

Jasper National Park of Canada

Climate

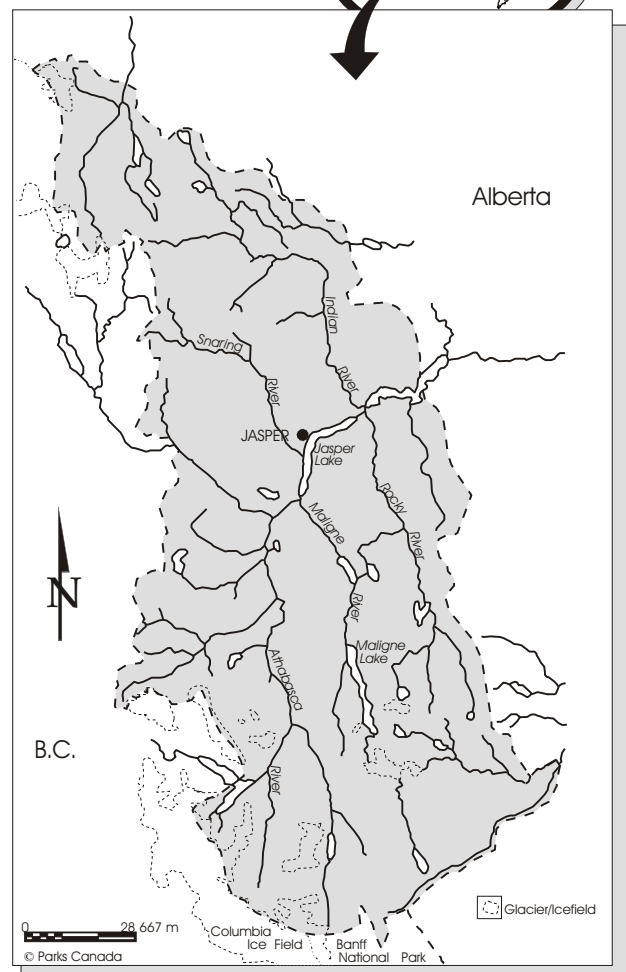
Dramatic variations in Jasper's climate are caused by a combination of elevation, rainshadow effects, and latitude. Generally, winters are long and summers cool and short, with only occasional hot spells. Average January highs are -7°C , while July averages to 22°C . These temperatures apply to valley bottoms. At higher elevations temperatures are about $5\text{-}7^{\circ}\text{C}$ cooler. Annual precipitation ranges from less than 380 mm at lower elevations to over 1 250 mm at higher elevations.

Geology

The Front and Main Ranges of the Rocky Mountains are found in Jasper and are composed of layers of limestone, shale and quartzites. At least four ice ages have modified the shape of the valleys and peaks. The Park protects part of the colossal Columbia Icefield, headwaters for several of Canada's major rivers. Jasper (along with Banff, Yoho, and Kootenay) was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985 on the National Park system's 100th anniversary.

Location

Jasper is Canada's fifth national park. It was established in 1907. Located along the Continental Divide in west-central Alberta on the British Columbia border, Jasper is part of the world-famous Rocky Mountains with all their rugged splendour and scenic beauty. The 10 878 km² park is about 360 km west of Edmonton, and is one of the five national parks that represent the Rocky Mountain Natural Region. The others are Yoho, Kootenay, Banff, and Waterton Lakes. Jasper is located in the Montane Cordillera Ecozone.



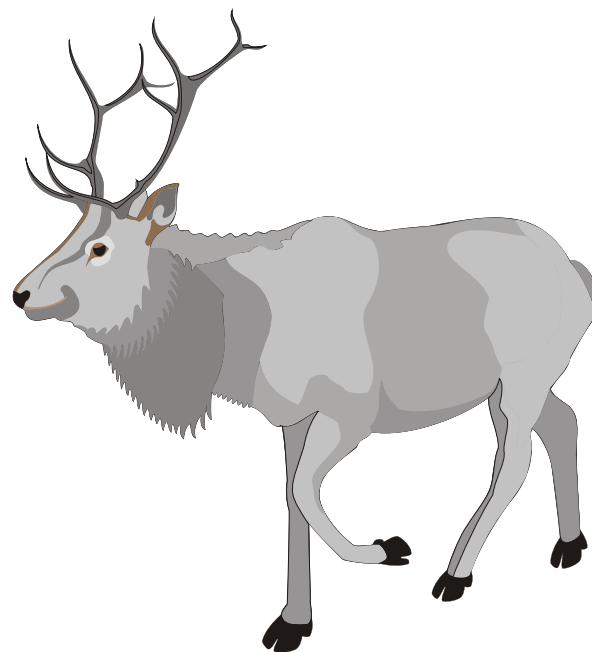
Vegetation

Three distinct vegetation zones exist in this mountainous region, largely because of the inherent changes in elevation. The montane zone is the lowest of the three, and is characterized by grassy meadows, wetlands and forests of Douglas fir, white spruce, trembling aspen and lodgepole pine. The subalpine zone of the slopes supports a largely closed coniferous forest of Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, and lodgepole pine. Some open meadows found here are covered with a thick carpet of wildflowers in the summer. The highest of the three zones is the alpine region. This is an area of treeless meadows, rock and ice where only the hardiest of plant and lichens persist.



Wildlife

Jasper is famous for its wildlife. Some 53 mammal species are found here, including moose, elk, mountain goat, bighorn sheep, white-tailed deer, mule deer, cougars, black bears and a secretive population of grizzly bears. More than 280 species of birds, including Golden and Bald Eagles, have been identified. The park's major watersheds contain rainbow trout, brook trout, lake trout, northern pike and whitefish. Only one species of toad, three frogs, one salamander and two types of snakes have been recorded.



Activities

Visitors to Jasper can enjoy a multitude of activities, including camping at one of 10 campgrounds, hiking along 1 200 km of trails, tours of the Athabasca Glacier, driving the scenic Icefields Parkway and visiting the interpretive Glacier Gallery at the Columbia Icefield. Canyons, waterfalls and lakes attract visitors, including Maligne Lake, the largest glacier-fed lake in the Rockies. The park offers excellent fishing, mountain climbing, cycling, horseback riding, canoeing, swimming, and downhill and cross-country skiing. Visitors can also take a tram tour to the top of the Rockies for a view of life above the treeline.

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