

You are in Bear Country



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National Parks introduce visitors to a landscape that is uniquely Canadian. But these parks are more than scenic wonderlands. They are home to many animals that depend on wilderness areas for their survival. For some, like the grizzly bear, national parks may be the critical core of a territory that can extend far beyond the parks boundary.

Bears and Humans

Bears generally prefer to avoid humans. However, bears may charge and even attack people when surprised, or if they feel you might be threatening their young or their food. Bears can also become aggressive if they learn to associate people and their activities with a free meal.

Reduce Your Risk

- **Travel In Groups**, on established routes, trails and paths and during daylight hours.
- **Stay alert, stay alive!** Watch for bears in the area and for their sign-tracks, droppings, diggings, torn-up logs, rub trees and turned over rocks. Leave the area if you see fresh sign.
- **Make Noise!** - Let bears know you're there. Bear bells are often not loud enough- call out, clap hands, sing or talk loudly. Especially near streams, dense vegetation and berry patches, on windy days, and in areas of low visibility. Cyclist who travel quickly and quietly along trails are most at risk of surprising wildlife.
- **Keep pets on a leash**- This is a park regulation. As well, your pet may run back to you with a bear in pursuit. Consider leaving your pet at home.
- **If you come across large dead animals**, leave the area immediately and report it to Park Wardens. Subsistence harvest by First Nation persons is permitted in northern National Parks. Bears may also be attracted to harvest remains.
- **Never approach or feed a bear.** Keep a distance of at least 100meters.
- **Keep Food & Smells away from bears** by properly storing food, garbage and food related items in bear resistant food canisters, day and night wherever you are. Even empty pet food bowls can attract bears.
- **Dispose of fish offal** in fast moving streams or the deep part of a lake, never along streambanks or lakeshores.
- **Area Closures**- For the safety of you and the bears obey all area closures. Plan alternatives in case of a closure.
- **Report all sightings to park staff.**

Bear Spray?

Not a Replacement for Common Sense!

Recent research indicates that spraying a bear at close range with bear spray can be an effective deterrent, but is not foolproof. If you plan to carry it, be aware that wind, spray distance, rain and product shelf life can all influence its effectiveness. Carefully read directions on the can prior to your trip. The best way to live safely with bears is to keep a safe distance from them.



If You Encounter a Bear

Bears are very intelligent and complex animals. Each bear and each encounter is unique; there is no single strategy that will work in all situations, almost all bear encounters end without injuries, especially if you follow some basic guidelines:

- **Stay Calm.** Most bears do not want to attack you; they usually just want to be left alone. Bears may bluff their way out of an encounter by charging and then turning away at the last second. Bears may also react defensively by woofing, growling, snapping their jaws, and laying their ears back.
- **Immediately pick up small children** and stay in a group.
- **Talk calmly and firmly.** If a bear rears on its hind legs and waves its nose about, it is trying to identify you. Remain still stand your ground and talk calmly so it knows you are a human and not a prey animal. A scream or sudden movement may trigger an attack.
- **Don't drop your pack.** It can provide protection.
- **Back away slowly** if the bear is stationary, **never run!** Bears can run as fast as a racehorse, both uphill and down hill.
- **Leave the area or take a detour.** If this is impossible, wait until the bear moves away. Always leave the bear an escape route.

BEAR ATTACKS

Attacks are rare. Most are defensive, when a bear is surprised and feels threatened or fears for the safety of its cubs; try to avoid such encounters by being alert and making noise.

If you Surprise a Bear and It DEFENDS ITSELF:

If you have bear spray, use it. If physical contact has occurred or is imminent, **PLAY DEAD!** Lie on your stomach with legs apart. Protect your face, the back of your head and neck with your arms. Remain still until the bear leaves the area. These attacks seldom last more than a few minutes. While fighting back usually increase the intensity of such an attack, in some cases it has caused the bear to leave. If the attack continues for more than several minutes, consider fighting back.

If a Bear ATTACKS YOU IN YOUR TENT or STALKS YOU and THEN ATTACKS:

DONT PLAY DEAD-FIGHT BACK! First-try to escape, preferably to a building, car or up a tree. If you cant escape, or if the bear follows, use bear spray, or shout and try to intimidate the bear with a branch or rock. Do what ever it takes to let the bear know you are not easy prey. Concentrate your blows on the bears face and muzzle This kind of attack is very rare but can be very serious because it often means the bear is looking for food and preying on you.

Backcountry Camping/Travel

To stay safe and protect the wilderness you have the responsibility to travel with two goals in mind- limiting your impact by avoiding encounters and managing your food, food smells and garbage.

- **Be Bear Aware**-follow the guidelines in "**Reduce Your Risk**".
- **Camp in designated areas** where provided or required. Avoid camping near running water, thick brush, animal trails or berry patches.
- **Keep yourself and campsite Odor Free**-set up cooking, eating and food storage areas at least 100meters from your tent. Keep sleeping bags, tents and clothes you sleep in, free of food, food odors or beverages. Consider wind direction.
- **Leave smelly cosmetics at home**-Store toiletries and personal items with food.
- **Use Bear Resistant Canisters** that provide for food and garbage storage. They are mandatory in some northern national parks for overnight backcountry trips.
- **Store food, and garbage, away from your tent.** Hang between two trees at least 4meters above the ground. In frontcountry campgrounds store food and garbage in containers provided or in the trunk of your vehicle in airtight containers.
- **Wash and store all dishes and food utensils immediately after use.** Strain food particles from dish water and store with garbage. Dump dishwater in designated areas or at least 100 meters from your sleeping area.
- **Pack out garbage**- Do not bury or burn garbage. Store the same way as food. Pack out in airtight containers.

Bear Resistant Food Canisters

Are recommended for overnight backcountry trips in many parks. In Kluane National Park and Reserve they are mandatory for overnight backcountry trips on many trails. Check with park staff before beginning your trip.



You Can Help

Grizzly Bears once roamed throughout most of western North America. Today they are extinct in Mexico. In the United States they are found in a few areas in the northwest and in Alaska. In Canada, there are grizzly bears in Alberta, British Columbia, the Yukon and Northwest Territories. They are considered a vulnerable species by COSEWIC in much of their range. If they are to survive, we must be careful to protect their habitat and respect their right to live undisturbed, in the few remaining areas left to them.

Unfortunately, bears that become used to people and their food often must be relocated or destroyed because of the threat they pose to visitors. Following the simple steps outlined above can help keep bears away from populated areas and prevent serious incidents. In this way we will help both bears and people coexist in our national parks.

? Visitor Centers

Visitor center staff can provide information on current sightings, warnings, closures and safety tips. Wilderness passes for overnight trips can be purchased there.

