



Wapta Ice Hike

Program Details

North of Lake Louise in Banff National Park a series of gentle Icefields stretch for miles across the Great Divide of the Canadian Rockies. Known collectively as the Wapta Icefields they provide a unique opportunity for fit walkers and hikers to enjoy amazing mountain scenery that is normally reserved for mountaineers. In the course of this three-day traverse we start at Bow Lake and hike up to and over the Bow Glacier to the Peyto Glacier staying in alpine huts en-route.

This program is ideal for those wanting a more casual mountaineering experience.

2010 Dates

June 18 - 20, July 2 – 4, July 16 - 18, July 31 - August 2, August 28 - 30, September 17 - 19

Cost

\$850 CDN

Includes guides, hut accommodation, meals, mountaineering gear, Park 'Wilderness Pass' and local transfers.

Not included: Canmore accommodation, Gratuities & 5% Goods and Service Tax (GST)*. Cancellation insurance available for \$45.

Optional pre and post trip accommodation packages are available from \$80 per person per night for shared room lodging (\$160 for single occupancy). Purchase with booking. Subject to availability.

* a 50% rebate of the GST is available to non-residents of Canada.

Meeting Place and Time

We will meet you at our Yamnuska Mountain Adventures office at 8.00am the morning of Day 1.

Our office is located at 200, 50 Lincoln Park, Canmore. See this map for location.

For your greater convenience we offer a pre-meeting shuttle service within Canmore. Please let us know in advance where you will be staying if needing this service. Pickup will occur between 7.30 and 7.50am.

Please ensure that you have your hiking equipment with you.

Program Itinerary

Day 1: Bow Lake - Bow Hut

Meet us at our office in Canmore at 8:00am for introductions, trip review and equipment issue and check. After packing up, it's an hour and a half drive north to Bow Lake where we commence the hike to Bow Hut.

We start on the "tourist trail" which follows the lakeshore to the head of this turquoise coloured lake then up the river flats beyond. The "tourist trail" experience finishes partway up a steep trail next to a small but spectacular gorge the river has cut into the limestone. Here the gorge is bridged by a gargantuan boulder which we use to gain the other side where the mountaineer's trail starts.

This trail leads us past old moraines then up through the forest until it opens out into a massive alpine cirque surrounded by peaks and glaciers. We hike on a rough trail through the rocky flats until a final ascent brings us to the Bow Hut which is located at 2350m on a shoulder adjacent to the snout of the Bow Glacier.

The Hut has magnificent views of the surrounding peaks and glaciers as well as back down the canyon to the main valley.

This will take us between 3 and 5 hours. Distance 6km, elevation gain 550m.

Day 2: Bow Hut - Peyto Hut

We get up early to make the most of what will be a spectacular day as we cross the Icefields to Peyto Hut.

The Bow Glacier is the source of the Bow River which flows down valley through Lake Louise, Banff, Canmore and finally out onto the plains past Calgary to eventually join the south Saskatchewan River.

Today we climb its gentle slopes below the impressive crag of Mt. St. Nick to top out on the flat expanse of the Wapta Icefield. After a side trip to flat-topped Polaris Peak from where we can enjoy an expansive panorama with peaks in every direction, we continue west to where the Peyto Glacier drops gradually away, Peyto Hut being on a bench inside the sweeping turn the Glacier takes as it drops now to the north. This is a fantastic spot, in every direction are glaciated peaks and colors in shades of rock and ice.

Hiking on the glacier we will be wearing a harness and be roped together for maximum safety. The glacier, like those everywhere, has many crevasses and whilst most are easily seen and avoided, we take maximum precautions. Your guide is certified, trained and very experienced on glacier terrain. We will also wear crampons (spikes that fit onto the soles of our boots) to give us firm traction on the ice. The glacial surface is not very steep. Walking with the crampons on is very easy. This will take between 4 and 6 hours. Distance 6km. Elevation gain 550m, loss 460m. Additional hiking may be available depending upon conditions.

Day 3: Peyto Hut - Peyto Lake

It's mostly down hill today as we drop back down to the Glacier from the Hut and follow it almost to its snout. Hiking on mostly white ice we pass mill holes down which glacier streams drop noisily into the bowels of the ice. We will see how glaciers preserve elements of the past, the exposed ice being hundreds of years old and bringing not only rocks to the surface but also spruce needles and twigs from long ago fires and the occasional bird or rodent long ago caught on the ice by early winter snows. It is usually hard to visualize the effects of global warming, not so on the Peyto Glacier which is in full retreat and your guide will be surprised when shown where the glacier so recently was!

We leave the Glacier just before the snout and climb a short distance on old moraines to a rather ramshackle research station from which research on glacial retreat is sporadically carried out. From here we traverse to the top of the lateral moraine which descends into the lower valley. If we have the energy we can take a side trip to Cauldron Lake which occupies an adjacent hanging

basin. With its still black waters are surrounded by tundra, rock and ice it is at once serene and wild!

Back to the main trail we now start down the moraine wall track which leads us down into the lower valley to the bridge which crosses the raging torrent issuing from the Peyto Glacier now far above. We follow river flats and a bit of forest until we reach the gravel flats above Peyto Lake. One of the signature lakes of the Canadian Rockies with its beautiful turquoise waters, Peyto Lake marks the end of our traverse. From its shores we hike up through mature forest to where we suddenly emerge once more on a "tourist trail" it being the paved path taken by thousands of tourists as they hike to look over Peyto Lake.

From here we return to Banff and Canmore to head off on our own trails.

How difficult is it? How fit and experienced need you be?

This trip is rated moderate. Backpack weights are moderate, participants will be carrying personal clothing and mountain gear plus a fair share of food. By keeping personal gear light, pack weights need not exceed 14kg (30lbs). Please read our Travelling Light & Making Backpacking More Fun for information and suggestions for clothing and equipment.

This program is suitable for those with prior hiking experience. Being in good shape already will add to your enjoyment of the trip. Whilst we will be on glacier terrain often associated with mountaineering, you don't need any mountaineering experience. You will be using basic equipment which your guide will show you how to use. Your guide will also show you how to walk on the glacier and will explain and interpret the terrain for you.

You need to have some confidence in your hiking skills as the hardest hiking is actually below the glaciers where we will travel on trails that are often rough and rocky. However there is no technical climbing of steep ice or rock slopes involved. We will hike at a regular and steady pace that conserves energy but you must be in as good as possible hiking shape before you come. We cannot emphasize enough that training pays great dividends in enjoyment. We suggest you train by walking and/or cycling and/or hiking (ideally in hilly terrain).

Guides and Group Size

Because this hike takes place on glaciers your guide will be a certified mountain guide who is trained and qualified to lead you across glaciers. The guide is also licensed by Parks Canada. Minimum group size will be 4 people. There will be a maximum of 6 guests per guide and no more than 12 guests per trip.

Accommodation and Meals

During the trip we stay in alpine huts operated by the Alpine Club of Canada. Sleeping areas are communal and facilities basic. The Huts are equipped with propane stoves, pots, pans, plates and cutlery. There is no running water. We gather water from nearby streams and lakes for drinking, cooking and washing.

Accommodation in Canmore is NOT included. For your convenience we can arrange bed and breakfast hotel rooms for these and other nights at \$160 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 the links page on our website for a range of Canmore accommodations. Excess luggage can be left at your hotel or our office.

We supply all meals and trail snacks from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 3. Trail cuisine is constructed from lightweight ingredients including our Yamnuska custom-made dehydrated dinners. Please specify any special dietary requirements you have on booking so we can incorporate them into our menus. In case of more complicated diets a surcharge may apply.

Getting to Canmore and Transportation

Canmore is situated 100km (65miles) west of Calgary on the Trans-Canada Highway. It is well served by scheduled bus lines both from Calgary (airport and downtown), Banff (20km west) and points further west. Calgary International Airport is well connected to major cities throughout North America and Europe. Once in Canmore we will supply all transport needed for the trip.

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 8790, 609 0300, 609 1490 or 609 8505 for taxis in Canmore.

Clothing and Equipment

We supply harnesses, crampons and all necessary mountain gear plus a full emergency and first-aid kit. You will need to bring personal equipment (backpack and sleeping bag) and clothing. In particular it is important that you have good, waterproof hiking boots for this trip. If you don't have these we have plastic mountaineering boots you can rent.

Yamnuska Mountain Adventures does have rental and retail equipment such as sleeping bags, mats, and backpacks. Contact us in advance to reserve.

What you bring will have a big impact on the quality of your experience, we especially urge you to read our notes on lightweight gear and clothing. Clothing and gear lists can be downloaded from the trip webpage.

Insurance

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

To Book

Please book as early as practical to avoid disappointment. A deposit of **\$312 CDN** (including GST) is required at time of booking. Final payment is due eight weeks before the start of the trip. To avoid unnecessary cancellation penalties we suggest you take our medical cancellation insurance for an extra non-refundable \$45, this can only be purchased at the time of 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 hike.