

Frequently Asked Questions

Grassi Lakes and Goat Creek Parking Areas Construction Project and Area Closure

Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park
Spray Valley Provincial Park

Where are Grassi Lakes and Goat Creek?

Grassi Lakes day-use area is located in Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park. It is one of the most popular year-round sites in Kananaskis Country due to its close proximity to the Town of Canmore and its unique viewpoints, attractions and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Goat Creek day-use area is located in Spray Valley Provincial Park. Goat Creek provides access to some of the region's most popular trails including Ha Ling Trail, High Rockies Trail, Goat Creek Trail and the East End of Rundle Route.

What is occurring?

As part of Budget 2022, Alberta is investing more than \$4 million to upgrade the Grassi Lakes and Goat Creek day use areas to address public safety issues and parking congestion while improving visitor experiences.

Grassi Lakes (Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park), Goat Creek (Spray Valley Provincial Park) and the surrounding area will be closed with construction is ongoing. This closure is scheduled to begin on April 1 and it is expected to last until the end of the year.

Why is this work needed?

Since 2019, visitation to Kananaskis Country has increased by 32 per cent. In 2020 and 2021, the region welcomed more than 5 million visitors annually.

Grassi Lakes and Goat Creek are two popular areas in the region and increased visitation has put increased pressure on existing facilities and the landscape. This work is necessary to address site degradation, public safety issues, emergency access, parking congestion and waste management challenges.

To provide formalized parking and trailhead facilities, Parks will be expanding four parking lots. To align with the parking lot work, trail construction work will occur on the Grassi Lakes trail and Goat Creek trail.

What will the work entail?

The project will:

- Expand and formalize the Grassi Lakes main parking lot.
- Refurbish portions of the Grassi Lakes trail.
- Formalize the Grassi Lakes overflow lot.
- Provide a road crossing and trail connection between the overflow and main lots.
- Provide separation and washroom facilities between the climber's lot and the Smith Dorrien Trail.
- Expand and formalize Goat Creek main parking lot.
- Replace two bridges on Goat Creek trail.

Why is Alberta Parks closing all of these areas and trails at once?

The area is being closed to reduce danger to contractors and the public, while maintaining cost-effectiveness and adhering to the project timeline. Seasons in the Rocky Mountains can be unpredictable outside of the summer months; therefore work must commence as soon as possible. It is not uncommon for the Goat Creek area to receive a large volume of snow as early as September.

Having the work completed at both sites this summer is the most cost-effective and efficient path forward. These upgrades are necessary and will have a positive impact for Albertans seeking to explore the area in the future.

What does the area closure include?

Trail Closures include:

- Grassi Lakes Trail
- Junkyard Trail
- Ha Ling Trail
- Miner's Peak Trail
- Goat Creek Trail
- East End of Rundle Route
- Reclaimer Mountain Bike Trail
- Riders of Rohan Mountain Bike Trail
- access to High Rockies Trail from Goat Creek

Climbing Area Closures include:

- Grassi Lakes Climbing Area
- Ha Ling Climbing Area
- East End of Rundle Climbing Area

Please note parking lots in the area will be under construction and closed.

Can I access trails from other parking lots or on foot from Canmore?

To protect workers and the public, the area will not be accessible while construction is ongoing. Conservation Officers will enforce the area closure under the *Provincial Parks Act*.

How long will construction take?

Construction is tentatively scheduled to start at the beginning of April and continue until December 2022. Alberta Parks will update the final schedule on www.albertaparks.ca/advisories. The full area closure will be in effect until construction is complete.

Why can't the contractor work one parking lot at a time so the alternate can stay open?

The contractor will have more than one crew working in different areas. Closing and opening various sections of parking lots and trails or providing reroutes is costly, time consuming and inefficient. To support completing this project in 2022, allowing access to some areas is not feasible.

What happens if I get caught in the closure?

Conservation Officers will enforce the area closure under the *Provincial Parks Act*. To support completing this project in 2022, keep safe and stay out of the closure and let the contractor finish the project without getting in their way.

Why can't I have access to the trails not under construction?

The parking areas will be closed during construction. There is no alternative for safe parking and trail access. Roadside parking is unsafe and will impede access for the construction vehicles hauling materials and equipment. Access for emergency response vehicles needs to remain clear without vehicles and pedestrian traffic. Some of the trails will be under construction by the contractor or trail crew to align with the parking lot closure.

Why is Ha Ling closed when I can ride my bike to the trail or get dropped off there?

Closing the trail reduces the volume of public who will be present in the area while construction is occurring. Large trucks will be hauling equipment, gravel and asphalt to Goat Creek parking lot and need the area to be free of people to work safely and efficiently. These trucks will also be travelling frequently up and down the steep, narrow and dusty Canmore hill. Encouraging cyclists to use this route increases the risk to their safety.

Why do both Grassi Lakes and Goat Creek need to be closed at the same time?

Both of these sites have high voltage transmission lines overhead. These lines require minimum clearances between the ground and line to allow safe operation of vehicles like the shuttle buses used for Roam Transit. A very detailed grading plan has been created to ensure the proper clearances so that in the future users can utilize a more environmentally-friendly mode of transportation to access their favorite sites. This will also afford new opportunities to users who cannot currently access the trailheads. The engineers have carefully detailed the plans so that any material not required on one site will be moved to another to achieve the final clearances needed. While this is a cost effective and more environmentally sustainable approach, it also means the two sites need to be worked on concurrently.

Why can't this work be done in the spring or fall instead of the busy summer season?

The area is being closed to reduce danger to contractors and the public, while maintaining cost-effectiveness and adhering to the project timeline. Seasons in the Rocky Mountains can be unpredictable outside of the summer months; therefore work must commence as soon as possible. It is not uncommon for the Goat Creek area to receive a large volume of snow as early as September.

How did you determine what size to make the Grassi parking lot?

Alberta Parks gathered and analyzed trail counter data over a number of years to determine how many recreationalists have been using the area. Staff with expertise in the ecology of the area and wildlife movements through the corridor were consulted and a plan was created to balance conservation and recreation. The parking lot has been 'right-sized' and roadside parking will be eliminated and replaced with opportunities for future transit service. This will allow for a sustainable level of use on the trails and maintain the experience that park users love about Grassi Lakes for future generations.

I purchased a Kananaskis Conservation Pass specifically to use these sites. Can I get a refund now that the sites are closed?

Kananaskis Country offers hundreds of kilometers of nearby maintained trails that are ready to be explored.

Your Kananaskis Conservation Pass provides access to over 25 campgrounds, 85 day use areas, hundreds of kilometers of trails and many other amazing features like creeks, canyons and lakes to discover and explore.

If you are looking for a family-friendly experience, consider Troll Falls, Heart Creek, Grotto Canyon, Chester Lake or Wedge Pond.

If you're looking for a challenge, consider Yamnuska, Prairieview Trail to Barrier Lake Lookout, Nihahi Ridge or Baldy Pass. Before you go, be sure to check AlbertaParks.ca for trail conditions and advisories.

Our staff is happy to make recommendations. Please visit <https://www.albertaparks.ca/parks/kananaskis> or call the Kananaskis

Information Line at 403-678-0760 to find many other options that will interest you.

We have out-of-town visitors and would like to take them to Grassi Lakes. Where should we go instead?

There are numerous options that highlight the beauty of the Rockies and offer family-friendly experiences.

Our recommendations:

- Troll Falls
- Heart Creek
- Grotto Canyon
- Chester Lake
- Wedge Pond (short hike)
- Bow Valley Provincial Park Trails (e.g., Middle Lake and Many Springs)
- Rawson Lake
- Marl Lake Interpretive Loop
- Elbow Falls
- Watridge Lake to Karst Springs Trail
- Barrier Lake Interpretive
- Montane Interpretive Trail
- Flowing Water Interpretive Trail

What's another challenging hike that we can do instead?

We would recommend researching alternate hikes with similar distance, elevation gains and technical terrain and determine what suits your skill, experience and comfort level.

Some suggestions include:

- Yamnuska - The full route is a scramble, involving exposure, but the route to the east ridge is a hike
- Prairieview Trail to Barrier Lake Lookout
- Nihahi Ridge
- Kananaskis Fire Lookout Trail
- Galatea Creek Trail
- Highline Trail
- Baldy Pass Trail
- Try a leg or two of the High Rockies Trail.
- We recommend considering a guided hike with a certified guide if you are not sure where to go. Arrive early and plan multiple options, parking can be very busy during peak summer season.

- Check [Albertaparks.ca](https://www.albertaparks.ca) for trail conditions and advisories before planning a trip.
- Our staff is happy to make recommendations. Please visit <https://www.albertaparks.ca/parks/kananaskis> or call the Kananaskis Information Line at 403-678-0760 to find many other options that will interest you.

COVID restrictions have caused so much disruption to our lives. Why close access to such popular parks when it's so important to people to have access to the outdoors?

While we recognize the construction is inconvenient, these needed upgrades will support both conservation and improved visitor experiences. Alberta Parks has been working hard to create a cohesive plan and design that will allow users to enjoy these locations for many years to come.

Throughout the duration of the area closure, we are encouraging Albertans and visitors to discover other parts of Kananaskis Country. There are hundreds of maintained trails nearby that are ready to be explored and our team has compiled a list of suggested alternatives for recreationalists of all ages and skill levels.