



HORSE USERS' GUIDE

BANFF NATIONAL PARK



We invite you to explore the timeless trails of Banff National Park by horseback. Horses have been used here for centuries, first by aboriginal peoples for trade and hunting, and then extensively by Europeans as they explored routes through the mountains and then settled in the Banff area. Banff National Park is part of a World Heritage Site and is one of the greatest areas in the world to explore and protect. Please practice *low impact* travel to ensure that the wilderness experience you enjoy remains intact for the generations that follow.

This guide will assist you in planning your horse trip in Banff National Park.

photo by Brad White



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EMERGENCIES

For all emergencies (24 hours), call **911** immediately. If you are in the backcountry, let the 911 dispatcher know that you require Banff park warden assistance. Please note that cell phones do not work from many locations in the backcountry. Satellite phones are the most reliable means of communication.

*(*If you are using a satellite phone, 911 may not be reliable in the backcountry. Instead, call 1-403-762-4506 which will connect you directly to the Banff Warden Office.)*

You are responsible for your animals in the backcountry. If your horse dies in the backcountry, you must contact the Park Warden in the field or the Banff Warden Office as soon as possible. Animals that die along or near trails and campsites must be removed as soon as possible to prevent conflicts with wildlife. Removal may involve helicopter use. Costs incurred for the removal of dead stock will be the responsibility of the permittee.

WILDLIFE

Report all bear and cougar sightings and encounters to either a Park Warden or the Warden Office as soon as possible. Information about bears and other wildlife in the park is found in the publication "Keep the Wild in Wildlife" available at Information Centres and Warden Offices.

HOW TO RESERVE YOUR TRIP

Private horse groups may reserve trips up to three months in advance on a first-come, first-served basis by contacting the Banff Warden Office at 1-403-762-1470. There is a fee for making a reservation. Space will be confirmed and a permit issued upon receipt of payment by cash, cheque or credit card (Visa or MasterCard). Permits may be mailed or faxed directly to your home or picked up at the Banff Warden Office. If you book and pick up your permit on the same travel day, you will not be charged the reservation fee. However, be aware that, without a reservation, your trip may not be available as planned.

The following information is required for your permit:

- ✳ name, address, postal code and telephone number;
- ✳ number of horses and number of people;
- ✳ dates entering and leaving Banff National Park;
- ✳ route and how many days you wish to stay at each grazing site;
- ✳ vehicle description, license plate number and location parked.

LENGTH OF STAY

Quotas on commercial and private horse use have been established to prevent overuse and protect wilderness areas. Opening dates of grazing areas are subject to seasonal conditions and may vary throughout the Park from June 15 to August 1st.

The maximum length of stay at any grazing site is three consecutive nights, with the exception of the Siffleur River special preservation area, where only one night's stay is permitted.

The maximum group size is ten people. Two animals per person are allowed as a maximum, however we encourage you to take fewer pack animals if possible.

TRAILHEAD HORSE FACILITIES

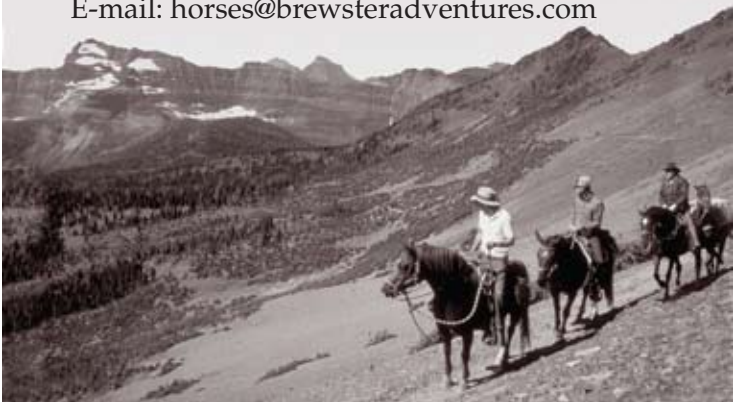
Trailheads with loading ramps are:

- ✳ Sunset Pass
- ✳ Helen Lake
- ✳ Mosquito Creek
- ✳ Pipestone River
- ✳ Johnston Creek
- ✳ Redearth Creek
- ✳ Healy Creek
- ✳ Spray River
- ✳ Norquay
- ✳ Upper Bankhead
- ✳ Mt. Shark

GUIDED HORSE TRIPS

If you want to go riding in Banff National Park, but do not own a horse or have access to one, contact one of the following commercial horse operators in the park. They offer a range of guided trips in the park from one hour, one day or multi-day.

- ✳ Holiday on Horseback, Warner Guiding and Outfitting Ltd. Box 2280, Banff, Alberta T1L 1C1 1-403-762-4551 Website: www.horseback.com E-Mail: warner@horseback.com
- ✳ Timberline Tours Ltd. (Paul Peyto) Box 14, Lake Louise, Alberta T0L 1E0 1-403-522-3743 Website: www.timberlinetours.ca E-mail: info@timberlinetours.ca
- ✳ Brewster Lake Louise Stables Box 370, Banff, Alberta T1L1A5 1-403-762-5454 Website: www.brewsteradventures.com E-mail: horses@brewsteradventures.com



TRIP CANCELLATIONS

Please inform the Banff Warden Office of trip cancellations. This will enable another group to use the area. Trip cancellations received more than 7 days in advance will receive a full refund, minus the reservation fee.

FEES

A current fee schedule for:

- ✳ Reservation fee
- ✳ Grazing fees
- ✳ Wilderness Pass (which can be purchased on a daily or annual basis)

can be obtained by phoning the Banff Warden Office at 1-403-762-1470 or by checking the Banff National Park Web Site at www.pc.gc.ca/banff .

PERMITS

Before going on an overnight horse trip in the park, you must purchase a **Wilderness Pass** and **Grazing Permit**. Permits are available from the Banff Warden Office in person Monday-Friday, 8 am-4:30 pm, by phone 1-403-762-1470, by fax 1-403-762 3240 , or by mail from:

Banff Warden Office
P.O. Box 900
Banff, Alberta, T1L1K2

These permits must be carried at all times and produced upon request from a Park Warden. Fees for permits go towards the cost of facilities and management of the park.

All park users are also required to purchase a **Park Pass** which now replaces the former Park Vehicle Permit. The Pass can be purchased at the Park Gates or Park Visitor Centres. You can order these by phone using your Visa or Mastercard by calling the Calgary Service Centre at 1- 403 -292-4401 between 8-4 pm, Monday -Friday) .

STAGING AREAS

If you wish to hold your horses in the park overnight at the start or end of a backcountry trip or if you are staying in the frontcountry area of the park, you may use one of the park horse staging areas with prior consent. Corrals can be found at these sites:

- ✳ Pipestone River Trailhead off Slate Road in Lake Louise
- ✳ Mosquito Creek opposite trailhead, behind Youth Hostel
- ✳ Highway 11 north side, 2 km east of Saskatchewan Crossing Resort . Contact the Saskatchewan Crossing Resort for use at 1-403-761-7000
- ✳ Nigel Creek Trailhead (Camp Parker). Call the Jasper Warden Office for access to this facility and trips from here into Jasper. 1-780-852-6167.

PARK REGULATIONS

Please be aware of the following regulations:

- ✳ The carrying and /or use of **chainsaws** is restricted to persons who have written permission from the Superintendent.
- ✳ The use of **horse drawn vehicles** is prohibited in the backcountry of Banff National Park.
- ✳ The carrying or transport of **firearms** is prohibited in the backcountry of Banff National Park.
- ✳ **Dogs** must be kept on a leash at all times. For this reason we recommend that you leave your dog at home.
- ✳ The use of Warden Service facilities such as backcountry cabins, corrals and pastures is not permitted.
- ✳ The use of llamas is prohibited.
- ✳ A National Park Fishing License is required when fishing in all National Parks. Read the Fishing Regulations that come with the license as seasonal closures vary. All tributaries and associated lakes in the Clearwater and Siffleur River systems, excluding Isabella Lake, are closed to fishing.

AREAS CLOSED TO HORSE TRAVEL

Horse travel is permitted throughout most of the park. There are a few trails and areas where horse use is prohibited to reduce impact on delicate resources and specially constructed walking trails:

- ✳ The Healy Pass trails from Healy Pass, Simpson Pass junctions to the Healy Pass, Pharaoh Creek trail junction
- ✳ The Sunshine Creek watershed including Sunshine Village Ski Area
- ✳ The upper watershed of Howard Douglas Creek above 7000 feet elevation from Brewster Rock to Citadel Pass

In addition, the following trails are **NOT** recommended for horse use:

- ✳ Lake Louise shoreline trail
- ✳ Bow Summit and Peyto viewpoint self guiding trail
- ✳ Fenland Trail
- ✳ Lake Minnewanka shoreline due to mountain bike traffic
- ✳ High passes along the Continental Divide before August 1st due to wet and fragile trails

HAZARDS

Banff National Park is varied in terrain and conditions. High mountain passes and river crossings may be impassable in late spring or early summer. You may inquire about trail conditions at the Banff Warden Office. The following rivers may be very high in the spring:

- ✳ Clearwater River, Pipestone River, Mistaya River, Howse River, Red Deer River

SEASONAL AND EMERGENCY CLOSURES

Seasonal and emergency trail closures and warnings may be implemented within Banff National Park for management of resources, prescribed burns, wildlife or public safety. Please inquire at the Park Visitor Centres or Banff Warden Office prior to your trip.

BACKCOUNTRY WARDENS

National Park Wardens conduct backcountry patrols throughout the year. They are there to assist you in case of emergency, provide information, and ensure that the park's natural and cultural resources are protected. Any Park Warden that you encounter will ask to see your Grazing Permit, Wilderness Pass and Fishing License. Since their duties require them to travel long distances, you should not count on being able to find a Park Warden in case of emergency. Prepare to be self-reliant.

BANFF BACKCOUNTRY VISITORS' GUIDE

Be sure to check the *Banff Backcountry Visitors' Guide* for other general information on backcountry use. This brochure identifies where other use is permitted. Be aware that designated campsites are multi-use campsites, and as such, you will be sharing facilities with hikers and mountain bikers.



photo by Brad White

MANAGING HUMAN USE

The last two decades have seen a dramatic shift in the way people use Banff National Park's backcountry. Day use on park trails is in some cases 15 times greater than overnight use. Areas once considered remote have seen increased use due to development adjacent to the park, new technology such as mountain bicycles, equipment improvements and rising numbers of park visitors.

Research shows that wildlife movement and habitat use is being restricted by the presence of

MINIMIZE YOUR IMPACT

- ✳ Avoid grazing on wet and fragile areas.
- ✳ Camp at least 70 metres away from streams and lake shores.
- ✳ Once on the trail, keep all stock single file. Multiple trails (trail braiding) are prevented when horses are kept on one trail. Keep horses on the trail and avoid skirting around puddles or obstacles which leads to trail deterioration, widening, loss of plant cover and increased soil erosion.
- ✳ Deadfall that is blocking the trail should be removed with an axe or a Swede saw so that new trails are not created.
- ✳ At rest stops, keep horses well off the trail away from water sources and scatter all manure left behind.
- ✳ Hobbles are preferred to tying up horses overnight.
- ✳ Do not tie to trees. If you must tie overnight, stretch a rope between two trees (high line) well away from the campground area. Fix tie ropes on a highline to prevent damage to tree roots from pawing and trampling. Clean up and scatter manure.
- ✳ Travel light. Advances in lightweight equipment make it easier on you, your horses and the environment, and fewer horses may be required to pack your gear.
- ✳ Feed bags ensure less spillage of feed and less attractant for bears.
- ✳ Travel with the least number of horses possible.
- ✳ Keep a clean camp and pack out all garbage, unused food, and horse feed. A low impact camp leaves no indication that it has been used at all.
- ✳ At **random campsites** be sure to disperse evidence of your fire pit.
- ✳ **DO NOT** nail items to trees or build structures.
- ✳ We recommend you do not take stallions on your trip, since you will be meeting other horse parties on the trail.
- ✳ Hang your food at least four metres above the ground and 1.3 metres from each tree trunk to reduce attractiveness to bears. (Bring two 20 M lengths of rope with you.) Cook and sleep in separate areas.
- ✳ As a courtesy to other users (hikers, bikers), do not bring horses into designated campgrounds. This will keep the campground free of manure. Camp in perimeter sites to prevent horses passing through campgrounds.
- ✳ Don't use hay as supplemental horse feed – it could introduce non-native plants into the park. Instead, use processed feeds such as cubes and pellets.

TRIP PLANNING CHECKLIST

- ✓ Familiarize yourself with Park facilities and National Park Regulations.
- ✓ Before your trip, contact the Banff Warden Office or one of the Park Visitor Centres for current trail information and closures.
- ✓ Check to make sure that your chosen trail is in fact open to horse use.
- ✓ For overnight trips, Grazing permits and Wilderness passes are required. Contact the Warden Office at 1-403-762-1470.
- ✓ Private horse groups can reserve a trip up to three months in advance on a first-come, first-served basis.
- ✓ Ensure that your horses are prepared for encounters with backpackers, cyclists, river crossings and are trained for hobbles.
- ✓ Obtain a 1:50,000 Topographic map of the area.
- ✓ For any day or overnight use of the park trails, obtain a Park Pass at park entrance points, Information Centres, or by calling the Calgary Service Centre at 1-403-292-4401.

For more information contact:

Banff Warden Office
Box 900, Hawk Avenue,
Industrial Compound, Banff, Alberta T1L 1K2
Phone 1-403-762-1470 Fax 1-403-762-3240

Banff Visitor Centre
224 Banff Avenue,
Box 900 Banff, Alberta T1L 1K2
Phone 1-403-762-1550

Lake Louise Visitor Centre
Box 213 Samson Mall
Lake Louise, Alberta T0L1E0
Phone 1-403-522-3833.

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YA HA TINDA RANCH



The Ya Ha Tinda Ranch is located adjacent to Banff National Park along the Red Deer River. This private property is the only federally operated working horse ranch in Canada. Ranch-hands raise, break, train and winter about 150 horses used by Park Wardens to patrol the backcountry of Canada's Mountain National Parks.

Ya Ha Tinda means "Mountain Prairie" in Stoney. The Red Deer River has long been a major travel and trade route, and evidence suggests that the Ya Ha Tinda area has been used by native people for over nine thousand years. Remains of prehistoric bison have been found here as well. Today the Ya Ha Tinda is a major winter range for ungulates and is important habitat for grizzly bears, wolves and other carnivores. To protect the area, please respect the following regulations:

- ✳ Camping is allowed only at the Bighorn campground.
- ✳ Random camping is not permitted on the Ya Ha Tinda property.
- ✳ Off-road travel with motorized or horse drawn vehicles is not permitted off the main ranch road.
- ✳ Grazing is not permitted at the campground or on the remainder of the ranch property.
- ✳ High lining is **NOT permitted** between trees.
- ✳ Highlines **ARE permitted** between trailers and poles away from trees.
- ✳ Portable corrals and electric fences are **NOT permitted**.
- ✳ Horses may be tied to trailers or the stalls provided.

