



The Wapta Traverse

Program Details

Hut to Hut Ski Mountaineering in the Canadian Rockies

This is the quintessential Canadian Rockies 'hut to hut' ski tour and one of the best ways to experience classical ski-mountaineering. The Wapta Icefields spread for many miles north along the continental divide from the Lake Louise area. With vast glaciers, easy peaks and a superlative hut system, the area is perfect for a great ski traverse.

We offer two versions of the traverse: the 4-Day Basic Traverse and the 6-Day Extended Traverse. The Basic Traverse will suit those with more limited time and is probably a better option for less experienced skitourers, it starts from Bow Lake. The Extended Traverse includes the entire Icefields and starts from Peyto Lake.

2010 Dates

Basic Traverse: February 12 - 15, March 11 - 14, April 1 - 4, April 22 - 25

Extended Traverse: March 15 - 21, April 5 - 11

Price

4-Day Basic Traverse **\$845 CDN**

Price includes guiding, hut fees, evening meals, transport to trailhead if necessary, National Park 'Wilderness Fee'.

Not Included is sales tax, breakfasts, lunches, snacks (package available for an extra \$90 or gratuities. Cancellation insurance can be purchased for an additional \$44.

6-Day Extended Traverse **\$1285 CDN**

Price includes guiding, hut fees, evening meals, transport to trailhead if necessary, National Park 'Wilderness Fee'.

Not Included is sales tax, breakfasts, lunches, snacks (package available for an extra \$135) or gratuities. Cancellation insurance can be purchased for an additional \$68.

Optional pre and post trip accommodation packages are available from \$60 per person per night for shared room lodging (\$120 for single occupancy). Purchase with booking. Subject to availability.

Itinerary

The 4-day traverse begins at the Yamnuska office at 8.00am on the first day. On the 6-day traverse it's important to get an early start on the first day. To achieve this we will be meeting the

evening before at 7.30pm, also at the Yamnuska office. The Yamnuska office is located at 200, 50 Lincoln Park, Canmore. See this map for location.

Basic Traverse

Day 1: Meet us at our office in Canmore at 8:00am for introductions, trip review and equipment check. Once ready we drive about 1 hour and 15 minutes north to Bow Lake, our start point. After an avalanche safety session, we commence the climb to Bow Hut which is located at 7700 ft. on a shoulder adjacent to the snout of the Bow Glacier, this will take us between 3 and 5 hours. We cross frozen Bow Lake then ski up the canyon which leads to the amphitheater below Mounts Olive and St. Nicholas. After a final steep section we reach the welcome warmth of this spacious cabin. We travel 6km and climb 2000ft / 610m. If time and energy permit we can head back out and get some powder turns on the headwall of the Bow glacier above the Hut.

Day 2: Today we start the Traverse, our objective Balfour Hut, located at 8000ft. near the snout of the Balfour Glacier. We get there by climbing the 'Headwall' one last time then heading over the 9,500ft. high col between Mt. St. Nicholas and Olive. If it's a nice day we can leave skis on the col and climb a beautiful snow ridge to the summit of Olive at 10,200ft. From there we can see tomorrow's route over the Balfour High Col. A long, easy descent brings us to the Hut. It will take us upwards of 4 hours depending on whether we climb Olive or not. Not including Olive we travel 8km and climb 1800ft / 550m. Add another 1.5km and 700ft / 215m if we climb Olive.

Day 3: First light will see us heading out of the Hut and onto the crux of the Traverse, the crevassed slopes leading to the 10,000ft. Balfour High Col. This is undoubtedly the most spectacular section of the traverse as we pass beneath Balfour with its towering seracs and corniced ridges. We need reasonable visibility for this part. Once on the high col we can look across the gently descending slopes of the Waputik Glacier to Mount Daly with the Scott-Duncan Hut, today's objective, below. It's a phenomenal panorama ... to the north the Front Ranges and to the south the granite spires of the Purcells with the main peaks of the Rockies between! Life is magnificent! This section will take around 6 hours. Travel 10km, climb 2000ft / 610m.

Day 4: Not far now! From the Hut we ski towards the rocky thumb of Mt. Daly where the fun really begins. This long descent sees us swooping down along snowy benches, through treed glades and along a canyon. We then finish skating across Sherbrooke Lake to a trail through the trees that brings us to the Trans Canada Highway at West Louise Lodge on the Kicking Horse Pass. We should be back in Canmore by late-afternoon. Travel 13km, descend 4800ft / 1465m.

Extended Traverse

Day 1: Meet us at our office in Canmore at 7:30pm for introductions, trip review, equipment check and to pack gear.

Day 2: Being ready to go we can leave early, by 7:30am for the 1.5 hour drive north to Peyto Lake, our start point. After an avalanche safety session, we commence our traverse by descending through the forest to Peyto Lake. After crossing the Lake we travel up the outwash valley from the Peyto Glacier to the base of the lateral moraine which we climb, carrying skis for a short section, to the edge of the glacier. From here we travel a further 3km up the Glacier to reach the Peyto Hut which is perched on a rocky shoulder overlooking the curve in the Glacier. Peyto Hut is completely surrounded by glaciers and peaks and is arguably the most spectacular location of any of the Wapta huts. We travel 9km and climb 2200ft / 670m.

Day 3: We will spend a day practicing crevasse rescue and ski touring from the Hut. There are some great options including an ascent of Mt. Rhonda (10,000ft. / 3048m) or the Baker Col. Expect to be out for 6 hours.

Day 4: We recommence the traverse and head over the Icefields to Bow Hut (6km & 900ft./275m) with the option of another ski ascent en-route. Bow Hut (7700 ft./ 2348m) is located on the edge of the spectacular amphitheatre below Mt. St. Nicholas with its hanging ice cliffs. Here we join up with the folks on the Basic Traverse. From here the itinerary is identical to that on the Basic Traverse.

Day 5: Today we start the Traverse, our objective Balfour Hut, located at 8000ft. near the snout of the Balfour Glacier. We get there by climbing the 'Headwall' one last time then heading over the 9,500ft. high col between Mt. St. Nicholas and Olive. If it's a nice day we can leave skis on the col and climb a beautiful snow ridge to the summit of Olive at 10,200ft. From there we can see tomorrow's route over the Balfour High Col. A long, easy descent brings us to the Hut. It will take us upwards of 4 hours depending on whether we climb Olive or not.
Not including Olive we travel 8km and climb 1800ft / 550m. Add another 1.5km and 700ft / 215m if we climb Olive.

Day 6: First light will see us heading out of the Hut and onto the crux of the Traverse, the crevassed slopes leading to the 10,000ft. Balfour High Col. This is undoubtedly the most spectacular section of the traverse as we pass beneath Balfour with its towering seracs and corniced ridges. We need reasonable visibility for this part. Once on the High Col we can look across the gently descending slopes of the Waputik Glacier to Mount Daly with the Scott-Duncan Hut, today's objective, below. It's a phenomenal panorama ... to the north the Front Ranges and to the south the granite spires of the Purcells with the main peaks of the Rockies between! Life is magnificent! This section will take around 6 hours.
Travel 10km, climb 2000ft / 610m.

Day 7: Not far now! From the Hut we ski towards the rocky thumb of Mt. Daly where the fun really begins. This long descent sees us swooping down along snowy benches, through treed glades and along a canyon. We then finish skating across Sherbrooke Lake to a trail through the trees that brings us to the Trans Canada Highway at West Louise Lodge on the Kicking Horse Pass. We should be back in Canmore by late-afternoon.
Travel 13km, descend 4800ft / 1465m.

Guides & Group Size

Your guides are certified by the internationally-recognized Association of Canadian Mountain Guides and also licensed by Parks Canada. There will be a maximum of 7 participants per guide. Group maximum is 10 plus guides, minimum 4.

Difficulty & Prerequisites

Typically whilst the glacier terrain is not steep and even has flat sections, there is still a lot of height gain and loss each day. Participants need to be at least strong intermediate downhill skiers (on either telemark or 'alpine' gear), willing to tackle conditions ranging from powder to crust. They should be making parallel turns on hardpack and in the backcountry must expect to take a few spills and be able to pick themselves up and carry on. They must be in good physical condition, able to carry a 40lb pack for several hours a day over several kilometers.

The toughest uphill is on the 1st day, the most difficult descent is on the last day. Participants should be comfortable traversing and controlling their speed in tight terrain. We recommend the "Basic Traverse" for those pressed for time or for those newer to ski mountaineering.

The "Extended Traverse" begins with a considerably more physically demanding approach day and is recommended for those with a higher level of aerobic fitness.

No prior ski mountaineering experience needed. This program is not suitable for snowboarding.

Training

Any training you can do will greatly enhance your experience. The ideal would be to do some ski touring or cross country skiing in your own area. Don't try to go too fast but concentrate on even breathing and pacing. The hillier the terrain the better and if you can carry a backpack then better still. Running is also good training. A WORD OF CAUTION: START GRADUALLY DON'T PUSH TOO HARD TOO SOON.

Transportation

Participants are responsible for their own transport to Canmore which is a 1hour (100km) drive west from Calgary.

To get to Bow Lake we rely on participants car pooling. If willing to help, share in a rental car or needing a ride please let us know so that we can put other participants in touch with you. We will assist with the vehicle shuttle at the end of the traverse.

Frequent shuttles connect Calgary International Airport and Canmore. Greyhound Bus Lines (1 800 661 8747) serves Canmore from points east and west along the Trans-Canada Highway. Call 609 0300, 609 1490 or 609 8897 for taxis in Canmore.

Return to top

Accommodation

During the trip we stay in alpine huts operated by the Alpine Club of Canada. Sleeping areas are communal and facilities basic. We cook on propane stoves and melt snow to get water for drinking, cooking and washing.

Accommodation in Canmore is not included. For your convenience we can arrange bed and breakfast hotel rooms at \$120 per night. These will be at the recommended Westridge Country Inn. Double or single occupancy, the cost is the same. For those wishing to defray this cost we will try to pair them with other participants. This accommodation can be booked with the trip online or by calling us. Subject to availability.

You can also make your own arrangements. Check our links page for a range of recommended Canmore accommodations. In addition the Alpine Club of Canada Clubhouse (403 678-3200) is a good hostel here in Canmore with good facilities and reasonable prices.

Meals

Breakfasts, lunches and trail snacks are NOT included but can be arranged for an extra charge. Evening meals and hot drinks will be supplied by Yamnuska.

Food Package

Folks taking the food package will have breakfasts, lunches and trail snacks supplied. Please let us know, well in advance, if you have any dietary restrictions. Dinners are supplied on all trips.

- Basic Traverse Food Package \$90 plus GST
- Extended Traverse Food package \$135 plus GST

Equipment & Clothing

You will need to bring your own clothing, skis, poles, climbing skins, avalanche gear, backpack and sleeping bag. We have many of these items available to rent and if not can pre-arrange them for you. We supply group safety items (ropes, harnesses, crevasse rescue gear etc).

Program Details, page 4 of 6

Yamnuska Mountain Adventures

200, 50 Lincoln Park, Canmore, Alberta, T1W 3E9, CANADA
1 866 678 4164 / 1 403 678 4164 info@yamnuska.com

You will be able to leave excess gear in Canmore whilst on the trip
The equipment and clothing you bring will have a big impact on the quality of your experience.
Please be sure to bring all items listed. If unsure about anything please don't hesitate to call and ask us!

Skis

There are two ski systems you can use: System 1: 'Alpine Touring' skis are essentially downhill skis with a special touring binding which allows the heel to lift whilst going uphill or across the flats and then 'locks down' to become a regular downhill safety binding. We recommend this system to anyone with a background of downhill skiing who is not already an advanced telemark skier. System 2: 'Telemark' skis. These should only be used for this program if you are at least an advanced-intermediate telemark skier with some backcountry experience. This system is more difficult and less forgiving than the other.

Which should you use? If you are a downhill skier then you should use 'Alpine Touring' gear. Only if you are already an advanced 'Telemark' skier should you bring 'Telemark' gear.
Both types of gear can be rented in Calgary and Canmore prior to the trip

Equipment List

You need to bring:

- Skis. We recommend a short (160 - 185cm) wide ski designed for powder
- Climbing skins 'Stick-on type'
- Ski Poles
- Ski Boots
- Climbing harness loaners available
- Locking biners (2), non-locking biners (2) loaners available
- Prussick slings (3) loaners available
- Avalanche Beacon rentals available
- Collapsible Avalanche Probe rentals available
- Shovel (lightweight snow shovel) rentals available
- Backpack (at least 65L, large enough for sleeping bag, spare clothes, and your share of group food & equipment). rentals available
- Sunglasses and ski goggles
- Water bottle (at least 1 liter capacity)
- Sun block and lip cream
- Pocket knife
- Sleeping Bag, must be warm as some huts are unheated. We recommend at least a '3-season' bag. Expect hut temperatures to below freezing overnight. Make sure you bring a stuff sac that will reduce your bag to its minimum size (i.e. one with compression straps) so you don't use up all the room in your pack. rentals available
- Small Flashlight or Headlamp with fresh batteries
- Small Blister & 1ST-Aid Kit ('moleskin', plasters & Tylenol is enough)
- Camera & spare film
- Personal Toilet Items (keep to a bare minimum)
- Ear Plugs for dorm sleeping (optional)
- Insulated Booties or Hut Slippers

Clothing List

We suggest layers of light, easily carried clothing that allow for fast and easy adjustment to best suit fast changing temperature conditions. We discourage cotton clothing as it causes rapid heat loss when wet. Feel free to call us if you have any questions about what to bring.

- Polypro underwear (top & bottom)
- Warm pants (pref. insulated or fleece)
- Warm shirt (not cotton)

Program Details, page 5 of 6

Yamnuska Mountain Adventures

200, 50 Lincoln Park, Canmore, Alberta, T1W 3E9, CANADA
1 866 678 4164 / 1 403 678 4164 info@yamnuska.com

- ❑ Medium weight fleece sweater.
- ❑ Fleece Jacket
- ❑ Light insulated jacket or vest
- ❑ Waterproof jacket with hood (Gore-Tex or nylon)
- ❑ Waterproof pants (Gore-Tex or nylon, with side zippers)
- ❑ Socks (wool outer & polypro liner), several sets
- ❑ Wool or fleece hat
- ❑ Waterproof ski mountaineering gloves or mitts
- ❑ Gaiters, only needed if your ski pants are not elasticized at the ankle
- ❑ Neck tube
- ❑ Sunhat

Skis, Boots, Skins & poles can be rented from:

- Canmore: Gear Up - (403 678-1636)
- Banff: Mountain Magic - 224 Bear St. (Tel: 403 762-2591)
- Calgary: Campus Recreation, University of Calgary - Phys-Ed Building (Tel: 403 220-5038)
- Calgary: M.E.C. - 830-10 Ave. S.W. Calgary (Tel: 403 363-0122)
- Yamnuska has sleeping bags and backpacks for rent.

Weather Note

The Wapta Icefields can be prone to whiteout in storm conditions. If the weather is too severe on Day 3 we may not be able to cross the Balfour High Col. We can wait a day for conditions to clear but there is a chance we may not complete the Traverse as described and have to ski back out via Bow Hut. There is no way of eliminating this risk. Even if this happens the trip is still an excellent ski mountaineering experience.

Insurance

There is no charge for rescue so long as you have a valid National Park Entry Pass (included in cost). It is wise, though to ensure that your health plan will cover you in case of illness or accident whilst here. Obtain extra coverage if necessary.

Booking Information

Please book as early as practical to avoid disappointment.

Basic Traverse: We require a \$311 CDN deposit including taxes. Final payment is due eight weeks before the program start date. To avoid unnecessary cancellation penalties we suggest you take our cancellation insurance for an extra non-refundable \$44, this must accompany your deposit. If requiring the food package please order this when first booking.

Extended Traverse: We require a \$473 CDN deposit upon booking. Final payment is due eight weeks before the program start date. To avoid unnecessary cancellation penalties we suggest you take our cancellation insurance for an extra non-refundable \$68, this must accompany your deposit. If requiring the food package please order this when first booking.

For detailed Booking Instructions and Conditions, please visit our website.

Please note that you will be required to sign our waiver before commencing the trip. A copy of the waiver can be viewed on our website.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you need to know anything else about this program.