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Banff National Park of Canada

Lake Louise, Castle Junction and Icefields Parkway Areas

Along the spine of the North American continent, the Rocky Mountains poke high into the clouds and blue glaciers cling to their slopes. Green forested valleys below provide a vital food source for grizzly bears and other species. This is the Lake Louise and Icefields area of Banff National Park, a landscape of wonder which has been dubbed the "hiking capital of Canada". Use the trail descriptions to choose a hike suitable for everyone in your party.

During a very brief period when the autumn colours of the larch tree display their brilliant yellow needles, new and experienced hikers seek out trails that offer larch viewing opportunities. Experience trails from moderate to difficult through thick forests to subalpine meadows. Try one; you'll likely want to try two!

[Castle Junction Area](#)

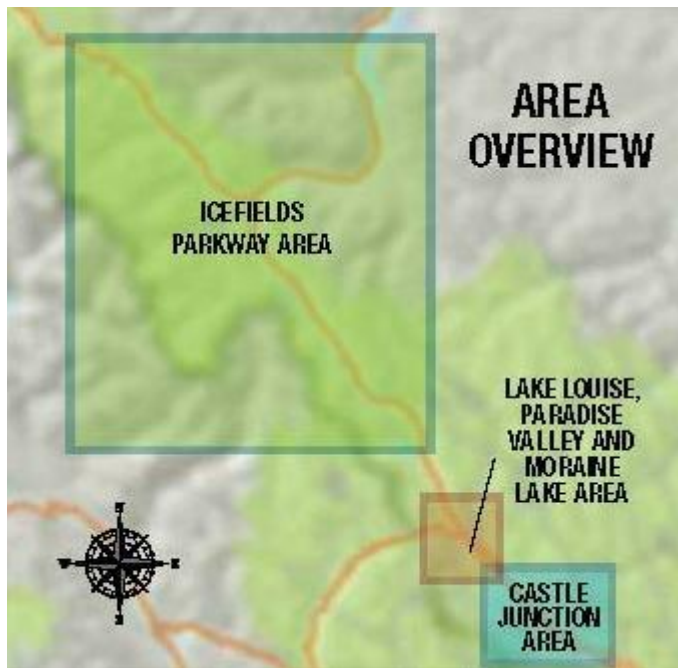
[Lake Louise and Boulder Pass Area](#)

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CASTLE JUNCTION AREA

1) Castle Lookout

Moderate: 3.7 km one way; 520 m elevation gain; 3 to 4 hour round trip

Trailhead: 5 km west of Castle Junction on the Bow Valley Parkway (Highway 1A).

In the mid-20th Century, Banff erected numerous fire towers where spotters could detect flames from afar. The Castle Lookout tower has long since been removed, but the expansive views of the middle Bow Valley remain.

2) Boom Lake

Moderate: 5.1 km one way; 175 m elevation gain; 3 to 4 hour round trip

Trailhead: 7 km west of Castle Junction on Highway 93 South.

Travel on a heavily forested trail featuring some of the largest subalpine trees in Banff National Park. Your ultimate destination is a pristine lake backed by an impressive mountain rampart.

3) Stanley Glacier

Moderate: 4.2 km one way; 395 m elevation gain; 3 hour round trip

Trailhead: In Kootenay National Park, 13 km west of Castle Junction on Highway 93 South.

The hike to Stanley Glacier features fire and ice in equal measures. The lower trail, which burned in 1968 and 2003, is regrowing with lodgepole pines, willows, and colourful wildflowers. Along the upper trail, you'll get clear views of Stanley Glacier and its numerous meltwater falls.

4) Arnica Lake

Difficult: 5.1 km one way; 120m elevation loss; 580 m elevation gain; 5 hour round trip

Trailhead: Vista Lake Viewpoint on Highway 93 South, 8 km west of Castle Junction.

Lose elevation before you gain it en route to Arnica Lake; the views and variety make this destination worth the ups and downs.

5) Twin Lakes

Difficult: Via Vista / Arnica Lake trailhead: 8.0 km one way; 120 m elevation loss; 715 m elevation gain; 6 to 7 hour round trip

Trailhead: Vista Lake Viewpoint on Highway 93 South, 8 km west of Castle Junction.

Hike under a canopy of larch trees while the continental divide guides you to Arnica and Twin Lakes.

6) Taylor Lake

Difficult: 6.3 km one way; 585 m elevation gain; 4 to 5 hour round trip

Trailhead: Taylor Creek Day-use area 8 km west of Castle Junction on the south side of the Trans-Canada Highway.

Thick forest gives way to subalpine meadows as you climb steadily to this classic glacial lake. This trail holds its snow through the early part of the hiking season, so it's best from July on.

Side trip to O'Brien Lake: 2.1 km one way, 55m elevation gain from Taylor Lake. Extend your Taylor Lake hike by visiting this charming tarn.

VILLAGE OF LAKE LOUISE AND BOULDER PASS AREA

29) Bow River Loop

Easy: 7.1 km round trip; no elevation gain; 2 hour round trip

Trailhead: Parking lot opposite the Lake Louise train station (restaurant).

Travel on a pleasant trail in the rich riparian zone of the Bow River. These waters travel across the prairies to their ultimate destination in Hudson Bay, over 2500 kilometers downstream of Lake Louise. Interpretive trail.

30) Louise Creek

Easy: 2.8 km one way; 195 m elevation gain; 1.5 hour round trip

Trailhead: From the Samson Mall parking lot, walk along Lake Louise Drive to a bridge crossing the Bow River. Cross the bridge and then look for the trailhead on the downstream side of the bridge.

Hike through a thick subalpine forest, following the entire length of Louise Creek as it rushes from Lake Louise to the Bow River.

31) Tramline

Easy: 4.5 km one way; 195 m elevation gain; 2.5 hour round trip

Trailhead: Parking lot opposite of the Lake Louise Station Restaurant.

Follow in the footsteps – or trolley wheels – of travelers who, a century ago, were dropped off at the railway station and then ferried, by tram, on this 3% railway grade to the Chateau Lake Louise.

32 Boulder Pass

Difficult: 8.6 km to the pass; 640 m elevation gain; 6 to 7 hour round trip

Trailhead: Fish Creek parking area, off Whitehorn Road, 3 km north of Lake Louise.

After 4 km on a wide access road, you will reach a world dotted with lakes and inviting alpine meadows. From the pass, you get a spectacular view into a remote corner of Banff National Park.

Side trip to Baker Lake: 3.4 km one way, 130 m elevation loss from Boulder Pass. Visit the stunning shores of Baker Lake in the valley below Deception Pass.

Side trip to Deception Pass: 2.4 km one way, 145 m elevation gain from Boulder Pass. Hike over to this windswept pass if you have energy to spare.

UPPER LAKE LOUISE AREA

Trailheads: Upper Lake Louise parking area, 4 km from the village of Lake Louise. Because of the number of options from this trailhead, you have the opportunity to “mix and match” many of the trails in the Upper Lake Louise area to suit your abilities and interests.

22 Lake Louise Lakeshore

Easy: 2 km one way, no elevation gain, 1 hour round trip

This accessible stroll allows visitors of all abilities to explore Lake Louise. At the end of the lake you'll discover the milky creek that gives the lake its magical colour.

23) Fairview Lookout

Easy: 1 km one way; 100 m elevation gain; 45 minute round trip

Leaving from the boathouse on Lake Louise, this short, steep hike offers you a unique look at both the lake and the historic chateau.

24) Lake Agnes

Moderate: 3.4 km one way, 385 m elevation gain, 2.5 to 3 hour round trip

Framed by a quaint European style tea house (seasonal), the Lake Agnes hike is the most "civilized" way to see the Rockies. To get there, hike up the well maintained trail and enjoy a beautiful tarn tucked underneath towering peaks.

Side trip to Big Beehive: 1.6 km one way; 135 m elevation gain from Lake Agnes. Beyond Lake Agnes, a switchback trail climbs the Big Beehive for a stunning panorama of Lake Louise and the Chateau.

Side trip to Little Beehive: 1 km one way, 105 m elevation gain from Lake Agnes. The Little Beehive was once the site of a fire lookout, and offers commanding views of the Bow Valley.

25) Plain of Six Glaciers

Moderate: 5.3 km one way; 365 m elevation gain; 4 hour round trip

Beyond Lake Louise you'll discover a high mountain treasure chest; a collection of impressive peaks and glaciers. Here, you can relax and enjoy the view or rest at a quaint Swiss-built tea house (seasonal). Connect the Lake Agnes and Plain of Six Glaciers trails, via the Highline trail, to form a 14.6 km, 5 hour round trip loop.

Side trip to Abbot Pass Viewpoint: 1.5 km one way; 50 m elevation gain; 1 hour round trip
Look down into crevasses on the Lower Victoria Glacier, and look up to Abbot Hut, one of the highest buildings in Canada.

26) Saddleback

Difficult: 3.7 km to pass; 595 m elevation gain; 3 to 4 hour round trip

From the boathouse on the shore of Lake Louise, rise steadily up to Saddleback for tantalizing views of Mount Temple and Paradise Valley. Here you'll find good larch tree viewing in the fall.

27) Fairview Mountain

Difficult: 5.1 km to summit, 1013 m elevation gain; 5 to 6 hour round trip

In a region that was explored by Swiss Mountain guides in the early 20th century, it makes sense to challenge your inner mountaineer with a steep hike up a famous peak. And the "fair" view at the top? It's downright spectacular!

28) Sheol/Paradise Connector

Difficult: 4.1 km (connector only), 500 m elevation gain / loss (depending on direction); 1-2 hours one way

Trailheads: Upper Lake Louise parking or follow Moraine Lake Road for 2.5 km to the Paradise Valley parking lot on the right hand side.

Connect the Saddleback and Paradise Valley trails by using the Sheol / Paradise connector. A car shuttle may be needed depending on your route choice.

PARADISE VALLEY AREA

39) Lake Annette

Moderate: 5.7 km one way; elevation gain 245 m; 4 hour round trip

Trailhead: Follow the Moraine Lake Road for 2.5 km to the Paradise Valley parking lot on the right hand side.

The steady hike through the subalpine forest is a prelude for the wonderful sensory experience that will greet you at Lake Annette.

40) Paradise Valley & Giant Steps

Difficult: 10.3 km or 10.9 km one way, elevation gain 385 m, 7 to 8 hour round trip

Trailhead: Follow the Moraine Lake Road for 2.5 km to the Paradise Valley parking lot on the right hand side.

Here's a chance to inhale great views of Mount Temple, identify midsummer wildflowers and witness dramatic surroundings at the Giant Steps waterfall.

41) Sentinel Pass Connector

Difficult: 2.3 km one way (connector only), elevation gain / loss 505 m (depending on direction), 1 to 2 hours one way.

Trailheads: Same as Paradise Valley area trails or Moraine Lake area trails.

Connect the Sentinel Pass and Paradise Valley Trails by using the Sentinel pass Connector. A vehicle shuttle is required. Route finding may be required on the rocky slopes on the north side of Sentinel Pass. Check with the Lake Louise Information Centre for more details.

MORAINE LAKE AREA

Consolation Lake Trailhead: drive 14 km from Lake Louise along Moraine Lake Road. Start at the bridge near the Rockpile at Moraine Lake.

All other trails: begin just beyond Moraine Lake Lodge.

33) Moraine Lake Lakeshore

Easy: 1.5 km one way; no elevation gain; 45 minute round trip

This stroll allows visitors of all abilities to explore Moraine Lake. Along the trail you will gain a magnificent view of Mount Fay and the Fay Glacier.

34) Consolation Lakes

Easy: 2.9 km one way, elevation gain 65 m, 2 hour round trip

Hiking to Consolation Lakes requires much less effort than most of the Moraine Lake trails, but rewards the hiker with views of high alpine meadows, enormous talus slopes and the Quadra Glacier.

35) Eiffel Lake

Moderate: 5.6 km one way; elevation gain 370 m; 4.5 hour round trip

The trail to Eiffel Lake splits off from the Larch Valley trail and takes you to a glorious alpine lake with a panoramic view of the Valley of the Ten Peaks.

36) Larch Valley / Minnestimma Lakes

Moderate: 4.3 km one way; 535 m elevation gain; 3.5 to 4 hour round trip

Hike into a unique larch forest high above Moraine Lake. Views of the Ten Peaks are breathtaking.

37) Sentinel Pass

Difficult: 5.8 km one way; elevation gain 725 m; 4.5 to 5.5 hour round trip

Steep switchbacks lead to a glorious viewpoint of two famous valleys: Larch Valley and Paradise Valley.

38) Wenkchemna Pass

Difficult: 9.7 km one way; elevation gain 720 m; 7.5 to 8 hours round trip

Travel to Eiffel Lake and beyond, wandering steadily into a high alpine environment to reach this spectacular pass on the Continental Divide.

ICEFIELDS PARKWAY AREA

7) Bow Summit Lookout

Easy: 2.9 km one way; 245 m elevation gain; 2.5 hour round trip

Trailhead: Highway 93 North, 40 km north of the Lake Louise junction, at the Peyto Lake parking lot.

From the highest point on the Icefields Parkway (2070 m), hike beyond the Peyto Lake viewpoint on the upper self-guided nature trail, then follow an old fire road to the lookout. Watch for pikas, marmots and ptarmigan.

8) Parker Ridge

Easy: 2.7 km one way; 250 m elevation gain; 2.5 hour round trip

Trailhead: Highway 93 North, 41 km north of Saskatchewan Crossing or 9 km south of the Icefield Centre.

After a series of switchbacks you'll be rewarded with dramatic views of the Saskatchewan Glacier – headwaters of the Saskatchewan River. Help maintain this fragile alpine ecosystem by staying on the trail.

9) Bow Glacier Falls

Moderate: 4.6 km one way; 155 m elevation gain; 3 hour round trip

Trailhead: Highway 93 North, 36 km north of the Lake Louise junction, 400 m down the Num-Ti-Jah Lodge access road.

At the base of Bow Glacier Falls, amid the spray and roar, you can witness the birth of a river. The Bow River, part of western Canada's largest watershed, begins as meltwater tumbling down from the Wapta Icefield.

10) Helen Lake

Moderate: 6.0 km one way; 455 m elevation gain; 4 to 5 hour round trip

Trailhead: Highway 93 North, 33 km north of the Lake Louise junction across from the Crowfoot Glacier Viewpoint.

Tucked well into the Main Ranges of the Canadian Rockies is a breathtaking lake in a valley abounding with alpine wildlife and grand vistas.

11) Cirque Lake

Moderate: 4.2 km one way; 150 m elevation gain; 3 hour round trip

Trailhead: Trailhead: Highway 93 North, 57.5 km north of the Lake Louise junction in the Waterfowl Lakes Campground.

This path is thickly forested, but offers beautiful views of mountains and glacier at the shore of the lake. Note that the trail is often muddy.

12) Chephren Lake

Moderate: 3.5 km one way; 80 m elevation gain; 3 hour round trip

Trailhead: Same as for Cirque Lake.

Chephren Lake lies underneath the brooding walls of Howse Peak and Mount Chephren. This trail is often very muddy.

13) Sunset Lookout

Moderate: 4.5 km one way; 390 m elevation gain; 3 to 4 hour round trip

Trailhead: Highway 93 North, 16.5 km north of the Saskatchewan River Crossing.

There is no question that old fire tower locations offer good views. A 1.6 km branch off the Sunset Pass trail allows you to enjoy an almost vertical view down to the confluence of the Alexandra and North Saskatchewan Rivers.

14) Wilcox Pass

Moderate: 4 km one way; 335 m elevation gain; 3 to 3.5 hour round trip

Trailhead: Highway 93 North, 47 km north of Saskatchewan River Crossing, or 3 km south of the Icefield Centre at the entrance to the Wilcox Creek campground in Jasper National Park.

Rise quickly above treeline to the expansive meadows of this glacier-carved landscape. Bighorn sheep are sometimes seen in this area. Please help keep them wild and safe – do not approach or feed them.

15) Nigel Pass

Moderate: 7.2 km one way; 365 m elevation gain; 4.5 to 5.5 hour round trip

Trailhead: Highway 93 North, 37 km north of Saskatchewan Crossing or 13 km south of the Icefield Centre.

A consistent and gentle grade ensures that it doesn't take long to reach treeline as you head towards the wide-open scenery of the Banff / Jasper boundary.

16) Molar Pass

Difficult: 9.8 km one way; 530 m elevation gain; 7 to 8 hour round trip

Trailhead: Highway 93 North, 24 km north of the Lake Louise turn-off.

Travel into Banff National Park's wilderness as you rise well above treeline to an expansive alpine meadow.

17) North Molar Pass

Difficult: 11.5 km one way; 760 m elevation gain; 8 to 9 hour round trip

Trailhead: Same as for Molar Pass.

At the Molar Pass trail junction you have the option of travelling to the alpine meadows of Molar Pass or heading left to this higher pass, a rugged and stark landscape of rocky meadows.

18) Dolomite Pass

Difficult: 9.0 km one way; 550 m elevation gain; 6 to 7 hour round trip

Trailhead: Same as Helen Lake.

After you've made it to Helen Lake, you can extend your hike and get a geology lesson at the same time: at the pass you'll have great views of both Dolomite Peak, a picture perfect layer-cake mountain, as well the wine-coloured folds below the summit of Cirque Peak.

19) Sarbach Lookout

Difficult: 5.2 km one way; 590 m elevation gain; 4 to 5 hour round trip

Trailhead: Highway 93 North, 71 km north of the Lake Louise Junction, or 6 km south of Saskatchewan Crossing, at the Mistaya Canyon parking lot.

This trail is a good physical workout, but since the fire lookout closed in 1971, forest growth has increasingly blocked the views.

20) Glacier Lake

Difficult: 8.9 km one way; 210 m elevation gain; 220 m elevation loss, 6 to 7 hour round trip

Trailhead: Highway 93 North, 1 km north of the Saskatchewan River Crossing.

Snow-free early in the season, this rolling wooded trail takes you to a picturesque lake set below the peaks seen by early European explorers.

21) Sunset Pass

Difficult: 8.2 km one way; 725 m elevation gain; 6 to 7 hour round trip

Trailhead: Same as for Sunset Pass.

Climb steadily through a thick forest to reach an expansive meadow atop Sunset Pass. Look west for a

panorama of some of the largest peaks in the park, or east into the remote White Goat Wilderness Area.

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