



Understand Banff, Jasper & Glacier

THE PARKS TODAY230

Find out how the national parks are facing up to the challenges of spiraling visitor numbers, environmental conservation and climate change.

HISTORY232

Journey back into the past and discover the fascinating history of the Rockies, from First Nations people through to pioneering explorers, inspirational map-makers and alpine mountaineers.

GEOLOGY.....240

The views are never less than spectacular, but you'll have a better appreciation of the scenery if you understand how it was formed.

WILDLIFE.....243

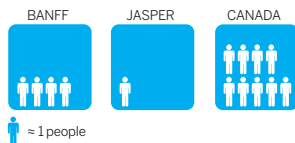
The Rocky Mountains are home to all sorts of wonderful wildlife. Get the lowdown on some of the creatures you'll see, and where best to see them.

CONSERVATION.....250

Protecting the precious natural environment of the national parks is as vital now as ever, so it's important to understand the issues and how you can do your bit to help.



population per sq mile



The Parks Today

Visitor Experience v Ecological Integrity

As four of the world's oldest and most symbolic national parks, Banff, Jasper, Glacier and Waterton face a difficult modern quandary. On one hand they proudly represent what – in the words of a 2009 Emmy award-winning documentary – was 'America's best idea.' On the other, they remain litmus tests for the planet's ongoing battle to protect its wild but delicate ecosystems from multiple human threats.

Set up in the late 19th and early 20th century as 'parks for the people,' the underlying philosophies that guide how these protected areas are managed have shifted significantly in the last decade with the focus moving away from the 'visitor experience' mantra of the early conservationist movement toward the more pressing question of 'ecological integrity.' This debate has grown more heated since the 1960s when the damage wreaked by millions of annual visitors first became worryingly apparent.

Banff at the Crossroads

These days an estimated five million people pass through Banff annually and, due to the environmental pressure caused by such large numbers, many feel that the town has been stretched to its limit. Actions to tackle this problem began in the early 1990s and in 1996, after two exhaustive years of research, the Banff-Bow Valley study compiled a 75-page document called *At the Crossroads*. Echoing the fears of many, the report stressed that if Banff's development plans and burgeoning visitor numbers were allowed to continue unchecked, the park's ecological integrity would be irrevocably harmed.

In the years since, the park management has become more coordinated and less visitor-centric, placing caps on townsite development and employing seasonal hiking restrictions in sensitive areas to reduce

» Population of Banff Townsite: 8721

» Average number of hours spent by a visitor in Glacier National Park: 11.9

» Mammals killed by cars in Jasper 2010: 132

Top Films

» **Brokeback Mountain** (2005)

Lean dialogue and stupendous acting characterize this unorthodox cowboy tale partly filmed in Kananaskis Country.

» **The Shining** (1980) The opening scene tracks a car plying its way along the Going-to-the-Sun Rd in Glacier National Park.

» **River of No Return** (1954)

The peroxide beauty of Marilyn Monroe is pitted against the natural beauty of Banff and Jasper.

» **Days of Heaven** (1978)

Terrence Malick's Magnus opus utilized Waterton and Banff for its stunning cinematography.

Top Books

» **The National Parks:**

America's Best Idea (2009) by Dayton Duncan and Ken Burns

» **Indian Trails of the Canadian Rockies** (1911) by Mary Schäffer

» **Night of the Grizzlies** (1969) by Jack Olsen