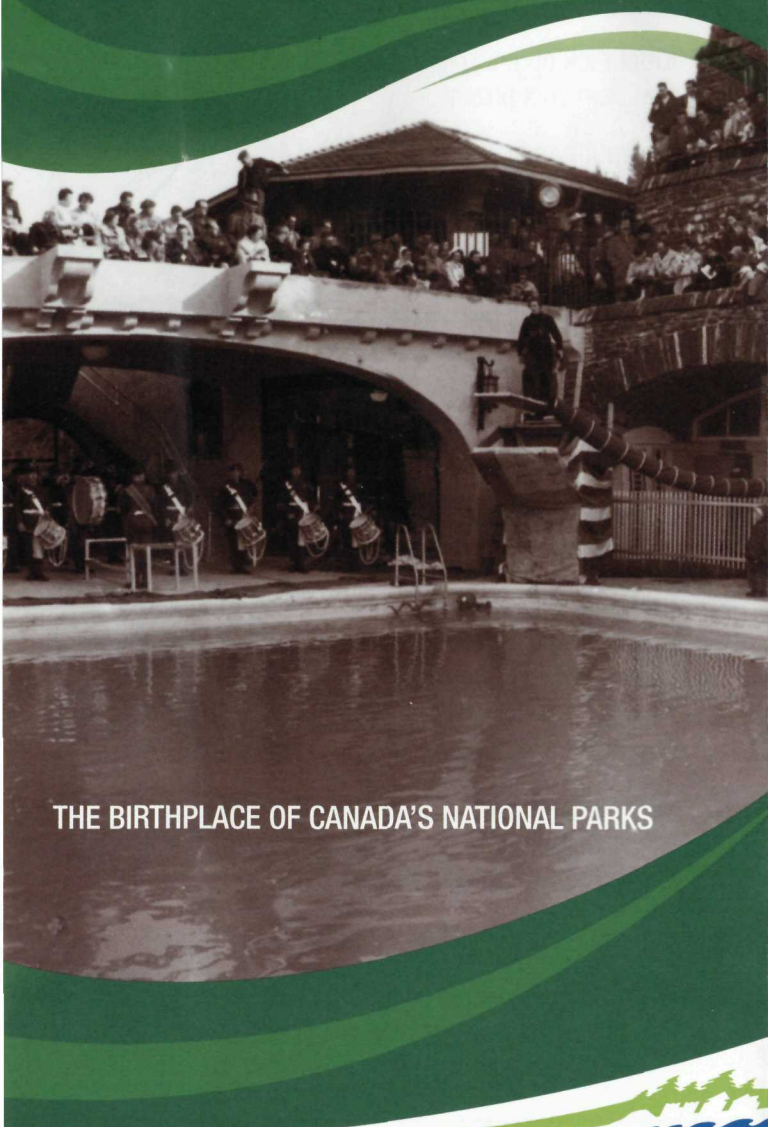
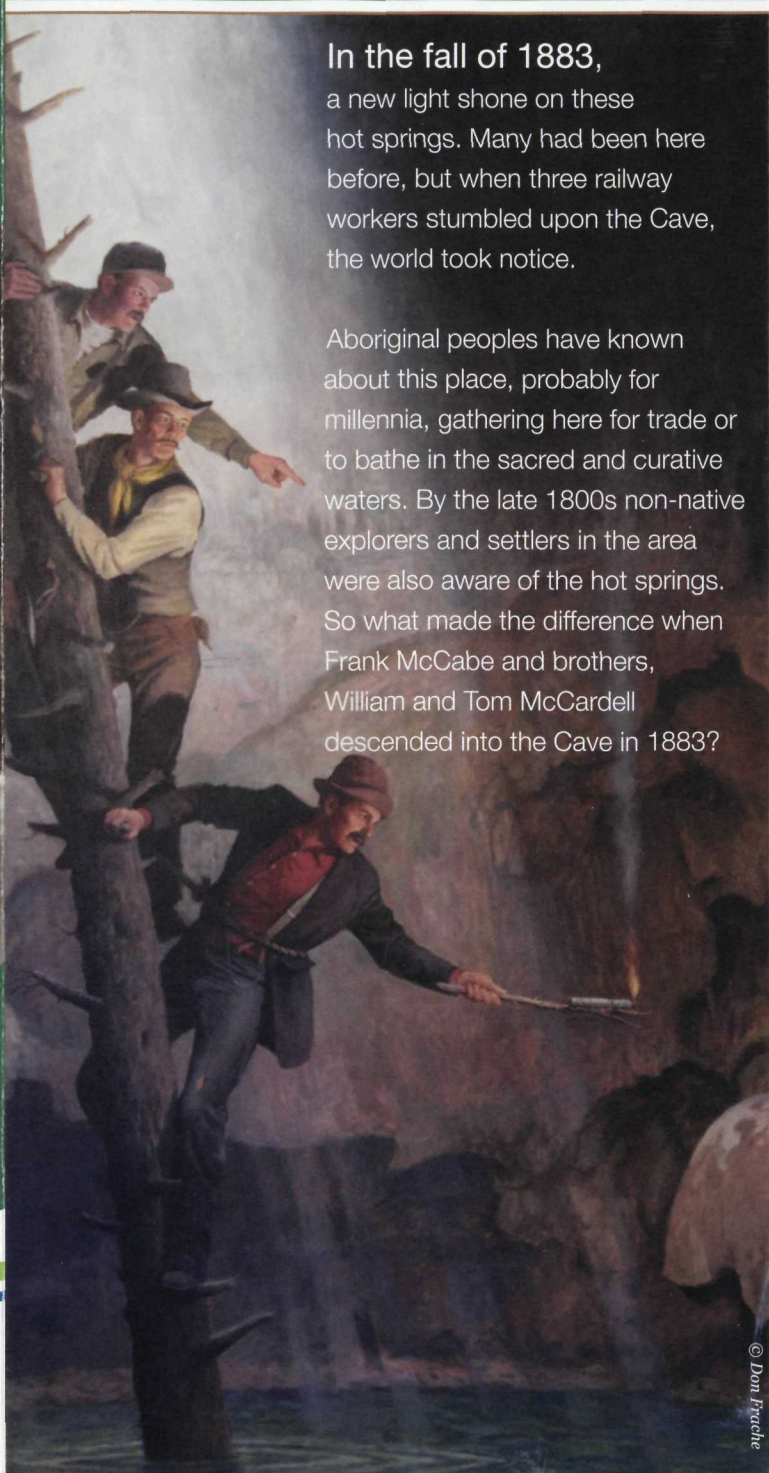


Cave and Basin National Historic Site



THE BIRTHPLACE OF CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS

It all started here



In the fall of 1883, a new light shone on these hot springs. Many had been here before, but when three railway workers stumbled upon the Cave, the world took notice.

Aboriginal peoples have known about this place, probably for millennia, gathering here for trade or to bathe in the sacred and curative waters. By the late 1800s non-native explorers and settlers in the area were also aware of the hot springs. So what made the difference when Frank McCabe and brothers, William and Tom McCardell descended into the Cave in 1883?

© Don Freche

Timing is everything

The Canadian Pacific Railway was stretching across the country, opening a path for thousands of pioneers to start new lives in the West. And it was an era when spas around the world were attracting wealthy globetrotters. The CPR route brought people to Banff, within easy reach of the thermal waters. The three men who had “discovered” the Cave saw dollar signs, and they weren’t alone.

Over the next two years, they and others petitioned the federal government for rights to develop the land. Officials came and went and conflicts brewed. The debate reached the ear of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, who supported a landmark proposal—the creation of a hot springs reserve, retaining ownership of the land for the public’s “great sanitary advantage.”



Field, BC

© Glenbow Archives, VA-1931-4

Dive into history



Here, in 1885, Banff, Canada's first national park was born.



© Banff Lake Louise Tourism/Paul Zizka



© Musée de la Ville de Québec 1488/115-25-2

From men and women bathing at separate hours in the warmth of the basin in 1885 to Canada's Olympic swimmers training in the big pool in 1968, the Cave and Basin was all about being in the water for over 100 years. Close to 66,000 people swam here in 1927. By 1961, 157,000 people crowded through the gates. Sadly, in 1971, the basin pool closed due to health concerns. In 1976 the big pool was closed as well, but many people had such fond memories of swimming here they lobbied hard and the pool was rebuilt and opened in 1985. It turned out to be the last hurrah for swimmers at the Cave and Basin. Despite permanent closure of the pool in 1994, the spirit of fun and pilgrimage lives on.



1985

Geology 101

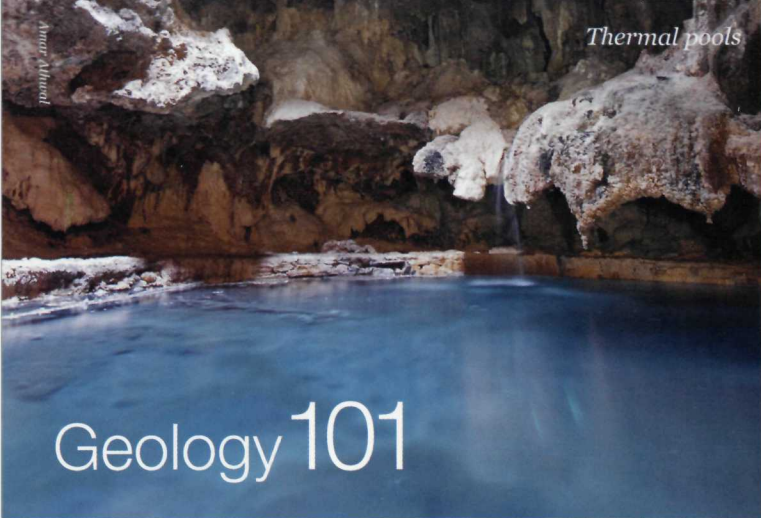
It's a long journey for a raindrop or a snowflake—seeping three kilometres underground and eventually bubbling up into one of the thermal springs on Sulphur Mountain. Intense heat radiating from the earth's core brings the water to near boiling, and pressure forces it back to the earth's surface along natural fault planes. As the water travels through the layers of sedimentary limestone rock, it picks up and dissolves high concentrations of minerals. The return trip takes decades, maybe even centuries. We know there is an underground storage area, but there are still many questions about exactly where it is and how it works.

"I'm a sensitive guy.

Please don't touch my home, the thermal waters."



Thermal pools



Snails in hot water

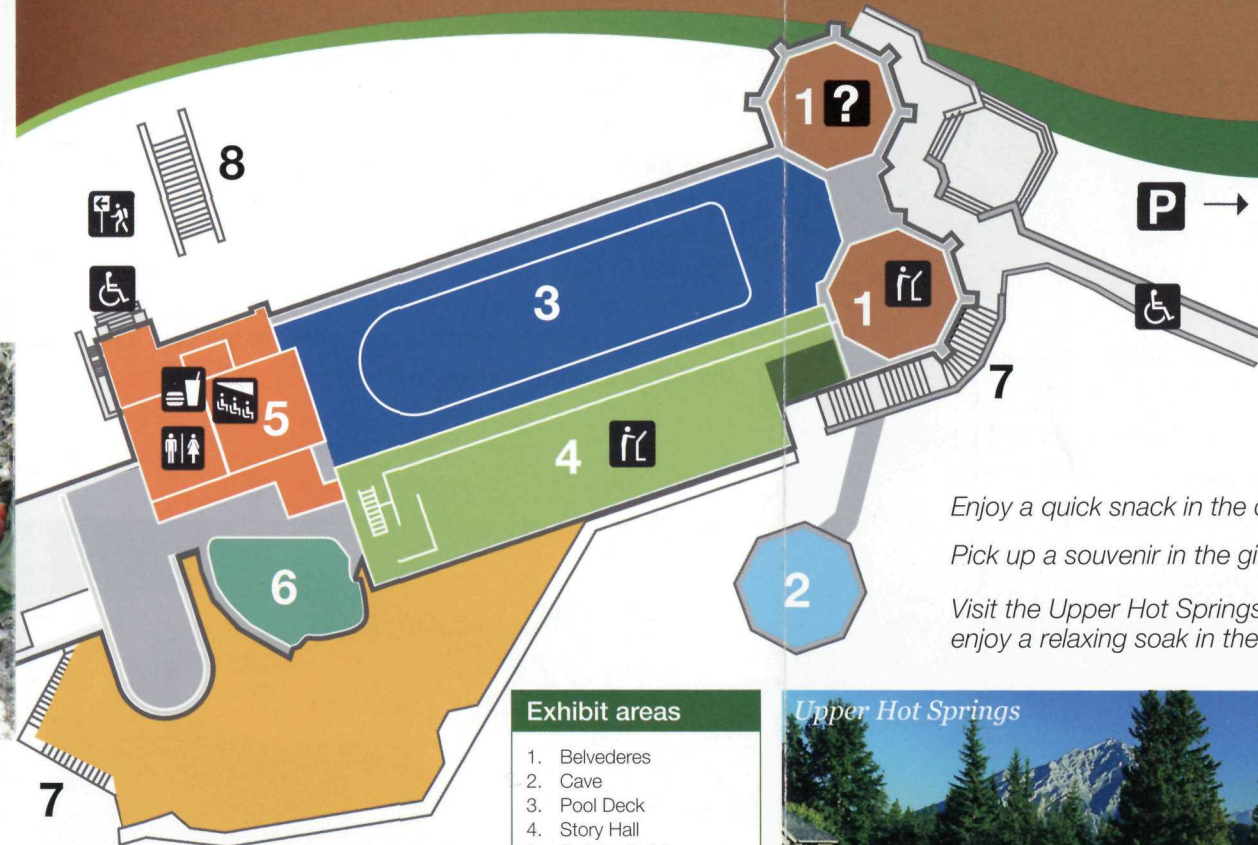
Parks Canada is responsible for protecting the natural resources of the site. Of special concern is the Banff Springs Snail, designated an endangered species in 2000. This tiny snail, the size of a popcorn kernel (5 mm), lives in the warm mineral springs on Sulphur Mountain feeding on algae, bacteria, and other microorganisms in and around the Cave and Basin.



Snails in habitat

More to discover

The Cave and Basin National Historic Site commemorates and celebrates the birthplace of Canada's national parks.



- Exhibit areas**
1. Belvederes
 2. Cave
 3. Pool Deck
 4. Story Hall
 5. Gallety Building
 6. Basin
 7. To Viewing Decks
 8. To Lower Boardwalks

- Exhibit
- Theatre
- Cafe
- Parking
- Washrooms
- Information
- Disabled Access
- Trails

Enjoy a quick snack in the cafe.
Pick up a souvenir in the gift shop.
Visit the Upper Hot Springs where you can enjoy a relaxing soak in the hot pool.



Upper Hot Springs

Your Cave Bucket List

1. Visit the fully accessible underground Cave and bubbling thermal waters
2. Take an interactive tour with Parks Canada staff
3. Kids! Pick up an *Xplorers* booklet and earn cool prizes
4. Dip your hands into the thermal water fountain—the only place on site where you can touch the protected water
5. Be blown away by a massive, 4 screen HD visual experience that takes you across Canada's network of protected places in the Story Hall
6. Spot a *Physella johnsoni* (hint it's the Banff Springs Snail)
7. Explore 1 km of raised boardwalks over pristine marshland, see the "hotel" site and marvel at the breathtaking scenery
8. Set your sights on birdwatching, and seasonal wildflower spotting. If your lucky you might even see some tropical fish and snakes too
9. Stargaze on the historic pool deck
10. Walk, ride, snowshoe or push a stroller along Sundance Trail past beaver ponds and Rainy Bay



Également offert en français

Reptiles around the Cave and Basin

