

Things to remember

Safety rules in the Rockies

Now that you have decided to visit the Canadian Rockies, you are about to embark on a true love affair with breathtaking scenery, interesting historical sites, magnificent national parks, and some of the friendliest people on the planet.

As you travel through Canada's special locales, you will find yourself in a world of discovery and adventure, where each new vista can open your eyes to a new story. Here in the Canadian Rockies, you will experience the vastness of nature, where flora and fauna thrives in surroundings that speak of a history that goes far, far back in time.

When traveling through the Canadian Rockies, it is important to treat your surroundings with care. Here are a few things to remember as you enjoy your adventure:

- It is against the law to disturb wildlife. This includes touching, enticing, or harassing animals in any form.
- Feeding wildlife is prohibited.
- If you travel with pets, they must be leashed.
- Disable any firearms that you may be carrying.
- Leave all natural elements where they are. This includes flowers, rocks, or artifacts such as antlers.
- Do not leave graffiti or any other type of mark on anything.

If you see anyone violating park regulations, please call the Park Warden at:

1-888-WARDENS (927-3367)

Please report all sightings of bears, wolves, or cougars to the nearest park warden or to the information centre. Make sure you report any aggressive behavior shown by any animal, no matter how small. Some wildlife species are monitored for research and safety purposes, so this information is important.

Driving in the mountains:

With all the beautiful scenery that will surround you along with the abundance of visible wildlife, it can be easy to be-

come distracted. The most dangerous activity in Canadian parks is driving, so please be attentive when on park roads. Observe speed limits and pull over to the designated pull-out areas when you wish to fully appreciate the sites.

Speed limits are:

90 km/hr (56 mph) on major roads

60 km/hr (37mph) on secondary roads

Wildlife along the roadside:

With such an abundance of wildlife it is important to remain alert while driving so as to avoid accidents. Here are a few tips for a safe and responsible journey:

- Stay alert, even when a highway is fenced. Although fences have reduced wildlife deaths, some animals may climb or jump over or burrow underneath them.
- Be extra careful around the sunrise and sunset hours. These are the times when animals are most active.
- At night, watch for the shining eyes of animals. Try to scan ahead for their movements so that you can give them a wide berth.
- If you spot one animal, there are most likely more nearby.
- If you see an animal by the road, slow down and warn other motorists by flashing your hazard lights.
- Watch for reduced speed limits of 70 km/hr (43 mph) on major roads. This indicates areas where animals have been struck and killed.

Wildlife in the parks:

When hiking or camping in the parks, there are several rules that will ensure that both you and the animals that live in the area stay safe. Always remember that the animals live in the area to survive and as visitors in their habitat, we must always be respectful of their habits and cognizant of how we share their space. Ask park staff about wildlife safety and how you can help to maintain it, or read the Parks Canada wildlife publications found at www.pc.gc.ca

Remember to follow these rules:

- Never give wildlife food, including birds

Human food is unhealthy for wildlife

Acclimating wild animals to human food can make them become aggressive

- Always keep a safe distance from wildlife

Use binoculars or a telephoto lens for a closer view of animals

Stay at least 100 metres (10 bus lengths) away from bears, wolves, and cougars

Keep a healthy respect for wildlife, giving them the space that they need to feel comfortable

- Seal all garbage in wildlife-proof bins
- Never leave food outside where it can be reached by wild animals
- Never leave your pet unattended outside as it can be considered food by bears, cougars, and coyotes
- Deer, elk, and moose can be unpredictable, especially females with their young and males during the mating season (September through November). Stay the recommended distance away from these animals to avoid potential attacks.

• Dogs can be attacked by deer and elk protecting their young. Make sure that when you walk your dog, you keep it closely leashed. Stay well away from deer and elk as they may attack, even when not provoked.

- Caribou will react strongly to dogs because they resemble their main



predator, the wolf. To reduce a caribou's stress and increase its chance for survival, many areas within the parks have been closed to dogs. Check with Parks Canada to see where you can bring your pet.

Remember that wolves, coyotes, and cougars are carnivores. The chance of these animals approaching a human is slight, but if you do come in contact with one of them, send a clear message that you are not prey:

- Pick up small children immediately.
- Face the animal and retreat slowly. Do not run or play dead.
- Maintain steady eye contact with the animal.
- Try to appear bigger by holding your arms or an object over your head.
- If the animal continues to approach, deter an attack by yelling, waving a stick or throwing rocks.
- If you are attacked, fight back. Hit the animal with a heavy stick or a rock.

Bears along the roadside

If you see a bear near the roadside, do not stop. If bears become too accustomed to seeing people, even when they are in vehicles, they begin to lose their natural fear of humans. When this happens, they begin to lose their wildness and instead may develop behavioral patterns that can jeopardize their survival. Habituated bears can become increasingly aggressive, which necessitates the need to destroy them for public safety reasons.

Driving by a bear without stopping can

help save the bear's life.

Bears in the parks

When you are in Canadian Rocky Mountain parks, you are in grizzly and black bear country. Protecting these magnificent beasts is as much your responsibility as those who tend the parks. It is rare that bears will attack humans in the mountain parks, but to feel confident, there are certain things you need to know.

- Travel in groups. Groups of four or more are the least likely to be attacked.
- Look for fresh bear droppings, diggings, or paw prints.
- Make noise to let bears know that you are coming. Shout or sing loudly as their hearing is no better than ours. This gives them time to move away.
- Keep your dog on a leash at all times.
- Never approach a bear. Stay at least 100 metres away.
- Be extra cautious from late July to mid-September, which is berry season. Berries are a bear's favorite food.

If you do encounter a bear here are some life-saving tips to remember:

- Back away slowly. Never run.
- Stay calm and move decisively. This will indicate that you are not a threat.
- Speak to the bear in a normal tone of voice. This helps to identify you as a human while satisfying his/her curiosity.
- If you are in a group, bunch up or join other nearby hikers.
- Leave the area or wait until the bear

moves away. Always leave the bear with an escape route.

It is extremely rare for a bear to attack a person with its claws or teeth. Even if an encounter looks potentially aggressive, usually the bear will move away. If a bear does attack, it will be because the bear feels defensive or because its behavior has become predatory.

If the bear is feeling defensive it is usually because it has been surprised. He or she may have been protecting or feeding cubs and sees you as a direct threat.

- If you have pepper spray, use it according to instructions.
- If a bear makes contact, play dead. Usually this is enough for the bear to decide to walk away.
- Lie on your stomach with your legs apart, making it difficult for the bear to flip you over.
- Keep your backpack on to protect your back.
- Cover the back of your head and neck with your hands.

If a defensive attack lasts more than two minutes, the bear may have shifted to a predatory position. In this case, fight back! It is very rare that a bear will stalk and attack you along a trail or attack you at night in your tent. If this should happen:

- Climb a tree or try to escape into a car or building.
- If you can't escape, do not play dead.
- Use pepper spray and do whatever it takes to let the bear know you are tough and will not give in.

