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We had to climb or the distance to the next campground. Please note that the location of BRI3 (Marvel Lake) is slightly inaccurate. Organic Maps is an alternative option, maintained by the original creators of Maps.me. It has very similar functionality, accuracy and offline map features.

From Mount (Shark) Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park is home to a variety of mammals and almost 100 species of birds. Both grizzly and black bears roam this area, along with mountain goats, moose, and deer, elk and bighorn sheep. Marmots and chipmunks are easy to spot, along with pikas in rocky areas. Wolverine, badger and coyote also live here but are not often seen. Common birds are the grey jay, white tailed ptarmigan, boreal chickadee and Clark's nutcracker. Negative wildlife encounters are rare. Parks Canada promotes coexistence and there are a few things hikers can do to help: Make noise while hiking. This alerts wildlife to your presence and gives them a chance to avoid you. As a general rule, animals dont want to be close to humans Leave No Trace. After eating, make sure you havent left any food or wrappers at your location Store food properly. Feeding animals is illegal and also harmful. This includes accidentally feeding wildlife as well. Use the provided food caches and bear hangs at the campgrounds to store food, cooking equipment and smelly items when not in use Give wildlife space. If you do see any animals, keep your distance ideally 100m or more. This offers them an escape route Know what to do if a bear approaches. Depending on the behaviour of the bear, different techniques are required (read our bear safety post for more info) Carry bear spray. An aerosol deterrent made with chili pepper oil, bear spray is a last resort tool intended to be used only when other methods have failed As a side note, expect to see mosquitoes and deer flies in the campgrounds and on the trails in July and August. They become more prevalent around sunset. We have never had major issues with bugs in this area as its always been cold on our trips but I know many hikers who have said that the bugs can be ferocious when their warm. Bryant Creek Mount Assiniboine is a popular provincial park with a lodge, but it is still located in remote mountainous terrain. Hikers must be self-sufficient. Weather conditions can vary and change quickly. Snow is possible at any time of the year There may be snow on the trail and in the campgrounds until mid-July, sometimes even later Water availability is very limited between Howard Douglas Lake and Og Lake on the Sunshine route to Assiniboine. Bring plenty of water, especially when warm weather is forecast Some sections (such as Sunshine Meadows) are very exposed, with no trees for shade or cover. Hikers should know what to do in the event of a lightning storm There is no phone signal anywhere in this area (except Sunshine Village). Tell someone where youre going and when you plan to be back (check out our outdoor safety guide for more tips). We carried an InReach device in case of emergencies Always purify water before drinking. On our most recent Assiniboine backpacking trip, we utilised a gravity hydration bladder system with the MSR Thru-Link In-Line Microfilter There may be fallen trees on sections of the trail at any time this is more common during the early season (July) Besides these hazards, its also important to stay aware of wildlife, particularly bears (see previous section)Collecting water at Og Lake Backpacking is all about balance keeping your pack weight low while still ensuring you need to be self-sufficient and comfortable. Keep in mind though, that the lighter you pack, the easier (and likely more enjoyable) the actual hiking will be. Here are all the items we carried to Mount Assiniboine on our most recent trip (you may find our backpacking gear guide helpful to make your own list): My Assiniboine wardrobe included: Hiking between Og Lake and Magog Lake (Sunshine route) Beyond your regular backpacking gear and the 10 Essentials, Id recommend bringing these items: Cash Assiniboine Lodge usually welcomes hikers between 4-5pm Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for afternoon tea. Beer and wine are also usually available. Purchases must be made with (Canadian) cash Warm layers As mentioned, the weather in the Mount Assiniboine area can change fast. It can be cold even in summer. Bring a mixture of layers, including some warmer clothing (we love merino wool) and waterproofs (jacket) Bear spray The Canadian Rockies are home to both black and grizzly bears. Its imperative to keep alert, make noise and know what to do if you see a bear. Carry bear spray in an accessible place and know how to use it Hiking poles We always hike with at least one hiking pole each. I like using poles for balance when hiking with a pack. They can also help to reduce knee strain when descending. Black Diamonds Carbon Zs are super light and pack down easily Water filter or purification method Prepare to treat all water sources during your Mount Assiniboine backpacking trip. There are three water taps in the Magog Lake campground but BC Parks recommends treating the water Camping reservation confirmation If staying at Magog Lake, Og Lakes or any of the Banff NP campgrounds, print off your reservation and bring it with you. Keep it dry in a Ziploc bag Bug protection Mosquitoes, deer flies and horse flies can be a real problem in the Mount Assiniboine area, especially in July and early August. Be sure to have repellent and consider bringing a head net Visiting from outside of Canada? Be sure to have travel insurance before heading out on this hike. If youre from the UK, check out True TravellerWe carry two bear sprays, with one on JRs shoulder strap (very easy access) Finishing in Sunshine Village? Enjoy the alpine for a little bit longer with a stay at Sunshine Mountain Lodge. This upscale boutique hotel, situated at 2,400m, is the only one of its kind of Banff. Think gorgeous mountain views, spa-like bathrooms, private balconies and more. Sunset at Sunshine Village Theres a huge outdoor hot tub as well, perfect for soaking after the long hike out of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park. To treat yourself even more, consider looking a spa treatment. There is a choice of three on-site restaurants at Sunshine Village. We enjoyed dinner at the Chimney Corner more amazing views, elevated cuisine (the best steak JR has had in years) and personable service. Dinner at the Chimney Corner Mount Engadine Lodge is the closest accommodation to the Mount Shark (Bryant Creek) Trailhead. This road-accessible wilderness lodge has all the comforts of civilisation (en-suite bathrooms, electricity, cooked meals, limited wi-fi) in the most one of the most beautiful locations around. Trails start right outside the door, but its possible to just enjoy the spectacular mountain views if youre all hiked out. All meals are included at Mount Engadine breakfast, lunch, dinner and afternoon tea as well. Mount Engadine Lodge The towns of Banff and Canmore offer a wide choice of accommodation options for Assiniboine-bound hikers. Moose Hotel is my favourite downtown property in Banff, conveniently positioned right on Banff Avenue, a short walk from many restaurants and shops. It has a good mix of rooms and spacious suites. A cheaper option is to camp. Tunnel Mountain Village is my top pick in the Banff area as it has showers and is ten minutes to downtown by bus (the outbound journey is free!) By ElizabethPaintingCo

By DanniFinePrintsCanada By JillWestonArt Read these other Canadian Rockies hiking guides next: Iceline Trail, Yoho National Park Rockwall Trail, Kootenay National Park Great Divide Trail Lake O'Hara, Yoho National Park Turbine Canyon Loop, Kananaskis Valley Burgess Shale, Yoho National Park BC hiking guides: HBC Heritage Trail West Coast Trail Heather Trail, Manning Park Nootka Trail Jumbo Pass One half of the Canadian/British coast behind Off Track Travel, Gemma is happiest when hiking on the trail or planning the next big travel adventure. JR and Gemma are currently based in the beautiful Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, Canada. Consider buying us a coffee if you have found any of our guides helpful! Mount Assiniboine is one of the more challenging backpacking trips in Canada. But with proper planning it is truly an adventure of a lifetime. Getting to Mount Assiniboine is anything but straight forward. There are many different trails, accommodation styles, and even a unique mode of transportation. So in this backpacking guide, we will cover everything you need to know, so your trip is a breeze. Mount Assiniboine is located deep into the heart of Mt Assiniboine Provincial Park, but you pass through other parks just to get there. Its actually right on the border of British Columbia and Alberta Canada. Whats certainly unique about Mount Assiniboine, is you can get here via foot, or by helicopter. But regardless, you are really in the backcountry with one of the most surreal scenes. So lets dive into all the details for backpacking to Mount Assiniboine. Be Sure To Leave No Trace. When exploring these treasured outdoor spaces, you are responsible for understanding and following Leave No Trace Guidelines. Most importantly: pack out all garbage, travel only on trails and durable surfaces, and follow local rules for campsites and human waste disposal. This post may contain affiliate links. Disclosure policy. 4 Different Trailheads to Access Mount Assiniboine There are a 4 different trailheads that you can launch from: Mt. Shark Sunshine Village Simpson River Mitchell River No matter which route you choose, each trail is long and challenging. The two most popular routes leave from Mt. Shark & Sunshine Village. And there are even a few different routes from Mt. Shark. Here is a helpful map of all the trailheads (blue), midway campgrounds (dark red), and main accommodations near Mount Assiniboine (orange). All hike distances are one way. Mt. Shark Trailhead to Mt. Assiniboine Sunshine Village to Mt. Assiniboine (Citadel Pass)Distance: 27.2km (16.9mi). Elevation: 1010m (3,313 ft) Simpson River To Mt. AssiniboineDistance: 30.7km (19.1mi). Elevation: 1045m (3,428 ft) Mitchell River To Mt. AssiniboineDistance: 30km (18.6mi). Elevation: 335m (1,100ft) There are a few other routes, but these are the main trail options hikers might consider. There are multiple ways to hike to Mount Assiniboine from the Mt. Shark Trailhead. Mount Shark Trailhead to Mount Assiniboine via Wonder Pass is the route Jake and I personally took. So its really the only route we can talk about from experience. The hike is 27km with 652m of elevation gain (16.9mi, 2139ft elevation), a beautiful view along the Mt. Shark Trail The trail starts along a flat, gravel dirt road, but of course, cars are not allowed to drive this section. Its mostly in the trees, but there are still a few impressive views along the trail. The trail gradually starts to climb as you hike along Marvel Lake. Once you near the end of the lake, this is where the true elevation of this hike begins as you ascend up Wonder Pass. view of Marvel Lake from right before ascending up Wonder Pass While the climb is steep, its short in comparison of the length of the hike. So just dig deep here, because the views at the top of Wonder Pass are breathtaking. You climb along beautiful meadows (bonus during wildflower season mid-July & August) encompassed by the surrounding mountains. Then, you reach the last decent to the base of Mount Assiniboine. I found that this trail goes by a couple different names. But these two trails are known to be the easiest ways to get to Mount Assiniboine. There isnt a ton of elevation in this trail as it skirts around Wonder Peak, view along Mt. Shark Trail near the beginning The lower Assiniboine Pass Trail also doubles as a horse trail, so you may encounter horse dung. The upper Assiniboine Pass Trail is a Grizzly Corridor, and has a closure from August 1-September 30. Also note that the helicopters follow this route, so this may be annoying if you are hiking on their flight days (more on this later). Bikes are allowed on the first 6.5km (4mi) of the Mt. Shark Trail. But there are signs clearly marked letting you know bikes are no longer allowed. Since the trail basically follows a road, this can be a faster way to complete the first part of the hike. But, of course, you need to be comfortable riding a bike with a heavy pack or have another bikepacking setup for carrying your gear. And you will likely want to bring a lock so you can secure your bike to a tree. This trail starts from the Sunshine Village Ski Resort. You can either choose to hike up the mountain, or you can pay for a gondola ride. The 27-kilometer hike from Sunshine Village to Mount Assiniboine assumes you are taking the gondola. Without the gondola, it adds another 6km (3.7mi) in distance and 600m (1969ft) or elevation. This making it the longest of all the popular routes. Sunshine Gondola ticket prices start around \$68+ CAD per person for the Sunshine Gondola. Alberta Residents get a 25% discount. Do note, the gondola only runs from 8:00am 6:00pm. So you will need to plan the start of your hike within that time frame if you plan to use the gondola. The hike climbs starts through a beautiful alpine meadow, then meets up with tall tick trees, and eventually climbs over Citadel Pass. This is another route to get to Mount Assiniboine. But the trail is known to be a bit overgrown and not very well-maintained. It also passes through a burned forest. There are a few different routes after the Rock Lake Campground and as you near the core area. You might find it helpful to read recent reviews from the Simpson River Trailhead to Suprise Creek Campground to see how the trail conditions are maintained throughout the year. This area is also known to have an increase in grizzly bear activity. This is the least traveled route to Mount Assiniboine. The trail is not well-maintained, and crosses through a mine. You will need to get permission to park here and walk through their property. The trail is said to cross the river, but you can also skirt the river through some bush wacking. You should definitely have a GPS and good map to help navigate this route. The Mount Assiniboine area is in true Grizzly Bear Country! Every group should have at least one bear spray, but ideally one per person. (You can buy or rent bear spray from outfitters in Banff or Canmore.) Be sure to learn, or brush up on bear safety before setting off on the trail. Here are a few key things to know about bear safety: Always carry bear spray and know how to use it Make loud noises and talk loudly while hiking Never leave food unattended Properly store your food and scented items using approved methods (bear box, bear hang, bear canister, etc) Never run from a bear (calmly give them space, while continuing to talk) There are different tactics to use if attacked by black bears versus grizzly bears. If a black bear attacks, flight back with everything you have. But for a grizzly bear, you want to play dead and hopefully it moves on. BUT if the bear continues to attack and not move on, then you fight back with everything you have!!! Its important to note, that some of these trails have seasonal restrictions or closures to protect wildlife. Upper Assiniboine Pass: No Access August 1-September 30 Allenby Pass Trail: Restricted to groups of 4 or more people Learn more about these closures & restrictions in the area. Personally, we feel the hikes in to Mount Assiniboine should be done up into two days. And luckily there are many stops along the way to help achieve that. Here are a few great mid-way campgrounds to stop at on your way to Mt. Assiniboine: Mt. Shark to Mt. Assiniboine: Sunshine Village to Mt. Assiniboine: Simpson River Trailhead to Mt. Assiniboine:Simpson Creek Campground (aka Surprise Creek Campground) Rock Lake Campground Mitchell Meadows Campground Mitchell River to Mt. Assiniboine: If you dont land a camping permit for Magog Lake. You might consider staying at Og Lake or Mitchell Meadows and day hiking to Magog Lake. Something exceptionally unique to Mount Assiniboine is the different styles of accommodation. You can choose from camping, huts, cabins, and lodge rooms. But price differs significantly. Magog Lake Campground (sites 35-40) Tent camping at Magog Lake Campground is the budget-friendly option at Mount Assiniboine. But dont worry, you arent exactly slumming it. They have level tent pads, shelters for cooking, outhouses where they provide toilet paper, a water tap (although you still need to filter it), grey water filter, bear boxes, and bear hangs. While each campsite is numbered, theres a lack of signage around the campground to show which sites are where. While it might not seem like a huge deal, when you are exhausted, the last thing you want to do is spend forever finding a vacant site. I recommend taking a photo of the campground map to help navigate. Personally, we liked campsites 35-40 because they are the only ones with clear views of Mount Assiniboine. However, they are in an open field, so there is less privacy and little shade from trees. To minimize negative bear encounters, all cooking needs to be done at the shelters located around the campground. And all food and scented items should be stored in the bear boxes/hangs, or otherwise carried on you during the day. There is a water spout near each shelter, but it needs to be filtered or boiled for drinking. Or you can get water from the stream at the farthest East end of the campground. It also needs to be boiled or filtered before drinking Our favorite backpacking water filter is the Platypus Gravityworks. You can read our full review here. Assiniboine Lodge The more luxurious stay is at the Assiniboine Lodge. There are rooms in the lodge itself or in individual cabins. Prices range from \$465+ CAD/person per night. Plus all meals and afternoon tea are included. Cabins at Mount Assiniboine Guests have access to running water. And flush toilets at night. There are communal showers and a sauna. Guests also have access to full and half-day guided hiking tours on non-helicopter days. Bookings are made by filling out a booking request form starting August 1-31 (the prior year). There is a waitlist (email info@assiniboinelodge.com) or you can call them directly (403-678-2883) to find out if there are any cancellations. Lodge Room (5 rooms available): \$465-\$680 CAD/person per night + 6.2% tax Cabins (5 cabins available, sleeps 3-5 people): \$465-\$575 CAD/person per night + 6.2% tax Children (2-12yrs): \$240 CAD/person per night + 6.2% taxNaiset Huts up at Mount Assiniboine There are five backcountry huts which sleep anywhere from 5 to 8 people. The huts are the middle tier option, more rustic than the lodge/cabins, but still a step above tent camping. Prices range from \$150-\$240+ CAD/night. You must book the entire hut. Bookings are available starting January 14 from 8:30am 2:30pm Mtn Time. You can only book by phone only (403-678-2883). Arnica (Sleeps 5), \$150/night Jonesy (sleeps 6), \$180/night Forget-Me-Not (sleeps 6), \$180/night Fleabane (sleeps 8), \$240/night Aster (sleeps 8), \$240/night The Hind Hut is ONLY for EXPERIENCE CLIMBERS. This hut can fit up to 10 people. This hut is a little easier to book, and doesnt book out super in advance. Mainly because people only want to use this hut if the climbing conditions are in good condition. You can find more information about both of these huts on the Assiniboine Lodge Page. Overnight permits are required at Magog Lake and for most campgrounds along the popular routes. And you may need additional parking permits (more info below). Backcountry Camping Permits for locations in British Columbia (such as Magog Lake and Og Lake) are available on the BC parks website up to 4 months in advance, often booking quickly for best summer months. We find the calendar view to be the easiest way to see whats available. Permits cost \$10 CAD per night per adult, plus a transaction fee of \$6 per tent pad per night, (maxing out at \$18). Permits for location in Alberta (such as Big Springs, Marvel Lakes, and Mcbrides Camp) are available on the Parks Canada Website. Permits cost \$13.50 CAD per night per adult, plus a transaction fee of \$11.50 for each booking. If you dont see your desired dates available, check back diligently for cancellations. Thats how we scored our permits just a couple days before the trip. Or you can check out paid subscriptions like Campnab or Schnerp that can help you score sold out permits. We havent personally used them, but heard very good success stories from others. The most sought after camping permits are for Magog Lake Campground, right at the base of Mt Assiniboine. Its a great base camp for exploring some of the best trails in the area. So most trips are structured around getting here. We highly suggest booking at least 2 nights here, so you have time to explore the other trails around camp. Most backpacking itineraries should plan for two days to hike in and out of Mt Assiniboine Park. There are mid-way campgrounds along the trails to break it up into more manageable distances. (We will include some ideal itineraries below.) You may need an additional parking pass if you plan to park at the trailhead, depending on the route you choose. If you plan to park at the Sunshine Village parking lot, then you will need a Banff National Park Pass. Or if you plan to hike from Simpson River or Mitchell River, you will need a Kootenay National Park Pass. Prices start around \$11 CAD per person per day. Or you might consider the annual discovery pass, which costs \$75.25 CAD per person. Or \$151.25 CAD for a family pass (up to 7 people). Learn more about the Discovery Pass If you plan to park at Mt. Shark Trailhead or helpaid, you will need to purchase a Kananaskis Conservation Pass. It costs \$15 CAD per day or \$90 CAD annually. You need to purchase a pass for every day you plan to be in the park. Learn more about the Kananaskis Conservation Pass One of the coolest things about Mount Assiniboine, is the lodge puts on tea time for non-lodge guests from 4-5pm. So stop by to grab a pasta, tea, wine, or our favorite item on the menu, an ice cold beer! While they do accept credit cards, they prefer cash! And dont forget to bring extra for a tip! Also the mosquitoes at Tea Time were the worst we experienced on the entire trip. Flights are offered to and from Canmore and Mt. Shark. Flights are offered on Wednesday, FridayandSunday, or on long weekends they fly on Monday instead of Sunday. Prices from Canmore: \$245 CAD/person one way + 5% tax Prices from Mt. Shark: \$215 CAD/person one way + 5% tax Each person is allowed to bring 40 lbs. Any pound over is an additional \$10. To book the helicopter, you must have a camping/hut/or lodge reservation, therefore, you cant use the helicopter for one day visits. One thing to note is that the Mt. Shark Helpaid is not quite at the Mt Shark trailhead. The hike is 1.4 km (.86mi) from the helpaid to the parking lot. If you still wish to hike, but want to lighten your load, you can just fly your gear to and from the Mt. Shark or Canmore helpaid locations. It costs \$5 CAD per pound (up to 40lbs). \$10 CAD per additional pound over 40lbs. view from the helicopter on Assiniboine Lodge to Mt. Shark Honestly, were a little conflicted about the helicopters here. Obviously, a parade of helicopters is quite disruptive to the peaceful nature. Especially for people hiking the trail on flight days. But on the flip side, it makes the park more accessible to people who otherwise arent physically fit enough to hike in. Or in our case it was one of the reasons we could realistically pull off our 2 night itinerary on such short notice. We made the mistake of hiking Mt Shark to Magog Lake all in one day, and we honestly regret that. It was really hard on our bodies, and kind of made us less excited to hike around the area. So we suggest at least breaking the hike up, into two days on the way in, to help break up the distances and leave you more energy for exploring the core area. Day 1 Sunshine Village (ride gondola up)/Camp at Og Lake (permit required) Day 2 Hike to Mt AssiniboineCamp at Magog Lake (permit required) Day 3 Hike Nub Peak, Nublet, and NibletCamp at Magog Lake (permit required) Day 4 Hike to Porcupine CampgroundCamp at Porcupine Campground Day 5 Head back to carDay 1 Start from Mt. Shark TrailheadCamp at Marvel Lakes Campground (permit required) Day 2 Hike to Mt Assiniboine via Wonder PassCamp at Magog Lake (permit required) Day 3 Hike Nub Peak, Nublet, and NibletCamp at Magog Lake (permit required) Day 4 Hike to Big Springs Campground via Assiniboine PassCamp at Big Springs Campground Day 5 Head back to car Trip can also be reversed. Day 1 Sunshine Village (Shuttle Car to Mt. Shark Trailhead)Camp at Og Lake (permit required) Day 2 Hike to Mt AssiniboineCamp at Magog Lake (permit required) Day 3 Hike Nub Peak, Nublet, and NibletCamp at Magog Lake (permit required) Day 4 Hike to Wonder Pass to Marvel LakeCamp at Marvel Lakes Campground Day 5 Head to Mt. Shark Trailhead (Shuttle car back to Sunshine Village) There is no scheduled shuttle from Mt. Shark to Sunshine Village (or vice versa). But you could consider using a taxi to shuttle your car. One shuttle company in the area is Three Sisters Taxi. You will need to call ahead to coordinate and get a quote. There is a public Facebook Group where fellow backpackers can ask questions, trade campsites, learn about trail conditions, find hiking partners, etc. Unfortunately, you cant use watercraft in the surrounding lakes because of whirling disease. Which is a microscopic parasite, which infects fish through their skin. During the summer months, it can be exceptionally buggy on the trails and near the lake. Plan to bring bug spray, and a head bug net. Some backpackers reported a thermacell working well at camp. Check out our favorite insect repellents. The weather changes often in the mountains. So plan for all types of weather. It can even snow in the summer! While it might be sunny and beautiful during the day, a storm can roll through and drop the temperature many degrees. We have an entire post dedicated to what to bring on a backpacking trip. Check that out for a simple guide to packing for a backpacking trip, plus a helpful checklist. But I want to note some packing considerations for this trip in particular. Trekking poles have basically become something we wouldnt consider leaving behind on any backpacking trip. They were especially helpful for navigating uneven terrain and helping take some of the strain off you lower body. (We love our Trail Buddy Poles, they are cheap but still very durable). Microspikes can be very helpful in spring or when snow is prevalent. Bear spray is a MUST! Be sure you know how to use it. A bear canister is needed because bear boxes are provided. Tent pads are provided, but you will still want a ground sheet to protect from rain. Like mentioned above, weather changes drastically in the mountains. You may want to pack for both a summer and a winter trip. Such as a beanie, gloves, neck buff, warm jacket, etc. Save This Post For Later

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