

Alberta Parks Q & A 2020

Alberta Parks Contact Centre for Reservations and Public Information 1-877-537-2757

Here are some of the top inquiries that VIC staff across the province have asked. In general, park regulations are the same this year. The only update are the additional measures that the Chief Medical Officer of Health requires us to implement to reduce the spread of the COVID-19.

The answers to these and many other questions can be found on albertaparks.ca/FAQS.

Rotating banners on the landing page, each connect to a different page full of details about camping, [group reservations](#), [COVID measures](#), etc.

Campsite bookings can be made at Reserve.AlbertaParks.ca. The landing page for albertaparks.ca also has a hot button that links you to our [list of first-come, first-serve campgrounds](#).

Many of our visitors this year are experiencing provincial campgrounds for the first time and need guidance on what to expect and etiquette/ regulations.

[Alberta Parks has regulations that all visitors must follow](#). We have resumed all of our standard regulations for this season. Eg. there is still maximum [of 6 people permitted per campsite and maximum of 3 pieces of equipment](#) (vehicles, tents, trailers) and of the 3 no more than 2 accommodation units

The changes visitors need to keep in mind are those [the Chief Medical Officer of Health has put into place](#) for all Albertans that apply to all gatherings in public places (outdoor as well as indoor). Even in Alberta Parks, people are required to maintain physical distancing, if you're ill do not go to a park, do not gather in groups >200 in outdoor (non-seated) settings, etc. Due to high touch points, we are recommending that visitors bring their own hand sanitizer and toilet paper to reduce transmission opportunities.

There is a [GOA web page dedicated to all things Albertans may ask about COVID rules](#).

When visiting any provincial park or campground, obey all signs in the park, and the directions given by park staff and operators.

- Q. What are provincial parks hours of operation?
- A. Day Use is 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. In campgrounds check-in time is 4 p.m. and checkout time is 2 p.m.
- Q. Are Parks open?
- A. All parks are open.
- Q. Do the campgrounds at provincial parks accept tents?
- A. Provincial Parks are accepting tents. (Outhouse facilities are available)
- Q. What activities are available at the parks during these times?
- A. There are no COVID-19 restrictions on normally permitted activities. (Hiking, mountain biking, canoeing, boating, swimming, fishing, camping). Physical distancing between cohorts/families on beaches is required and we recommend that hikers wear a face mask if hiking on a trail where physical distancing can not be maintained, rather than stepping off of the trail to allow

people to pass. In some parks, where they can be maintained safely, playgrounds are open. For this season, boat & equipment rentals are suspended.

- Q. Castle Provincial Park, Waterton Lakes and other Alberta Parks campgrounds close by have gone reservation only this year. Most of our tourists did not know that (nor did we initially) and got down here with not much access to first come camping sites. Is AB Parks going this way completely now?
- A. Waterton Lakes is a National Park (not managed by Alberta Parks). Waterton Reservoir Provincial Recreation Area is first-come, first-serve. Also in the Castle Provincial Park, Lynx Creek Campground is first-come, first-serve as well as the random camping areas #1-7. Many Alberta Parks campgrounds were switched to fully reservable, if already on our reservation system, to reduce cash handling in alignment with Alberta's health guidelines. At this time the results of making the reserveable campgrounds 100% reservable are being reviewed to determine whether or not to continue this for future camping seasons. You can find the complete list of current [first-come, first-serve](#) campgrounds on our website.
- Q. Is there access to showers/running water facilities at the campgrounds? Where is this info? Campers need to know before they come and whether these changes are going to become permanent changes or not. Most people do understand the changes and we are trying to accommodate helping them find sites as much as we can.
- A. [Wherever it is operationally feasible, showers and flush toilets will be open by July 30th](#). Each park will make the decision based on whether they have enough staff to be able to maintain clean and safe facilities for their visitors. Campers can find out whether or not showers and flush toilets are open under the amenities section on the specific campground web page. Most parks have water taps in the campgrounds. Some of our campgrounds have not had potable water since Alberta Health stopped testing water provided from hand pumps. If no potable water is available at a particular park it will be noted on the specific campground web page in the notes near the bottom of the page. Also, you can find out if a park has drinking water by the symbol for water being present among the amenity symbols on their web page.
- Q. Which Alberta Parks are open and what facilities are open/are offered at each? Some of this information can be found online, however majority of it, unfortunately cannot be. This information would be extremely useful and helpful for our visitors.
- A. All parks are open. All parks are providing vault toilet facilities. Where it is operationally feasible, showers and flush toilets will be open by July 30. Sani-stations (Dump Stations) are open. You can find most of this by looking up the specific park page. Pay attention to any advisories that are attached to individual park pages. When in doubt call our contact centre 1-877-537-2757.
- Q. Are all toilet facilities currently open to the public? Are they being maintained?
- A. All parks offer vault toilets. They're being maintained, as often as is operationally feasible. We are recommending that visitors bring their own hand sanitizer and toilet paper to reduce the spread of COVID-19 by reducing high frequency touch points.
- Q. Are there any day use restrictions?
- A. Do not gather in groups >200 in outdoor non-seated areas. Maintain physical distance when you're around groups that are not from your household or cohort family. Bring hand sanitizer and toilet paper in case the supply runs out before staff are able to replenish. Day use hours are 7 am to 11 pm. All day users must leave the park by 11 p.m.
At some beaches, (e.g. [Wabamun Lake Provincial Park](#), [Kinbrook Island Provincial Park](#), [Gregoire Lake Provincial Park](#), [Aspen Beach Provincial Park](#) and [Long Lake Provincial Park](#)) day use quotas are in place to enforce physical distancing and size of gatherings. If there are day use limits, there will be an advisory attached to the page of the specific park. Visitors should plan to arrive

early and if the site has already reached capacity, go to another location or come back another day.

- Q. Are masks required for any of the Alberta Parks information centres/facilities? Which ones are open to public?
- A. At this time, we aren't requiring facemasks in our visitor centres, but signs will advise visitors how many can be in the centre at a time – however this could get updated to align with the many municipalities moving to mandatory mask wearing indoors in public spaces, i.e. Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, etc. [Visitor Centre Information is at this link](#). People should wear a facemask anywhere in our parks, where physical distancing cannot be maintained. Obey all signs in the parks, and the directions given by park staff in the parks.
- Q. Are Alberta Provincial Parks allowing out of province visitors to book camping spots or are Albertans the only ones able to use the provincial park facilities?
- A. Due to current [Government of Alberta travel guidelines](#), non-essential travel outside the province is not recommended. This recommendation will not be lifted until Stage 3 of [Alberta's relaunch strategy](#). Currently camping is restricted to Alberta Residents, and is monitored/enforced as much as possible. Day use as well is primarily restricted to Albertans. Exceptions are being made for residents of Saskatchewan and BC if visiting a border park in proximity to their community. Travel from Saskatchewan or BC to parks well inside AB, would not be considered a local community visitor.
- Q. Lots of general inquires about visitors wanting information on camping and hiking in provincial parks? Where can they go?
- A. [Trail reports are on the web site](#). There are a few suggested [regional road trips](#) that provide a few ideas. GemTrek maps are a good resource, or AllTrails is a commonly used website for hiking, although not endorsed or monitored by Alberta Parks. Info is not always accurate.
- Q. Have fees been reduce because of COVID?
- A. Some camping fees have been reduced in campgrounds where fees for shower facilities were part of the camping fee – if the showers have not been opened. Otherwise there have been no fee reductions “due to COVID”
- Q. Is back country camping closed? The website shows constantly shows “full”.
- A. No - backcountry sites are by reservation only and they are typically booked up very quickly – hence they will show on RAP “not reserveable” or “full”. As peoples' plans change, reservations may be cancelled, so we advise people wanting backcountry hikes to check back once a week to see if anything has opened up. Overall, our visitation and use this year is way up.
- Q. Where do they get information on random camping on crown-land?
- A. Call the [AEP Info Centre](#) with questions about random camping on public lands.
- Q. Where can back-country permits be bought?
- A. Kananaskis Country backcountry permits have switched to fully bookable online at [reserve.albertaparks.ca](#).
- Q. What restriction/guidelines are in place other than the standard COVID ones of Social and Physical Distancing”?
- A. Alberta Parks standard [regulations](#) .
- Q. Who is enforcing COVID protocols in Alberta Parks (This is stemming from overcrowding on the sites).
- A. All enforcement in provincial parks is being done by Conservation Officers and RCMP. We hope that our visitors show respect for the parks and their fellow visitors, and behave themselves without requiring the threat of enforcement.
- Q. Updated campsite availability.

- A. There is up-to-date information about availability for reserveable campsites at [Reserve.AlbertaParks.ca](https://reserve.albertaparks.ca). We do not maintain FCFS site availability.
- Q. Many visitors are looking for recommended day hikes that are less crowded? Any trail maps or hiking guides for parks to hand out?
- A. Park maps that we have are all downloadable from albertaparks.ca. Some parks may have maps on site, but because of the high risk of spreading the virus, self-service brochure racks are not being stocked/used. GemTrek maps are a good resource, or AllTrails is a commonly used website for hiking, although not endorsed or monitored by Alberta Parks. Info is not always accurate.
- Q. Are Parks crowded?
- A. Yes. Many provincial parks, public lands, and beaches have experienced overcrowding during the summer recreation season – including day use areas at Wabamun Lake and Aspen Beach Provincial Parks and the Mount Yamnuska and Grassi Lakes trails in Kananaskis.

Alberta Parks is committed to providing safe recreation opportunities to visitors, while also following guidance of Alberta's Chief Medical Officer. Monitoring of usage levels is occurring on an ongoing basis.

Capacity limits and temporary closures of specific areas may be implemented where necessary to protect public safety.

We request visitors to be respectful to one another and follow the directions of emergency services and Environment and Parks staff. They are there to help make beaches and parks safe for everyone.

Our campgrounds are busier than ever, so it's important to follow proper camping etiquette and Alberta's COVID-19 health and physical distancing guidelines!

Here's a quick refresher of basic camping etiquette:

✔ Be a good neighbour. Avoid excessive noise at all hours. Loud partying, stereos at high volume and other rowdy behaviour are not tolerated and take away from other campers' enjoyment. Constantly running generators is considered excessive noise unless required for medical reasons; please use it in moderation. Official quiet hours are 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.

✔ Keep pets leashed. Dogs must be kept on a leash at all times and their waste must be packed out or disposed of in the appropriate facilities. Ensure that your dog doesn't bark excessively.

✔ Leave no trace. Maintain a clean campsite at all times and dispose of all waste in designated facilities. It is illegal to remove, deface, injure or destroy plants, fossils and rocks. Using deadfall or removing branches from trees for firewood is also prohibited.

✔ Campfire safety. Campfires are only permitted in the facilities provided. Never leave your campfire unattended. Ensure it is completely out before retiring for the night and before leaving your campsite. Soak it, stir it and soak it again. Always check [AlbertaParks.ca/FireBans](https://albertaparks.ca/firebans) for current fire bans or restrictions.

✔ Know who to call for help. The conservation officer number is posted on signs around campgrounds (often at washrooms and on kiosks) if you need to report an issue. Call 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Guidelines for staying safe and healthy and preventing the spread of COVID-19 while camping:

✔ Be prepared. Bring your own water, snacks, hand sanitizer and toilet paper. Most campgrounds will be cashless this year. Vault toilets are open. Flush toilets and showers may be unavailable.

✔ Be self-contained. Lessen the use of shared facilities if you have an RV.

✔ Physical distance. Continue to respect physical distancing in campsites and shared spaces.

✔ Wash and sanitize. Wash or sanitize your hands before and after using high-touch shared amenities like washrooms, bear bins, self check-in stations, boat launches, docks and water fill and dump stations.

✔ Stay home if you're sick. Don't visit if you're sick or were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19. You must isolate for 10 days if you have symptoms, or for 14 days if you were exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case or returned from international travel.