. Always study your route at every opportunity.

7. It's a matter of perspective. The further you stand back from a mountain, the more you can see. Conversely, once you are actually on a climb, the features close to you can often block your view of the way ahead. Cliffs hidden from sight can block your way. Well-used footpaths can lead you the wrong way. Cascade Mountain is a good example of this – **pay attention!**

8. Looking back. At the end of a long day, the way down always looks different than expected! As you climb, make a conscious effort to look back and memorize landmarks for the way down. This is so important that we have included **[look back]** reminders at key points in the route description.

9. Descending. Experienced climbers learn that it is almost impossible to assess a descent route by looking down from the top. Changing a descent route line by only a few degrees at the top of a mountain can put you in totally unfamiliar terrain by the time you are halfway down. For this reason, unless you are absolutely certain of what you are doing, always descend the same way you went up.

10. Avoid shortcuts. Taking shortcuts can be a very bad idea in mountaineering. Inexperienced climbers taking shortcuts has resulted in the most serious accidents during ascents of Cascade Mountain by this route. The **X** symbol on the route description photos denotes areas where serious accidents have occurred.

11. Lightning. Electrical storms are common in the mountains during the summer season. Lightning strikes and associated ground currents can be deadly. Lightning storms are most common on warm afternoons and strikes are most likely to hit peaks, ridges and prominent objects, such as climbers on open slopes.

If you hear an approaching thunderstorm, it is time to descend immediately to the safety of lower elevations. If a thunderstorm catches you in an exposed position – pick a spot away from any dangerous drop, crouch down so your head is not raised above the surrounding terrain, keep your feet together, sit on your pack at a distance from metal belongings, and try not to touch the ground with any other parts of your body. Do not shelter under overhanging rocks or caves during electrical storms as the current will pass through you as it grounds through the rock above and below.

EMERGENCIES

Nights Out

If, for any reason, your party is detained, you should be prepared to spend at least one night out. This is one good reason why you are carrying spare clothing and energy efficient food. Summer nights at high altitudes can be cold and uncomfortable, but are seldom life-threatening. If someone is injured, focus most of your resources on conserving their warmth and energy until help arrives.

Accidents

If a serious accident occurs, respond with care – avoid rushing. Stabilize the injured person(s), provide them with shelter and take measures to protect them from further danger. If the injured party requires an emergency evacuation, call the Banff Warden Office or send someone for help, ideally leaving someone at the scene to care for the patient. Ensure that the reporting person has all the information including the exact location of the patient, nature of injuries, and time of the accident. Don't forget details like car keys. If you have a cell phone, try it!

In Banff National Park, the **EMERGENCY NUMBER** is: **(403) 762-4506** (24hrs - emergency only) or call **911** and tell them you have a mountain emergency in Banff National Park and require Park Warden assistance.

Looking for Further Information?

- ▲ Banff Public Safety Wardens can provide trip planning and mountaineering advice: call (403) 762-1415 or 762-1401, or drop by the Warden Office in the Banff Industrial Compound
- ▲ Visit the Banff Information Centre: - 224 Banff Avenue - (403) 762-1550
- ▲ Guidebooks available in local bookstores and Friends of Banff National Park outlets:
 - *Scrambles in the Canadian Rockies*, New edition, by Alan Kane (describes moderate mountain climbs throughout the Rockies)
 - *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, by Sean Dougherty (for serious alpinists)
- ▲ Private guide services offer guided climbs throughout the Mountain Parks. (visit www.acmg.ca)
- ▲ Check the Banff website: www.pc.gc.ca/banff
- ▲ Current mountain conditions can be found on the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) website. (www.acmg.ca)

Gear List

- Lightweight rain/wind jacket
 - Water
 - Food/lunch
 - Insect repellent
 - Emergency matches
 - Walking stick (ski pole)
 - Light first aid kit (especially tape)
 - If you're wearing shorts, take lightweight wind pants
 - Flashlight (in case you get back late)
 - Camera, etc.
 - Cell phone
 - A copy of this brochure!
 - Sweater
 - Hat and gloves
 - Sturdy hiking boots
 - Sunglasses and sunscreen
- If any snow remains on the climb (see Season section), consider taking a climber's ice axe.

About Cascade Mountain and You

Cascade Mountain is the spectacular peak you see as you look northeast up the main street in Banff. While there are some climbers' routes up this side of the mountain, the safest and easiest route is hidden from view far around on the west side of the mountain.

This route description is aimed at strong hikers and scramblers who are keen to climb to the top of a mountain. If you follow the route described here, Cascade is one of the easier climbs in the Banff area. But, like all mountains, there are hazards. This pamphlet has been specially prepared to supply detailed information to help you make the right decisions, and have a safe climb.

Summit elevation: 9836' / 2998m.
Elevation gain during climb: 4800' / 1460m.
Length of trip: approx. 18 km round trip
Average round-trip time : 9 hours

Difficulty: Most of the Cascade climb is a steep, strenuous hike, but about a quarter of the climb is over loose scree and talus. A few places require using your hands for balance. Technical climbing gear is not normally required. There is no built trail on the climbing route. Some worn footpaths have formed along parts of the route but these are intermittent, and some are "off-routes" – in other words, the wrong way!

Season: Important! Cascade is a **summer climb**. Route conditions are best after winter snow has melted completely off the peak. This normally occurs by late June or early July. Before you decide to go, check the left skyline ridge near the summit as viewed from Banff Avenue. If this ridge is snow-covered, you may be forced to turn around and abandon the climb at this point.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

The route description to the summit begins at the Cascade Amphitheatre. For information on the trail leading to the Amphitheatre, see the other side of this sheet.

(The following description is keyed to the numbers on the photos.)

1. Amphitheatre Meadows

These meadows are the destination of the hiking trail, and the start of the scrambling route to the summit. The Amphitheatre is the huge basin ahead curving gradually around to the left. The route to the summit generally follows the skyline of the cliffs forming the right wall of the Amphitheatre. Take a moment to pick out the main features: the First Peak, False Summit, and the main Summit, as viewed from this point.

2. Getting Started

Follow the hiking trail along the meadows until you are nearly past the band of forest on your right. Turn to the right off the hiking trail and pick up a narrow foot path leading back to the right along the base of the steep slope. This path turns up the slope once past the end of the rock cliffs and safely gains the easier slopes along the top edge of the Amphitheatre cliffs. Follow this 'edge' up to the last trees on the ridge. Do not traverse left across the steep ledges below the crest of the cliff.

3. The First Peak

From the last trees, continue following the ridge up and over the First Peak. A tempting footpath also diverges to the right from the trees, but this is a poor choice. Stick to the ridge – the footing is better and, despite appearances, it is actually easier. It also happens to be the best way to come back over this section on the way down.

Climbing Tip: From this point on, you should be making a conscious effort to look back at the way you have come in order to fix the descent route in your mind. It really does look different when you are coming down a mountain. The weather and visibility can change. This is so important that we have put reminders [look back] at key points in this route description.

4. The Hidden Notch

Look towards the False Summit which is the next main feature up the ridge. As the name implies, many hikers have been surprised when they reached this peak to find that not only is it not the top, but the way to the actual summit is blocked by a drop down a vertical cliff. The need for careful route-finding starts here!

Beyond the First Peak, hike easily up the ridge on smooth dirt and moss. As soon as the ridge surface changes to solid rock scramble down a small step (two metres) to the right. Continue up on the easy ground just below a little cliff on the right side of the ridge until reaching an obvious notch in the ridge that, until now has been hidden from view. [look back]

This notch is the landmark where you can pick up an important detour around terrain difficulties that lie hidden beyond the False Summit. Ignore the well-worn track leading straight up the slope above. Instead, take the narrow but distinct trail which leads horizontally right across the 150m wide slope to the right-hand skyline, onto the south side of the mountain overlooking the Bow Valley. [look back]

5. The False Summit

[refer to the inset photo] At the skyline, turn a corner and scramble down the small rock band. This is the lower end of the cliff bands behind the False Summit. Follow a faint trail in the loose scree along the base of this cliff. [If this slope is snow-covered, it may be time to turn around]. In a few minutes you will reach a small ridge on the edge of the last slope that must be crossed to rejoin the main ridge beyond the False Summit. [look back]

This slope forms a steep bowl exposed to cliffs below. When the mountain is dry, you walk across on soft dirt most of the way. It is easy but breathtaking! However, this is also the last place for winter snow to melt off this side of the mountain. A bad slip here on the wrong kind of snow could be disastrous. Climb across this place with extreme care and be prepared to turn back if you are uncertain of your safety. This is one place where a climber's ice axe, and knowing how to use it, could come in very handy.

6. The Main Summit

From the notch beyond the False Summit [look back], scramble up long, loose scree to the main summit. The summit is marked by a cairn. Enjoy the fantastic views but be sure to stay away from cornice snow along the summit ridge. Most cornices eventually fall off during the summer. Your elevation is over 9836 ft. or 2998 m.

Descending

On the descent, stick to the plan and follow exactly the same way back down. You are following the ridge, but it is actually quite easy to stray off course, wasting time and energy, or even wandering into dangerous terrain.

From the ridge just above the False Summit, it may look like a tempting shortcut to climb straight down to the Amphitheatre from here (others have tried!). This would be a potentially fatal mistake. Look at the route picture again to see the huge cliffs below which are now hidden from your viewpoint.

Your practice of looking back during the ascent will now pay off. It will help you retrace your route quickly on the way home. At the First Peak, avoid the trails that appear to bypass this peak on the left side. These lead into a long section of loose talus and poor footing. Climb back up over the little peak and follow the ridge down to the last trees.

On a clear day, the view down the southwest face to Mt. Norquay ski area may look like an easy shortcut back to your car. Again, this would be a serious mistake! This direction ends in cliffs and does not join up with the trail.

So, you've done Cascade! If this is one of your first climbs, go to the Info Centre, and get information on Mt. Rundle. If you've done these and want more.... it's time to get "Scrambles in the Canadian Rockies", join the Alpine Club, hire a guide, or take a course.....good luck!

