

Willmore Wilderness Park



Ancient glaciers, high mountain peaks, thick forests and raging rivers define these 4,597 km² of untamed wilderness. Backpackers and horseback riders seeking a true backcountry experience can explore over 750 km of trails where wildlife abounds. Visitors to Willmore must be experienced and well equipped for backcountry adventure.

Note

Motorized vehicles (including motorized boats) are prohibited. Written authorization is required to land aircraft in the park.

Park Access

Willmore is located southwest of the town of Grande Cache in west-central Alberta, approximately 300 km northwest of the City of Edmonton. It is bordered on the west by the Province of British Columbia and on the south by Jasper National Park. The north end of the park joins with Kakwa Wildland Park, which forms the Kakwa-Willmore Interprovincial Park. There are three main access points into Willmore: Rock Lake Provincial Park, and Sulphur Gates and Big Berland Provincial Recreation Areas. Rock Lake and Sulphur Gates are equipped with equestrian facilities.



Equestrian Use

Horseback riding and outfitting in the Willmore are traditional activities with a rich history dating back to the fur trade. Local outfitters can be hired to take visitors safely on guided trips into the backcountry. Outfitters have first-hand knowledge of the landscapes and cultural stories. If you plan a horseback trip into the Willmore, please abide by these guidelines:

- Use established trails and routes.
- Be especially cautious when passing hikers.
- Supplemental feeds such as hay, grain pellets and alfalfa cubes can be used to prevent over-grazing and reduce competition with wildlife for food. 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.

- 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.
- Don't tie horses to live trees; this can cause damage to bark and eventually kill a tree.
- Scatter manure before breaking camp.
- Avoid soft and marshy edges when watering horses.
- Salt should be kept in a waterproof container and elevated above ground; this prevents leakage into the soil which can attract wildlife.

Camping

There are no official campsites in the Willmore. However, as much as possible, use existing campsites; as it is always better to camp on sites that are already impacted; where additional use won't be detrimental to the environment.



Wildlife

Willmore's wildlife thrives in the natural surroundings of the park. Grassy slopes provide excellent winter ranges for sheep and goats. Almost 20% of Alberta's mountain goats and 20% of the province's bighorn sheep live in Willmore and the park is also home to woodland caribou, moose, elk, grizzly bears, black bears, cougars, wolves, wolverine, and numerous small mammals.

Hunting & Fishing

Hunting and fishing are permitted in Willmore, subject to Alberta big game and fishing regulations. To ensure personal safety, park visitors are encouraged to wear bright colours during hunting seasons. For detailed information on hunting and fishing in Willmore, obtain the Alberta Guide to Hunting Regulations and the Alberta Guide to Sportfishing. Mountain whitefish and bull trout can be found in deeper pools. Bull trout are listed as a threatened species in Alberta and are "catch & release" only.

Trapping

Trapping is a traditional activity in Willmore Wilderness. If you spot traps, do not touch them or interfere with trap lines. Keep your dog on a leash and do not approach traps with your pet.

- Camp on durable surfaces (such as rock, gravel, and areas with sparse vegetation). Place tents on non-vegetated areas.
- Camp at least 60 meters from water. All toilet facilities, waste water disposal and fuel storage should be located at least 100 metres from lakes, rivers, and streams.
- 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.
- Avoid washing in streams and lakes. Detergents, soap and toothpaste are harmful to fish and other aquatic life. Scatter all wash water so that it filters through the soil.
- 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.

Backcountry Cabins

The majority of cabins in the Willmore are *patrol cabins* which are used by Conservation Officers on backcountry patrols. These cabins are locked and are off-limits to the general public. There are three *historic cabins* open for public use; these include: Summit Cabin, Sulphur Cabin, and Sheep Creek Cabin. Please use cabins with care and respect, packing out all garbage and leaving them clean and well maintained.

Campfires

- It is recommended that backcountry travelers use camp stoves. Backpacking stoves are lightweight, compact, efficient, and more convenient to use than wood fires. As well, they leave no 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.

Backcountry Safety

The wild and rugged nature of Willmore Wilderness is an irresistible draw for many visitors. Yet, the dangers of Willmore can provide a challenge for even the most seasoned outdoor enthusiasts.

- Only minimal trail maintenance occurs and there are no developed campsites in the park. To the uninformed, the 750 km network of trails and vast mountain ranges can be disorienting.
- Good maps, a GPS and survival gear are a necessity.
- There is no cell phone service in the park.
- There are no bridges and river crossings can be especially dangerous at high water.
- 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.

Hiking

Many of the park's well-established trails follow in the historic footsteps of Aboriginal hunters, fur traders, coal miners and trappers. The Rock Lake staging

- 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.

Bear Safety

There are grizzly and black bears in Willmore Wilderness 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.
- Remain alert. Keep your ears open. 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 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.

area provides a popular access into the Willmore via the Mountain Trail. For those with only a few days to explore, Seep Creek Trail soon heads north off the Mountain Trail to provide quick entry into alpine country with plentiful wildlife and extensive views. Further along, Mountain Trail bends southwest and climbs to Eagle's Nest Pass, offering a fine base camp for day-trip explorations of the surrounding alpine lakes and ridges. Mountain Trail then heads northwest along Rock Creek and provides access via West Sulphur Trail, to higher alpine terrain.

While most trips into Willmore are multi-day expeditions, there are also day-trip options. The 2.5 km trail from Sulphur Gates staging area to the scenic Eaton Falls makes a nice half-day outing, and the 18.5 km climb to the panoramic views of Adams Creek Lookout from Big Berland River staging area is a reasonable overnight trip.

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.



- 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.

Cougar Safety

Willmore Wilderness Park is home to cougars. These large and powerful cats will generally avoid encounters with humans. However, if you encounter a cougar, do not run, but back away slowly. If the cougar approaches or shows aggression, prepare to use your bear spray. Show the cougar you are not a prey animal and that you will fight back. Shout at the cougar and make yourself look larger by waving your arms and a walking stick. Never play dead with a cougar.

Contact

Alberta Parks Visitor Information

Web: albertaparks.ca
Hinton Office: 780-865-8395
Visitor Centre: 780-865-5600
Toll Free: 1-877-537-2757

Fire Bans in Alberta

Web: albertaparks.ca/firebans

Emergency (Police, Fire, Ambulance)

Phone: 911

Illegal Activity/Public Safety (24/7)

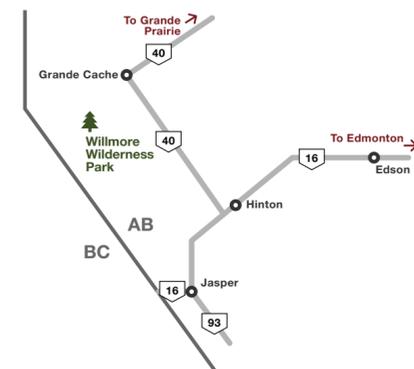
Phone: 310-LAND (5263)

Report-A-Poacher

Phone: 1-800-642-3800

Forest Fires

Phone: 310-FIRE (3473)

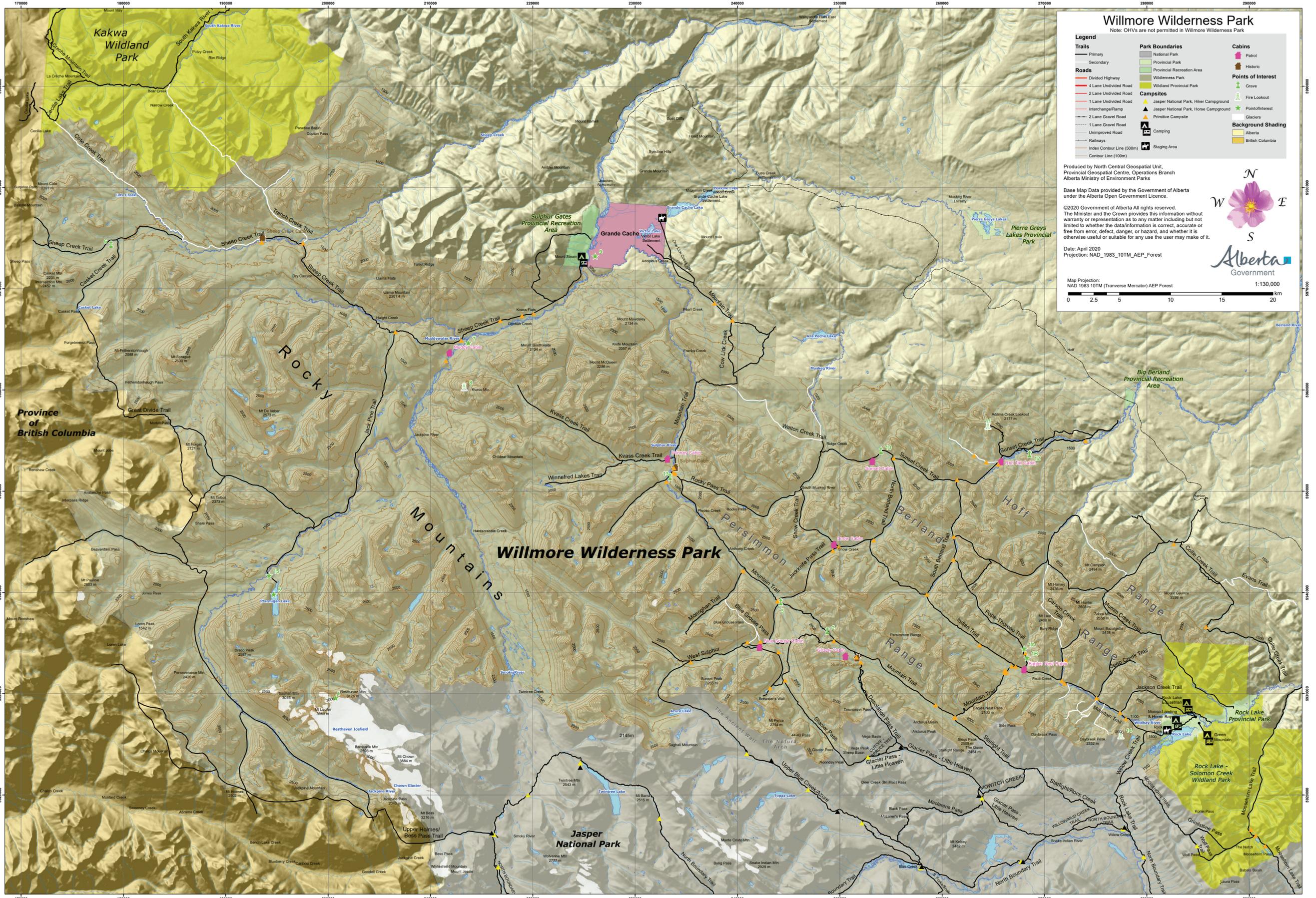


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Crossing Streams and Rivers

Crossing streams and rivers can be the most dangerous challenge that hikers confront. River crossings can be deceptively hazardous. Even a very shallow, swiftly flowing body of water can pack enough force to knock you off your feet. Use caution and common sense. After storm events, it may be best to wait until water levels drop, or backtrack to a different trail to get around a flooded area. When crossing, release your backpack so you can shed it quickly, use a hiking staff to provide balance, and cross facing upstream. If the depth of the water is above your thighs, turn back and look for a better location to cross.



Willmore Wilderness Park Map

Map Points of Interest

Willmore Wilderness Park is rich in culture and history. During your explorations of the park, you may encounter these points of interest:

- 1A. Steam Engine – from the Blue Diamond Coal Company, 1928.
- 1B. Coal Mine Cabins – from the Blue Diamond Coal Company, 1928.

- 2. Grave of Thappe – a member of the Beaver tribe who died on a winter hunting trip.
- 3. Grave of Baby Delorme – died 1908.
- 4. Resthaven Mountain – highest point in Willmore Wilderness Park (3,125 metres).
- 5. Ptarmigan Lake – largest lake in Willmore Wilderness Park.
- 6. Grave of George Hargreaves – died in his sleep in 1936 and buried at the base of Casket Mountain.
- 7. Clark's Crossing – a very dangerous river crossing named after Stan Clark, superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve in 1912.
- 8. Kvasv Lookout – decommissioned in 1972.
- 9. Sulphur Gates – dramatic cliffs and confluence of the Smoky and Sulphur rivers.
- 10. Washy Joe Angas – Washy Creek was named in honour of Washy Joe, a trapper and rancher and member of the Alexis Band.
- 11. Adam's Creek Lookout – named in honour of Adam Agnes. The tower opened in 1941.
- 12. Grave of Madelaine Fraser – the mother of Adam Joachim; died in 1904.
- 13. Grave of Pierre Delorme – died in 1906 after falling off his horse and hitting his head. Pierre Delorme was 6 foot 8 and blind.
- 14. Rock Lake Lookout – decommissioned in 1969.
- 15. Curly Philips Historical Cabin

