



A Climber's Guide to MOUNT RUNDLE



Detailed Route Description

Getting to the Start of the Climb

Tips, Recommendations, Gear Lists



Parks Canada



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, sit on your pack at a distance from metal belongings, keep your feet together, 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

Out Overnight

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 altitude 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 injured persons. Take measures to protect them from further danger. Provide them with shelter. If they require evacuation, call the Banff Warden Office or send someone for help - ideally leaving someone at the scene to care for the patient. Ensure 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 or change for a pay phone. If you have a cellular phone, try it!

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

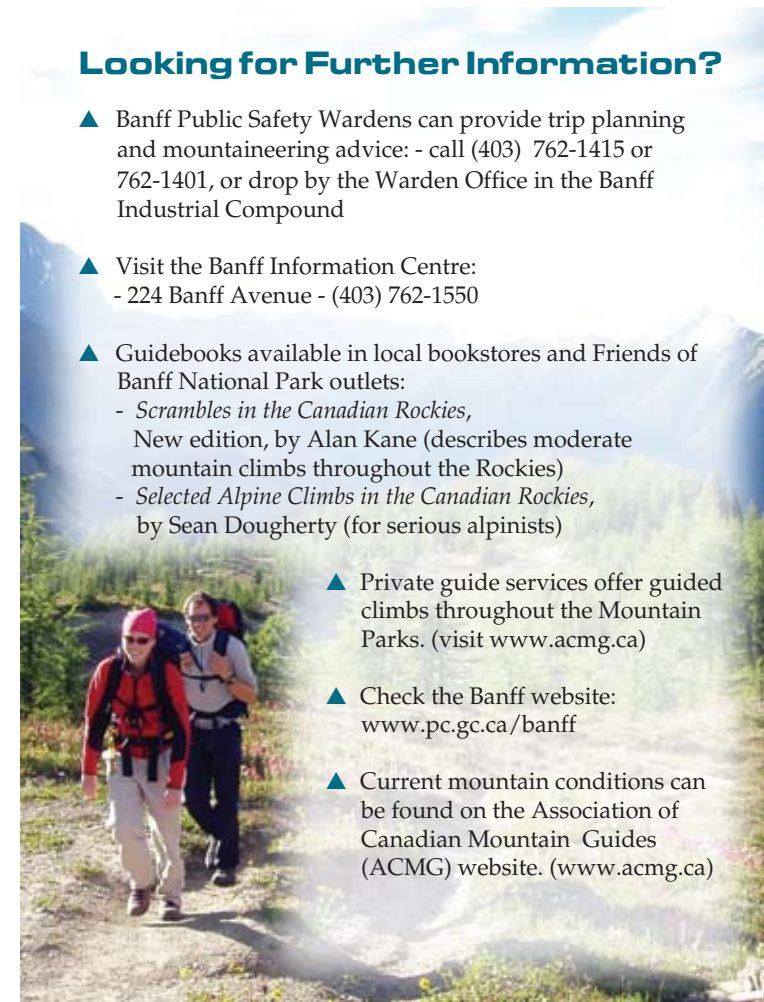
▲ Visit the Banff Information Centre: - 224 Banff Avenue - (403) 762-1550

▲ 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)



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 here in the summer. Climbing a 2700 m (9000') mountain is the same as travelling 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 west slopes of Mt. Rundle dry off early in the summer.

6. **It's a matter of perspective.** The further you stand back from a mountain, the more you can see. Take advantage of opportunities to study your climb from a distance, then compare your impressions to what you actually find on the mountain. The road to Sulphur Mountain and the Upper Hot Springs provides an excellent view of the route up Mt. Rundle.

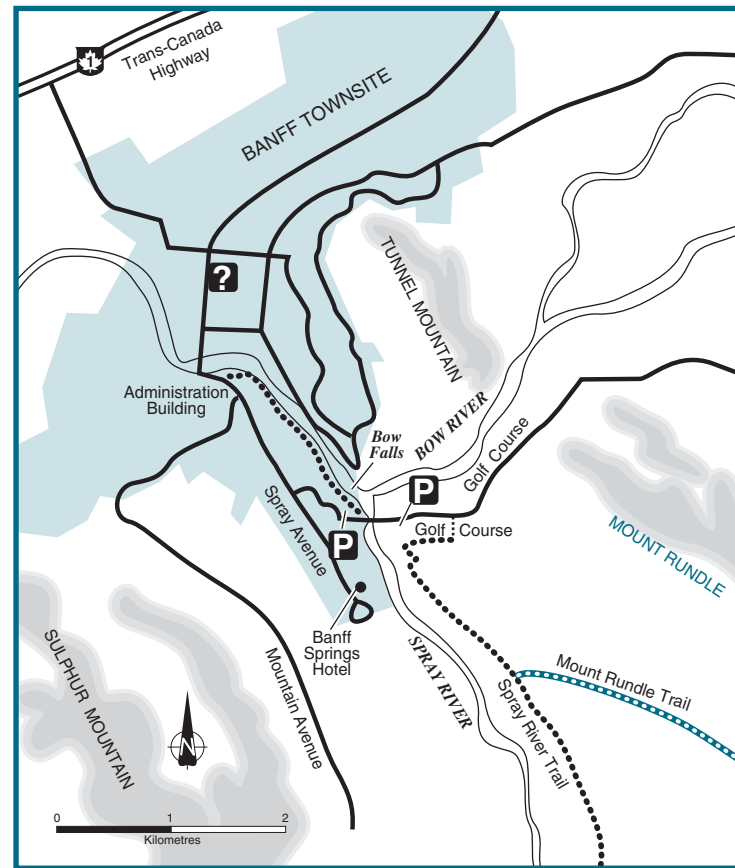
7. **Looking back.** At the end of a long day, the way down always looks different. As you climb up, make a conscious effort to look back and memorize landmarks for the way down. This is especially important on Rundle in the section where you return to the hiking trail on the way home. Note the **[look back]** reminders in the route description.

8. **It isn't over.** The climb isn't over until you're down! Downhill travel uses different skills as well as muscles. You are always more tired than on the way up. There's a tendency to want to hurry to get it over with. Take your time and pay attention. During the descent is where you find out if you really paid attention on the way up.

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 by 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 on this route. The **X** symbol on the route description photos denotes the 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.



Parking and Starting

The trailhead for Mt. Rundle is located near the Spray River bridge on the road to the Bow Falls viewpoint and the Banff Springs Golf Course. Park at the paved lot near the bridge, or at the small pullout located on the right side of the road about 50m past the bridge. This point is also an easy 20 minute walk from downtown Banff.

The start of the trail is located about halfway along the far side of the golf fairway on the east side of the Spray River bridge. To reach the trail, follow the paved road to the end of the fairway, and then take the dirt track running back to the right on the other side for 100m until it branches left up the hill at the Spray River Trail sign. (Note: This is not the trail along the shore of the Spray River). Follow this old fire road for 0.3km to the Mt. Rundle Trail junction on the left.

The route description, illustrated on the other side of the pamphlet, starts at this point.

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.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

This route description begins at the junction of the Mt. Rundle Trail and the Spray River Trail. (For information on how to reach this point, see the other side of this sheet.)

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

1. The Lower Trail

Follow the excellent, constructed trail which climbs steadily across the lower forested slopes of Mt. Rundle. As the mountainside becomes steeper, the trail begins to contour horizontally to the right. After almost an hour of hiking, you will reach the start of a dozen switchbacks which lead straight up the slope.

2. The First Cliffbands

On the route photograph, you will notice that this series of switchbacks actually leads up through a band of rocky cliffs which extends across the mountainside at this elevation. This obscure cliffband is worth noting because it is actually one of the significant hazards associated with this climb. (See section 3. Central Gully below)

At the top of the switchbacks, the trail resumes a horizontal traverse to the right and soon heads down across the first of two large forested ravines. Shortly after the second ravine, the trail comes to an abrupt end at the edge of a large, rocky gully, known as the *central gully*.

3. The Central Gully

The *central gully* marks the end of the hiking trail and the start of the 'scrambling' part of the trip. The route to the summit crosses this gully and ascends to the top by way of the forested ridge beyond. But before you continue, there are two key safety pointers about this location:

- **Do not climb up the central gully!** Despite appearances, it is not a safe route to the summit. The gully is easy at the start but gradually gets steeper and steeper, forming dangerously smooth slabs where several people have been killed!
- **During the descent, you must return to this point and use the hiking trail the rest of the way home!** From across the gully, the end of the hiking trail is surprisingly hard to see. Several fatal accidents have occurred when descending climbers missed the trail, and fell while trying to take a shortcut through the first cliffband which lies 100m downhill from here. Yellow marker signs help define the route beyond the gully, to guide descending climbers back to this crucial route home.

From the end of the hiking trail, descend a few metres and cross the gully (which may contain some old avalanche snow) to the bottom edge of an open rocky outcrop on the opposite slope. Scramble around the bottom of the outcrop to its right-hand side.

From this point, look back to spot the marker at the end of the hiking trail. **[look back]**

4. Forested Ridge

Scramble up the steep track in the trees just right of the rock outcrops. Stick to the most obvious path that climbs directly up the slope. There is no 'built' trail - only a few cut trees, and the path is slippery in places. About 100m up the slope, the path traverses horizontally to the right and away from the steeper slopes overlooking the *central gully*.

From here on, the route climbs almost straight up though the forest. The path is well worn but continuously steep and smooth. Near treeline it has eroded badly to expose the smooth bedrock underneath. This whole section can become extremely slippery when it gets wet.

5. The Dragon's Back

The slope you are following is actually a ridge bounded by the *central gully* on the left and another similar large gully on the right. This ridge leads most of the way to the top. Above treeline the ridge gradually narrows to form the "*dragon's back*", a sloping spine of rock between the two gullies. Its surface is the smooth slope of the limestone bedrock. For much of the way it is covered by loose gravel, and there are steep cliffs on each side. Take care with your footing! **[look back]**

6. The Summit

Beyond the *dragon's back*, it is a long, straightforward slog up the loose 'scree' to the summit ridge. The ridge crest is a sharp edge with the vertical east face of Mt. Rundle below. Traverse to the right along the ridge for about 100m (mostly along the right side of the crest) to the summit high point which is marked by a cairn. There is a modest flat spot here to rest and enjoy the view.

- **Cornices:** Stay well back if there is any snow built up along the edge. This 'cornice' snow usually hangs out over the edge of the mountain and forms a deathtrap for the unwary!

- **Traversing to any other peaks along the ridge is not recommended.** They are farther away than they look and require technical climbing skills and equipment.

DESCENDING

It is critical that you use exactly the same route to descend. Retrace your steps. No shortcuts!

Do not attempt to try an alternate descent down either of the gullies below. These may appear to be feasible options when viewed from this perspective, but dangerous terrain lies out of sight downhill. Both gullies have trapped or killed people.

The *dragon's back* ridge leads you back to the trees. The yellow markers help you retrace the way back to the *central gully*. If you find you have missed the trail and descended too far, your only choice is to **climb back up to the trail**. Do not try and descend any cliffs!

One last thing - on the way up you may have noticed the trail damage in the switchback area caused by people taking shortcuts on the way down. **Please...do not shortcut the switchbacks.**

So, now you've done Mt. Rundle. If you are interested in more climbing at this level, the park has prepared a similar pamphlet for Cascade Mountain available at the Banff Information Centre. If you have done both of these and want more, it is time to purchase "Scrambles in the Canadian Rockies", join the Alpine Club, hire a guide, or take a course... good luck!

