



Jasper National Park

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Best Hikes

- » Skyline Trail (p157)
- » Tonquin Valley (p158)
- » Path of the Glacier Trail (p152)
- » North Boundary Trail (p161)

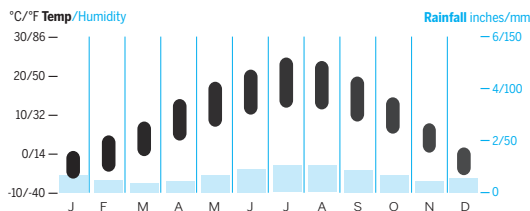
Best Places to Stay

- » Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge (p146)
- » Park Place Inn (p167)
- » Athabasca Hotel (p168)
- » Pyramid Lake Resort (p169)

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 laconic office stiff into romantic poets, Jasper is a rugged beauty; rawer and less tourist-pampering than its southern cousin Banff, and hence host to a more ambitious, adventurous type of visitor. Its tour de force is its extensive multipurpose trail network, much of it instantly accessible from the park's compact townsites. Backing it up is abundant wildlife, colossal icefields and – for the brave – the kind of desolate backcountry that'll make you feel as if you're a good few kilometers (and centuries) from anything resembling civilization.

When to Go



July–August The best weather for hiking Jasper's multiple trails.

September–October Quieter hiking amid autumn colors, if the weather holds.

February–March Best snow cover for skiing – both cross-country and downhill.

PLANNING TIP

Overnight stays in the backcountry require a wilderness pass (per person per night C\$9.90), which you must pick up from the park office within 24 hours of heading out.

Fast Facts

- » Area: 10,878 sq km (4200 sq miles)
- » Highest elevation: 3782m (12,408ft)
- » Lowest elevation: 985m (3232ft)

Reservations

Mandatory camping permits are available at all campground kiosks. 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\$11.85.

Resources

- » Jasper National Park: www.jaspernationalpark.com
- » Parks Canada: www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/banff/index.aspx

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 Pochahontas. 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.

THE WOODLAND CARIBOU

Jasper's most iconic fauna is also – ironically – one of its most endangered: the woodland caribou, better known to lovers of Father Christmas as the reindeer. Rather like the buffalo, woodland caribou were once ubiquitous in much of North America, foraging in boreal forests as far south as Idaho. But hunting and habitat loss have seen their numbers drastically diminished in recent times, leaving them banished to a small pocket of the Rockies largely contained within the confines of Jasper National Park. A member of the deer family, the woodland caribou, in contrast to its more common tundra-roaming cousins, live in smallish groups in sub-alpine regions where they subsist on a diet of lichen. Jasper's endangered caribou is split into two groups. A southern herd, numbering less than 100, roams the slopes around Maligne Lake and the Tonquin Valley; a more stable northern group numbering from 200 to 350 hides in the park's remote northern mountains. To see them you'll need to get lucky on the Opal Hills, Tonquin Valley or North Boundary hikes.

When You Arrive

- » All visitors intending to stop off in Jasper National Park must purchase a parks pass (adult/youth/senior/family day pass C\$9.80/4.90/8.30/19.60), even if it's just for a picnic or a short leg stretch.
- » Passes can be procured at the Jasper Information Centre or at one of three different road entrances.
- » All visitors receive the *Mountain Guide*, a magazine with maps and information on local sights.
- » If you're spending a week, an annual pass (C\$67.70) will work out cheaper and can be used in all national parks across Canada, including Banff and Yoho.
- » The park is open year-round, though many activities and services are closed during winter.