



Yoho National Park of Canada

Climate

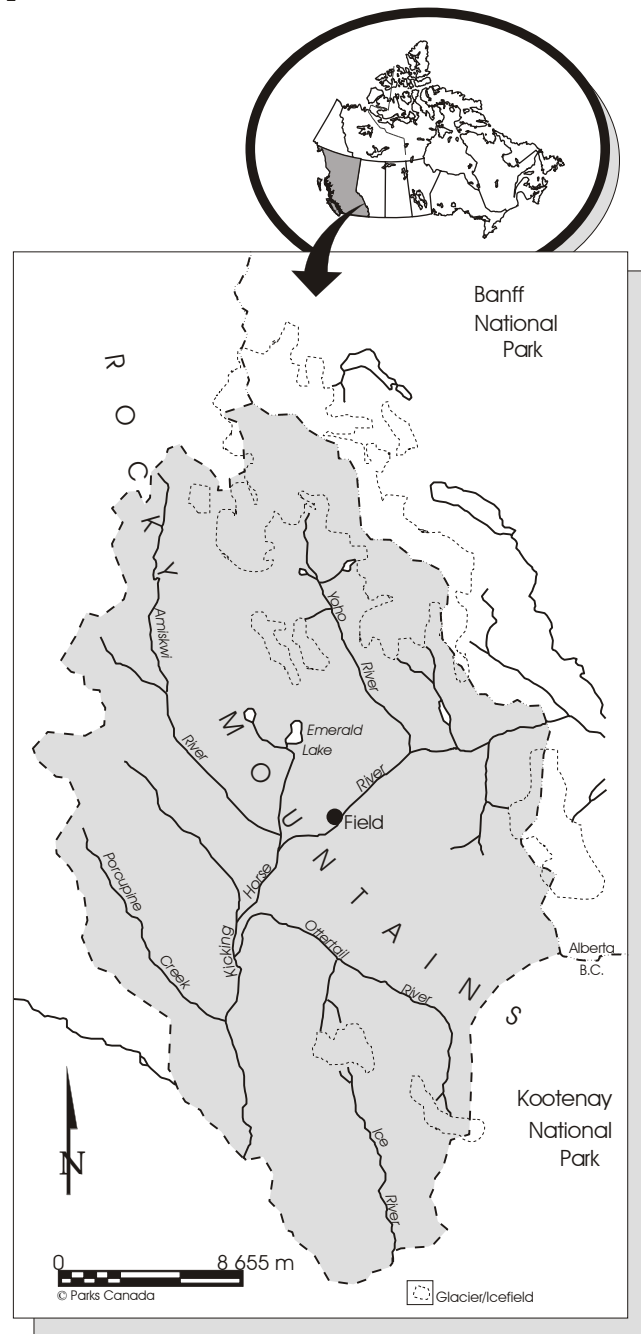
Dramatic variations in Yoho's climate are caused by a combination of elevation, rain shadow effects, and latitude. Generally, winters are long and summers cool and short, with only occasional hot spells. Average January highs are -7°C , while July averages to 22°C . These temperatures apply to valley bottoms. At higher elevations temperatures are about 5 to 7°C cooler. Annual precipitation ranges from less than 380 mm at lower elevations to over 1 250 mm at higher elevations.

Geology

The Western and Eastern Main Ranges of the Rocky Mountains are found in Yoho, and are composed of limestone, sandstone, and shale. The mountains occasionally show folded layers of these sedimentary bedrocks that are among the oldest in the whole mountain chain. It is believed that the Rockies have seen at least four ice ages. Yoho is a region of waterfalls, rock walls, and igneous formations, which are not too large, but are unique to the Rocky Mountains. The Burgess Shale site, one of the most important fossil sites in the world, is located in the park and was declared a World Heritage Site in 1981. Yoho, (along with Jasper, Kootenay and Banff National Parks and Mount Robson, Hamber and Mount Assiniboine Provincial Parks) was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985 on the park's 100th anniversary.

Location

Yoho and Glacier National Park were both declared Canada's second national parks on the same day. Yoho was established in 1886. Located in southeastern British Columbia on the Alberta border, Yoho is part of the world-famous Rocky Mountains. The 1 313 km² park is about 8 km west of Lake Louise, Alberta, and represents the Rocky Mountain Natural Region, part of the Central Rockies ecosystem. Yoho is part of the Montane Cordillera Ecozone.

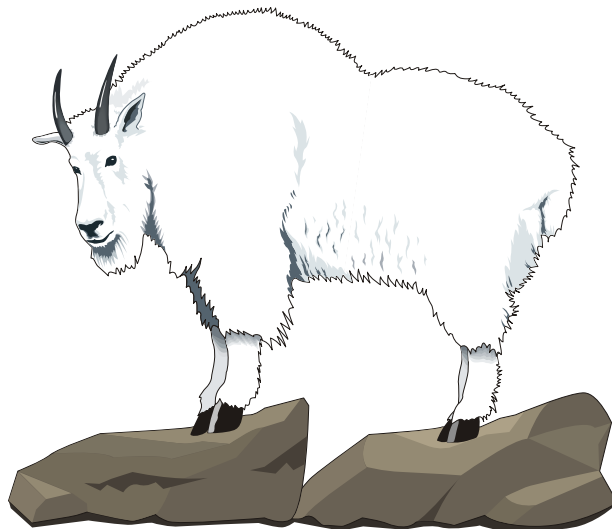


Vegetation

Three distinct vegetation zones exist in this mountainous region, largely because of the inherent changes in elevation. The montane zone is the lowest of the three, and is characterized by grassy meadows, and forests of Douglas fir, white spruce, trembling aspen, and lodgepole pine. The eastern limit of interior western hemlock forest is found in the park. The subalpine zone of the slopes supports a largely closed coniferous forest of Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, and lodgepole pine. Some open meadowland in upper regions can also be found. During the summer, these meadows are covered with a thick carpet of wildflowers. The highest of the three zones, the alpine region, cannot support trees. Vegetation is sparse, with some alpine meadows, and as one goes higher up still, one enters the exclusive domain of hardy lichens that cling to the bare rock.

Wildlife

Yoho, like all of the Rocky Mountain Parks, is famous for its wildlife. Some 60 mammal species are found here, including moose, elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, cougars, black bears, wolves, coyotes, and a secretive population of grizzly bears. The mountain goat is Yoho's most numerous large mammal with a population estimated at around 400. More than 200 species of birds, including Golden and Bald Eagles, have been identified. The park's major watersheds contain rainbow trout, brook trout, lake trout, northern pike, and whitefish. Reptiles and amphibians are scarce because of the severe climate. Only one species of toad, three frogs, one salamander, and two types of snakes have been recorded.



Activities

Visitors to Yoho can enjoy a multitude of activities, including camping at one of five campgrounds, hiking along backcountry trails, canoeing on the park's larger lakes and ponds, and driving the scenic roadways. The park, which attracts visitors from all over the world each year, offers fishing, mountain climbing, cycling, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. Commercial services offer ski rentals, dog sledding, and mountain guiding.

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