



Sapphire Col Hut

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Sapphire Col Hut by Vytas Barsauskas

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 Sapphire Col shelter is located high up in the Asulkan Valley in the Rogers Pass area of Glacier National Park in British Columbia. This mountaineering shelter is built on the Sapphire Col between The Dome and Castor Peaks on the Asulkan Ridge. Attaining the Sapphire col requires mountaineering equipment skills.

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

Summer

Trailhead location:	3.5 km west of Rogers Pass Information Center
Hiking distance:	9 km one way to the Hut
Elevation gain:	4500 feet (1375 meters) from the parking lot
Approximate time:	5-8 hours from the highway

Winter

Trailhead location:	3.5 km west of Rogers Pass Information Center
Skiing distance:	Approximately 9 km one way A loop can be done going from Wheeler Hut, Asulkan Hut and then to Sapphire Col
Elevation gain:	4500 Feet (1375 meter)
Approximate time:	5-8 hours (more if there is a lot of fresh snow)

Trailhead location

Access is off the Trans-Canada Highway approximately 3.5 kilometres west of the Rogers Pass information centre. On the south side of the highway there is a sign for the turnoff to the Illecillewaet Campground and parking area.

In the summertime you can drive up the road to the parking area near the Illecillewaet Campground and start the hike from there. In the winter the road to the campground is not plowed and instead a parking lot exists just off the side of the highway (same parking lot as for Wheeler Hut).

Please note: if you are driving up from the east it is a difficult turn to make along a dangerous curve of the highway into the parking lot. The better option is to continue driving several hundred meters further down the highway to a railway access road on the right-hand side where it is safer to turn around and approach the parking lot from the west.

Summer approach

From the end of the Illecillewaet Campground, follow the trail marked "Asulkan Valley Trail". The first section is fairly easygoing as you hike alongside the Asulkan Creek on a good trail. After about 4 km the trail begins to steepen as you climb up to gain the crest of the moraine. From here, follow the same route as to the Asulkan Hut.

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The route to the Sapphire Col departs not far from the Asulkan Hut. When approaching the valley end, cross over to ascend along the SW moraine and then steeply across rock and the Asulkan glacier to the col between Dome and Castor Peaks. Note that this route is only recommended for experienced mountaineers.

Winter approach

From the plowed parking lot just off the highway (same parking lot as for Wheeler Hut), climb up the steep slope through the trees for approximately 50 meters to reach an old railway road. Turn left onto the road and follow it for barely a kilometer until the trail splits off from the railway road into a large open area on the right. The trail snakes up the obvious path through the trees until it pops out into the Asulkan Valley. From here you ski up the Asulkan Brook to reach the practice slopes. The route along the valley floor is quite straightforward as it follows alongside the Asulkan Creek, however it does cross underneath a few significant avalanche slopes that are quite hazardous. When the valley begins to open up, make your way by choosing the safest slopes and head up to the right into a treed area. This is called 'The Mouse Trap'. Make the steep climb up through the trees which will lead you to the open slopes again. Continue traveling to the right until you reach a prominent rock buttress 'The Cleaver'. Keeping this cliff on the right, still climbing straight up. When the groove ends, you have to traverse left across a large slope before reaching more gentle terrain. From here, climb in Southern direction to reach Sapphire Col. The small bivouac shelter is located right in the col. This tour is a serious undertaking and should be considered by well equipped and skilled teams. For a more detailed description of this route, refer to Chic Scott's guide *Summits & Icefields, Columbia Mountains Alpine Ski Tours*.

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/3 Mt Wheeler NAD 83 651732
Grid reference:	5673193 N
GPS coordinates:	UTM Coordinates 11N 46509E
Hut elevation:	2590 meters (8500 ft)

Maps

- "Touring at Rogers Pass" 1:50,000 topographic map by Murray Toft. This is an excellent map that shows trails and permanent closure areas in detail.
- 'The Adventure Map' Series 1:50,000 topographic map entitled "Rogers Pass". This map highlights summer hiking routes in the area.
- Chrismar Mapping Services 1:50,000 topographic map entitled "Rogers Pass". This excellent map shows trails and highlights in detail.
- The 1:50,000 Canadian Government issued standard topographic maps; "82N/3 Mt Wheeler".

Guidebooks and general interest books

- *Summits & Icefields, Columbia Mountains*, by Chic Scott
- *Ski Touring in Rogers Pass*, by J.P. Kors and John Kelly
- *Selkirks South*, by David P. Jones
- *Selkirks North*, by David P. Jones
- *Backcountry Huts and Lodges of the Rockies and Columbias*, Jim Scott
- *Revelstoke Rock*, by Ruedi Beglinger
- *Footloose in the Columbias*, by the Friends of Mount Revelstoke & Glacier
- *Radium Ski and Snowboarding Guide*, by Ted Johnson & Chris Hofstetter

Website Links

Current conditions

Weather: Go to www.weather.gc.ca click on <BC>, then scroll down to <Revelstoke> and <Golden>. The weather forecast is not accurate for the exact location, but should be similar enough to give you an idea of the conditions in the Pass.

Avalanche Hazard: Go to www.avalanche.ca click on the <Public Avalanche Bulletins> and review the section for <Glacier National Park>. The avalanche forecast for this region is kept current throughout the winter season.

Highway Conditions: www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/bc/glacier/index_e.asp click on <Road Conditions Report> on the left side. Parks Canada updates their <Mountain National Parks Road Conditions Report> by 9 am daily when road conditions change.

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 on ratings throughout Glacier National Park, visit www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/bc/glacier/visit/visit7a1_E.asp

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 082N06. Next, press <Search> under <Search Options> (without changing any of the information in <Search Options>). Select 082N06 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 Rogers Pass area at: http://yellowmaps.com/maps/rogers_pass_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: www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/store. For current rates, visit: 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 may be purchased at most Park entrance gates and Park visitor centers and soon through the Alpine Club of Canada's national office.

Glacier National Park Avalanche Control

Wardens in Glacier National Park are involved in avalanche control to maintain the safety of vehicles travelling along the highway. Heavy artillery fire is used on the slopes surrounding the highway and these areas as well as

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all snow-study areas are closed to the public. More information on the location of the permanent-closure areas is available at the Visitor Centre.

In the wintertime parking is restricted to specific areas along the road in order to avoid interfering with snow plowing and artillery fire. Designated parking areas are snow plowed, however avalanche control may begin while you are out on your day of skiing in which case you may find a card on the windshield of your car. If this occurs, you are asked to remain with your vehicle in the parking area until you are notified that the highway has been re-opened.

Closed Area Entry Permits

Certain areas in Rogers Pass are permanently closed due to the threat of avalanches to the highway. Depending on the conditions, the wardens may open some of the restricted-access areas to skiing on a day-to-day basis. If you plan to ski in these areas, a permit is required and can be picked up free of charge from the Rogers Pass Visitor Centre. It is a criminal offence to ski in closed areas without the required permit.

Voluntary Registration Service

All visitors have the option to register their summer or winter trips within the National Park. It is recommended that anyone participating in hazardous activities in the backcountry register their trips with the wardens. This registration is free and is the best method of ensuring that a search will be initiated if you fail to return on the specified date.

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.

What Is At the Hut

Summary

Heating:	No
Lighting:	No
Cooking:	No stove, just a few utensils. Bring your own!
Sleeping:	No mattresses or foam pads
Capacity:	4 in the summer and the winter
Drinking water:	snowmelt
Human Waste:	Outhouse
Dishwater:	Greywater pit
Garbage:	Pack it out!

The Building

This was the first modern high altitude hut in the Colombia and the Rocky Mountains. It was erected on August 15, 1964 by the Alpine Club of Canada. It was designed by mountaineer and architect Philippe Delesalle who also designed the early huts on the Wapta Icefields.

Capacity

4 people

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Kitchen

Minimal Facilities, no cooking equipment or foam mattresses.

Lighting

No Lights.

Heat

No heat

Tools

No tools

Drinking Water

In the winter drinking water can be reached from snow melt. In summer months the nearby melt pond is a second option to obtain drinking water. It is recommended that all water be boiled or filtered before drinking.

Grey Water

Water can be poured directly down the drains but please ensure that food scraps are pulled out of the sink and strainers. Do not leave food scraps behind, and do not throw them into the outhouse. Please pack it out.

Human Waste

The outhouse is located next to the hut. Please do not dispose of any unnecessary waste into the outhouse.

Garbage

All paper garbage, recyclables, unused food, and food scraps should be packed out of the hut. In the summer garbage can be deposited in Parks Canada containers in the campground. Do not leave any garbage behind, pack it out!

What you need to bring

- sleeping bag
- food for the duration of your stay
- Stove, pots and pans, utensils
- toilet paper
- matches
- first aid kit
- 9V battery for the smoke detector
- reservation form from 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!

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- If you arrive at the hut before 2:00 pm, 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.
- 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

Mountaineering

The rugged terrain in Glacier National Park creates the opportunity for many challenging trips. The mountains are steep, the valleys are narrow and many of the trails involve high elevation gain to reach stunning ridges and peaks. Castor Peak is a classic peak to attempt in the area.

Backcountry Skiing

The Rogers Pass area offers some of the best powder skiing in the country, with its legendary deep snow and long ski descents. The potential to access high-quality trips from the Asulkan Cabin is outstanding! The trip up to the hut itself, as well as many of the ski touring destinations, are within avalanche terrain and skiers are urged to be prepared with the proper equipment and knowledge for avalanche safety. You can find these amazing ski tours described in Chic Scott's book 'Summits & Icefields, Columbia Mountains'.