A scenic view of a lake at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the water and the sky. In the foreground, several aluminum canoes are lined up on a dark, pebbly shore. The water is calm, reflecting the light from the sun. In the background, there are rolling hills or mountains under a clear sky.

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If you bought a license, stamp or tag for fishing or hunting in Alberta this year then your recreational passion is helping to ensure a cherished resource will always be part of life in Alberta. That's because a portion of the applied levies goes to the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) to help us carry out approximately \$10-million in important conservation projects and programs in Alberta.

ACA is a non-profit organization delivering top-caliber conservation programs across the province. Established in 1997, ACA is recognized for our commitment to maintaining and enhancing Alberta's wildlife, fish and habitat. Part of ACA's mandate is to develop and enhance recreational opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts across the province.

ACA envisions an Alberta where citizens understand and support good stewardship of our natural biological resources and where habitat integrity is maintained so future generations can value, enjoy, and use those natural biological resources. Working towards this, ACA not only funds but also delivers a wide variety of projects and programs across the province including research and data collection, and hands-on project delivery, monitoring, analysis, and evaluation.

The delivery of ACA initiatives are possible thanks to the contributions of not only hunters and anglers, but also many organizations, industries and individuals. In fact, ACA's business of conservation is based on collaboration. It is not only the foundation of our business, but also the foundation of our corporate mission, values and objectives. We recognize – and embrace – the fact that through collaboration, we can accomplish more together than we could do as a single organization.

ACA works with other conservation groups to secure, protect and enhance critical parcels of native habitat. Habitat securement, including protected areas such as Alberta's Parks, is an essential strategy needed to reverse the trend of habitat loss and endangered wildlife populations. It also creates recreational opportunities throughout the province that Albertan's and visitors can enjoy now and in the future.

For more information on ACA visit www.ab-conservation.com where you can also register to receive a free copy of "Conservation Magazine" ACA's official publication published twice a year to keep you up to date on important conservation issues across the province.

Welcome to Alberta's Parks and Protected Areas!

KANANASKIS COUNTRY

This vacation guide provides just a taste of the places to visit and things to do in our great outdoors – from mountain biking to backpacking, canoeing to cross-country skiing – we really do have it all. For detailed information about the sites described in this guide and the other provincial parks and protected areas in Alberta, visit www.albertaparks.ca, or give us a call at **1-866-427-3582**.

Facilities & Services at Provincial Campgrounds

The campgrounds in Alberta's provincial parks and recreation areas are normally equipped with picnic tables, fire pits, potable water, toilet

facilities, garbage containers and fish cleaning stations. Additional amenities such as power hook-ups, boat launches and equestrian facilities are provided at some sites.

Overnight camping fees at auto-accessible provincial campgrounds vary, depending on the facilities provided. Campsite reservations may be made at many provincial campgrounds by calling the appropriate reservation office. For information, visit www.albertaparks.ca or call 780-427-3582 (toll-free 1-866-427-3582).

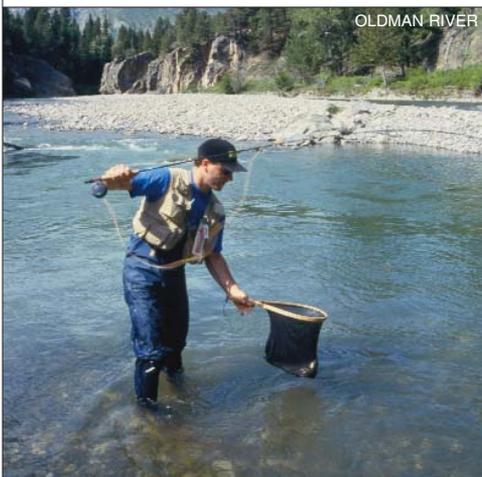
Fire Prevention

Never leave a campfire unattended. Make sure your fire is "dead out" before you leave.

Never smoke while walking or riding on trails. Stop in a safe place, grind the butt on a rock and make sure all sparks are extinguished. If you see a wildfire in a forested area, report it immediately by calling the emergency wildfire reporting line toll-free at 310-FIRE (310-3473) from anywhere in Alberta. For information about current fire hazard ratings and fire bans, visit www.albertafirebans.ca or call 1-866-427-3582.

Wildlife

Alberta's protected areas are home to many wild animals, including bears and cougars. For information about bear and cougar safety, pick



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up our *Bear in Mind* and *Living with Cougars* brochures, available at any Alberta Parks & Protected Areas office and on-line at www.albertaparks.ca.

Alberta BearSmart Program

In 2006 Alberta introduced BearSmart, a province-wide program to increase public awareness of bear behaviour.

As the numbers of people and their activities in “bear country” have increased, so too have encounters between people and bears. Bear Smart is aimed at protecting both people and bears, and through the program we hope to:

- reduce the number of bear-human interactions that result in human injury or death;
- reduce the number of bear mortalities and relocations that result from interactions with people; and
- reduce costs associated with bear-related property damage and management actions in response to conflict situations.

For information about BearSmart, visit: www.srd.gov.ab.ca/fw/bearsmart.

Kananaskis Country

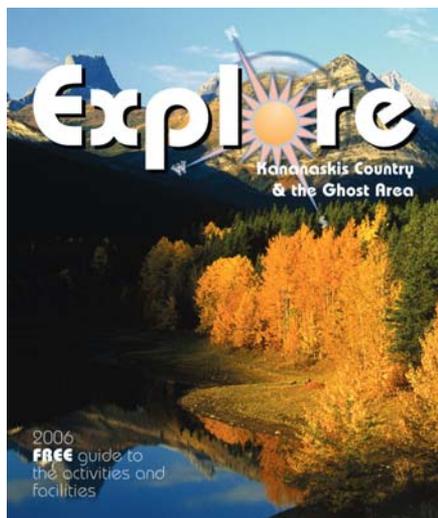
Although there is general information about Kananaskis Country in this guide, for detailed information you’ll want to refer to our companion guide *Explore Kananaskis Country & the Ghost Area*, available at the following locations:

Barrier Lake Visitor Information Centre
403-673-3985

Elbow Valley Visitor Information Centre
403-949-4261

Peter Lougheed Provincial Park
403-591-6322

Kananaskis Country information, including maps and trail reports, is also available at www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/kananaskis.



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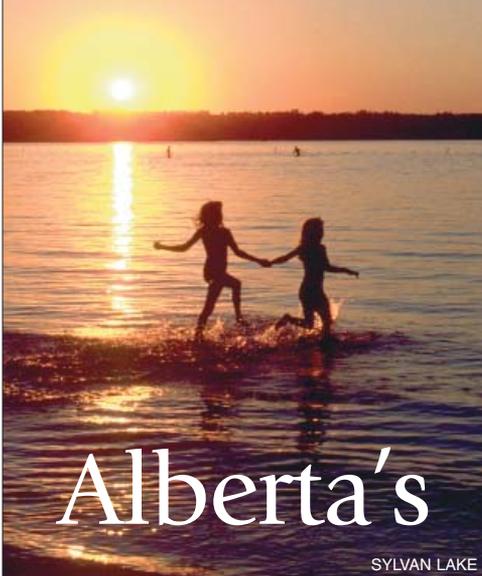
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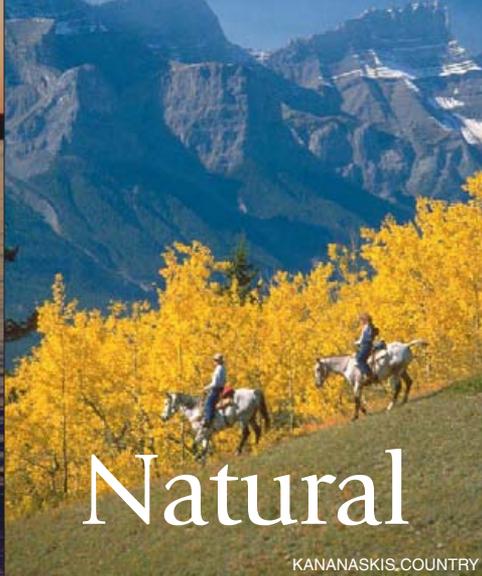
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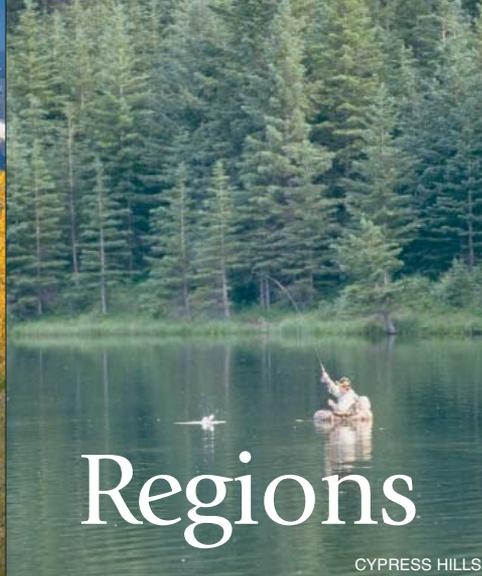
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KANANASKIS COUNTRY



Regions

CYPRESS HILLS

There are six natural regions in Alberta, each with its own unique geography, landforms, soils, climate, plants and animals.

Rocky Mountain Natural Region



The Rocky Mountain Natural Region lies primarily along the western edge of the province, with one exception. Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, located in the southeastern corner of Alberta, protects an isolated pocket of the Rocky Mountain Natural Region within the Grassland Natural Region. The Rocky Mountain Natural Region contains some of the most spectacular landscapes in the world – sweeping mountain vistas, rugged river valleys, and breathtaking alpine meadows adorned with wildflowers.

Foothills Natural Region



The Foothills Natural Region runs parallel to the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains and is the transition zone between the Rocky Mountain and Boreal Forest natural regions. It also includes several outlying foothills, such as the Saddle Hills, the Pelican Mountains and the Clear Hills. The Foothills Natural Region is a panorama of majestic flat-topped hills and ridges decorated by a mosaic of wetlands, rich grasslands, and coniferous and deciduous forests.

Grassland Natural Region



Located in southeastern Alberta, the Grassland Natural Region is the hottest, driest and windiest natural region in Alberta. At first glance, this region may appear to be a vast stretch of empty land but a closer look will reveal a sea of undulating prairie that boasts an unexpected magnificence with its moraines, glacial lakes, ridges of sand dunes, cryptic coulees and ravines, valleys and colourful canyons.

Parkland Natural Region



Between the Grassland in the south and the Boreal Forest in the north is the Parkland Natural Region, a subtle montage of aspen woodlands, fescue grasslands, shrub lands and wetlands on a gently rolling landscape. The aftermath of the Ice Age is particularly evident here in the gently rolling moraines that overlay parts of this region, an effect that was caused by the stagnation and melting of glaciers.

Boreal Forest Natural Region



At 340,000 square kilometres in size, the Boreal Forest is the largest of Alberta's natural regions. It spans approximately 60% of Alberta and 35% of Canada, and is one of the

largest natural regions in the world. In Alberta, the Boreal Forest is located in the northern half of the province and consists primarily of aspen, balsam poplar and white spruce forests, with lakes and muskeg occasionally breaking up the forest cover. In northernmost areas, evergreens form a seemingly endless carpet broken only by water in the form of fens, bogs, lakes and rivers.

Canadian Shield Natural Region

The Canadian Shield, the smallest and most remote of Alberta's natural regions, is located in the far northeast corner of the province. The region consists of exposed glaciated bedrock, rushing rivers, coniferous forests, sand dunes and small lakes. There are also isolated pockets of jack pine forests that have a unique undergrowth of pale reindeer lichens, dusty green sage and bearberry. Vast sand dune landscapes grade into pine forest and provide habitat for plant species found nowhere else in the province.

Alberta artists are invited to celebrate the 75th anniversary of provincial parks in Alberta.

In 2007, submissions will be accepted for art inspired by Alberta's provincial protected areas.

Several categories will be judged in regional competitions. Winners will go on to compete in a province-wide event.

Details, prizes and locations for judging will be announced later in 2006.

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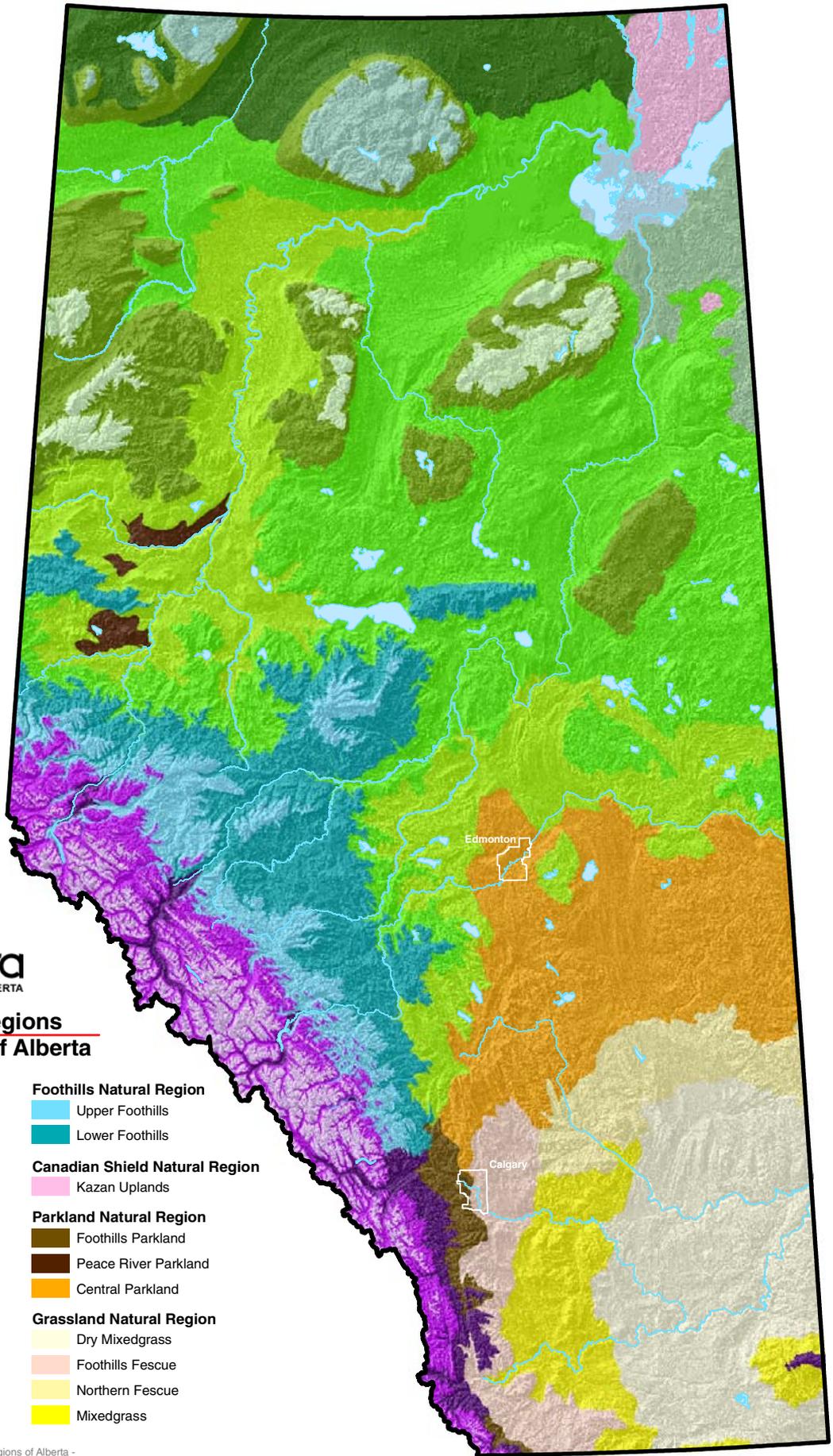
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**2005 Natural Regions
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Boreal Forest Natural Region

- Central Mixedwood
- Dry Mixedwood
- Northern Mixedwood
- Boreal Subarctic
- Peace-Athabasca Delta
- Lower Boreal Highlands
- Upper Boreal Highlands
- Athabasca Plain

Rocky Mountain Natural Region

- Alpine
- Subalpine
- Montane

Foothills Natural Region

- Upper Foothills
- Lower Foothills

Canadian Shield Natural Region

- Kazan Uplands

Parkland Natural Region

- Foothills Parkland
- Peace River Parkland
- Central Parkland

Grassland Natural Region

- Dry Mixedgrass
- Foothills Fescue
- Northern Fescue
- Mixedgrass

2005 Natural Regions and Subregions of Alberta -
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Environment,
Alberta Community Development and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, June 2005

make a Splash!



FISHING

 Get hooked on fishing in Alberta's parks and protected areas! Alberta is blessed with some great fishing opportunities – cast your line into the clear-water lakes of the north, the scenic streams and lakes of the mountains, and the roaming rivers and picturesque lakes of the parkland and prairie. Alberta Sportfishing Regulations apply in all provincial parks and protected areas. For information about licenses and fees, pick up an Alberta Guide to Sportfishing Regulations, or visit www.srd.gov.ab.ca.

Carson-Pegasus Provincial Park

Carson-Pegasus Provincial Park, located near Whitecourt, is one of Alberta's most popular year-round fishing destinations. Two lakes in the park let you choose between outstanding fishing for rainbow trout at McLeod Lake, and yellow perch and whitefish at Little McLeod Lake. A shoreline seawall on McLeod Lake provides anglers of all ages and abilities with access to a relaxing and successful fishing experience. Sit back on a lawn chair and enjoy the view while you're waiting for a bite! McLeod Lake is stocked annually with hundreds of thousands of rainbow trout fingerlings, nearly ensuring you a tasty fish-fry every visit. If you don't have equipment, boat and fishing rod rentals are available. For the hardier and more determined fishing souls out there, there's free winter

camping for your ice-fishing excursion. Information: 780-778-2664.

Castle River Bridge & Castle Falls Provincial Recreation Areas

Just west of Pincher Creek along the Castle River are Castle River Bridge and Castle Falls provincial recreation areas. The Castle area is a quiet place of outstanding natural beauty. From towering alpine peaks and sub-alpine woods to rare montane landscapes and windswept grasslands, its beauty is unmatched. Both recreation areas offer great fishing for bull trout, cutthroat trout and mountain whitefish. At Castle River Bridge, the banks of the river are scattered with rounded rocks, some of which are roughly one billion years old. At Castle Falls, the beautiful and scenic falls will appeal to nature lovers and photographers alike. An interesting bit of trivia – the falls are a unique example of a "migration nick point". Alternating layers of hard and soft sedimentary rock have helped create this lovely set of falls; the hard layers of rock undercut and break as the water hits them, creating a gorge and causing the point of the falls to continuously move upstream. Information: 403-382-4097.

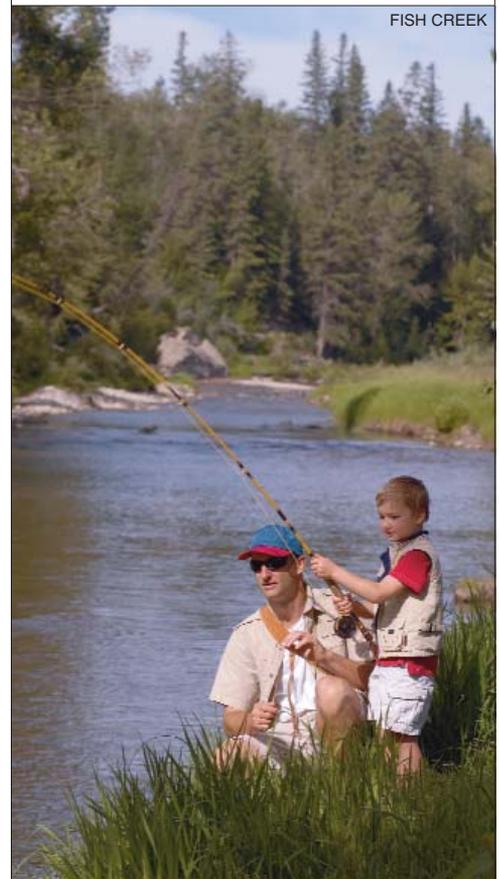
Chain Lakes Provincial Park

Chain Lakes Provincial Park, located southwest of Nanton, protects a string of lakes in the Rocky Mountain foothills that were used by First

Nations people for thousands of years. These lakes are bordered by the natural spectacle of the Livingstone Mountain Range, rich grasslands, and aspen and spruce woodlands. The lakes are stocked with rainbow trout for superb year-round fishing. Information: 403-646-3131.

Kananaskis Country

In the mountains and foothills of Kananaskis Country, anglers can choose from numerous streams, rivers, ponds and lakes. Those willing to exert themselves can hike up to alpine lakes in pursuit of cutthroat trout or, if you prefer, there are the more easily accessible Upper and Lower Kananaskis lakes and Spray Lakes Reservoir. The Bow River is highly regarded by anglers, but many other streams and rivers in the area, such as the Highwood, are also worth a visit. Cutthroat, rainbow, brown, brook, bull and lake trout, as well as mountain whitefish are all found



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LUNDBRECK FALLS

in Kananaskis Country waters. In the winter, ice fishing is popular on Upper Kananaskis Lake and Spray Lakes Reservoir.

Alberta's Northern Wildland Parks (Birch Mountains, Gipsy Lake, Grand Rapids):

Birch Mountains, Gipsy Lake and Grand Rapids wildland parks are remote and though they are excellent fishing destinations, are time consuming to access in both summer and winter and it is strongly advised that anglers and other recreational users contact the Parks and Protected Areas office in Fort McMurray about access routes (780-743-7200).

Birch Mountains Wildland Park

Birch Mountains Wildland Park contains one of the most diverse hill systems in the Boreal Forest Natural Region; the park preserves a mosaic of peat lands and one of Canada's only free-roaming wood bison herds. Ninety kilometres northwest of Ft. McMurray, this remote area offers fishing opportunities on several serene lakes within its borders, including Namur, Island, Gardiner and Sand. Summer access into the park is limited to "fly-in only" and winter access is by snowmobile along designated trails and frozen lake surfaces. There are two fly-in fishing lodges in the park – Namur Lake Lodge (www.namurlake.lodge.com) and Island Lake Lodge (www.islandlake.biz); both lodges offer a host of amenities. Namur Lake is a designated Trophy Lake where you can fish for prize lake trout, burbot, Arctic grayling and northern pike. The pristine waters of Island Lake support a vigorous walleye and northern pike fishery. Information: 780-743-7200.

Gipsy Lake Wildland Park

Fifty kilometres southeast of Ft. McMurray is secluded Gipsy Lake Wildland Park. The park contains four lakes, three of which offer superb fishing – Gipsy, Birch and Gordon. The fishing lodge on Gipsy Lake offers a warm, inviting stay in log cabins after a hard day of fishing for 30 pound trophy pike. In spring and summer,

access to the lodge is via float plane. In winter, access is by snowmobile only and is restricted to designated trails and frozen lake surfaces. For information about Gypsy Lake Lodge, call 780-743-3176. Both Birch and Gordon lakes support robust northern pike sport fisheries and offer first-rate wildlife viewing. Gordon Lake is one of the most important waterfowl breeding, moulting and staging areas in the region and is reported to support one of Alberta's largest colonies of American white pelicans. Double-crested cormorants nest on an island in Birch Lake. Information: 780-743-7200.

Grand Rapids Wildland Park

Grand Rapids Wildland Park preserves the remote and nationally significant Rapids Reach of the Athabasca River south of Ft. McMurray. The area is very scenic, with numerous rushing rapids and jagged rock outcrops. The river cuts deeply into the land for the entire length of the park, in places exceeding 150 metres. Fish the mighty river for northern pike, walleye and goldeye upstream as far as Cascade Rapids and enjoy the beauty of the natural limestone shelves over which the river flows. Access is by motor boat from Fort McMurray via the Clearwater River. Fish species include walleye, lake and mountain whitefish, Arctic grayling, northern pike, and goldeye. The forested valley slopes provide a stunning backdrop for some serious sport fishing. Find your own secluded spot among the rocks and cast off as the river mists into the early morning sun. Information: 780-743-7200.

PADDLING

Dip your paddle into some of Alberta's most scenic waters. Discover the serenity of a canoe expedition, the thrill of a kayak trip, or the rushing excitement of a rafting tour. Set out on a solitary outing to watch wildlife, or embark on an enjoyable family adventure! There's so much to choose from in Alberta's parks. Visit www3.gov.ab.ca/env/water/ws/advisories/ for river flood advisories and warnings.

Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park

Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park, located southeast of Innisfail, is intriguingly beautiful. An unusual land formation called a "dry island", a flat-topped mesa that rises 200 metres above the Red Deer River, presents a breathtaking view and evokes mystic nostalgia of a lost era. The Cree Indians used the grassy cliff-top as a buffalo jump; they stampeded the animals over the high cliffs to provide the meat, hides and other materials they needed to get them through the winter. The site is more than 3,000 years old. Canoeists can use this park as a launch point for a unique river ride through the badlands. For a short jaunt, take out at Tolman Bridge where Secondary Highway 585 crosses the Red Deer River or, if time permits,

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continue on to Drumheller or Dinosaur Provincial Park. More than 150 bird species have been spotted here including turkey vultures, golden eagles, mountain bluebirds, belted kingfishers, great blue herons, marbled godwits and willets. Camping is available at the park's Tolman East and West campgrounds, located 10 km south of the park's day use area. Information: 403-378-4342.

Kananaskis Country

There are several streams and rivers in Kananaskis Country that lend themselves to whitewater kayaking. The most popular is an easily accessible two-kilometre stretch of the lower Kananaskis River in Bow Valley Provincial Park. Also of interest to whitewater kayakers is a section of the Sheep River in Sheep River Provincial Park. Larger lakes such as Upper and Lower Kananaskis lakes and Barrier Lake offer numerous opportunities for canoeists and kayakers to paddle amidst magnificent mountain scenery. On these lakes, paddlers need to be aware that sudden mountain winds can cre-

ate challenging water conditions. There are backcountry campgrounds on the shores of Upper Kananaskis Lake and Barrier Lake for overnight excursions.

Lakeland Provincial Park & Provincial Recreation Area

The pristine wilderness of Lakeland Provincial Park and neighbouring Recreation Area makes canoeing here an unforgettable experience. Lakeland contains extensive boreal forest and some of Alberta's finest lakes, beaches and shorelines. A backcountry canoe circuit complete with portages and several rustic campsites will bring you back to nature like nothing else. The looped canoe circuit includes Blackett, Dabbs, Jackson and Kinnaird lakes and seven easy portages. The longest portage is at Jackson Lake Staging Area at the start of the loop, but canoe carts are available to make the 3.2 kilometres a cinch. Though the full 30-kilometre loop takes at least three days, there are a number of possibilities for shorter trips. While you're out and about, watch for the rock



cairns that honour some of Canada's fallen airmen – in the 1950s, several unnamed lakes in the area were named for fallen World War II service men; the cairns tell the stories of the pilots the lakes are named for. Information: 780-623-5235.

William A. Switzer Provincial Park

William A. Switzer Provincial Park, located in the secluded mountain foothills 25 kilometres northwest of Hinton, is home to Alberta's only interpretive canoe route. The park's series of five lakes connected by Jarvis Creek is one of the most diverse and intact river valley habitats in the foothills; it is also a haven for canoeing enthusiasts. Soak up the view – majestic peaks and forests dappled with shades of green, with lodgepole pine, spruce and aspen lining the slopes. Interpretive signs along Jarvis Creek display a wealth of information ranging from beavers and bugs to brown trout. Make sure you have your camera ready – you'll likely see beavers, mink, muskrats, loons, grebes, osprey, bald eagles and great grey owls while canoeing the park. Information: 1-877-865-5152

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SAILING

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Cold Lake Provincial Park

Picture this. It's a hot, sunny day. Heat waves ripple like mirages, causing the treed shores of Cold Lake to appear in continuous motion. The wind is picking up, sweeping the vast open water and toying with the bright sails of your boat. Then suddenly you're whisked away, past sandy beaches and marshes, water spraying at your sides. Cold Lake is an exceptionally

large, pristine lake in northeastern Alberta, with a whopping 373 square kilometres to navigate. The sizeable area allows the wind to pick up in great gusts and create perfect sailing conditions. Many of Cold Lake's beaches are accessible only by boat - one of the prettiest is on Murray Island. The lake heats up in the summer, extending the recreation season well into September. Boats can be rented at Cold Lake Marina, the largest freshwater marina in western Canada, and can launch there or at Cold Lake Provincial Park. The Cold Lake Sailing Club holds weekly races from June until mid-September, as well as an annual regatta race. Information: 780-639-3341.

Kinbrook Island Provincial Park

Lake Newell, the largest water body in southern Alberta and one of the country's largest man-made lakes, is a lush oasis in the warm, wide-open prairie. The lake measures 12 kilometres in length and up to 6 kilometres in width, with an average depth of more than 10 metres. The warm water, plenty of undeveloped shoreline, free launching facilities and powerful winds rushing onto the lake from the surrounding prairie make Lake Newell one of Alberta's best sailing and windsurfing sites. Kinbrook Island Provincial Park is located on an island in the lake and offers good launching facilities for cruisers; you can also launch at the Lake Newell Resort marina at the north end of the lake. The Newell Sailing Club's "Club House" is situated in the park and is recognized for its delicious food and welcoming social atmosphere. Information: 403-362-2962/off-season 403-362-1138.

Oldman Dam Provincial Recreation Area

Oldman Dam Provincial Recreation Area, just 13 kilometres north of Pincher Creek, is nestled against the Rockies in southwestern Alberta. The area is one of the windiest places in Alberta. The abrupt transition from mountains that are over 4,000 metres above sea level to grasslands that are only 1,000 metres above sea level creates a geographical shift that causes great gusts of wind to blow off the mountains. Pincher Creek has taken advantage of this and become the wind energy cap-



LESSER SLAVE LAKE

ital of Canada, with more than 100 massive windmills dotting the prairie skyline. You can take advantage of this wind energy too, sailing and windsurfing Oldman Reservoir - enjoy some of the highest winds and most challenging waves in southern Alberta! Camp at Windy Point Campground or make yourself at home along the Oldman River in the shade of the cottonwoods at Cottonwood Campground. Information: 403-382-4097.

Sylvan Lake Provincial Park

Sylvan Lake Provincial Park, located in the charming resort community of Sylvan Lake, contains as its main attraction a 1.6-kilometre-long sand and grass beach ideal for beach volleyball tournaments and many other beach activities. During the summer, water-based recreation is extremely popular and the lake is buzzing with activity - swimming, windsurfing, fishing, canoeing, sailing, power boating - you name it and it's happening! Sylvan Lake has the second largest marina in the province; boat rentals are available for sailing, cruising, fishing and water-skiing. The spectacular lake setting and convenient amenities make Sylvan Lake a favourite among sailors. Spend a day out on the water, manoeuvring your boat in the breeze, then return to shore for dinner at one of the many local restaurants. There are boat launches at the Marina and at Sun Haven on the north side of the lake. The park is also close to Wild Rapids Waterslide Park, various shops and ice cream parlours, go carts, mini-golf - everything to ensure a fun family vacation. Information: 403-340-7691.

SWIMMING & BEACHES



Who doesn't love a day at the beach? Picture your ultimate relaxation vacation - lounge on a lawn chair, doze off in the warm sun to the sounds of gulls and children laughing, go for a refreshing dip and, as the day comes to an end, watch the sun slowly disappear in a colourful display on the water. Alberta's parks offer great opportunities to do this and much more! Become an Alberta beach bum and love every minute of it!

Aspen Beach Provincial Park

Clear water...sandy beaches...trademarks of Aspen Beach Provincial Park. Located on Gull Lake west of Lacombe, Aspen Beach is very popular for both camping and day use. The lake's warm shallow water is ideal for swimming and splashing around, and its wide sand beaches beckon sun bathers of all ages. Add to this great fishing, canoeing, sailing, power boating and windsurfing and you have a recipe for an entertaining vacation! Two campgrounds in the park offer a variety of camping choices. Lakeview Campground is an R.V. retreat. Both fully-serviced and un-serviced sites accommodate your every camping need. Playgrounds, a baseball diamond, walking trails and a private beach and boat launch make this campground perfect for families. Brewers Campground offers a more rustic camping experience. Bask in the serenity of nature in its large, secluded and well-treed sites. Showers, washrooms, playgrounds, a large sandy beach, boat launch, and a con-

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Crimson Lake Provincial Park

Crimson Lake, named by an early trapper for the remarkably colourful sunsets he witnessed on the water, is a small clear lake a short drive northwest of Rocky Mountain House. Set in rolling, pine-covered hills, this beautiful area is protected by Crimson Lake Provincial Park. The lake is used for power boating, windsurfing, water-skiing and sailing. Once you've had your fill of water sports, take your pick from a variety of other engaging activities. Play a challenging match of beach volleyball, take a stroll through dense evergreen forests in search of the park's abundant wildlife, or check out the visitor centre's informative displays and evening events. The park has two campgrounds – Crimson Lake and Twin Lakes – that are sure to satisfy your camping needs. Information: 403-845-2330.

Kinbrook Island Provincial Park

Just when you think the prairie heat is unbearable, Kinbrook Island Provincial Park presents a cool opportunity – to take a swim! The park is located on Lake Newell, one of the many reservoirs in the sunny and dry southern region of the province and it's a popular stopping place for visitors in search of invigorating water activities. In addition to water sports, visitors will surely be impressed with the wildlife viewing prospects in the area. The large reservoir attracts many species of prairie waterfowl and water birds, many of which can be viewed from specialized viewing trails. The park offers a variety of amenities to guarantee convenience and comfort: a swimming beach, boat launch, covered kiosk, picnic tables, fast-food concession, convenience store and two playgrounds. Group use facilities and a 166-unit campground set the stage for a pleasurable camping experience. Information: 403-362-2962/off-season 403-362-1138.

Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park

Who needs the sand beaches of foreign destinations when luxurious white sand beaches await you in Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park? The 8 kilometres of beaches in the park are among the finest recreational shorelines in the province – swimming, power boating, sailing,

water-skiing and windsurfing are all at your fingertips. At the south end of the park, just outside of town, is Devonshire Beach, which boasts 7 kilometres of beautiful ocean-like beach. Boats can be launched at Lesser Slave River, located just south of the park. The park's 1500-year-old sand dune complex and beach ridge are interesting highlights and lakeshore hiking trails allow you to explore the ancient ridges and endlessly shifting dunes. If this trail

whets your appetite for hiking, the walk to Marten Mountain Viewpoint provides a spectacular panorama of one of Alberta's largest lakes. The park is equipped with a 113-unit campground, a playground, picnic facilities, and a golf course. Information: 780-849-7100.

Sand-Sculpture Competition

Lesser Slave Lake's annual Sand Sculpture Competition is an exciting event for families and beach enthusiasts. Each July, you can watch professional and novice sculpting artists craft exquisite forms out of the beautiful white sand of Devonshire Beach. The championship is accompanied by a variety of other fun events, such as beach volleyball and children's activities; there's also plenty of great food, entertainment and music. Look for holiday packages offered by hotels in the Slave Lake area – many include area tours along with your accommodation. Check out the town's web site for information on upcoming competitions (www.slavelake.ca) or call the town office at 1-800-661-2594.



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Cold Lake Provincial Park

The beauty of Cold Lake Provincial Park's boreal landscape is undeniable. The lure of the towering evergreen forests, grand water views and sand beaches continue to draw hikers again and again. Nine kilometres of well-developed trails in the southern portion of the park lead visitors along the lakeshore, through low marshland and mature boreal stands, and provide viewing platforms to observe the area's incredible diversity of bird life. In the more remote northern portion of the park, 20 kilometres of undeveloped trails provide a more rustic approach to exploring the Martineau River valley, the lakeshore, wetland areas and woodlands. Hiking the Cold Lake area is the perfect way to glimpse wildlife – watch for moose,

white-tailed and mule deer, beaver, lynx, black bear, mink, red fox, river otter and porcupine. The park's beautiful and spacious campground will ensure a comfortable and enjoyable stay for the whole family. Information: 780-639-3341.

Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area

Who would have guessed that there's a hiker's paradise so close to the province's capital city! Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area is just 45 minutes east of Edmonton and offers more than 170 kilometres of trails. With such a wide selection of trails to choose from you can pick one suited to your mood and keep coming back for more! Embark on a relaxing trail or challenge yourself in more difficult terrain, all the while enjoying the area's scenic forests, pastures and wetlands. Many of the trails are named for the wildlife often spotted on the paths – be on the lookout for moose, deer, elk, beavers, muskrats, swans and blue herons. Four staging areas – Waskehegan, Islet Lake, Central and Blackfoot – have plenty of parking as well as picnic shelters and privies. Trails are equipped with covered rest stops and heated shelters. Visitors are advised to come prepared with extra gear such as dry clothing, food and a flashlight. Maps of the area are available on site and on-line at www.alberta-parks.ca. Information: 780-922-3293.

Crimson Lake Provincial Park

The landscape of Crimson Lake Provincial Park is a picturesque convergence of foothills forests, wetlands and aspen parkland. The park has a well-developed trail network sure to motivate the hiker in every visitor. Trails wind through black spruce bogs, open sedge and shrub fens, tamarack swamps, and pine and aspen forests. Amerada Trail, 10 kilometres in length, circles the entire lake and travels through a variety of landscapes, including patterned fens, wetlands and vegetated sandhills. An additional 10 kilometres of trail adjacent to the campground allows you to explore the rolling land away from the lake,



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and 20 kilometres of trail links Crimson Lake to Twin Lakes, then proceeds to the town of Rocky Mountain House. Visitors to Crimson Lake can enjoy a variety of outdoor activities, abundant wildlife and convenient camping facilities. Trail maps are available at the park office. Information: 403-845-2330.

Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park

The most difficult decision you'll have when visiting Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park is which hiking trails to try! With plenty of trails to choose from, this intriguing land is sure to impress even the most well-travelled hikers. Nowhere else on the Canadian prairies can you roam pine forests and explore grassland and montane landscapes untouched by the last ice age! Wildlife viewing along the trails will produce some uncommon sightings – pronghorn antelope, raccoon, the northern pocket gopher, wild turkey, common poorwill and the endangered northern leopard frog can all be found here. The area is also a refuge for orchids, a rare and beautiful family of plants. Grab a trail map from the park office and seek out the canyons, coulees, rolling rangelands, boardwalks and woodlands. Information: 403-893-3777.

Pigeon Lake Provincial Park

Nestled among the evergreens southwest of Edmonton, Pigeon Lake Provincial Park is a popular recreational retreat. Hiking trails circulate through campground loops, along the lakeshore and through mixedwood and aspen forest. Five kilometres of trail split into three loops with a shelter, stove and rest stop at the intersection of the three trails. Trails are wheelchair-accessible and each offers a glimpse of different terrain – one crosses a meadow, one runs along a small waterway that is home to several beaver, and the third cuts through dense aspen forest. There are rest stops with benches along each trail and maps are situated at various spots, along with concessions in case you need to fuel up on ice cream! Some of the trails in the park are part of Kiskayo Trail, a branch of the famous



KANANASKIS COUNTRY

Trans Canada Trail. Well-treed campsites provide visitors with a relaxing camping environment; golf courses, shopping and farmers market are all within a 15-minute drive of the park. Information: 780-586-2644.

William A. Switzer

William A. Switzer Provincial Park protects a pocket of the Rocky Mountain foothills, a serene mountain valley dressed with mature stands of lodgepole pine, poplar and white spruce. Here, high rocky ridges and kettle holes, remnants of retreating glaciers, surround streams connecting five clear lakes and numerous wetlands. Twenty-five kilometres of trails let you explore this mountain jewel and observe its rich diversity of wildlife. The area is home to both provincially and nationally rare plant species, and uncommon birds such as the yellow-bellied flycatcher, barred owl and black-breasted woodpecker. Walk an esker and view a "kettle" lake to witness the results of thousands of years of Alberta's geological past, learn about the park's fascinating natural history on interpre-

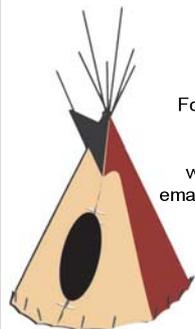
tive trails, spot wildlife from viewing blinds and platforms, and wander through rolling hills, mixed forests and meandering creek beds. The campgrounds in the park offer a wide range of services, from rustic secluded sites along Jarvis Creek to more modern sites at Gregg Lake. Information: 1-877-865-5152.

HORSEBACK RIDING



Saddle up and prepare for the ride of your life! Alberta's parks provide a true taste of the west and a chance to see some of the world's most magnificent natural wonders on horseback. Sit back in the saddle, relax to the sway of the horse, and take in the view. Facilities exist to let you go it alone if you're an experienced equine adventurer, but guest ranches and commercial trail riding outfitters are plentiful for those less equipped. Visit the Travel Alberta website for information about Alberta's excellent trail riding outfitters and guest ranches (www.travelalberta.com). When horseback riding in Alberta's backcountry, please use weed-free feed (processed cubes and pellets).

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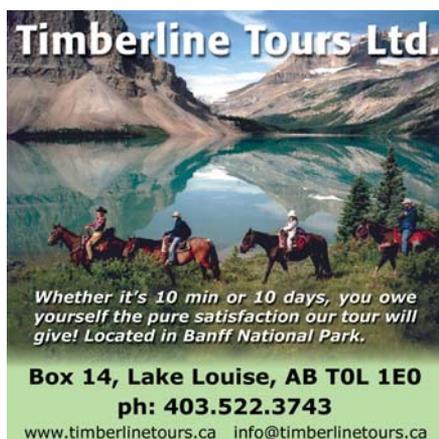
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Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area

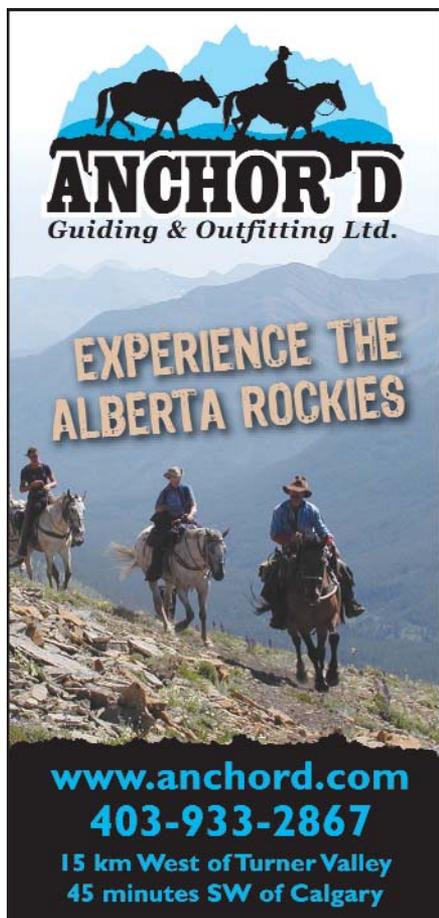
Looking for a quick fix to satisfy your equestrian craving? Cooking Lake-Blackfoot is a "day use only" recreation area that is a rider's paradise! The 97-square kilometre site is just 45 minutes from Edmonton and offers more than 85 kilometres of equestrian trails. Lead your horse through open pastures and fertile wetlands, mixed forests and hilly terrain. Delight in the area's diverse wildlife – beaver, snowshoe hare, moose, elk and deer are common, as are a wide variety of birds such as grouse, great blue heron and the "at risk" trumpeter swan. Get away from the city and



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Kananaskis Country

There are more than 800 kilometres of equestrian trails in Kananaskis Country. The eastern and southern portions of Kananaskis Country are perfect for people who have their own horses. Sheep River Provincial Park, Elbow-Sheep Wildland Park, and Little Elbow, Mesa Butte and Etherington Creek provincial recreation areas all have facilities designed specifically for equestrian users. Trails in these areas provide numerous opportunities for day rides as well as overnight trips to backcountry campgrounds. Most vehicle-accessible equestrian campgrounds in Kananaskis Country are equipped with tie stalls, tie rails, loading ramps and manure bins. Maps are available for purchase at Kananaskis Country information centres and on-line at www.kananaskis.org. Information about the equestrian campgrounds in Kananaskis Country is available in the *Explore Kananaskis Country* guide and at www.alberta-parks.ca.

Willmore Wilderness Park

Willmore Wilderness Park is a remote Rocky Mountain playground that is perhaps the best place in Alberta to travel on horseback. Riders will be rewarded with an authentic backcountry experience – towering mountain passes, gentle slopes and majestic valleys bursting with wildlife and wildflowers. The park's trails are steeped in history. Remnants of old graves, trapper's cabins, tipi pole cuttings and abandoned camps are a mere sample of what you'll witness in this intriguing land. With more than 750 kilometres of trails in the park, Willmore will tantalize your senses and tug at the wild threads of your soul. Imagine spending an evening here around a fire as the sun goes down, the sky fading from shades of purple to darkness, leaving behind a carpet of stars nestled above mountain peaks. There are many dangers in this rugged landscape, so independent travel is not advised for inexperienced riders. Visit www.willmorewildernesspark.com for information about Willmore's commercial trail riding operators. Park information: 780-865-8394.

Equestrian Staging Facilities

Several provincial recreation areas provide equestrian facilities and allow horses on-site. Equestrian staging areas usually provide loading ramps and hitching rails and some also provide corrals, privies, bear-proof garbage containers, picnic tables, potable water and fire pits.

Many of these staging areas are located along the Forestry Trunk Road (Highway 40 / Secondary Highway 734), a legendary highway that winds through forested foothills for more than 1,000 kilometres, from Grande Prairie in the north to Crowsnest Pass in the south. The primarily-gravel Forestry Trunk Road is a great way to get off the beaten track and explore some of Alberta's most beautiful and interesting spots. Abandoned coal mines, clear mountain streams, old exploration and pack trails, majestic waterfalls and dark aromatic forests await you. Opportunities for horseback riding abound in the numerous wild areas off the Forestry Trunk Road – plan for an adventure you won't soon forget!

Rock Lake Provincial Recreation Area

Rock Lake Provincial Recreation Area is one of the main staging areas for Willmore Wilderness Park. It is nestled in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains on a scenic mountain lake just east of the park. The staging area is equipped with loading ramps, hitching rails, corrals and holding pens. In between rides, hike the surrounding peaks for a great view of the lake or cast a line to catch a fish for supper. The Rock Lake entrance into Willmore leads into the southern portion of the park. Information: 780-865-2154.

Sulphur Gates Provincial Recreation Area

Sulphur Gates Provincial Recreation Area is a popular staging area for riders going into the northern part of Willmore. Located 10 kilometres southwest of Grande Cache, this quaint recreation area is equipped with a loading ramp, horse corrals, a water trough and hitching rails. A short walk will take you to the impressive Sulphur Gates – a 70-metre-high rock face that towers over the point where the Sulphur and Smoky rivers meet. Information: 780-827-6521.

Peppers Lake Provincial Recreation Area

Two kilometres east of its main campground, Peppers Lake Provincial Recreation Area provides equestrian staging facilities for riding access onto surrounding public land. Located 80 km southeast of Nordegg on the Forestry Trunk Road, the site is equipped with a loading ramp and hitching rails, potable water, privies and fire pits. Information: 403-845-8349.

Crescent Falls Provincial Recreation Area

Located east of Banff and Jasper national parks on Highway 11, Crescent Falls is equipped with corrals, a loading ramp, hitching rails and a 31-unit campground. There's also a developed viewing area from which you can admire the striking two-tiered Crescent Falls on the mighty Bighorn River. Information: 403-721-3975.



Spread your wings

Breathtaking Moments

BIRDING



Whether you're an enthusiastic diehard birder, up at the crack of dawn with scope in hand, or a novice lover of our feathered friends, Alberta's parks will not disappoint you in your quest to add another species to your "have-seen" list. Water birds, prairie birds, songbirds, woodland birds, predator birds ... Alberta has them all. With nearly 400 species to find, you're in for a lifetime of challenging and rewarding bird watching!

Cold Lake Provincial Park

Cold Lake Provincial Park is one of the top three birding destinations in Alberta, and rightfully so. The region lies within the transition zone between the Parkland and Boreal Forest natural regions, allowing for a wide diversity of habitats and bird species. Nearly 300 species have been recorded in the Cold Lake area. In late May and early June, birders flock to the area in hopes of spotting some of the 23 exquisite warbler species that arrive in the park, including the uncommon chestnut-sided, Nashville, Blackburnian, bay-breasted, Connecticut and mourning warblers. Breeding season also rewards birders with courtship displays and calls of the area's many water birds. If you're lucky you just might glimpse the famous and elaborate dance of courting western grebes on the water – the lake is home to one of the largest western grebe colonies in the province. You can also bird watch in the winter at Cold Lake – pine grosbeaks, redpolls and snowy owls actually fly south to spend their winters here. Information: 780-639-3341.

Dillberry Lake Provincial Park

Shorebirds are among the most challenging birds to identify – but they're well worth the effort! The dainty steps and proddings of shorebirds appeal to every birder's senses, and Dillberry Lake Provincial Park is one of the best places in the province to see them, with a whopping 30 species recorded. The park is located along an internationally important shorebird migration route and is part of the Killarney, Dillberry & Leane Lakes Important Bird Area, significant for several species of shorebirds, including the striking red-necked

phalarope, the still sandpiper, and the adorable piping plover. During spring migration, tens of thousands of shorebirds visit the area – the mud flats, marshes and meadows on the area's shallow lakes provide the birds with essential food and nesting sites. Other species you'll see in the area include hermit thrush, lark sparrow, marsh wren, yellow-headed blackbird, western meadowlark, Sprague's pipit, ducks, herons, geese and swans. The park's landscape is another highlight – its beautiful sand dunes and sharply rolling hills were formed thousands of years ago by glaciers. Information: 403-853-8221.

Kinbrook Island Provincial Park

In the blistering hot and dry prairie south of Brooks is Kinbrook Island Provincial Park, a marsh oasis sure to be a welcome relief from the heat and a joy for birders. The area is one of Alberta's best waterfowl nesting and staging areas. More than 3,000 waterfowl use the area each day during spring and fall! The park is located on an island on Lake Newell and is part of the Lake Newell & Kitsim Reservoir Important Bird Area, significant for the American white pelican, ring-billed gull and a variety of colonial water birds. The best way to explore the park and adjacent marsh is on the Kinbrook Marsh interpretive trail. The full loop takes a minimum of 1 1/2 hours, but you should give yourself extra time to ogle the birds! This is one of the best places to see the American avocet, easily one of the province's most elegant and beautiful birds. The nationally vulnerable long-billed curlew and nationally endangered burrowing owl also nest in the area. Information: 403-362-2962.

Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park

Located on the largest auto-accessible lake in Alberta, Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park is a bird haven and undeniably one of the best birding sites in the province. The region is designated an Important Bird Area of Global Significance – thousands of tundra swans stop to feed on the lake during spring and fall migration, and the reeds around the lake provide nesting habitat for a globally important western grebe population. The park's bird checklist is at 238 species and counting!

During breeding season visitors can spot a wide array of water birds. The surrounding forests support an incredible concentration and diversity of birds, such as eagles, osprey, flycatchers, grosbeaks, sparrows, and more than twenty wood warbler species. The park is home to Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory, a partner in the new Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation and operator of the northernmost bird monitoring and banding station in Canada. Neotropical migratory songbirds are studied at the centre and it offers regularly scheduled bird banding demonstrations and bird hikes. For more information, visit www.lslbo.org or call 780-849-7100.

Birding Tips

A birder's best friends are a pair of decent binoculars and a good guidebook! Visit your local library or bookstore and check out some of the many fabulous birding guidebooks available for both experienced and inexperienced birders. For the first few trips, an interpreter will do wonders to help you learn how to distinguish among species. Once you're familiar with some of Alberta's birds, getting to know their calls will greatly enhance your birding experiences! There are some very good guides to bird songs out there as well. Always remember that birds are wild – they deserve your respect and their space. Never approach a bird too closely and if they appear stressed, leave the area immediately.

Photography Tips

Wildlife photography is an art that requires a lot of practice and patience. Different situations call for different equipment and camera settings – try taking a photography class to learn more. Use a tripod for a sharper image and when photographing birds in flight or movement, use high speed film or, if your camera allows, the fastest shutter speed possible. Try a variety of settings and angles – be creative and have fun!

Police Outpost Provincial Park & Outpost Wetlands Natural Area

In the shadow of the great Chief Mountain, Police Outpost Provincial Park and Outpost Wetlands Natural Area protect one of the most productive bird habitats in southern Alberta. Outpost Wetlands, located along Boundary Creek adjacent to the park, is a diverse complex of willow thickets, sedge meadows and emergent vegetation that provide habitat for many species, including the "at risk" trumpeter swan. Here the fescue grassland and foothills parkland landscapes meet, creating a combination of habitats you won't see elsewhere. The wetlands and Police Lake offer phenomenal birding. Search for unusual water birds like the sandhill crane, cinnamon teal and northern waterthrush – all the while enjoying the extraordinary view of gentle mountain slopes and a carpet of wildflowers. Information: 403-653-4060.

Winagami Lake Provincial Park

Just north of High Prairie is yet another birder's paradise. Winagami Lake Provincial Park protects the eastern portion of Winagami Lake, a large shallow water body ringed by sedges, cattails and bulrushes, with submergent aquatic plants extending far into the water. This is prime habitat for grebes, sandpipers and ducks; some of the star species include long-tailed duck, northern pintail, gadwall, northern shoveler, canvasback and white-

winged scoter. Scan for waterfowl on the viewing platform and search for some of the area's 200 nesting and migratory species along specialized birding trails. The woods of the park provide exceptional opportunities as well; watch for the colourful spectacle of warblers flitting from branch to branch. The park is home to the northwestern-most nesting colony of purple martins in the world. These gorgeous birds spend the non-breeding season in Brazil, then migrate northward to nest. They are uncommon in Alberta but can provide hours of entertainment with their spiral chase for insects high in the sky. Information: 780-523-0041.

Swan Festival

In late April, Saskatoon Island Provincial Park hosts the Swan Festival, a celebration of the annual return of the rare birds to the Peace Country. The park is part of a federal migratory bird sanctuary that protects the swan. There are exceptional walking trails and a wildlife-viewing platform on Little Lake where you can catch a glimpse of nesting trumpeter swans. Join in on the fun, which includes bus tours, hands-on displays, nature walks and children's activities. For more information, visit www.swanfestival.fanweb.ca, or call 780 538-5350.

Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation

The Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation opened in 2005 in Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park. This world-class facility is

dedicated to bird conservation. Bus tours, bird banding camps, daily interpretive programs, guided birding tours and learning vacations are just some of the memorable experiences to be had at this wonderful new centre. The facility contains laboratories and a research library, as well as accommodation for researchers. For information call 780-849-7166 or visit www.lslbo.org/borealcentre.asp.

Songbird Festival

The Songbird Festival is held annually in Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park. Bird safaris, guided hikes, bird banding demonstrations and workshops are all part of this exciting weekend event. For information call 780-849-7117 or visit www.lslbo.org/songbirdfestival.asp.

Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count is held each year in more than 1,800 localities across Canada, the United States and Latin America between December 14th and January 5th. In each area, a group of local birders picks a day, sets out a 24-kilometre-diameter circle, and counts all the birds they observe within the circle. The count is one of the biggest events in the birding world. It has resulted in a huge database on the distribution and numbers of North American birds that provides much-needed information for bird conservation efforts. Visit www.bsc-eoc.org/cbc/compiler.jsp for a list of routes and contact information.



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Kananaskis Country

There's an extensive network of more than 1000 kilometres of trails in Kananaskis Country that allow hikers to explore everything from the subtle scenery of rolling foothills and quiet forest streams to spectacular vistas on mountain summits. To sample the foothills, you can explore a wide variety of trails in the Elbow River and Sheep River valleys; or, there are the more challenging, higher-elevation trails in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park, where even short trails provide stunning mountain views. Trails near Kananaskis Village in Evan-Thomas Provincial Recreation Area provide everything from a short walk to a small waterfall and impressive valley views, to a strenuous full-day hike to a mountain summit and spectacular panoramas via the highest-elevation trail in the Canadian Rockies. Staff at Kananaskis Country visitor centres will gladly assist you with route selection and provide information on trail conditions. Trail maps and guide books are available for purchase at visitor information centres and on-line at www.kananaskis.org. There are 18 backcountry campgrounds in Kananaskis Country, some that require long, strenuous approaches suitable for experienced backpackers, and others that are easily accessible and suitable for families with young children. Backcountry camping permits are required and may be purchased in person at visitor centres or by calling 403-678-3136. Trail condition updates and area maps are available at www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/kananaskis.

Lakeland Provincial Park & Provincial Recreation Area

Located in the heart of Alberta's "lake district" just 13 kilometres east of Lac La Biche, Lakeland Provincial Park and Recreation Area offer some of the top backcountry opportunities in the province. Lakeland protects a pocket of majestic wilderness – 600 square kilometres of rolling hills, scattered lakes, and boreal, mixedwood and old growth forest – the perfect setting for a network of superb backcountry trails. Year-round hiking trails penetrate mature boreal and mixedwood stands, meander around peaceful bays, lead to glacial lakes with sandy beaches, follow canoe portage trails, skirt the shores of numerous pristine lakes, and climb rolling terrain. You can also catch a glimpse of the past here – many of Lakeland's trails were marked by explorers, fur traders and natives more than 100 years ago. Information: 780-623-5235.

Siffleur Wilderness Area

Some of the most rugged and spectacular alpine terrain in Alberta lies within the vast

Siffleur Wilderness Area in the front ranges of the Rocky Mountains 60 kilometres southwest of Nordegg. Siffleur protects an area of 400 square kilometres along the eastern edge of Banff National Park; its remarkable series of mountain peaks and valleys inspires painters and photographers alike. The main trail in the park is the Siffleur River valley route, a relic of the wranglers who moved horses from the mountain national parks to Kootenay Plains in the early 1900s. Evidence of these early visitors is still visible in the hand-carved signposts along the rugged route that passes braided streams, steep gorges, waterfalls and wetlands. Hike along the valley bottom through heavily treed conifer stands or take side trails up to Porcupine Creek above tree line and be dazzled by the sight of hanging glaciers and crystal clear glacial lakes. In Alberta's wilderness areas, travel is by foot only and open fires, hunting and fishing are prohibited. The most popular access into Siffleur is off Highway 11 at the Siffleur Falls trailhead 65 kilometres west of Nordegg. Information: 403-845-8349.



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White Goat Wilderness Area

The landscapes of White Goat, Alberta's largest wilderness area at nearly 450 square kilometres, vary from lowlands along the Cline River to tundra-like expanses of alpine vegetation. The only well-defined backcountry trail through White Goat is the Cline River route, an interesting hike sure to excite the senses. The area boasts breathtaking mountain peaks (some of which reach heights of more than 3,300 metres), alpine meadows alive with brilliant wildflowers, hanging glaciers, mountain lakes and tarns, and waterfalls. Large mammals in the valleys and on the lower slopes include moose, wapiti, white-tailed and mule deer, black bears, and coyotes. Other residents that are more difficult to spot include grizzly bears, cougars, wolves and wolverines. In the alpine and upper sub-alpine areas of White Goat, look for mountain goats, woodland caribou and bighorn sheep. White Goat lies north and west of Highway 11, abutting the north end of Banff National Park and the south end of Jasper National Park. As in all wilderness areas, travel is by foot only, and open fires, hunting and fishing are prohibited. Information: 403-845-8349.

Whitehorse Wildland Park

Whitehorse Wildland Park, 60 kilometres south of Hinton, is located in the northern front ranges of the Rocky Mountains and offers an assortment of un-maintained backcountry trails. You can stand atop the Continental Divide and drink in the panoramic spectacle of two major watersheds, trek to picturesque falls that cascade over a series of ledges, and stroll through open alpine tundra valleys. The majority of the park is situated above tree line, making it a haven for alpine enthusiasts. At lower elevations there are forests of lodgepole pine, Englemann spruce and sub-alpine fir. Cadomin Cave, a limestone cave that has been forming for millennia, is just one of the park's many striking geological features. The cave, which is one of only four known bat hibernacula (over-wintering residences) in Alberta, should only be experienced with a caving guide. Information: 780-723-8554.

Willmore Wilderness Park

Imagine a land so remote that many of its features remain unnamed; a land of pristine forests, magnificent sweeping valleys, grassy meadows exploding with wildflowers, clear mountain streams, sparkling alpine lakes, stunning mountain vistas and rocky ridges that run on for miles. The trails you follow were carved into cliffs by bighorn sheep and mountain goats over millennia, or stamped out by early fur trading activity. This is Willmore – 4,597 square kilometres of remote, untouched backcountry, the ultimate mountain destination that is truly the last piece of virgin wilderness left in the Alberta Rockies. Willmore stretches out north of Jasper National Park; its western boundary follows the Continental Divide. The park is often referred to as "Walking in the Sky Country", with its impres-



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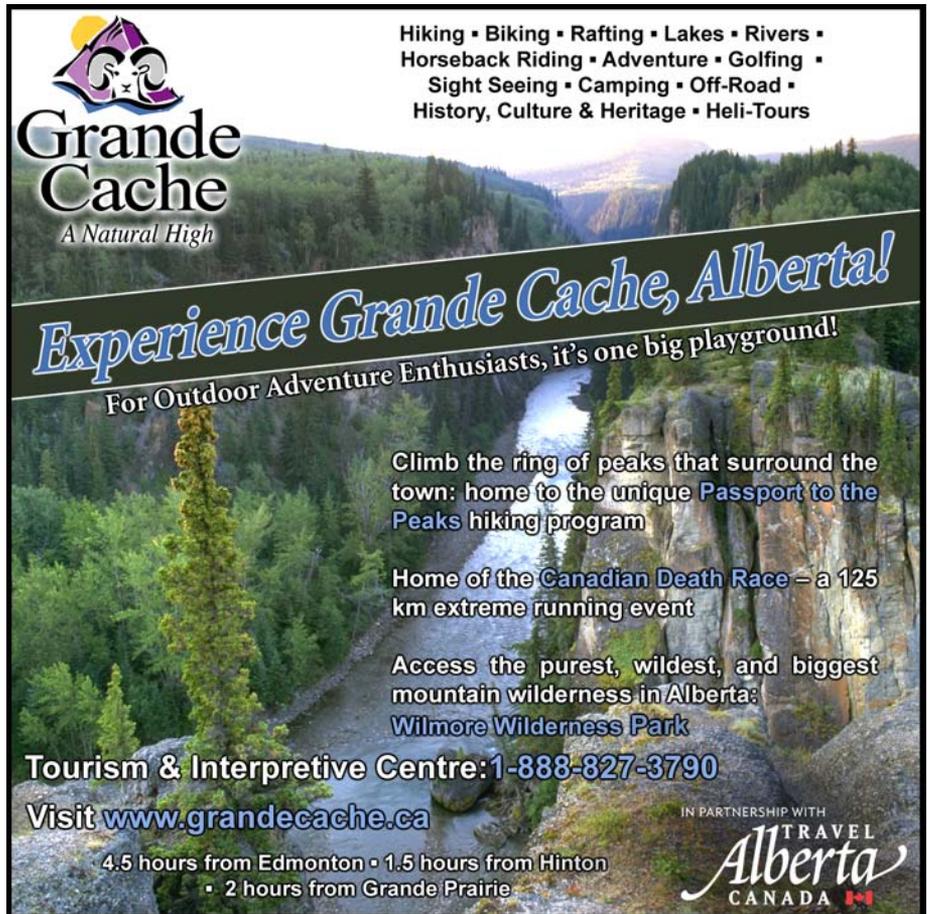
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sive span of peaks that reach heights of more than 3,050 metres. One of the park's main attractions is its rich variety of wildlife – white-tailed and mule deer, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, moose, elk, caribou, wolves, cougars, black bears and grizzly bears. Information: 780-865-8394.

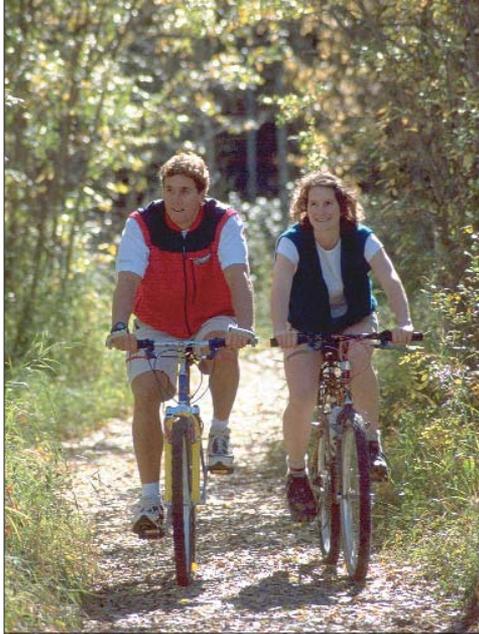
MOUNTAIN BIKING



Kick it into high gear for your Alberta vacation! Mountain biking is a perfect way to experience Alberta's diverse terrain of dense forests, vast prairies and challenging mountain passes. The possibilities are endless! Find a secluded trail and enjoy the fresh air and spectacular scenery. Whether you go it alone or with the whole family, take a lazy jaunt or a demanding ride, you'll soon understand why Alberta draws mountain bikers from around the world.

Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area

Imagine spending a day peddling energetically along rugged trails, with glorious stands of spruce and aspen towering above you. Birds flit from branch to branch, their songs blending with the rush of wind in your ears. You stop for lunch in a clearing to view a handful of deer elegantly grazing, and later watch as the evening sun casts dancing shadows on a quaint little pond. After packing up, you're off to enjoy the



nightlife that Alberta's capital city has to offer. It can happen! Cooking Lake-Blackfoot is less than an hour east of Edmonton, allowing for an exhilarating day of recreation without sacrificing urban delights. The area's mountain biking trails include Beaver Loop, Buck Run, Don's Way, Grouse, Hare, Highline, J.J., Lakeside, Lost Lake, Meadow, Middle, Muskrat, Neon Lake, Push Lake, Siksika, Springs, Spruce Hollow, Swan, Ungulate, Wanisan, Wapiti, Whitetail and Winter South trails. Information: 780-922-3293.

Fish Lake Provincial Recreation Area

Fish Lake Provincial Recreation Area, located northwest of Nordegg on Highway 11, makes a great base camp for mountain biking in the surrounding area. While there are no formal trails within the recreation area, the site provides the closest camping opportunity to the Black Mountain bike trails, located just 10 kilometres away. This 20-kilometre loop consists of challenging uphill slopes on a gravel access path, a downhill single-track littered with roots, rocks and drops, and an old downhill logging road where you can reach exhilarating speeds. Trails are lightly maintained by mountain bikers from Rocky Mountain House; for more information, stop by the Rocky Mountain House bike shop. The Black Mountain bike trails can be accessed approximately 10 kilometres west of Fish Lake via the Snow Creek Group Use Area entrance road (watch for trailhead signs). Fish Lake Provincial Recreation Area also offers excellent fishing opportunities on a crystal-clear mountain lake and is close to golfing, horseback riding and the Nordegg Heritage Centre. Information: 403-721-3975.

Kananaskis Country

Kananaskis Country offers some of the province's most outstanding opportunities for mountain biking, from easier double-track trails to steep and technically challenging single-track adventures. The choices are almost limitless. Visitor centre staff can assist you

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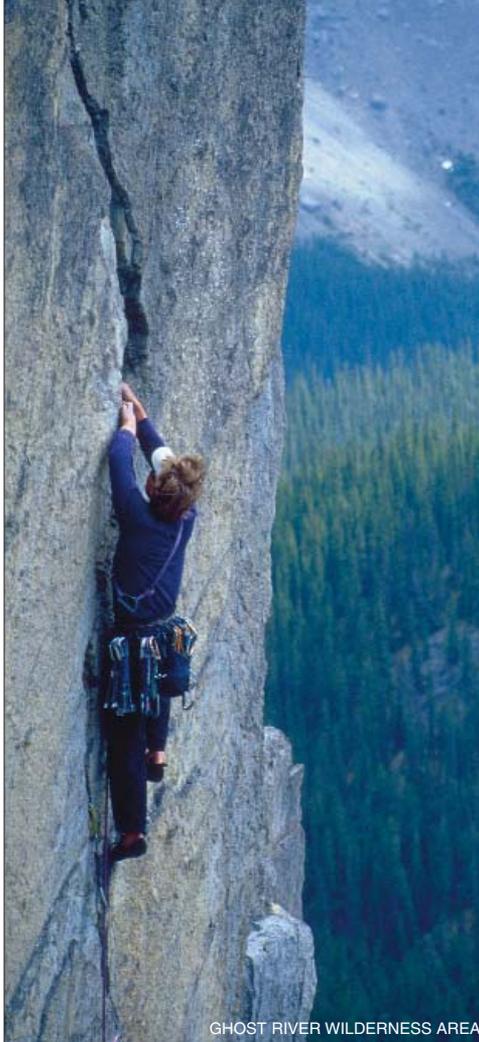
with selection of the most appropriate trails and provide current trail conditions. For the casual cyclist, there are three paved bike trails in Kananaskis Country – in Evan-Thomas Provincial Recreation Area, Bow Valley Provincial Park and Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. Maps and trail guide books are available for purchase at Kananaskis Country visitor centres and on-line at www.kananaskis.org.

Lakeland Provincial Park & Provincial Recreation Area

Lakeland's year-round trail network meanders through 600 square kilometres of boreal mixedwood and old-growth forest and along the shores of numerous pristine lakes. If you're searching for a rustic backcountry mountain biking excursion, look no further! Located a short drive east of Lac La Biche, Lakeland harbours an abundant array of wildlife including bear, moose, dozens of spawning fish species, 14 varieties of wild orchid, and more than 200 bird species. For some inner reflection, you can contemplate the history of the area as you peddle – many of the trails in the region were used by native people, explorers and fur-traders. Don't forget to bring your camera along to capture the superb beauty of the area! Cycling access is available at the Mile 12 Jackson staging area in Lakeland Provincial Park. Mountain biking trails include Amisk, Black Duck Lake/Dabbs Lake, Jackson Lake, Mosquito Lake, Kinnaird Lake, East Wishbone, West Wishbone, and Tchir Road. Information: 780-623-5235.

Whitney Lakes Provincial Park

Just three hours east of Edmonton, a beautiful dense forest rims the edges of four clear lakes and stretches over a landscape created 10,000 years ago by glaciers. Whitney Lakes Provincial Park is set among Whitney, Laurier, Borden and Ross lakes; it protects provincially significant esker and kettle formations and diverse wetlands. This varied terrain is ideal for mountain biking and the park's trail system offers nearly 40 kilometres of possibilities. Follow shorelines, pass through thick old-growth forests and wide-open grasslands, and defy the area's deep gullies and rolling



GHOST RIVER WILDERNESS AREA

hills. The park's wetlands and forests are home to deer, moose and beaver. Two campgrounds in the park, Ross Lake and Whitney Lake, provide all of the essential amenities and access to a lovely sand beach. Information: 780-645-6295.

ROCK CLIMBING



Reach new heights and experience the Canadian Rockies up close with some of the best rock climbing opportunities in the world. Whether you're a hesitant beginner or an expert rock-jock, Alberta has something for everyone, from relatively easy climbs to the most revered mixed climbs in North America.

As would be expected, the mountains of Kananaskis Country attract significant numbers of rock climbers. Mt. Yamnuska in Bow Valley Wildland Park has long been a favourite. Its broad mountain face hosts dozens of established multi-pitch routes for the experienced rock climber. Two other locations in Bow Valley Wildland Park, Cougar Canyon and Heart Creek, offer a variety of routes that are single-pitch and bolted. In Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park, the Grassi Lakes area is often busy with rock climbers. The Grassi Lakes area has climbs on steep, pocketed rock of varying grades. Barrier Bluffs off Highway 40 in Elbow-Sheep Wildland Park is another rock climber's hot spot. Wasootch Slabs, also in Elbow-Sheep, offers easy and moderate slabs, a good choice for beginners. Rock climbing guide books can be purchased at Kananaskis Country visitor centres and on-line at www.kananaskis.org. If you'd like to give rock climbing a try but aren't sure how to learn the sport, Visitor centre staff can provide you with information about professional guides that offer both guided rock climbing experiences and rock climbing courses. For detailed safety and climbing information, pick up a copy of *Sport Climbs of the Canadian Rockies, 6th Edition* (Rocky Mountain Books).

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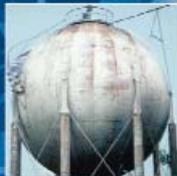
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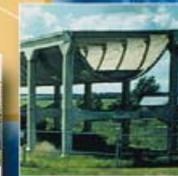
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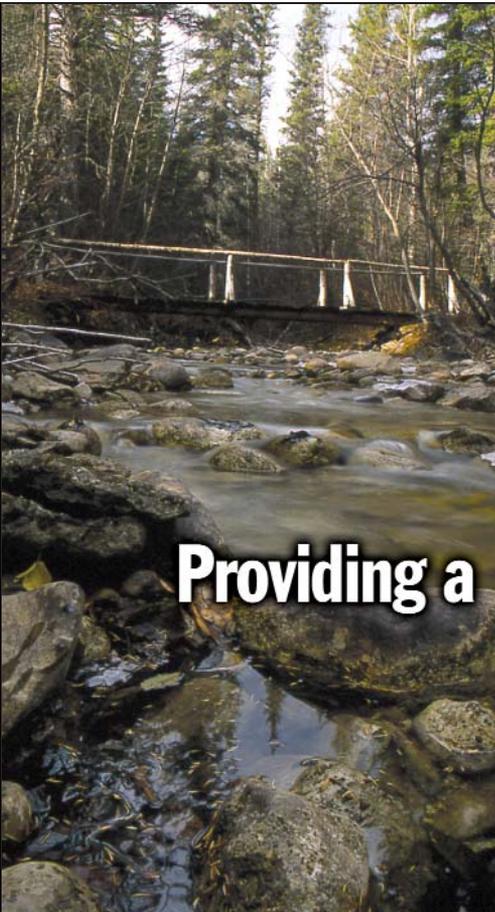
Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park

Join in on the year-round fun at Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, the land shared by Alberta and Saskatchewan "where pines touch prairie skies". This exceptional area protects a collection of fascinating natural and historical features that the whole family can explore through numerous interpretive programs. Cultural sites in the area show evidence of more than 7,000 years of human use and depict the battles and massacres of the late 1800s that prompted formation of the Northwest Mounted Police. Elkwater Lake Visitor Centre is a great starting point to learn interesting details about the park – from there,

you can move on to informative indoor and outdoor exhibits, interpretive auto tours, and guided and self-guided hikes. For children, there are stimulating nature exploration packs about birds, ponds and flowers. You can spend your evenings by joining interpretive staff at campfire and amphitheatre events. Information: 403-893-3777; www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/cypresshills.

Dinosaur Provincial Park

Come walk the land of the dinosaurs! Imagine a time when Alberta was a lush sub-tropical floodplain at the edge of the great Bearpaw Sea, a region teeming with dinosaurs. Today,



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the area is a moonscape, a riddle of hoodoos, pinnacles and coulees sculpted into gently rolling grassland. The eerie landscape of Dinosaur Provincial Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is the site of some of the most important dinosaur fossil discoveries ever made from the "Age of Reptiles" – 35 dinosaur species dating back 75 million years have been found here. Tour the interactive visitor centre and take a guided bus tour into the badlands to see firsthand what makes the park unique. Guided hikes bring you closer to palaeontologists' astonishing discoveries and enable you to explore the world of the plants and animals that have adapted to the extreme

conditions of the badlands. Indoor theatre productions and outdoor amphitheatre presentations will add a dramatic flair to a truly unique and unforgettable experience for the whole family. Allow two full days for your visit. Reservations are strongly recommended, both for the campground and for ticketed events. Information: 403-378-4342; www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/dinosaur.

Fish Creek Provincial Park

Where urban streets meet nature's treats - Fish Creek Provincial Park is a unique example of a thriving natural environment within a major urban centre. Located in residential Calgary

and containing mixed forest and open prairie that provide essential habitat for a variety of fish, birds and mammals, Fish Creek is one of North America's largest urban parks. Evidence of early First Nations people, and the settlers and ranchers who came after them, can be seen in the numerous archaeological and historic sites in the park, from ancient tipi rings and buffalo jumps to a woolen mill and old ranch sites. Fish Creek Archaeological Centre features a working lab that gives visitors a chance to see ancient and historical artefacts that have been excavated at sites within the park. The park boasts extensive award-winning public education programs for both children and adults including family walks, workshops, a speaker series, and much more. Information: 403-297-5293; www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/fishcreek.

Kananaskis Country

During the summer, park interpreters present creative and informative evening theatrical and musical programs at campground amphitheatres in Bow Valley, Peter Lougheed and Sheep River provincial parks, and Evan-Thomas Provincial Recreation Area. These award-winning programs will engage children and adults alike. Program details are available at visitor centres. Information: www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/kananaskis.

Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park

Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park, located on the eastern shore of Lesser Slave Lake, offers a rare opportunity to explore the remarkable features of the boreal forest, a seemingly endless carpet of evergreens interrupted by rivers, bogs, fens and lakes. Interpretive programs are presented year-round, with weekly programming during summer months. Gather the family for an enjoyable evening amphitheater performance or embark on an engaging guided hike. Watch as the fascinating natural and cultural history of the boreal forest and Alberta's North are brought to life before your eyes. Programs touch on various topics from birds to bugs to boreal ecology and are geared towards families. For a list of upcoming events, call 780-849-7100, visit www.borealbirdcentre.ca, or consult notices posted throughout the park.

Saskatoon Island Provincial Park

Saskatoon Island Provincial Park is situated in the dry mixedwood sub-region of the Boreal Forest Natural Region. Despite the park's small size, the mosaic of forest, wetlands, shrub lands and native prairie results in an amazing diversity of plants and animals. Saskatoon Island Provincial Park is part of a federal migratory bird sanctuary that protects nesting and migratory waterfowl, including the threatened trumpeter swan. During the summer, the park offers many fun and educational programs including Saturday evening

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amphitheatre shows, nature-based family drop-in programs and guided walks. Participants can play bug bingo and then look for insects and spiders, try to solve a bird migration mystery using real bird bands, explore diverse natural habitats, solve animal track puzzles and make their own tracks, dip for wetland creatures in Saskatoon Lake, or think like a bat using sound and smell games. Information: 780-538-5350/766-2636.

Sir Winston Churchill Provincial Park

Experience the splendour of a 300-year-old mixedwood boreal forest alive with plants, birds, and other wildlife in Sir Winston Churchill Provincial Park, located just 13 kilometres northeast of the Town of Lac La Biche. The park is situated on the largest island on Lac La Biche and is renowned for bird watching; it is one of the finest sites in Alberta to observe boreal forest birds, including 20 wood warbler species. The park is also home to numerous waterfowl and shorebirds. Two well-marked trails guide you past informative interpretive displays and through old-growth forests of white and black spruce, balsam fir, birch and poplar. Mounted viewing scopes at several excellent vantage points provide visitors with great opportunities to observe the area's 200 resident and migrant bird species, including American white pelicans and double-crested cormorants. Summer interpretive programs bring to life the natural and cultural history of the area – there are family-oriented weekend events, guided walks, amphitheater presentations and campfire talks. Information: 780-623-4144.

William A. Switzer Provincial Park

Located in the foothills just 25 kilometres northwest of Hinton, William A. Switzer Provincial Park is a tranquil mountain destination that offers an exquisite outdoor classroom for learning about the natural world. Seven different self-guided adventure packs, along with all the necessary equipment, are available on free loan from the Gregg Lake campground hosts in July and August. There are several self-guided interpretive trails where you can learn about the park's natural history and experience the results of thousands of years of Alberta's geological past. For those with a love of water, Alberta's only interpretive canoe route is located in this park. Information: 1-877-865-5152; www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/switzer.

Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park

The past springs to life in the mystic landscape of hoodoos, badlands and sprawling native grasslands of Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. The park is named for the thousands of First Nations rock art images within its borders – Writing-on-Stone protects the largest concentration of native rock paintings and carvings on the North American Plains. Guided tours are held throughout the

summer and provide an expert perspective into the possible meanings of the carvings and paintings. Adding to the nostalgic character of the park, a reconstructed Northwest Mounted Police outpost portrays the area's role in bringing law and order to the Canadian West. Delight in one of the evening amphitheatre presentations or children's programs, or venture out into the stunning wilderness of sandstone outcrops and the scenic Milk River on a guided hike. To top off your educational experience, sit quietly among the hoodoos as the sun goes down and watch the shadows play haunting tricks over this sacred and wondrous land, a legacy of the rich culture of the Blackfoot people. Information: 403-647-2364.



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KANANASKIS COUNTRY

Winter Warriors

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING & SNOWSHOEING



For those hardy souls out there who are too energetic to succumb to Alberta's winters, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are a fun way to pass the days! Strap on a pair of skis or snowshoes and exercise the winter blues away – you'll be rewarded with unforgettable scenes of feathery hoar frost clinging to grasses and branches, tracks of animals scampering across the snow, and the glittering shine of snowflakes in the sun.

Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area

Adjacent to Elk Island National Park, Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area offers extensive cross-country ski trails and is one of the best places in the province to enjoy this stimulating sport. Winter trails are packed and groomed on a regular basis to ensure a good ski, and four staging areas provide access to an array of trails for both novice and advanced skiers. There are 65 kilometres of track set trails and 35 kilometres packed for skate skiing. All trails are double-tracked for two-way traffic. A number of non-groomed trails also exist for those seeking a more solitary experience. Other winter activities include snowmobiling, snowshoeing and dog

sledding. Visitors are encouraged to come prepared with warm clothing and food. Maps are available on site and on-line (www.albertaparks.ca). Information: 780-922-3293.

Kananaskis Country

Whether you're a novice skier or world-class competitor, you'll find the perfect trail in Kananaskis Country. Canmore Nordic Centre is a world-class facility that hosted Nordic ski events during the 1988 Winter Olympics; the centre continues to be the site of regional, national and international events. There are also cross-country ski trail systems in Peter Lougheed, Spray Valley and Sheep River provincial parks, and Evan-Thomas and West Bragg Creek provincial recreation areas. Snow-permitting, these trail systems are machine-groomed and track-set. Snowshoeing is becoming increasingly popular and Kananaskis Country has eight snowshoeing trails suitable both for novices and for those seeking a more strenuous workout.

Trail maps are available for purchase at visitor centres and on-line at www.kananaskis.org.

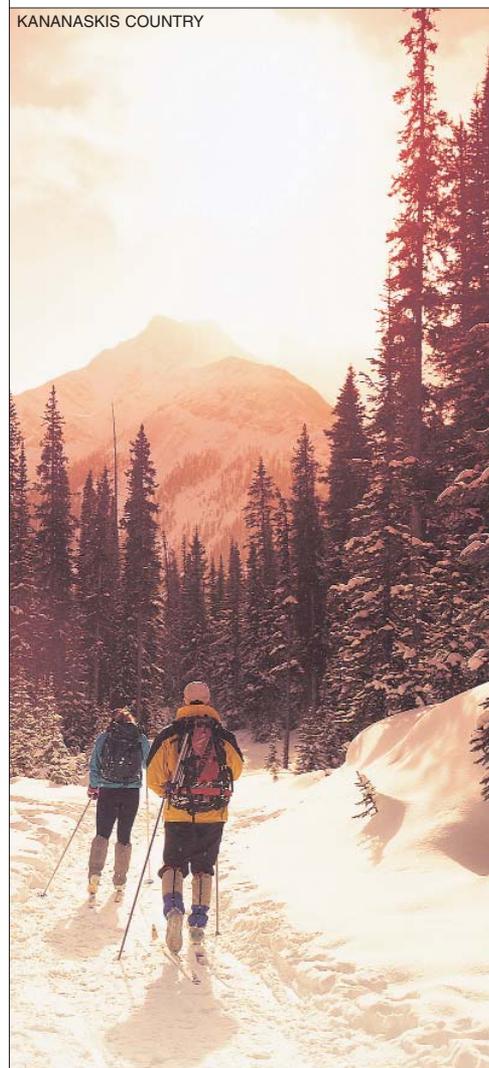
William A. Switzer Provincial Park

William A. Switzer Provincial Park provides opportunities for outstanding winter fun. Enjoy cross-country skiing on 50 kilometres of groomed trails, winter camping, snowshoeing and ice-fishing. Athabasca Lookout Nordic Centre, situated at the south end of the park is equipped with a biathlon range, world-class ski trails, a luge run and telemark hill – all in view of incredible mountain scenery! Trails are groomed for both classical and skate skiing and accommodate a variety of skill levels. If you're not too keen to face the elements with winter camping but want to stay in the park, VentureScape Wilderness Retreat, with its comfortable cabins, fireplace, sauna and hot tub, might be just the thing. Imagine soaking your sore muscles after a hard day of skiing, then drying off in front of a fire with hot chocolate! For information about VentureScape, visit www.venturescape.ca or call 780-865-4741. Winter park information: 780-865-8394.

The Canadian Birkebeiner Ski Festival

The Canadian Birkebeiner Ski Festival is an annual Nordic ski event held at Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area the second weekend in February. The event is open to everyone, from families and novice skiers to competitive racers; it is the largest classical cross-country ski festival in North America and attracts up to 2500 skiers from around the world. Visit www.canadianbirkie.com for more information about the Birkie, or call 780-430-7153.

KANANASKIS COUNTRY



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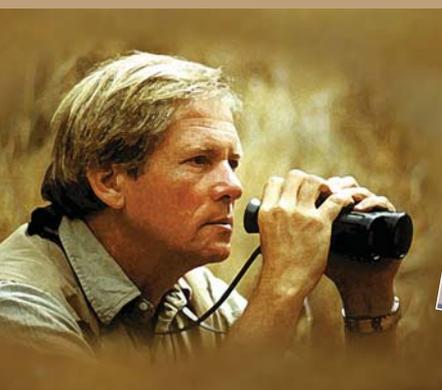
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