



Bow Hut

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Bow Hut by Nancy Hansen

Booking, Payment and Cancellation Policy

View the Booking, Payment and Cancellation Policies at www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/facility/reservations.html

Rates

Visit www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/facility/rates.html for current hut and wilderness pass prices.

Getting There

The Bow Hut is located near the Bow Glacier at the east end of the Wapta Icefields. It is the largest and most popular of the ACC huts in the area and is the easiest route to access the Wapta Icefields. The parking lot from which to approach the Bow Hut is at the turnoff for the Num-Ti-Jah Lodge, 40 km north of Lake Louise on the west side of the Icefields Parkway (Highway 93). Please do not park in the parking lot for the Num-Ti-Jah Lodge, instead choose either the lot immediately beside the highway or the one next to the public washrooms (which are both open year-round).

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

Summer

Trailhead location:	40 km north of Lake Louise on Highway 93
Hiking distance:	8 kilometres
Elevation gain:	400 metres / 1310 feet
Approximate time:	3-5 hours

Winter

Trailhead location:	40 km north of Lake Louise on Highway 93
Skiing distance:	8 kilometres
Elevation gain:	400 metres / 1310 feet
Approximate time:	3-5 hours

Portering Services

Need help carrying your load? Check out our portering services!

Trailhead location

The trailhead to approach the Bow Hut is past the west end of the parking lot, at the north shore of Bow Lake.

Summer approach

Take the road past the Num-Ti-Jah Lodge and follow the trail that leads around the north shore of the lake. After you cross the main creek that feeds into the lake, follow the well-marked trail that starts to climb the slope along the right side of the canyon. Follow the trail up the steps and take the first possible left turn, over a boulder-bridge to get across to the east side of the river. Continue on the trail above the east side of the canyon until it drops back down to the streambed again, and stay along the left side of the river on the way up. Eventually the trail will begin to angle up through the trees on the left side of the canyon, and will open up into a large moraine-basin filled with rubble. From here you can choose from many of the cairn-marked trails to take you across the basin towards the large headwall, which the hut sits right above. Cross the creek at the last minute, and follow any of the good trails up the final steep slopes to the right for a few hundred metres to reach the hut.

Winter approach

From the west end of the parking lot ski down to the edge of the lake. Since the lake is frozen in the wintertime the route is more straightforward by crossing over the snow-covered ice directly to the other side (be sure that the lake is completely frozen). On the other side, ski along the streambed for about half a kilometre until the canyon up ahead becomes too difficult to pass through. Angle up into the trees to the left where the terrain is more easygoing, and follow the trail through the trees parallel to the canyon. The trees will open up beneath a large avalanche slope, move across it quickly and climb a short hill on the right that leads up around the corner and back into the main drainage again. Continue along the creek into the narrow canyon with steep walls above. These walls are covered in snow and present some avalanche hazard, be sure not to linger in this area as it can be a terrain trap if anything were to slide. Be cautious through here in the late season as the ice over the creek may begin to melt in the springtime. The terrain through the canyon will begin to get quite difficult after about one km and at this point climb up onto the east bank on your left. The trail gradually ascends the slope, continuing at an angle through the forest until opening up into a large snow basin. From here you can spot the hut high up on a bench across the cirque to the right. Choose the safest route to cross the avalanche slopes through here, making your way around the contour of the cirque while gradually gaining elevation to reach to hut around on the right side. The final slopes beneath the hut are steep and usually require a number of switchbacks to climb up out of the cirque and onto the bench, on which the hut is located just another 100 metres further from the top.

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: www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/store/index.html

Map and GPS references

Map reference:	82N/9 Hector Lake
Grid reference:	355203
GPS coordinates:	51°38' 06"-116°29' 24" NAD27 11U 535296 5720566
Hut elevation:	2,350 metres (7,700 feet)

Maps

- Gem Trek Publishing 1:70, 000 topographic map entitled "Bow Lake and Saskatchewan Crossing". This excellent map shows trails and highlights in detail.
- "Touring the Wapta Icefields" 1:50, 000 topographic map by Murray Toft. This is an excellent map that highlights the popular ski traverse routes used in the wintertime. A great close-up view of the entire Wapta Icefields area.
- The 1:50,000 Canadian Government issued standard topographic map "82N/9 Hector Lake".
- The 1:50, 000 Canadian Government issued standard topographic map "82N/10 Blaeberry River". This map is useful to view the remainder of the Wapta Icefields if you choose to trek further than the Bow Hut.

Guidebooks and general interest books

- *Backcountry Huts and Lodges of the Rockies and Columbias*, by Jim Scott
- *Ski Trails in the Canadian Rockies*, by Chic Scott
- *Summits & Icefields Canadian Rockies, Alpine Ski Tours*, by Chic Scott
- *Summits and Icefields, Canadian Rockies*, by Chic Scott
- *Backcountry Banff - Walking, Hiking, Backpacking, and off-trail Scrambling in Banff National Park*, by Mike Potter
- *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide*, by Brian Patton & Bart Robinson
- *Don't Waste Your Time in the Canadian Rockies*, by Kathy & Craig Copeland
- *The 11,000ers of the Canadian Rockies*, by Bill Corbett
- *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, by Sean Dougherty
- *Mixed Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, by Sean Isaac
- *Waterfall Ice Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, by Joe Josephson

- *Artists of the Rockies*, by Jane Lytton Gooch
- *Handbook of the Canadian Rockies*, by Ben Gadd
- *Banff National Park*, by Mike Potter

Website Links

Current conditions

Weather: Go to www.weather.ec.gc.ca click on <Alberta>, then scroll down to <Banff>. The weather forecasts are updated 3 times daily.

Avalanche Hazard: Go to www.avalanche.ca click on the <Public Avalanche Bulletins> and review the section for <Banff/Yoho/Kootenay National Parks>. The avalanche forecast for this region is kept currently updated.

Area information

Avalanche Terrain Rating System (ATES): Parks Canada has developed a classification system for avalanche terrain, and has applied ratings to approximately 250 trips in the Mountain National Parks. For more information, visit www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/ab/banff/visit/visit7a1_E.asp

Google Earth Reference: The Bow Glacier area is covered in medium resolution on Google Earth. Go to <http://earth.google.com/>. You will find the Bow Glacier at 51°38' 06"N - 116°29' 24"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 082N09. Next, press "Search" under "Search Options" (without changing any of the information in "Search Options"). Select 082N09 from the options and download it.

1:50,000 Topographic Map: area specific version – [YellowMaps.com](http://yellowmaps.com) offers access to the Canadian Government maps, but in smaller, area-specific versions. You will find the Bow Lake area at http://yellowmaps.com/maps/bow_lake_topo_map.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.

Bow Hut

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.

What Is At the Hut

Summary

Heating:	Wood stove
Lighting:	Propane
Cooking:	Propane stove, cookware, dishes & utensils provided
Sleeping:	Dormitory style on thick foam mattresses
Capacity:	30 in the summer as well as in the winter
Drinking water:	Small glacial stream 50m south of the hut or snowmelt
Human Waste:	Outhouse
Dishwater:	Ground sump approximately 20m east of the hut
Garbage:	Pack it out!

The buildings

The Bow Hut is made up of a large kitchen/common area that is separated from the sleeping quarters to make it easier for a large number of users to be there at one time. The outhouse area is accessible through a hallway without having to step outside of the building.

Capacity

The hut sleeps a total of 30 people in the summer as well as the wintertime. The sleeping arrangements are dormitory-style bunk beds in one large room, which is not heated.

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 several sinks and 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 kitchen/common room that supplies heat to the hut. Firewood is stored underneath the kitchen window, on the east side of the hut. Please replace all firewood you use in the hut with cut and split wood from the outside pile.

Tools

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

Drinking Water

In the summer drinking water can be reached from a small glacial stream 50 metres south of the hut. In the winter, water is made from snowmelt and it is recommended that all water be boiled or filtered before drinking.

Grey Water

Grey water disposal is in a ground sump approximately 2m east of the hut. In the winter the pipes might be frozen or buried under snow, in this case do your best to dispose of the water on the rocks. You can drain grey water directly down the sinks in the hut, but please ensure that the strainer and buckets are 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 to be burned into the fireplace.

Human Waste

The outhouses are located behind the vestibule connecting the common room and the sleeping room. Garbage should not be disposed in the outhouses.

Garbage

All paper garbage and food scraps should be burned in the fire, and all other garbage, bottles, and unused food packed back out of the hut.

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
- 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).

- 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

Mountaineering

The area around the Bow Hut and the Wapta Icefields is excellent for moderate mountaineering in both summer and winter, and the Bow Hut is the best located and equipped of the huts for use as a base. The peaks in the immediate vicinity of the Bow Hut include St. Nicholas Peak, Mt. Olive and Mt. Gordon. To the north, Mt. Thompson and Mt. Rhondda can be accessed from either the Bow or the Peyto Huts. Information on these routes can be found in the guidebook *The Rocky Mountains of Canada – South*.

Backcountry Skiing

The slope on the toe of the glacier above the hut provides an excellent ski slope, giving almost 1,100 feet of vertical descent to the hut; however, there are a number of barely hidden crevasses here which have claimed several lives over the years. The slopes on the mountains around the hut also provide excellent skiing terrain, but now you are into ski mountaineering terrain.

Ice climbing

The major peaks around Bow Hut can all be climbed in winter, and many of them largely on skis. The most popular ascents from the hut include St. Nicholas Peak, Mts. Gordon and Olive, and for a longer day, Mt. Collie. Not all of these peaks are completely accessible on skis; crampons and ice axes are required for some. Refer to Chic Scott's book, *Summits and Icefields* for more details.

History

The original Bow Hut project was initiated by Peter Fuhrmann, funded by Peter and Catharine Whyte and was constructed in 1968 by members of various groups including the Calgary Ski Club and the ACC. The hut was built near Bow Glacier to facilitate ski tourers and mountaineers entering the Wapta via Bow Lake, the easiest and most natural route to the icefields. Fiberglass igloos had been established at both the Peyto Glacier and Balfour Pass in the years prior, and with the building of a deluxe 14-person facility at a location between the two, the vision of a system of huts on the Wapta/Waputik Icefields was taking shape. None of those responsible for the project, however, could have predicted the amount of use and the level of abuse that the original Bow Hut would endure.

The hut was abused from the beginning, and saw very little regular maintenance or upkeep. By the 1980s the place was a total hole. The hut was used as a flop house, the snow within several hundred feet of the hut had been contaminated by the outhouses and by indiscriminate waste disposal, and some estimates put the number of users per year at 7,000 (19 people per night at a facility which was built to sleep 14!). The hut which was described upon its completion as the “the Ritz” had metamorphosed into the “Bow Ghetto”.

By the mid-1980s it was evident that the facility required radical change. In 1989, under the direction of the ACC’s Huts Committee Chairman Mike Mortimer, that radical change took place. The original hut had been built on a site which was non-porous and therefore had no drainage – a problem that led to the contaminated water and snow. Plans were made for a new hut in a more environmentally sensitive location and fund-raising began. The new Bow Hut was constructed for \$98,000, raised primarily through the Calgary and Edmonton sections of the Club. Design concerns in the new hut included proper waste disposal, spacious and bright common areas and sleeping rooms which were both increased in size from the original hut and separated from the common areas to facilitate use by many groups at one time. The palatial new Bow Hut was opened in the fall of 1989 to rave reviews and is presently operated by the ACC.

The hut today is a far cry from the original Balfour and Peyto fiberglass igloos, which a Banff Warden predicted in the late '60s “will only serve the few hardy ski mountaineers who can accept the hardships of carrying and skiing with heavy loads and are willing to put up with discomfort during the night in bad weather”. It’s an even further cry from the abused state of the original Bow Hut and now serves as a stopover for many summer and winter trips.