Jasper National Park

Why Go?

In a modern world of clamorous cities and ubiquitous social media, Jasper seems like the perfect antidote. Who needs a shrink when you've got Maligne Lake? What use is Facebook when you're two days by foot from the nearest road? And, how can you possibly describe the Athabasca Glacier in a 140-character tweet? Filled with the kind of immense scenery that has turned the monosyllabic into romantic poets, Jasper is a rugged beauty; more raw and less tourist-pampering than its southern cousin Banff, and hence host to a more ambitious, adventurous visitor. Its tour de force is its extensive multipurpose trail network, much of it instantly accessible from the park's compact townsite. Backing it up is abundant wildlife, colossal icefields and – for the brave – the kind of desolate backcountry that makes you feel as though you're a good few kilometers (and centuries) from anything resembling civilization.

Best Hikes

➡ Skyline Trail (p146)

➡ Tonquin Valley (p148)

➡ Path of the Glacier Trail (p138)

➡ Bald Hills Loop (p145)

Best Post-Hike Refreshment Spots

➡ Bear's Paw Bakery (p169)

➡ SnowDome Coffee Bar (p170)

➡ Jasper Brewing Co (p170)

➡ View Restaurant (p170)

Road Distance (KM)

	Columbia Icefield Centre	Jasper	Maligne Lake	Mt Robson (Visitor Centre)
Jasper	105			
Maligne Lake	150	50		
Mt Robson (Visitor Centre)	185	85	135	
Pocahontas	150	45	85	130

Note: Distances are approximate

Entrances

There are three main road entrances to Jasper National Park. The East Park Entrance is on Hwy 16 between Jasper and Hinton, just east of Pocahontas. The West Park Entrance is on the same highway, 24km (15 miles) west of Jasper Town, near Yellowhead Pass and the border with British Columbia and Mt Robson Provincial Park. The Icefields Parkway Entrance is south of Jasper Town on Hwy 93, on the way to Lake Louise. You must either buy or show a park pass at all entry gates.

DON'T MISS

Unlike Banff, most of Jasper's trails are 'multi-use', open to hikers, horseback riders and cyclists. Thanks to this liberal sharing policy, the park is able to offer what is the best network of off-road **cycling trails** in Canada – and they're not just for daredevils. They're rated green (easy), blue (moderate) or black (difficult), so pretty much everyone is catered for, including kids or parents towing chariots.

An added bonus is that many of Jasper's trails start directly from the townsite, meaning you don't need to lug your bike around in a car or bus. Using a special cycling trail map (free from the info office), numerous loops can be plotted from your hotel or campground, with time to incorporate hiking, swimming, canoeing or grabbing a cup of coffee along the way.

When You Arrive

➜ All visitors intending to stop off in Jasper National Park must purchase a park pass (adult/youth/senior/family day pass C$9.80/4.90/8.30/19.60), even if just for a picnic or short leg-stretch.

➜ Passes can be procured at the Jasper Information Centre or at one of three different road entrances.

➜ If you're spending a week, an annual pass (C$67.70) works out cheaper and can be used in all national parks across Canada, including Banff, Kootenay and Yoho.

➜ The park is open year-round, though many activities and services are closed during winter.

PLANNING TIP

Overnight stays in the backcountry require a wilderness pass (per person per night C$9.80); pick it up from the park office within 24 hours of heading out.

Fast Facts

➜ **Area** 11,228 sq km (4335 sq miles)

➜ **Highest elevation** 3782m (12,408ft)

➜ **Lowest elevation** 985m (3232ft)

Reservations

You can make reservations at four of Jasper's 10 campgrounds: Whistlers, Wapiti, Wabasso and Pocahontas. Reservations are also recommended for backcountry camping, as Parks Canada limits the number of hikers on each trail; these can be made up to three months in advance and cost C$11.70.

Resources

➜ **Jasper National Park** (www.jaspernationalpark.com)

➜ **Parks Canada** (www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/jasper/index.aspx)