

Canmore Hiking Trails

Grassi Lakes

Moderate Walk/Light Trail

Total round trip: 3.8 km/2.4 miles

Elevation gain: 250 m./820 feet

Average time: 1.5 to 2 hours return

Location: Follow Spray lakes Road 1.25 km past the Nordic Centre to the transition from pavement to gravel. Turn left to reach the parking lot.

An incredibly beautiful location, Grassi Lakes is designated as one of Alberta's Special Places 2000. The trail bears the name of its creator, Lawrence Grassi, an important figure in Canmore's hiking history, Grassi pioneered many of the area trails, and this was one of his favorites. The hike climbs through the forest to 2 beautiful spring fed lakes. The trail splits into two about 200 m. into the hike, and they are labeled as "Easy" (this is a fire road – suitable for mountain strollers) and "More Difficult" (a narrower trail with some rocks and roots on the trail, as well as a staircase near the end; not recommended for those with limited flexibility.)

Summer – Hike

We recommend taking the "More Difficult" trail up to the lakes, as it offers an incredible view of the waterfall. From the far end of the second lake, turn left and hike up the trail through the trees to a scree slope to reach the pictographs. Once you return to the second lake, take the fire road back to the parking lot to make a loop.

Winter – Hike

Because the stairs on the "More Difficult" trail are covered in ice in the winter, and the trail is generally in poorer condition, we recommend taking the "Easy" way up and down. You may encounter snow even on the "Easy" trail, so use your judgment as to how far you feel you can safely go depending on the conditions.

Grotto Canyon *(a signature trip featuring pictographs)*

Moderate Walk/Light Hike

Total round trip: 4 km/2.5 miles

Elevation gain: 50 m./154 feet

Average time: 1.5 to 2 hours return

Location: Follow Highway 1A (Bow Valley Trail) east out of Canmore for approximately 10 minutes to the Grotto Pond Day Use Area.

Ignore the many side trails as you begin your walk. Within a few minutes for some, maybe as long as 10 minutes for others, you will come to a significant dry river bed (this is not Grotto Canyon). The trail continues to the other side across the river bed – follow the sign with the hiker symbol. Once on the west side of this dry gulch, carry on to the post with the red trail marker and follow the route indicated, which takes you past an industrial plant. Just west of the plant, the trail has a little elevation gain, and you will see a bench overlooking another river bed, with a spectacular lookout over Gap Lake and on to Canmore. Turn right and you will be looking into the entrance of Grotto Canyon. Total walk time to this point is approximately 120 minutes. The walk into the canyon is breathtaking and awe inspiring, however for some, the steep sides of the canyon walls may be claustrophobic. As you enter the canyon, begin looking carefully along the

Canmore Hiking Trails

walls for the remaining pictographs. The first set is visible on the left, almost at eye level for most adults. Regretfully, most have been vandalized and inadvertently compromised by our curious nature and the need to touch. Do not touch the pictographs as acids and oils in your skins will accelerate the deterioration of the artifacts.

Summer – Hike

If you are here in the early summer, the canyon floor will likely be wet with a light flowing creek. Be cautious in early spring, as snow melt combined with a spring downpour can easily turn into flood conditions.

Winter – Ice Walk

The floor of the canyon is covered by a subterranean stream that has risen and frozen, resulting in a surface that is a sheer sheet of ice. Near the end of the canyon, you will reach the ice falls, a popular location with the ice climbers. Rent ice cleats in Canmore before beginning your excursion.

Cougar Creek

Easy

Total round trip: 4 km/2.5 miles

Elevation gain: minimal

Average time: 1.5 to 2 hours return

Location: Cougar Creek parking lot on Benchlands Trail

In the summer, this dry creek bed makes a great hiking trail. Starting by the creek, the well marked trail quickly changes into walking on rocks on the dry creek bed and occasionally making creek crossings over small streams. Be cautious in early spring, as snow melt combined with the spring rain greatly increases the water in the creek.

Heart Creek

Easy

Total round trip: 4 km/2.5 miles

Elevation gain: 100 m./328 feet

Average time: 1.5 hours return

Location: East of Canmore on the TransCanada Highway (Hwy. 1). Travel towards Calgary (approximately 15 minutes) and take the Lac Des Arc/Heart Creek exit, then follow signs to the parking lot and trail head.

Be sure you follow the right fork at the first major junction. At this point, you should find yourself following a wide gravel path up the creek bed. You will cross this creek on seven log bridges. Spectacular views of the rock face of Mount McGillivray, as well as impressive views of Heart Mountain can be seen.

Canmore Hiking Trails

Moraine and Middle Lake

Easy

Total round trip: 5.5 km/3.4 miles

Elevation gain: Minimal

Average time: 1 to 1.5 hours

Location: Head west from Canmore on the TransCanada Highway (Hwy 1) for approximately 15 minutes towards the Highway 1X overpass. Exit here and follow the northbound signs to Bow Valley Provincial Park, then follow the signs to the amphitheatre.

This interpretative trail is very easy to follow.

Ha Ling Peak

Steep Hiking / Beginner Scramble

Total round trip: 5.6 km

Elevation gain: 700 m.

Average time: 3 to 4 hours

Location: Goat Creek parking lot, located 5.5 km past the Nordic Centre along the gravel Spray Lakes Road / Smith Dorrien highway. Walk across the road, past the green gate and over the bridge until you come to a small building. Just behind the building is the trailhead to Ha Ling Peak.

In the summer, this dry creek bed makes a great hiking trail. Starting by the creek, the well marked trail quickly changes into walking on rocks on the dry creek bed and occasionally making creek crossings over small streams. Be cautious in early spring, as snow melt combined with the spring rain greatly increases the water in the creek.

This short but steep trail takes you to incredible viewpoints, overlooking the Town of Canmore. The majority of the trail switchbacks go up a forested slope, but the final ascent is on shale and scree and some route finding may be required.

Summer – Hike

Winter – Snowbound; Travel is not recommended

Lady Macdonald *(To the abandoned Tea House)*

Steep Hiking / Beginner Scramble

Total round trip: 8 Km

Elevation gain: 850 m.

Average time: 4.5 to 7 hours

Location: Cougar Creek parking lot on Benchlands Trail

Follow the trail alongside Cougar Creek until you reach a signed trail to the left. The trail switchbacks through the forest until you reach treeline. Just above treeline, you'll see the remains of a teahouse that was being constructed but is now abandoned. Because the last 60 m. of the hike is an exposed scramble along a narrow ridge, many people end the hike here, and enjoy the spectacular views of Canmore and the Three Sisters. If you decide to go to the summit ridge, you'll gain approximately 275 m. of elevation over 60 m.

Summer – Hike

Winter – Snowbound; Travel Not Recommended