

Whitehorse Wildland Provincial Park



Pristine alpine meadows, sub-alpine forests, and clear mountain streams make Whitehorse Wildland Provincial Park a backcountry paradise. This 175 km² protected area provides prime habitat for bighorn sheep, grizzly bears and harlequin ducks.

Other special features include rare plants, alpine flowers, marine fossils, limestone caves with bat hibernacula, the Cardinal Divide Viewpoint, and the Fiddle Pass route to Miette Hotsprings. Day hikers, backpackers and horseback riders seeking a true wilderness experience can explore picturesque waterfalls and view breathtaking Rocky Mountain vistas.



Park Access

Whitehorse Wildland Park is located southwest of the town of Hinton. It is bordered on the west by Jasper National Park. Travel through the small town of Cadomin to Whitehorse Creek Provincial Recreation Area with a campground and equestrian facilities. This staging area marks the main access point into Whitehorse Wildland Park. If you continue past Whitehorse Creek PRA for 20 km, you will reach the Cardinal Divide Viewpoint. Be aware that gravel roads can be rough and snow can occur in all seasons due to the high elevation.

Please Note: Motorized vehicles are permitted on the main access road only and not on hiking trails. Written authorization is required to land aircraft in the park.

Wildlife & Natural Features

Whitehorse Wildland Park is home to many wildlife species including elk, moose, mule deer, bighorn sheep, grizzly bear, wolves, cougars, hoary marmot and pika. The Park also provides breeding habitat for harlequin ducks dependent on fast-flowing mountain streams for nesting and rearing their young. The Park is home to 128 bird species and more than 270 plant species.

Fossil impressions from prehistoric sea life can be found imbedded in the tops of mountains. Please be aware that removal of such fossils is strictly prohibited under the Provincial Parks Act.

Cadomin Cave is located just south of Cadomin. This extensive limestone cave system provides important bat habitat and is one of only four major bat hibernacula in Alberta. The cave is closed to the public to reduce the risk of white-nose syndrome spreading to the resident bats.

Hunting & Fishing

Hunting is permitted in Whitehorse Wildland Park during open seasons. Hunters must hold a valid permit and are subject to Alberta hunting regulations.

Note: hunting is prohibited in the Cadomin Cave Preservation Zone. When hunting in the park please respect other users and recognize that there may be hiking, cycling, camping, or other activities going on in close proximity. No fishing is permitted in Whitehorse Wildland Park.

Backcountry Safety

The wild and rugged nature of Whitehorse Wildland Park is a draw for many visitors. Yet, backcountry dangers can provide a challenge for even the most seasoned outdoor enthusiasts.

- Only minimal trail maintenance occurs. The network of trails and mountainous terrain can be disorienting.
- A good map, a GPS and survival gear are a necessity. There is no cell phone service in the park.
- There are no bridges, and creek crossings can be expected.
- Check local weather forecasts before you go. Be prepared for sudden changes in mountain weather.
- Snow is possible any month of the year. Hypothermia and wet cold conditions can turn a fun adventure into a life threatening emergency.
- Grizzly bears, black bears, and cougars live in the park.
- It is recommended that family and friends be informed of your planned route, camping spots, and estimated return time.



Contact

Whitehorse Wildland Information
Hinton Parks Office: 780-865-8395
Visitor Centre: 780-865-5600

Provincial Park Visitor Information
Web: albertaparks.ca
Phone: 1-877-537-2757

Illegal Activity/Public Safety (24/7)
Phone: 310-LAND (5263)

Fire Bans in Alberta
Web: albertafirebans.ca

Report-A-Poacher
Phone: 1-800-642-3800

Forest Fires
Phone: 310-FIRE (3473)

Emergency (Police, Fire, Ambulance)
Phone: 911

Recommended Resources

Alberta Guide to Sport Fishing Regulations and *Alberta Guide to Hunting Regulations* are published annually, available where you purchase fishing permits and online at srd.alberta.ca.

Alberta Parks brochures are online at albertaparks.ca:

- Bear Smart
- Living With Cougars
- Regulations brochure
- Research & Collection Permits
- Filming & Photography in Alberta Parks

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Camping

Whitehorse Creek Provincial Recreation Area offers front country campsites and equestrian facilities including corrals, hitching posts and loading ramps. Visit albertaparks.ca for more details. At the far west end of the campground is the trailhead into Whitehorse Wildland. There are four designated backcountry campsites in the park: Trappers, Sawmill, Whitehorse Creek Falls, and Fiddle campsites.

- Please use existing campsites. Camp on durable surfaces such as gravel and areas with sparse vegetation.
- Camp at least 60 meters from water. Avoid washing in streams. Detergents, soap and toothpaste are harmful to aquatic life. Scatter all wash water so that it filters through the soil.
- In areas without toilets, use a portable latrine and pack out your waste if possible. Otherwise, make a cat-hole latrine (20 cm deep) that naturally decomposes human waste. All toilets and waste water pits should be filled with soil and levelled when you vacate your campsite.
- Garbage should always be packed out of the backcountry, never buried. Wildlife can easily find and dig up old garbage pits, even in winter. Once accustomed to human food, these animals may become a problem for future visitors.



Campfires

- It is recommended that backcountry travelers use camp stoves. Backpacking stoves are efficient and leave no fire scars in the backcountry.
- In emergency situations, a wood fire may be a necessity. As much as possible, use an existing fire pit. Use sites that are clear of dry grass, bushes, leaves, tree trunks, tree roots, peat moss and overhanging branches.
- Dig or scrape down to mineral soil. Clear away any flammable materials within 1 metre of the fire pit.
- Use only dead wood. Live trees in the subalpine areas grow very slowly and should never be used for campfires.
- Never leave a campfire unattended. Make sure the fire is out and cold to the touch before retiring for the night and before leaving camp. Soak it thoroughly and stir it – and then soak it again.
- Do not bury your fire as the embers can continue to smoulder and can re-emerge as a wildfire.
- During periods of high fire hazard, campfires may not be permitted.



Hiking

Many of the park's trails follow in the historic footsteps of indigenous hunters, fur traders, coal miners and trappers.

While you hike:

- Use well-defined trails and avoid short-cuts across switchbacks. Short-cuts result in erosion and create unwanted parallel trails.
- Never drop litter along trails. Please keep a plastic bag handy and pick up any litter you find.
- Do not pick wildflowers. Collecting rocks, fossils and artifacts is not permitted – take a photograph instead.
- Your dog must be kept on a leash at all times. Remember, wildlife regard your dog as either prey or predator

Bear Safety

There are grizzly and black bears in the park. By using a few simple techniques, you can minimize the risk of a dangerous bear encounter.

- If possible, never travel alone in the backcountry. A larger group is always safer than a single hiker.
- Carry bear spray on a belt holster for quick access, and know how to use it.
- Make plenty of noise when approaching blind corners, dense shrubs and streams, and when walking into the wind. A loud shout every few minutes is more effective than bear bells. Do not wear earphones while on the trails.
- It is best to leave your pet at home, but if you do travel with a pet, keep it on a leash. Loose dogs can attract and irritate bears.
- Always keep your group together. Be especially diligent at keeping children with you at all times.
- Avoid areas if you see signs of recent bear activities: fresh digging on trails, bear scat, and claw marks on bear trees. A dead or scavenged animal site is especially dangerous.
- Hang all food, garbage, and scented items on designated bear poles or high in a tree at least 100 m from your sleeping area to discourage bears from investigating. Never store food or scented items in a tent.
- Make sure that your cooking area is 100 meters from your sleeping area to prevent food-odour contamination. Never sleep in clothes worn while cooking.
- Pack out all garbage in sealed bags. Never bury food scraps.
- At night, use a flashlight and move cautiously around your campsite.



Equestrian Use

Horseback riding in Whitehorse Wildland is a traditional activity. Local outfitters can be hired to take visitors safely on guided trips into the backcountry. If you plan a horseback trip into Whitehorse Wildland, please abide by these guidelines:

- Use only established horse trails and routes. Avoid braiding new trails.
- Horses are permitted on the Upper Whitehorse Trail, but the lower Whitehorse Trail is designated for hikers only.
- Be especially cautious when passing hikers or mountain bikers.

- Supplemental feeds such as hay, grain pellets and alfalfa cubes can be used to prevent over-grazing. Supplemental feed should be stored in sealed containers to prevent tampering by wildlife. Using hay as supplemental feed has the potential to introduce noxious weeds into the backcountry; grain or alfalfa pellets are preferable.
- Salt should be kept in a waterproof container and elevated above ground; this prevents leakage into the soil which can attract wildlife.
- Use ropes or approved electrical wire to make corrals. Make sure that horse holding areas are located at least 100 metres from any watercourse or body of water.
- Do not tie horses to live trees; this can cause damage to bark and eventually kill a tree.
- Scatter manure before breaking camp.



Trails and Points of Interest

Trail Note
All distances noted are one-way from the main trailhead.

1st Falls Trail – 0.3 km

From Whitehorse Creek Campground, this short stroll leads to the picturesque 1st Falls (Rudashy Falls). Water cascades over a series of slippery ledges; the rock ledge above is home to some American Dipper.

Leyland Basin Trail – 3 km

From Whitehorse Creek Campground, follow the trail past 1st Falls and take the right fork from the main trail. The trail leads to a historic quarry site with giant boulders.

Drummond Trail – 9 km

From Whitehorse Creek Campground, follow the main trail, taking the left Lower Whitehorse Trail. There will be a left fork for the Drummond Trail. The trail is a steady climb up into an alpine ecosystem with a series of creek crossings and waterfalls at the end of the valley.

Whitehorse Falls Trail – 12 km

From Whitehorse Creek Campground, follow the main trail to the junction for Lower Whitehorse Trail (left) or Upper Whitehorse Trail (right). The lower hiking route meanders along the creek and over rolling hills. The upper trail is the designated route for horseback riders. Both trails meet again at Trappers Campsite. Continuing past the campsite, you will eventually pass a turn off to the left leading to Sawmill Campsite. You will get to a junction for Whitehorse Creek Falls or Fiddle Pass and you will take the left fork to reach the 16 m high falls and Whitehorse Creek Falls Campsite.

Fiddle Pass Trail to Miette Hot Springs – 40 km

From Whitehorse Creek Campground, follow the trail past the junction for Lower Whitehorse Trail or Upper Whitehorse Trail, and continue to the junction of Whitehorse Creek Falls or Fiddle Pass. Take the right fork and follow a steep horse trail up past Fiddle campsite to reach Fiddle Pass. The top of the pass lies on the border between Jasper National Park and Whitehorse Wildland Park. The trail offers rewarding majestic views. From here the trail descends into Jasper and follows a scenic valley with a handful of creek crossings. Backcountry camping permits and reservations must be acquired ahead of time for overnight stays in the National Park.

Prospect Creek Trail – 5.4 km

Drive 2.7 km south of Whitehorse Creek Campground along the Grave Flats Road to reach the parking lot for the Prospect Creek Trail. Hike through the underpass tunnel to access Prospect Creek valley (only horses and hikers permitted). Take the junction to the right for Drummond Ridge with spectacular views of the valley.



Whitehorse Wildland park map

Mountain Park Cemetery & Historic Mining Town Site

Drive 8.5 km south of Whitehorse Creek Campground on Grave Flats Road to reach Mountain Park Cemetery. The cemetery and historic mining town site are designated heritage sites. Stop at a local visitor centre for a copy of the Coal History Tour Map.

Cardinal Divide Viewpoint

Drive 14.5 km south along the Grave Flats Road to ascend a rough and steep hill (caution is advised). The summit is the Cardinal Divide at an elevation of 2025 metres. This ridge is the divide between two major watersheds: the McLeod River and Athabasca River, which drain into the Arctic Ocean; and the Cardinal/Brazeau/North Saskatchewan rivers, which eventually drain into Hudson Bay. There are many unique alpine plants and wildflowers— for this reason, the trails here are for foot traffic only. Camping and fires are not permitted.

Cardinal Divide East Trail – 1.3 km to 3.8 km

From the Cardinal Divide Viewpoint parking lot, this trail travels up the hill to the northeast. You can continue along the ridge for 2.5 km for spectacular views of the McLeod River Valley, the McKenzie Gap, Tripoli Ridge, Cheviot and Prospect Mountains, and Rocky Pass.

Cardinal Divide West Trail – 3 km

From the Cardinal Divide Viewpoint parking lot, this relatively level trail travels west exploring beautiful alpine views and wildflower meadows. Experienced scramblers can continue up the left side of Tripoli Ridge to traverse the mountain. Caution is advised. There is significant exposure and fall hazards. Mountaineering gear and experience is essential.

Cardinal River Headwaters Trail – 13 km

Off-highway vehicles are permitted, but only as far as the Cardinal Falls. Drive south past the Cardinal Divide down a steep hill to reach the parking lot for the Cardinal River Headwaters Trail. From the trailhead, at 1.7 km, a small trail goes left toward Jasper National Park (open to hikers and equestrian users only). The trail to the right goes around the base of Tripoli Ridge and continues northwest, climbing gradually at first, then more steeply. You will cross open alpine tundra to reach Cardinal Falls near the head of the valley. The wildland park boundary is just beyond the falls.