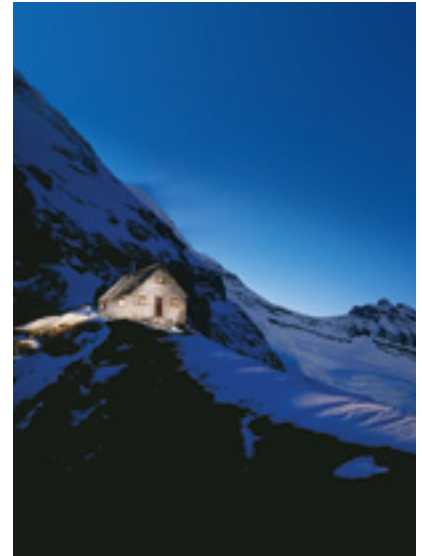




## Abbot Pass Hut

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Abbot Pass Hut by Tom Freebairn

## Booking, Payment and Cancellation Policy

View the Booking, Payment and Cancellation Policies at: [www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/facility/reservations.html](http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/facility/reservations.html)

### Rates

Visit [www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/facility/rates.html](http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/facility/rates.html) for current hut and wilderness pass prices.

## Getting There

A destination in itself for hikers and mountaineers alike, the Abbot Pass Hut sits high up in the pass between Mount Victoria and Mount Lefroy. There aren't many other huts that compare to the real alpine feel you get at Abbot, a hut that is truly rewarding to reach after putting in the hard work to get there.

The pass on which the hut is located is right on the border between Banff National Park and Yoho National Park, the provincial boundary between Alberta and British-Columbia, and on the Continental Divide. The hut is approximately 10 km SW of the town of Lake Louise, AB.

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

### Summer

<b>Trailhead location:</b>	Lake O'Hara (refer to directions to Elizabeth Parker Hut)
<b>Elevation gain:</b>	914 metres (3000 feet) from Lake O'Hara
<b>Approximate time:</b>	4-5 hours (but prepare to allow for more time if need be)

The Abbot Pass Hut is closed in the wintertime due to avalanche danger.

### Portering Services

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

### Trailhead location

The trailhead to the Abbot Pass Hut begins once having reached Lake O'Hara. The Lake O'Hara trailhead/parking lot is located on the south side of the Trans-Canada Highway, 12 km west of Lake Louise, Alberta and 13km east of Field, BC. Follow the sign on the highway to the turn-off, and after crossing the railroad tracks turn right and drive about 200 metres to the parking area.

### Summer Bus Information

The Alpine Club of Canada only takes bus reservations for people staying at Elizabeth Parker or Abbot Pass huts – we do NOT book people on the bus for day trips or camping. For day trips or camping, people must book the bus through Parks Canada. The Yoho information center is open Monday to Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Mountain Time, phone (250) 343-6433.

The bus into Lake O'Hara runs from mid June to early October each year. The bus ride takes 20 to 30 minutes. See below for information on buses outside of regularly scheduled bus times. For the bus schedule, visit: <http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/facility/ohara.html>

You must arrive 20-25 minutes early for any bus you take into Lake O'Hara. The bus leaves ON TIME, and you must allow time for luggage loading prior to departure.

The ACC is allotted 12 seats on each of the morning in-going buses, and 24 seats on each of the afternoon in-going buses. See below for tips on how to possibly get on a morning bus even if you can only reserve space on an afternoon bus.

# Abbot Pass Hut

You cannot reserve space on an outgoing bus – it is first come, first served.

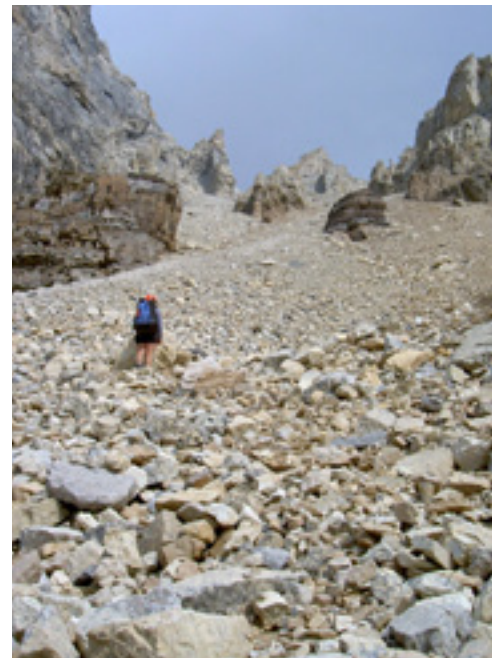
Children under the age of two do not need to be booked on the bus as long as they sit on their parents' laps. If the child is two or older, they **MUST** have a bus booking.

## Summer approach

The Lake O'Hara approach is the most recommended and most popular way to access the hut, as it is the safest, fastest, and travels through absolutely beautiful landscapes and hiking terrain. There are two other options to approach the hut, the "Death Trap" and the "Fuhrmann Ledges" which are both mountaineering objectives in themselves. Climbers looking to take either of the latter approach routes require advanced technical skills, and knowledge of glacier travel and proper crevasse-rescue training. The easiest and fastest way of approaching the hut is via the Lake O'Hara fire road. The road is serviced in the summer months (mid-June to early October) by a Parks Canada bus, which picks passengers up at the Lake O'Hara parking lot four times daily.

You can make your bus booking through the ACC office at the time you make your hut reservation. You can not book the bus through the ACC without booking Abbot Pass Hut. The road is not open to private vehicles at any time. The road can be hiked, but mountain bikes are not permitted. The hike up the road involves 12km of travel and a short distance further you will arrive at "Le Relais" day use shelter at Lake O'Hara (the same spot at which the bus drops passengers off).

**From Lake O'Hara to the Abbot Pass Hut:** From Lake O'Hara, follow the signs marking the trail to Lake Oesa. Once you've reached Lake Oesa, the trail continues up a talus slope from the north side of the lake (the left side as you approach it). Further on you'll pass through a narrow scree gully then across rock ledges to the right where the trail is well marked by Cairns and blue rectangles painted onto rocks. Scramble up past these ledges and take a narrow but clear trail leading up to the base of the main, large scree slope that takes you up to the pass. To ascend the scree slope you can choose your own route out of the many trails that fade in and out through the loose rock. Cairns mark the general route up the slope and through the quartzite ledges, but the scree and shale is quite loose and ever-changing. Be ready to spend quite some time trudging up this slope, helmets are strongly recommended due to the rockfall hazard as you gain over 350 metres (1,150 feet) of elevation. Crampons and ice axes are also recommended in early season or after a fresh snowfall, which can occur at any time during the summer months. This approach can take anywhere from 3 to 7 hours, do not underestimate it and be aware of approaching weather systems that can move in quickly and easily catch hikers and climbers off-guard.



The route up to Abbot Hut from Lake Oesa

**"Death Trap" Access to the Abbot Pass Hut:** At the turn of the century this was the logical route to the pass. Lake Louise was the alpine centre of the Canadian Rockies, there was no road to Lake O'Hara, no Parks Canada trail to Lake Oesa, and the glacier leading to the pass was considerably more mellow. The danger from falling seracs and the like from the upper Victoria Glacier has always been high. In recent years the glacier has become more crevasse riddled (particularly near the pass) and a large bergschrund running across the entire route has made it nearly impassable. This route is not the first choice for access to the Abbot Pass, and is only for the strong alpinist. Check with the Banff Wardens at the Lake Louise Visitor's Centre for current conditions.

From Lake Louise follow the trail to the Plain of Six Glaciers Tea House and the lookout beyond. If the weather is fair you will be able to see the pass and the hut. From here the route description is quite simple – descend to the Victoria Glacier and follow it up to the pass – but the complicated crevasses and objective hazards make it more serious. On the glacier, follow a line up the middle, or slightly to the Mt. Lefroy side, to avoid the danger of falling ice and seracs from the upper Victoria Glacier overhead. As the glacier steepens there will be a large bergschrund to negotiate, which may require technical ice climbing skills to cross or skirt it on the right side. It is a good idea

# Abbot Pass Hut

to have a pair of short ice tools. In some years this bergschrund is simply not passable and parties should be prepared to turn around at this point. As the glacier approaches the pass it is heavily crevassed, and the best route through is to head left toward the Mt. Lefroy side of the glacier and contour back to the pass and the hut higher up. Use your own judgment here, as the glacier will undoubtedly change significantly in different seasons and years. Use great caution if using this route as a descent from the pass; the slope leading down toward the most heavily crevassed portion of the glacier is quite steep, making it difficult to arrest a fall into a crevasse.

From Lake Louise to the pass the elevation gain is approximately 1,190 metres (3,904 feet). Times for this approach vary widely, and depend largely upon the amount of fresh snow, time required to deal with the crevasses, and difficulties encountered through the bergschrund itself. Certainly allow a full day, and get an early start to avoid the worst of the garbage falling off the upper Victoria glacier.

**“Fuhrmann Ledges” Approach and Descent to/from Abbot Pass Hut:** As an alternative to the dangers of the “Death Trap”, this route provides a slightly safer, albeit more circuitous route to the pass or (more commonly) back to the lake. It incorporates portions of what was known as “the Old Swiss Guides Route”; however, the terrain has changed substantially since the beginning of the century. The first recorded use of this route in modern times was by Peter Fuhrmann, while guiding an Alpine Club “Rockies Panorama” hiking camp down from the pass in 1991 – a trip on which the participants surely got their money’s worth! A trip up this route in the early season would have the advantage of snow covering the scree cone on the east face of Lefroy, possibly providing more secure footing. However, the upper west slopes of Lefroy get the afternoon sun and in the early season there is a greater possibility of debris falling from above as you traverse the final trails and ledges to the pass.

From Lake Louise, follow the Plain of Six Glaciers Teahouse trail as for the Death Trap route, descending to the Victoria Glacier a little ways past the teahouse. It is easier to gain the Victoria Glacier at a point before the where the trail comes close to the glacier – the trade-off is that more time is spent on the glacier, and less on the highly developed Parks Canada trail beside it.

Whichever way you get onto the Victoria Glacier, cross it to the south to the Lefroy Glacier, then head toward, and begin climbing up, the largest scree cone coming out of a large gully/chimney on the east face of Lefroy. This is the largest such feature on this face of Lefroy. It is difficult to see the ledges, or the cairn which marks their beginning from the scree approach itself; if you are on the largest scree cone, proceed on faith that the cairn is there. As you near the top of the scree, there are some steeper steps of rock on the right; these can be climbed directly or bypassed on the left (recommended). Very near the top of the scree slope, a cairn identifies the start of the ledge heading north. The ledge itself is punctuated by gullies and drainages which provide small scrambling challenges with very exciting exposure; some groups may want to travel roped across the length of the ledge. The ledge reaches the north ridge of Lefroy and turns the corner onto the west face at grid reference 503922 and at an elevation of 2,457 metres (8,060 feet).

Once on the west face, the terrain opens up and the exposure is reduced dramatically, and more options for travel are presented. Various cairned trails lead across this slope and toward the pass, each presenting periodic scrambling and continuous route-finding challenges. When in doubt, it is probably better to stay high rather than low. This section of the approach is long and involved, including almost 2,000 ft. of elevation gain to the pass. Anticipate three or more hours for this section of the approach alone.

The elevation gain from Lake Louise to the Pass is about 1,190 metres (3,904 feet). It is a long day to get to the pass from Lake Louise via this route. Leave yourself all day, because you certainly do not want to be mucking around on the ledges on the west side of Lefroy in the dark. Small, experienced parties traveling light have recorded times in the neighborhood of seven to eight hours for the whole trip up to the pass; times for the descent would be somewhat less.

If using this route as a descent from the pass, reverse the above description. The greatest potential route-finding problem is going to be turning the corner onto the east face at the proper place and locating the beginning of the ledge. Make a descending traverse across the west slopes of Lefroy from the pass, watching for cairns, and aiming for the broadest scree ledges directly above the Death Trap. Gradually work your way forward along a ledge, which narrows progressively until you find yourself just above a significant drop-off. A prominent gendarme should be visible on the ridge of Lefroy 200 feet above. From this point the route is more obvious: head for marks

# Abbot Pass Hut

on the rock. Turn the corner at grid reference 502922 and you should find yourself on the traverse ledge noted in the ascent description. You can confirm your position by noting a series of unusually distinct, parallel and finely layered limestone strata on the right wall of the ledge. Once on the ledge, continue south, then descend scree to the Lefroy Glacier.

## Maps and Guidebooks

All of the following books and maps can be purchased through the ACC office or online through the ACC online store at: <http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/store/index.html>

### Map and GPS references

<b>Map reference:</b>	82N/8 (Lake Louise)
<b>Grid reference:</b>	495903
<b>GPS coordinates:</b>	51°21' 54"-116°17' 12" NAD83 11U <b>549660 5690657</b>
<b>Hut elevation:</b>	2,926 metres (9,598 feet)

### Maps

- Chrismar Mapping Services 1:20,000 topographic map entitled "Lake O'Hara". This excellent map shows trails and area highlights in detail.
- Gem Trek Publishing 1:20,000 topographic map entitled "Lake O'Hara". This excellent map shows trails and area highlights in detail.
- Gem Trek Publishing 1:50,000 topographic map entitled "Lake Louise and Yoho". This excellent map shows the trails and highlights of the area.
- 'The Adventure Map' 1:20,000 topographical map entitled "Lake O'Hara"
- Canadian Government Issued standard topographical map 82N/8 (Lake Louise)

### Guidebooks and general interest books

- *Backcountry Huts and Lodges of the Rockies and Columbias*, by Jim Scott
- *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide*, by Patton and Robinson
- *The Wonder of Yoho*, by Don Beers
- *Lake O'Hara Trails*, by Don Beers
- *Don't Waste Your Time in the Canadian Rockies*, by Kathy & Craig Copeland
- *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, by Sean Dougherty
- *The 11,000ers of the Canadian Rockies*, by Bill Corbett
- *Scrambles in the Canadian Rockies*, by Alan Kane
- *Handbook of the Canadian Rockies*, by Ben Gadd
- *Artists of the Rockies*, by Jane Lytton Gooch

## Website Links

### Current conditions

**Weather:** Go to [www.weather.gc.ca](http://www.weather.gc.ca) and click on <BC>, then scroll down to <Yoho National Park>, and also click on <Alberta> then scroll down to <Banff>. The weather should be similar to the two, weather forecasts are updated 3 times daily.

# Abbot Pass Hut

## Area information

**Google Earth Reference:** The Abbot Pass area is covered in high resolution on Google Earth. Go to <http://earth.google.com/> . You will find the Abbot Pass Hut at 51°21' 54" N, 116°17'12" W.

**1:50,000 Topographic Map:** The Canadian Government offers free downloads of their regular 1:50,000 topo maps. The map files are large (25 MB) and take a few minutes to download. You will find this service at: <http://www.geogratis.gc.ca/geogratis/en/product/search.do?id=10119> . Perform your search by selecting <NTS Mapsheet>, and enter <082N08>. Next, press <Search> under <Search Options> (without changing any of the information in <Search Options>). Select 082N08 from the options and download it.

**1:50,000 Topo Map:** Area specific version – YellowMaps.com offers access to the Canadian Government maps, but in smaller, area-specific versions. You will find the Abbot Pass area on the map at [http://yellowmaps.com/topo/\\_lakeohara\\_bc/index2.htm](http://yellowmaps.com/topo/_lakeohara_bc/index2.htm) .

## Parks Canada Info

### Wilderness Passes in National Parks

Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, Yoho, and Glacier National Parks collect a fee for backcountry overnight use in the Parks. The fees collected from the wilderness passes go towards maintaining trails, supplying the voluntary registration service, avalanche forecasting, backcountry bridge-building, etc. Overnight users of the ACC huts (ages 16 and over) are required to pay this fee. A copy of the wilderness passes should be carried in the backcountry at all times as a Parks Canada representative may ask to see proof of purchase.

We encourage you to buy these passes from the ACC, as 40% of the monies collected goes to a special huts account for our heritage huts and environmental improvements. You will be offered the option to purchase the pass when you make a reservation, or you can buy an annual pass from our online store at: <http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/store/index.html>. For current rates, visit: <http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/facility/rates.html>.

### Vehicle Permits

All vehicles stopping in a National Park must have a Park Motor Vehicle Permit. Annual or single day permits can be purchased at most Park entrance gates and Park visitor centres and soon through the Alpine Club of Canada's national office.

### Maximum Group Size

The maximum group size for hiking is 10 persons. If your group is larger, you will need to split into smaller groups.

### Voluntary Hazardous Activities Registration

It is recommended that anyone participating in hazardous activities in the backcountry register with the Park Wardens. This registration is free and is the best method of ensuring that someone comes looking for you should an emergency happen. You can register at any Parks Canada Visitor Centre.

# Abbot Pass Hut

## What Is At the Hut

### Summary

<b>Heating:</b>	Wood burning stove
<b>Lighting:</b>	Propane
<b>Cooking:</b>	Propane stove, cookware, dishes & utensils provided
<b>Sleeping:</b>	Dormitory style on thick foam mattresses
<b>Capacity:</b>	24 in summer
<b>Drinking water:</b>	Snowmelt all year or small run-off on west slopes of Mt. Lefroy
<b>Human Waste:</b>	Outhouse 10 metres NW of the hut on an elevated platform
<b>Dishwater:</b>	Greywater pit in front and to the west of the outhouse steps
<b>Garbage:</b>	Pack it out!

### The building

Now a historic building, the Abbot Pass Hut is second only to the ACC's Neil Colgan Hut as the highest permanent, habitable structure in Canada. The hut still stands in its original form, constructed in 1922 out of stones from Abbot Pass. It contains a kitchen area and common room, as well as dormitory-style sleeping arrangements on the top floor.



### Sleeping arrangements

The hut sleeps 24 people at full capacity on thick foam mattresses in the dormitory-style room upstairs.

### Kitchen

The kitchen is well supplied with all dishes, cutlery, utensils, pots and pans necessary for cooking. There are several two-burner propane stoves for cooking. Please do not leave any unused food behind, even if it is non-perishable, as it attracts rodents and people generally won't use it as they don't know how old it is.

### Lighting

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

### Heat

The hut is heated by a wood-burning stove, which works very efficiently when used properly, but on the contrary does not provide very much heat if not used the right way. Please be sure to read the instructions for the stove, which are found in the hut.

### Tools

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

### Drinking Water

There is snow available year-round near the hut that can be melted for drinking water. There is also a small run-off from a pipe on the west slopes of Mount Lefroy (towards Ringrose Peak). It is recommended that you boil or filter all drinking water.

# Abbot Pass Hut

## Grey Water

Grey water disposal is in a ground pit out front and to the west of the outhouse steps. 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 ground sump. Please periodically empty the strainer contents into the fireplace.

## Human Waste

The outhouse is located 10 metres northwest of the hut on an elevated platform. Do not dispose of any garbage or food waste into the outhouse barrel.

## Garbage

Burn all paper garbage and food scraps, and pack out all other garbage and unused food. Please do not leave any unused food behind even if it is non-perishable, as it attracts rodents and people generally won't use it since they don't know how old it is. Do not leave any garbage behind, pack it all out!

## What you need to bring

- combination lock number for the hut door (call the ACC office to confirm before you go to the hut)
- reservation form from the ACC stating how many beds you have booked and the length of your stay
- Parks Canada overnight or annual wilderness pass (the former will be on your reservation form if you purchase it through the ACC)
- sleeping bag
- food for the length of your stay
- toilet paper
- newspaper for lighting the fire
- matches
- first aid kit
- 9V battery for the smoke detector

## 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).
- Parks Canada does not permit dogs
- 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 odor and environmental impact.

# Abbot Pass Hut

## 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

The Abbot Pass Hut is used today, as it was in the beginning, as a base for climbing on Mts. Victoria and Lefroy. The routes from the pass are classic moderate alpine outings and are "must do" routes for locals and visitors alike. During the summer when the Lake O'Hara bus is operating, the hut is popular and can be completely full on weekends and any given day.

## Mountaineering

There are essentially two mountaineering routes from the pass: the South-East Ridge of the south summit of Victoria, and the West Face of Lefroy. The former is one of the most elegant ridge routes in the Rockies, while the latter gives excellent snow or ice climbing of a moderate standard. Both routes take you to the top of impressive 11,000+ foot peaks, give excellent views, and are highly recommended. It is also possible to traverse the Mt. Victoria massif from the pass. This is a less popular, and certainly more committing outing than either of the other two routes. Information on these routes can be found in the guidebook *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* by Sean Dougherty.

## History

The Abbot Pass Hut is rich in the history of the development of the west and inextricably linked to the history of climbing and guiding in the Canadian Rockies. It was here that Phillip Stanley Abbot fell to his death while attempting the first ascent of Mt. Lefroy in 1896, giving North America its first mountaineering fatality and the pass its name. In 1897 Peter Sarbach, the first Swiss guide in Canada, led a group up Mt. Lefroy and Mt. Victoria and demonstrated the need for trained guides in Canada. The Canadian Pacific Railway saw the potential for developing tourism in Canada and hired Swiss guides to work at their hotels. By the beginning of the 1920s, ascents of Victoria and Lefroy had become popular guided outings.

The CPR Cabin, as it was originally known, was built to provide easier access to the peaks, and to provide shelter in emergency situations. The construction, which was carried out by the Swiss guides working for the CPR, took place during the summer of 1922 and the hut was finished and officially opened in 1923.

By the 1960s the hut had been well used by both the CPR guides and the general public alike, and as it essentially had no upkeep or maintenance for 40 years, had become dilapidated and grimy. The CPR turned the hut over to Parks Canada, which along with a dedicated group of volunteers, cleaned, gutted, and re-roofed the place. In 1985, Parks turned the operation of the hut over to the ACC. The Club has since renovated the hut three times, once in 1986, and again in 1993, and June of 1997 saw the interior of the hut brought back to close to its original state. The Abbot Pass Hut was designated a National Historic Site on August 26, 1997.

# Abbot Pass Hut

Today the Abbot Pass Hut is well used. Hikers use it as a destination for day hikes and overnight visits, while mountaineers base themselves in the hut for attempts on the classic climbs of Mounts Victoria and Lefroy. The hut is as popular as ever with professional guides. However, the relative ease of access, spectacular setting and publicity have occasionally conspired to lure both hikers and climbers beyond their level of comfort. As traffic at the hut has increased, so has the concern for safety. Remaining true to the original goal of safety for mountaineers at the pass, an emergency telephone, the first at an Alpine Club of Canada hut, was installed in the fall of 1994. The Alpine Club National Office and the Banff Park Wardens in Lake Louise can be contacted directly from the hut in the event of an accident or other emergency.