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5 Tips for Hiking in Banff National Park in Alberta, Canada

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Aug 22, 2011 Misty Fauchoux Comments



Banff National Park is a massive park located in the western section of Alberta, Canada and is part of the Rocky Mountain range. It offers amazing views of massive peaks and gorgeous valleys. There are also a number of things that you need to know before you enter the park.

Get Your Permits

As soon as you enter the town of Banff, you must get either a day or annual pass. Unlike American parks, you can't just visit Banff Avenue and walk around the shops or go to a restaurant

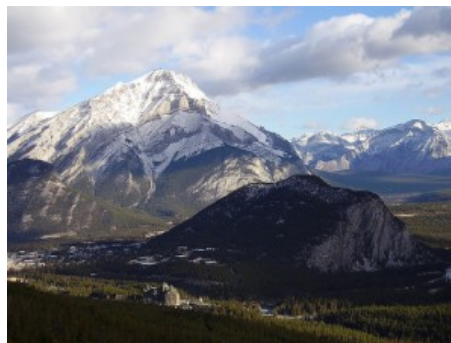
without purchasing a pass. Get your Banff passes at either the Lake Louise Village or Banff visitor center or park entrance.

Be Prepared for the Worst

The Rocky Mountains in Banff are extremely high, meaning that weather can change in an instant. Wear or pack plenty of layers, including fleece or down and a weatherproof outer shell. Bring boots that can handle both normal hiking and walking through snow and ice. If necessary, pack a few cleats if you suspect that you'll be going over thick ice. Bring extra food and water, and also bring items to start a fire.

Get the Trail Conditions

The visitor centers at both Lake Louise and Banff have information on current trail conditions. Stop in at one of these before venturing out. Trail conditions change all the time making mud/rock slides or even heavy snow susceptible at any time making passing impossible. It's best to know what is and is not open before you get to the trailhead.



Scope Out Where You Want To Go

Banff is an extremely large park with multiple trailheads that take you to everything from hot springs to glaciers to waterfalls.

Figure out which area of the park you want to target. You'll get sweeping views from many trails. For example, the Icefields Parkway is nearly one hour away from Lake Louise, and the trail is 1.5 miles round trip. While the trail isn't very long, you'll still spend a good chunk of your day getting there, hiking the trail and getting back to where you're staying.

Watch for Wildlife

Bears are common in the Rockies. While they're not known for attacking humans, they are unpredictable, and mother bears will do pretty much anything to protect their cubs. As cute as they may seem, animals like deer or elk or anything else can get spooked and defend themselves, which can lead to serious injury. Best piece of advice – as tempting as the camera and a cool Facebook photo may seem, stay inconspicuous and you'll stay safe.

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