

Alpine Club of Canada, Elk Lakes Cabin Information

Getting There

The Elk Lakes Cabin is nestled between the French and Italian Military Groups of the Rocky Mountains in Elk Lakes Provincial Park, B.C. It is 62 km south of the Trans-Canada Highway in Kananaskis Country, AB and 104 km north of Sparwood, B.C.

The following information should be used in conjunction with the correct topographic map (maps are listed below).

Hiking, biking or skiing	
<i>Trailhead location:</i>	62 km south of Highway 1 on Highway 40 or 29 km north of Highwood Pass on Highway 40
<i>Distance:</i>	9 km
<i>Elevation gain:</i>	200 m / 650 ft. gain, 200 m / 650 ft. loss
<i>Approximate time:</i>	3-4 hours hiking or skiing, 1-2 hours biking

Driving	
<i>Starting point:</i>	Sparwood, BC
<i>Driving distance:</i>	104 km (including 75 km on good gravel road)
<i>Approximate time:</i>	2 hours from Sparwood

Portering Services

Need help carrying your load? Check out our [portering services!](#)

Trailhead location

Parking for hiking, biking or skiing into the Elk Lakes Cabin is at the Elk Pass trailhead, near Upper Kananaskis Lake in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. If you are coming from Calgary or Canmore, drive 50 km south of the Trans-Canada on Highway 40. If you are coming from the south, drive 17 km north from Highwood Pass on Highway 40. Either way, turn left (west) onto the Kananaskis Lakes Trail, and follow the road south for 12 km to the Elk Pass trailhead.

Hiking approach

From the parking lot, head south on the gated gravel road right of the outhouse. Ignore several trails which leave the main trail, and follow the "hiker" signs the whole way to the Park boundaries/West Elk Pass (4.8 km). From West Elk Pass it is a 4.2 km downhill hike to the cabin.

Biking, skiing and snowshoeing approach

The trailhead for the mountain bike and ski/snowshoe route to the cabin is the same as for the hiking and skiing approach. Follow the hiking trail for 2 km, but

take the left (east) trail immediately after crossing the Fox Creek bridge. This trail ascends to the hydro-line which you will follow all the way to the Elk River Forest Service Road via Elk Pass. Once at the forest service road, turn right (west) and you will reach the cabin in a few hundred metres. Please note that mountain biking is not allowed elsewhere in the Park.

In winter, the trail is trackset as far as Elk Pass. There is no avalanche hazard on or near the trail.

Driving approach

Turn off Highway 3 at Sparwood, BC and go north on Highway 43 until you reach the community of Elkford, a distance of 35 kilometres. From here, travel the gravel road on the west side of the Elk River. Approximately 47 kilometres north of Elkford the road crosses the Elk River and joins the Kananaskis Power Line Road. It is 5.8 kilometres from the crossing to the Cadorna Creek trailhead; the Elk Lakes trailhead is a further 16.1 kilometres. The Elk Lakes Cabin is 150m from the parking area.

The drive takes approximately six hours from Calgary or 2.5 hours from Fernie. Cars with low clearance are not recommended.

Maps and Guidebooks

All of the following books and maps can be purchased through the ACC office or online through the [ACC online store](#).

Map and GPS references

Map reference:	82J/11 (Kananaskis Lakes)
Grid reference:	364016
GPS coordinates:	50° 33' 06" - 115° 04' 40" NAD83 11U 0636495 5601673
Hut elevation:	1,740m (5,709 feet).

Maps

- Gem Trek Publishing 1:50,000 topographic map entitled “Kananaskis Lakes”. This map shows the access to the cabin, but unfortunately does not show much of the area surrounding the cabin.
- The 1:50,000 Canadian Government issued standard topographic map “82J/11 Kananaskis Lakes”. The cabin is located 1 km east of the lower Elk Lake. This map shows the area surrounding the cabin.

Guidebooks and general interest books

Kananaskis Country Trail Guide, Volume 1, by Gilleen Daffern
Canadian Rockies Trail Guide, by Patton and Robinson

Where Locals Hike in the Canadian Rockies, by Kathy & Craig Copeland
Scrambles in the Canadian Rockies, by Alan Kane
Waterfall Ice Climbs in the Canadian Rockies, by Joe Josephson
Mixed Climbs in the Canadian Rockies, by Sean Isaac
Handbook of the Canadian Rockies, by Ben Gadd

Website Links

Current conditions

Weather – www.weather.ec.gc.ca - click on "BC", then scroll down to "Sparwood". The weather forecasts are updated 3 times daily.

Avalanche Hazard - www.avalanche.ca - click on "Bulletins" and review the section for "South Rockies". The avalanche forecast for this region is updated 3 times weekly.

Area information

BC Parks has an excellent website outlining the things to see and do while in Elk Lakes Provincial Park. The site is at

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/elklakes.html#parkinfo>

Google Earth Reference – A good overview of the trip into the Elk Lakes Cabin can be seen on Google Earth. Go to <http://earth.google.com/>. You will find the location of the cabin at 50° 33' 06" N - 115° 04' 40" W

1:50,000 Topographic Map - The Canadian Government offers free downloads of their regular 1:50,000 topo maps. The map that covers the Elk Lakes area is 82J/11 (Kananaskis Lakes). The map file is large (25 MB) and takes a few minutes to download. You will find it at:

<http://www.geogratis.gc.ca/geogratis/en/product/search.do?id=10119>

Perform your search by selecting "NTS Mapsheet", and enter 082J11. Next, press "Search" under "Search Options" (without changing any of the information in "Search Options"). Select 82J/11 from the options and download it.

Parks Info

BC and Alberta Provincial Parks

Elk Lakes is a BC Provincial Park. If you access the area from the Alberta side, you will travel through Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. Each park has rules about dogs, fishing, bicycles and more. Please note that dogs are allowed on leash in Elk Lakes Park, but they are not allowed on the ski trail in Peter Lougheed Park, nor are they allowed inside the cabin at any time. Bikes are allowed on the trail to Elk Pass (in Peter Lougheed Park) and along the powerline to the cabin. Bikes are not allowed elsewhere in Elk Lakes Park. Educate

yourself at

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/elklakes.html#parkinfo> and <http://gateway.cd.gov.ab.ca/siteinformation.aspx?id=307>

There are several campgrounds in both Parks, including one that is a kilometre from Elk Lakes Cabin. The fees for the lower Elk Lake campground are \$5 per person, per night, and it is first-come, first-served.

What Is At the Hut

Summary	
<i>Heating</i>	Wood stove
<i>Lighting</i>	Propane
<i>Cooking</i>	Propane oven & range, cookware, dishes & utensils provided
<i>Sleeping</i>	Dormitory style on thick foam mattresses
<i>Capacity</i>	10
<i>Drinking water</i>	From the creek (boil or filter). Snowmelt in winter.
<i>Human Waste</i>	Outhouse
<i>Dishwater</i>	Ground sump
<i>Garbage</i>	Pack it out!

The building

The Elk Lakes Cabin is a log building which was built in 1992. The cabin was the headquarters for the Elk Lakes park rangers until the ACC began operating the cabin for public use in 2004. The cabin consists of a kitchen area and living room with tables and a wood burning stove. The sleeping quarters are in a loft above the main floor.

Sleeping arrangements

The cabin sleeps up to 10 people comfortably on four-inch thick, covered foam mattresses found on one long bunk.

Capacity

The total capacity of the hut is 10 people.

Kitchen

The kitchen is well supplied with dishes, cutlery, utensils, pots and pans and bake ware (including roasting pans, cookie sheets, bread pans and muffin pans). There is a full size propane oven, as well as some two-burner propane stoves for cooking.

Lighting

The hut is lit by several propane lights. Propane is supplied by the ACC via a large outdoor tank.

Heat

There is a wood-burning stove in the cabin. Firewood is stored in the nearby woodshed. Please replace all firewood you use in the hut with cut and split wood from the pile.

Tools

The hut has a good supply of tools including water buckets, axes, saws, shovels, etc.

Drinking Water

Drinking water is available 10m to the west of the hut from a tributary of Elkan Creek. In winter, water is from snowmelt. It is recommended that you boil or filter all drinking water.

Grey Water

Grey water disposal is in a ground sump next to the hut. You can drain grey water directly down the sinks, but please ensure that the strainer is in place under the drain. Do not allow any food scraps (including coffee grounds) to enter the grey water sump or it will become plugged. Please periodically empty the strainer contents into the fireplace. The grey water sump occasionally freezes in the winter. In this case, please dump your grey water (strained of food particles) within a three meter radius of the outhouse.

Human Waste

The outhouse is located 10m east of the cabin. Do not dispose of any garbage in the outhouse.

Garbage

Burn all paper garbage and food scraps, and pack out all other garbage and unused food.

What you need to bring

- combination lock number for the hut door (call the ACC office to confirm before you go to the hut)
- sleeping bag
- toilet paper
- newspaper for lighting the fire
- matches
- first aid kit
- 9V battery for the smoke detector
- reservation form from the ACC (to show the custodian)

Hut Rules

Here is a list of simple rules we ask that you follow in order to maximize everyone's enjoyment of the "hut experience".

While at the hut:

- No smoking.
- Dogs are not permitted in any ACC facility (with the exception of seeing eye dogs).
- Some Parks also outlaw dogs entirely; leashed or not. Check before you go!
- If you arrive at the hut before 2:00pm, put your belongings where they will not disturb the previous nights' occupants.
- Please be considerate of others; the hut should be quiet by 10 pm.
- Carry out all of your garbage.
- Do not do personal washing in cooking pots or nearby streams - use wash basins and slop pits.
- Fill stoves and lanterns outside the hut and leave extra fuel outside.
- Clean the stoves after using them.
- Clean up after yourself.
- Follow posted instructions for care and maintenance of toilet systems so that they function properly with minimum odour and environmental impact.

When leaving a hut:

- If your belongings will be in the hut after 2:00pm, and you are not staying that night, be sure to pack everything up and leave it out of the way in a corner so the new guests can move in.
- Leave all tools inside the hut when not being used.
- Empty all water containers and slop buckets before leaving the hut.
- Take out all leftover food as food left in the hut encourages rodents. (Other people generally won't use it as they don't know how old it is.)
- Bring out damaged axes, lanterns or stoves and discharged fire extinguishers - advise the national office.
- Close & latch the outhouse door when leaving to keep out rodents & snow.
- Close/lock hut, replace shutters (if applicable), before leaving the hut.
- A nearly full outhouse, damage to hut & similar matters should be reported to the national office (you may call collect)

Please leave the hut in better condition than you found it. Thank you for your consideration in following these rules, and have a great time!

Things To Do Around the Hut

Located within the western ranges of the southern Rocky Mountains, Elk Lakes Provincial Park is an easily accessible wilderness park characterized by

outstanding sub-alpine landscapes, remnant glaciers, rugged peaks and productive lakes.

Hiking

The Elk Lakes area has a wide variety of hiking options. Hikers of all abilities and interests will be entertained for several days in the area. Many of the trails are appropriate for all family members with some experience in back-country hiking. Other trails are longer, tougher, more exposed and involve some route-finding. Everyone will be rewarded with spectacular views of craggy peaks, alpine tarns, waterfalls, glaciers, alpine flowers and mountain fauna. Those that have been to Elk Lakes compare it to the world-renowned Lake O'Hara area in Yoho National Park. Hiking in the area is best covered in *Kananaskis Country Trail Guide*, Volume 1, *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide*, and *Where the Locals Hike in the Canadian Rockies*. General descriptions of the hiking trails can also be found at

http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/elk_lks/hiking.html#

Climbing and scrambling

Several mountaineering objectives and a couple of difficult scrambles can be reached from the Elk Lakes Cabin. Mts. Fox, Aosta, Petain, Nivelles and Castelnau can all be summited in a moderate to long day from the cabin. There is good access to Mt. Joffre from the Elk Lakes side, but a high camp is recommended if you are planning on climbing it.

Guidebook information on the area is contained in the out-of-print "Rocky Mountains of Canada – South", by Boles, Kruszyna and Putnam. You can download the relevant pages on the website at

<http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/facility/elklakes.html>.

The Alpine Club of Canada has held General Mountaineering Camps in the Elk Lakes area in past years. Camp Manager Brad Harrison has posted some of the climbs from the camp on his website at www.colwest.ca.

Backcountry Skiing

The Elk Lakes Cabin is very popular in winter. It is one of the few ACC huts that can be reached with cross-country skis by reasonably advanced cross-country skiers. Those on alpine touring or telemark gear should find the trip easy. The ski touring in the area ranges from easy, flat tours to advanced ski mountaineering. The ski touring is not described in any guidebooks, so you will have to use a map and your imagination to find your own trails and slopes!

Ice climbing

The area has several high quality waterfall ice routes and at least one established mixed climb. The routes are described in *Waterfall Ice Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*.

History

The Elk Lakes Cabin was built in 1992 to house park rangers. In 2003, BC Parks issued a request for proposals for the operation of the cabin for public use. The Alpine Club of Canada was awarded operation of the cabin, and began operating it in the summer of 2004.

The Elk Lakes Cabin was a welcome addition to the ACC's hut system. It has easy access, and a wide range of hiking, skiing and climbing opportunities in the area.