



Stanley Mitchell Hut

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Stanley Mitchell Hut by Darren Rudy

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 hut sits in a small meadow not far from the base of The President, in the Little Yoho Valley, Yoho National Park, B.C.

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

Summer

Trailhead location:	21 km west of Lake Louise, AB / 3.7 km east of Field, BC
Hiking distance:	11 km / 7 miles
Elevation gain:	520 m / 1700 ft
Approximate time:	3-4 hours

Winter

Trailhead location:	21 km west of Lake Louise, AB / 3.7 km east of Field, BC
Skiing distance:	23 km
Elevation gain:	675 m / 2200 ft
Approximate time:	Full day (longer if you are breaking trail), many people split the trip into 2 days

Trailhead location

In summer, the Little Yoho Valley trailhead is located on the north side of the Trans-Canada Highway, 21 km west of Lake Louise, Alberta and 3.7 km east of Field, BC. The turn-off to the trailhead is signed as “Takakkaw Falls” on the highway. Follow the Yoho Valley Road to the Takakkaw Falls parking lot (13 km from the highway). Park at the most northerly point (closest to the Parks Canada campground).

In winter, the Little Yoho Valley trailhead is located on the north side of the Trans-Canada Highway, 21 km west of Lake Louise, Alberta and 3.7 km east of Field, BC. The turn-off to the trailhead is signed as “Takakkaw Falls” on the highway. Follow the Yoho Valley Road for approximately 1 km and park at the locked gate.

Summer approach

The two common approaches to the Stanley Mitchell Hut are the Little Yoho Valley Trail and the Iceline Trail. Both originate at the Takakkaw Falls parking lot and follow well-developed National Park trail systems. It is more common to approach the hut on the former trail, and to hike the Iceline on the descent, to avoid the immediate gruelling uphill of this trail. Descending the Iceline allows you to hike toward, rather than away from, the spectacular scenery surrounding the trail. You will end up about 1 km from your car if you approach the hut on the Little Yoho Valley trail and descend the Iceline trail.

Little Yoho Valley Approach

This is the most common way of getting to the hut. The trails are well developed and maintained, the route is well graded, and (including a few short optional diversions), very scenic.

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Time: The standard hiking time in the summer is three to four hours, but be prepared to add to that if you don't do a lot of backpacking or if you have all of your kids' stuff as well as your own on your back. Many parties use this hut as one of their first backpacking trips and as an introduction to backcountry adventures, so the time needed to hike in is often underestimated.

Approach: Begin hiking on the Little Yoho Valley and Twin Falls trail (signed). You will pass the campground almost immediately. The trail is mostly level for about the first 4 km, and begins gaining elevation after passing Laughing Falls. At Laughing Falls you will come to a trail junction which leads to Twin Falls to the right, and the Little Yoho Valley to the left; keep left here, and hike up the switchbacks. There is another trail junction for Marpole Lake about half a kilometre before reaching the top of the Laughing Falls hill. Stay left on the trail which continues to climb the hill. Half a kilometre further, and pretty much at the top of the elevation gain, you will come to another junction indicating the Whaleback trail to your right, and the Little Yoho Valley to the left; go left here, and then to the right at the next junction which is less than 100 m further. In approximately another 3 km you will come to an open meadow and the Stanley Mitchell Hut.

Iceline Trail

This trail provides spectacular views of Takakkaw Falls and the glaciers beyond; you can picture where the Scott Duncan hut lies north of Mt. Daly on the southern end of the Waputik Icefield. This trail is more commonly used descending from the hut, making a great loop trail. Early in the summer, the trail can be difficult to follow and you may need an ice axe to safely cross some of the snow slopes.

Distance and Elevation Gain: From the Takakkaw Falls parking lot, the trail rises about 600 m (2,000 ft) and descends about 100 m (330 ft) over 11 km. Most of the elevation gain takes place within the first couple of kilometres.

Time: 3-5 hours is standard for this approach.

Approach: Drive up the Yoho Valley Road as described above. Leave your car at the parking lot beside the Whiskey Jack Hostel, just before Takakkaw Falls. The trail starts a couple of hundred metres north of the hostel. Climb the trail up the hillside above, through the forest to the left of a giant avalanche slide path. After 1 km there is a junction for a side trip to Hidden Lake to the left, and a couple of hundred metres further, a junction for Yoho Pass and Lake to the left. Keep right at both of these intersections. The trail continues rising, then levels out and follows well-developed trails on moraine on the northeast side of the President range, before dropping down to the Little Yoho River and the Stanley Mitchell Hut.

Winter approach

A summary of winter access routes is given below. This information describes the character and difficulty of the undertaking, but is inadequate for planning or carrying out the trips themselves. Please refer to Ski Trails in the Canadian Rockies, or Summits and Icefields – Ski Tours in the Canadian Rockies by Chic Scott for complete access information.

Two routes are commonly used to access the hut in winter: the Little Yoho Valley approach, which gives access from the highway in a long one-day push, and the less common multi-day route across the des Poilus Glacier from the Wapta Icefield. Both routes are serious undertakings, and as a result this hut is used much less in the winter than in the summer months.

Little Yoho Valley

The road to Takakkaw Falls is not plowed in winter, and must be skied. The first 5 km are normally trackset. After arriving at the Takakkaw Falls, the route follows the one taken in summer.

Distance and Elevation Gain: The ascent from the highway to the hut is approximately 700 m (2,200 ft) over 23 km.

Time: Allow a full day for this approach – longer if you are breaking trail. Many people split the trip into two days, with a bivouac at the campground cook shelter just past Takakkaw Falls. There are no amenities at the shelter, other than a roof over your head.

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Approach: The route follows the road to Takakkaw Falls and the summer hiking trail to the hut. The trail signs may be completely under snow, and the final stretch to the hut may be difficult to follow if a trail has not been broken or if the sun goes down. The route is described in full detail by Chic Scott in *Ski Trails in the Canadian Rockies and Summits and Icefields – Alpine Ski Tours in the Canadian Rockies*.

The Yoho Traverse

This is a major, multi-day ski tour with a couple of variations. You can begin at either the Bow or Peyto Hut, or the Icefield Parkway. It is possible to push through to the Stanley Mitchell Hut in a day from the Bow Hut, but most parties camp out one night on the des Poilus Glacier. The summary description below assumes a start at the Bow Hut.

Distance and Elevation Gain: There is a net elevation loss coming off the Wapta Icefield, but there are a lot of ups and downs along the way. From the Bow Hut you will gain about 820m (2,700 ft), and lose about 1100m (3,600 ft) over 20 km.

Time: The route is sometimes done in a full day from the Bow Hut, but many parties plan on two days. A night out should be planned for, even if not anticipated.

Approach: The route crosses the Wapta Icefield to the west through the Rhondda - Mt. Gordon Pass and across the southeast slopes of Mt. Collie before descending south onto the des Poilus Glacier. You will pass Isolated Peak on its east side, and descend its south slopes to the hut. This route is described in detail in Chic Scott's *Summits and Icefields – Alpine Ski Tours in the Canadian Rockies and Ski Trails in the Canadian Rockies*.

Maps and Guidebooks

All of the following books and maps can be purchased through the ACC office or online through the ACC on-line store.

Map and GPS references

Map reference:	82N/10 (Blaeberry River)
Grid reference:	303 084
GPS coordinates:	51°31' 36"-116°33' 48" NAD83 11U 530293 5708485
Hut elevation:	2,060m (6,825 feet)

Maps

- Gem Trek Publishing 1:50,000 topographic map entitled "Lake Louise and Yoho". This excellent map shows the trails and highlights of the area.
- Four 1:50,000 Canadian Government issued standard topographic maps. The hut is found on the bottom right hand corner of map 82N/10 (Blaeberry River) at grid reference 303081, the parking lot and trailhead on the upper left corner of 82N/8 (Lake Louise), and the middle part of the trail on the lower left corner of 82N/9 (Hector Lake). It is also advisable to carry 82N/7 (Golden) if you wish to climb the President and Vice President.
- The critical areas of the above four maps have been reproduced onto one 1:50,000 map sheet: *Touring the Wapta Icefield*, by Murray Toft.

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
- *Don't Waste Your Time in the Canadian Rockies*, by Kathy & Craig Copeland
- *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, by Sean Dougherty

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- *Scrambles in the Canadian Rockies*, by Alan Kane
- *Waterfall Ice Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, by Joe Josephson
- *Ski Trails in the Canadian Rockies*, by Chic Scott
- *Summits and Icefields – Canadian Rockies*, by Chic Scott
- *Handbook of the Canadian Rockies*, by Ben Gadd

Website Links

Current conditions

Weather: Go to www.weather.ec.gc.ca click on <BC>, then scroll down to <Yoho National Park>. 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: A good overview of the trip into the Stanley Mitchell Hut can be seen on Google Earth. Go to <http://earth.google.com/>. You will find the hut at 51° 31' 36" N, 116° 33' 48" 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 082N10. Next, press "Search" under "Search Options" (without changing any of the information in "Search Options"). Select 082N10 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 Stanley Mitchell Hut and area at http://yellowmaps.com/topo/_emeraldlake_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 17 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.

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 the worst happen. You can register at any Parks Canada Visitor Centre.

What Is At the Hut

Summary

Heating:	Wood stove
Lighting:	Propane
Cooking:	Propane oven & range, cookware, dishes & utensils provided
Sleeping:	Dormitory style on thick foam mattresses
Capacity:	22 people
Drinking water:	From the creek (boil or filter)
Human Waste:	Outhouse
Dishwater:	Ground sump
Garbage:	Pack it out!

The building and sleeping arrangements

The Stanley Mitchell Hut is a two-storey log building. The hut consists of a large kitchen area and a living/dining room with tables, seats and a wood burning stove. The sleeping quarters have 4-inch thick covered foam mattresses and are in a small room on the main floor and a large upstairs loft. Sleeping arrangements are dormitory-style, on two long bunks (bring earplugs!).

Capacity

The total capacity is 22 people year around.

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

The hut has a wood-burning stove. Firewood is stored behind the hut. Please replace all firewood you use in the hut with cut and split wood from the pile.

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Tools

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

Drinking Water

Drinking water is from a small spring-fed creek running through the meadow 60m south of the hut. It is advisable to boil or treat the water before drinking it. In the winter you can dig down to the creek or melt snow for 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 metre radius of the outhouse.

Human Waste

The outhouse is located 30 m west of the front door of the main hut. 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. NOTE: Burning plastic is strictly prohibited. Not only does it adversely coat the insides of the stove pipes, burnt plastic is a pollutant!

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)
- Parks Canada overnight or annual wilderness pass (the former will be on your reservation form if you purchase it through the ACC).

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 2:00 pm, put your belongings where they will not disturb the previous nights' occupants.

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- 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.

When leaving a hut:

- If your belongings will be in the hut after 2:00 pm, 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

Hiking

The hiking on established trails in the vicinity of the hut is excellent, with interesting trips back down the valley toward Twin Falls (such as the Whaleback trail and the Marpole Lake trail) as well as up past the hut toward Kiwetinok Pass. Refer to *The Canadian Rockies Trail Guide*, *The Wonder of Yoho* and *Don't Waste Your Time in the Canadian Rockies* for more information on these and other trails.

Climbing and scrambling

The big mountaineering objectives of the area are Mts. President and Vice President. The routes from the col between the two peaks are excellent moderate mountaineering challenges that see a fair number of beginners brought along. The Vice President also offers a very good snow and ice route on the north face. The North Ridge and East Face of Mt. McArthur to the northwest are also very good alpine outings. Information on these routes can be found in Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies, and The Rocky Mountains of Canada - South.

Besides the President and Vice President, the other peaks in the area are primarily scrambling outings. Some of the most common objectives are Mt. Kerr, Mt. Polinger, Kiwetinok Peak and Isolated Peak. There is also very good scrambling along Whaleback Mountain. Scrambling in the Canadian Rockies contains descriptions of the scrambling routes around the Stanley Mitchell Hut.

Backcountry Skiing

Chic Scott in Summits and Icefields – Alpine Ski Tours in the Canadian Rockies raves about the Little Yoho Valley in the winter, referring to both the skiing terrain and the warmth and atmosphere at the Stanley Mitchell Hut. According to Chic, the valley, with its perfect terrain, excellent snow and ski runs which end at the door of the hut is the “Gem of the Rockies”. What more needs to be said?

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Ice climbing

It is an awfully long way to haul ice climbing gear, but if you are really keen, you will be rewarded with ascents of the lovely "Twin Falls" (100 m, WI 4-5). Refer to Waterfall Ice Climbs in the Canadian Rockies for more information.

History

Along with A.O. Wheeler and Elizabeth Parker, Stanley Mitchell was responsible for founding the Alpine Club of Canada in 1906, and from 1907 to 1930 he served as its Secretary-Treasurer. He had a great reputation as a gentleman among his fellow founders and the executive of the Club, as well as the members he met at the Club House in Banff. He died in 1940, shortly after the hut which bears his name was completed.

The Little Yoho Valley has long had a reputation as an excellent alpine climbing area as well as a magnificent skiing area. The Canadian military used the area during the summer of 1943 as a training site for mountaineering techniques. From 1954 to the mid-70s Hans Gmoser used the hut as a base for his new ski touring operation - a company which eventually became Canadian Mountain Holidays.



The hut has undergone a few renovations, but is relatively the same as it was in 1940. It is presently in excellent condition; a comfortable facility set in beautiful meadow and mountain terrain, and a fine memorial to one of the Club's founders.

The Stanley Mitchell Hut was designated a Federal Heritage Building in 1997.