

Winter Backcountry Trip Planning Checklist

Banff National Park of Canada

Before you head into the backcountry, you need to know how to assess if you're in AVALANCHE TERRAIN, whether hazards exist, and how to minimize your risk.

Where to start?

Outlined here are some important questions to consider when researching and planning your trip. Additional resources are listed on the other side of this checklist.

- **What do you want to do?** The park is large with varied terrain. Are you looking for groomed trails or do you prefer to ski powder? Will you be skiing or snowshoeing?
- **How much experience do you and the members of your group have?** Many destinations in Banff National Park require knowledge for travelling in avalanche terrain. If you will be travelling through avalanche terrain all members of your group should have avalanche training and equipment, are urged to wear avalanche transceivers, carry probes and shovels, and be prepared for self-rescue. Some of the destinations in Banff National Park also involve glacier travel and require advanced knowledge and self-rescue skills. If you are unfamiliar with the area, consider hiring a mountain guide certified by the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides.
- **How far would your group be comfortable travelling each day?** Base your trip on the abilities of the least experienced member of the group. The terrain, weather, amount of new snow, elevation, and each group members' abilities should determine the length, duration and destination of your trip.
- **How many nights do you want to go for?**
- **Do you have a good understanding of the hazards you may encounter?** You should have knowledge of natural hazards, experience in avoiding them and a plan to deal with them successfully when required. Avalanches, stream crossings, illness, injury and wildlife are just some of the hazards.
- **Do you know what to do in case of an emergency?** To report emergencies call 911 immediately. If you are in the backcountry let the dispatcher know that you need warden assistance. Note that cell phones do not work everywhere in the park. When seeking help, make sure you can report the location of the emergency as accurately as possible. Remember in wilderness emergencies, help may be delayed by weather and daylight hours. For this reason all backcountry users should be prepared to survive at least one extra night out in the event of an emergency.
- **Does anyone know where you are going?** Leave a detailed itinerary with a reliable friend or relative along with instructions as to what they should do if you do not return.
- **Do you know which permits you need?** You will require a Park Pass for entry into the park, and a Wilderness Pass for overnight backcountry trips.
- **How will you get to and from the trailhead(s)?** Most trailheads are difficult to access without a vehicle, and public transportation is limited beyond the Banff Townsite and the Village of Lake Louise. Information Centre staff can assist you with options for getting to and from trailheads.
- **Will your trip continue beyond the boundary of Banff National Park?** For information on how to contact adjacent national and provincial parks, see the Backcountry Visitors' Guide to Banff National Park.

Have you got it?

This is a list of suggested equipment, which you can adjust to suit your personal preferences. Mountain weather is unpredictable; be prepared for changing conditions.

Clothing

- Waterproof, breathable jacket & pants
- Long underwear (top/bottom)
- Insulating top (e.g. fleece, down parka)
- Fleece pants and vest
- Warm hat and gloves / mitts (plus spares)
- Synthetic/wool outer socks with wicking inner socks
- Gaiters or insulated over-boots

Snow Gear

- Backcountry skis, snowboard or snowshoes
- Boots and Poles
- Daypack
- Climbing skins (if skiing)
- Avalanche transceiver, probe and shovel
- Light repair kit (spare binding parts, tools)
- Gear for safe glacier travel

Other Essentials

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food (high calorie) | <input type="checkbox"/> Candle | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency blanket or bivouac sac |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water, bottle thermos | <input type="checkbox"/> Garbage bags | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses, goggles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wilderness Pass (overnight use) | <input type="checkbox"/> Headlamp/flashlight, extra batteries | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunscreen & lip balm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Topographic map | <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid kit | <input type="checkbox"/> Pencil & paper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compass | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal medication | <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet paper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waterproof matches &/or lighter | <input type="checkbox"/> Signalling device (whistle/mirror) | <input type="checkbox"/> Knife |

Optional

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Binoculars | <input type="checkbox"/> Camera & film | <input type="checkbox"/> GPS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Altimeter | <input type="checkbox"/> Rope | <input type="checkbox"/> Knee pads |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phone - cell/satellite | <input type="checkbox"/> Toiletries | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes at trailhead |

Camping Gear (overnight travel)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Backpack | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking /eating utensils | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra fuel for melting ice or snow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tent | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping bag | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping pad | <input type="checkbox"/> Stove and fuel | |

Have you checked the latest reports?

Check the following reports before booking your trip, and again before you leave. These reports are available at Parks Canada Information Centres, on our website (see Resources and Directory below), **Park Radio 101.1FM**, and over the phone.

- | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weather Forecast | (403) 762-2088 | <input type="checkbox"/> Warnings and Closures | (403) 762-1550 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avalanche Report | (403) 762-1460 | <input type="checkbox"/> Road Report | (403) 762-1450 |
| | OR 1-800-667-1105 | <input type="checkbox"/> Trail Report | (403) 760-1305 |

Before starting on the trail, check the trailhead kiosk for recently posted Warning and Closure Notices.

In case of Emergency

For all emergencies (24 hours), call 911 immediately.

If you are in the backcountry, let the 911 dispatcher know that you require park warden assistance. 911 is valid in Banff, Yoho, and Jasper National Parks. (** Please note that if you are using a satellite phone in the backcountry, you must call (403) 762-4506 in the event of an emergency.*)

Did you also know?

Regulations

- ◆ On overnight trips a valid Wilderness Pass is required and must be kept with you at all times.
- ◆ All food and toiletries must be properly stored (on bear cables or strung up between trees).
- ◆ Pack out **all** garbage (including: sanitary napkins, diapers, food waste and foil).
- ◆ Do not disturb or remove any natural or cultural objects.
- ◆ Pets must be kept on a leash **at all times**. Consider leaving them at home.
- ◆ Dogs are not permitted on groomed cross-country ski trails.
- ◆ Dogs are not permitted in the Egypt Lake or Bryant Creek Shelters.
- ◆ Do not feed, touch or harass wildlife.

Trip Details

Trip Leader Name: _____		Phone # _____	
Address: _____		# Adults: _____	# Children (16 yrs & under): _____
# Tent(s): _____	Shape: _____	Make: _____	Colour(s): _____
# Avalanche Transceivers: _____	# Packs: _____	Make: _____	Colour(s): _____
Starting Trailhead: _____		Vehicle(s) Make & Lic. Plate: _____	
Day 1 Date: _____	Route: _____	# kms _____	Camp/Hut: _____
Day 2 Date: _____	Route: _____	# kms _____	Camp/Hut: _____
Day 3 Date: _____	Route: _____	# kms _____	Camp/Hut: _____
Day 4 Date: _____	Route: _____	# kms _____	Camp/Hut: _____
Day 5 Date: _____	Route: _____	# kms _____	Camp/Hut: _____
Exiting Trailhead: _____		Vehicle(s) Make & Lic. Plate: _____	

Now you are ready to book your trip!

Contact a Parks Canada Information Centre to purchase your Park Passes and Permits (see *Resources and Directory* below). For a small fee you can reserve the Egypt Lake and Bryant Creek backcountry shelters up to 3 months in advance of your trip.

Resources and Directory

Maps and Recommended Reading www.friendsofbanff.com (403) 762 – 8918

Topographic maps and guidebooks are sold at the Friends of Banff National Park:

Publications available at Parks Canada Information Centres

- ◆ Backcountry Visitors' Guide to Banff National Park
- ◆ Cross-Country Skiing: Banff Area
- ◆ Cross-Country Skiing in the Lake Louise Area

Banff Information Centre
224 Banff Avenue, Banff, AB
(403) 762 – 1550
Banff.trails@pc.gc.ca

Lake Louise Visitor Centre
Samson Mall, Lake Louise, AB
(403) 522 – 3833
LL.Info@pc.gc.ca

Parks Canada Service Centre
1300 - 635 - 8 Ave. SW
Calgary, AB
(403) 292 – 4401

Banff National Park Website www.pc.gc.ca/banff

(Trail, Road, Weather, and Avalanche Reports and more information on winter activities)

Canadian Avalanche Association: www.avalanche.ca

Banff National Park Warden Service (403) 762-1470

(For information on current ice climbing, backcountry and mountaineering conditions)

SZ-V.1-27/01/04