

# Willmore Wilderness Park

If you're looking for hiking, horseback riding and backcountry camping in a remote, spectacular mountain setting, Willmore Wilderness Park is for you. More than 750 km of trails bisect this 4,597 km<sup>2</sup> park, bounded on the south by Jasper National Park and on the west by the Continental Divide marking the Alberta/B.C. border. Here you can venture for days or more than a week – up mountain flanked valleys, into side basins and along wildflower-strewn ridges – often without seeing other humans.

Chances are good, though, you'll see wildlife. With its many windblown, grassy slopes and sheltering subalpine forests, this wilderness is home to some 20 per cent of Alberta's bighorn sheep and mountain goats, as well as elk, woodland caribou, black and grizzly bears, moose, cougars and wolves.

Many of the park's well-established trails follow in the historic footsteps of Aboriginal hunters, fur traders, coal miners and trappers. Scattered throughout the park are remains of old cabins and grave sites, some dating back to the late 1800s.

Given the distance from the nearest community, visitors to Willmore Wilderness Park should be experienced, well equipped backpackers or riders, who have planned their trips carefully. Valley bottom trails are often muddy or thick with willows and brush, though park staff, outfitters and the Willmore Wilderness Foundation are working to clear a number of overgrown trails. None of the river crossings are bridged, and those on foot should be prepared for fording cold mountain streams. Backcountry campsites are primitive sites often without toilets or bear poles. For those not wishing to venture into the park on their own, outfitters can be hired to lead trips on horseback or to carry supplies and establish camps for those on foot. For more information on trips to and trails in Willmore, consult the **Willmore Wilderness Park** map, available from Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

Willmore Wilderness Park has three major staging areas for both hikers and horseback riders, all reached off Highway 40 to the park's east. From south to north they are Rock Lake Provincial Park, Big Bear Provincial Recreation Area and Sulphur Gates Provincial Recreation Area, the latter just outside Grande Cache. The most popular of the three is Rock Lake, along the Wildflyer River, which provides access to the heart of the park via a couple of main, valley routes: the winding **Mountain Trail** and **Indian Trail**.



For those with only a few days to explore, **Seep Creek Trail** soon heads north off **Mountain Trail** to provide quick entry into alpine country with plentiful wildlife and extensive views. Further along, **Mountain Trail** bends southwest and climbs to **Eagle's Nest Pass**, offering a fine base camp for day-trip explorations of the surrounding alpine lakes and ridges. **Mountain Trail** then heads northwest along the Rock Creek and provides access, via **West Sulphur Trail**, to higher alpine terrain.

While most trips into Willmore are multi-day expeditions, there are a few exceptions. The 2.5 km trail from Sulphur Gates staging area to scenic **Eaton Falls** makes a nice half-day outing, and the 18.5 km climb to the panoramic views of **Adams Creek Lookout** from Big Bear Provincial staging area is a reasonable overnight trip.

# Grande Cache Area

Located 143 km northwest of Hinton, Grande Cache is perched on a lofty plateau surrounded by forested foothills, some 20 mountain peaks and valleys that harbour two rivers, numerous small lakes and a number of waterfalls that can be reached on foot. It's a recreational paradise for trail and watersports users and a great place for viewing wildlife and wildflowers. And for hardcore runners, there's the infamous annual **Canadian Death Race**, a 125 km, 24-hour race that follows well-defined trails over a couple of mountains north of town.

The town of 4,000 people offers a full range of tourist services and attractions. Check the Grande Cache Tourism and Interpretive Centre<sup>51</sup> (888-827-3790) for information on area events and attractions. Just outside the centre, Birds Eye View Park features an interpretive trail.

In Grande Cache, the 12 km (return) **Griffith Trail** loops around town through rolling, scenic terrain and can be hiked or biked. The nearby, 7 km **Sulphur Rim Trail** is another multi-use track that follows the deep gorge of Sulphur Canyon<sup>45</sup>. Grande Cache is also the northern gateway to Willmore Wilderness Park and its hundreds of kilometres of superb hiking and equestrian trails.



For stiffer hikes to panoramic viewpoints, head southwest of town to the Sulphur Gates Staging Area<sup>48</sup> and hike the 6.5 km trail up **Mount Stearn** or the 10 km route up the adjacent **Lightning Ridge**. Advanced mountain bikers can tackle the **Grande Mountain Loop** (20 km, stunning views) or grind up **Mount Hamell** (20 km).

The Smoky River Nordic Ski Club<sup>49</sup> groomes 6 km of cross-country ski trails (including 1 km of night-lit skiing) at the **Grande Cache Campground and Golf Course**<sup>50</sup>. At **Pierre Grey's Lakes Provincial Park**, east of Grande Cache along Highway 40, there's 18 km of looped ski trails and a warm-up shack.



# Rock Lake-Solomon Creek Willand Provincial Park



## Rock Lake-Solomon Creek

A major staging area for Willmore Wilderness expeditions, the 331 km<sup>2</sup> Rock Lake-Solomon Creek Willand Provincial Park is worth exploring in its own right. Located 70 km north of Hinton, the park protects one of Alberta's most diverse upper foothills ecosystems, featuring mountain peaks, grassy slopes, dense forests and wet meadows. The area is a significant wildlife movement corridor and provides critical winter range for elk, deer and bighorn sheep.

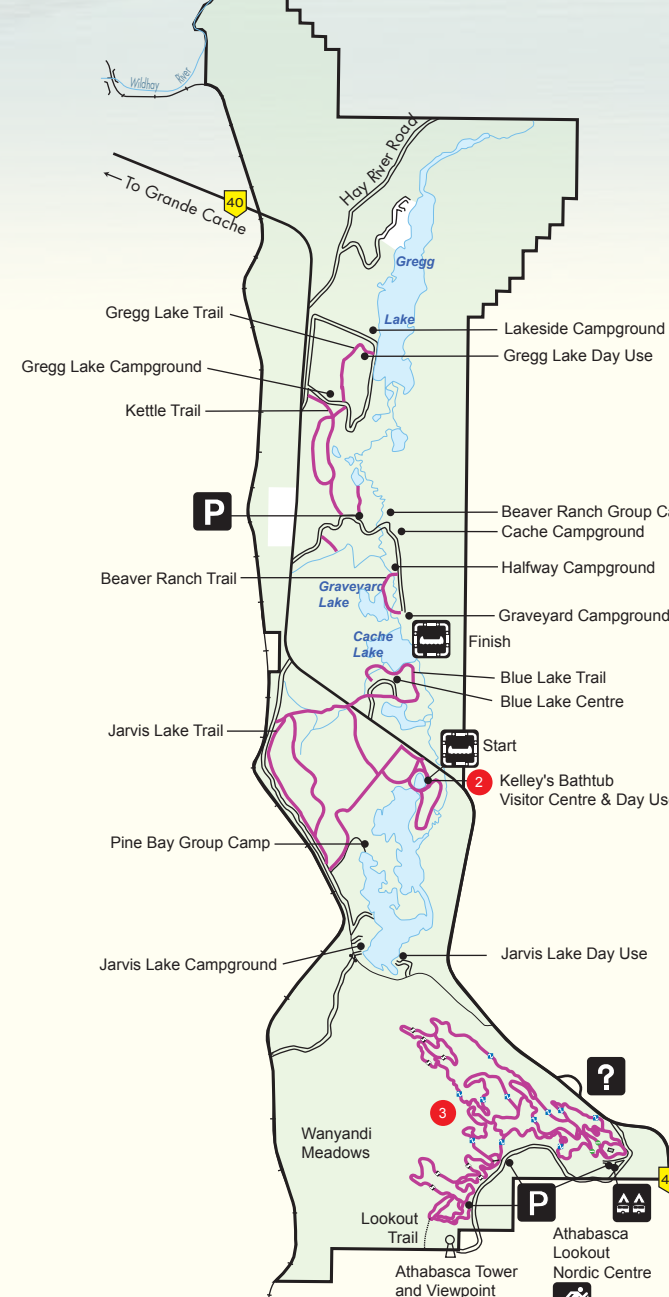
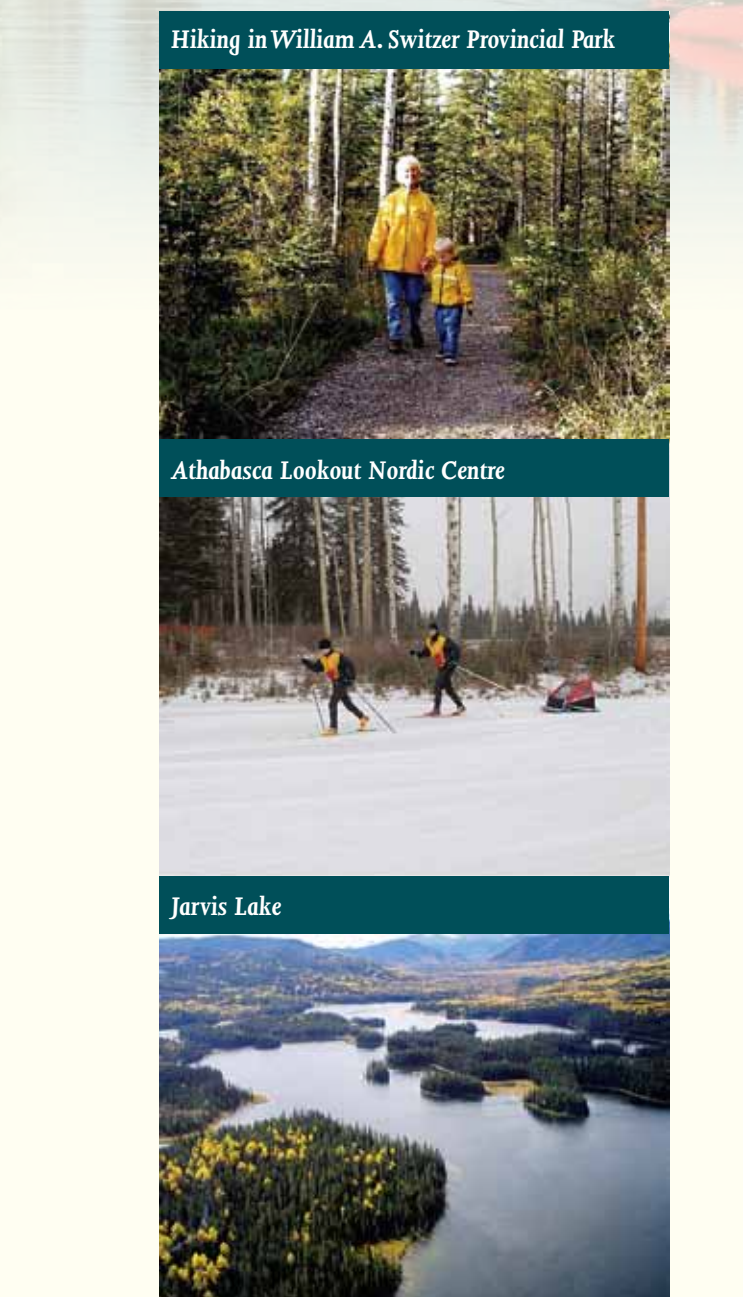
An extensive network of multi-use, non-motorized trails winds through the park's forest and valleys and along **Mumm** and **Solomon Creeks**, following abandoned roads, old pack and fur trade trails and Aboriginal routes. One popular hike explores the deep canyon and sinkholes along the **Ogre Canyon Trail**, accessed via a grazing lease. Most park trails are not regularly maintained, and most stream crossings are not bridged.

# William A. Switzer Provincial Park

**William A. Switzer Provincial Park** is set in rolling foothills 25 km northwest of Hinton. A park highlight is the **Athabasca Lookout Nordic Centre**<sup>1</sup>, one of the finest cross-country ski facilities in Alberta, with 35 km of hilly forested trails and including a biathlon range and two warm-up shelters and a natural luge run.

Throughout the year, the park's Kelley's Bathub Visitor Centre<sup>2</sup>, to the north, is a staging point for a network of trails for hikers, skiers and cyclists. The **Jarvis Lake Trails** run for 13 km through rolling hills, meadows and mixed-wood forests, while the 2.5 km **Friendly Vistas Trail** gravel trail (wheelchair accessible) follows the shores of Jarvis Lake to a wetland, with viewpoints along the way. Popular short loop trails east of Highway 40 include **Kettle** (3.5 km), **Blue Lake** (3 km) and **Beaver Ranch** (1.5 km).

## William A. Switzer



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- Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation
- Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
- Alberta TrailNet Society
- Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association
- Alberta Snowmobile Association

Gratitude is expressed to all local clubs, groups, organizations, individuals and municipalities for their review, comments and updates in developing this map.

For more information or for map access, please contact Alberta TrailNet at 877-987-2457 or through [www.albertatrainet.com](http://www.albertatrainet.com)

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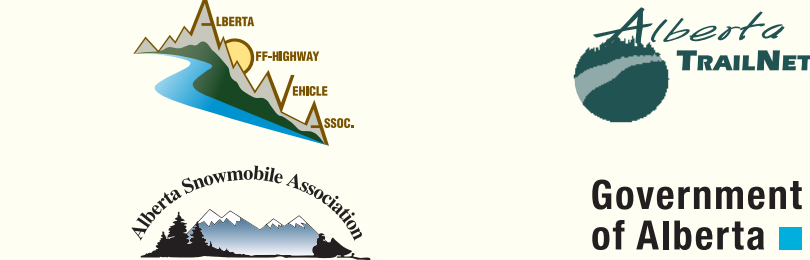
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Recreational trail layer, campground layer and backcountry layer provided by Jasper National Park of Canada, P.O. Box 10, Jasper, AB T0E 1E0.

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In plain language, this document provides you with a variety of recreation facility locations and activities. None of the maps are intended for navigational purposes. The trail locations come from various sources and do not represent Alberta government or Alberta TrailNet standards.

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**Know Before You Go**

There is limited maintenance on many trails. To maximize enjoyment of these trails, gather additional details about the trails, current conditions, local sites of interest, area services and access points from nearby communities and recreation associations (see website information in the text that accompanies this map). Further visitor information can be obtained from:

- Travel Alberta** 1-800-ALBERTA; [www.travelalberta.com](http://www.travelalberta.com)
- Grande Alberta Economic Region** (GAER); [www.grandealberta.com](http://www.grandealberta.com)
- Jasper National Park of Canada**; [www.pc.gc.ca/jasper](http://www.pc.gc.ca/jasper)
- Alberta Parks**; [www.albertaparks.ca](http://www.albertaparks.ca)
- Sustainable Resource Development**; [www.srd.alberta.ca](http://www.srd.alberta.ca)
- Alberta Parks Campground Reservations**; [www.ReserveAlbertaParks.ca](http://www.ReserveAlbertaParks.ca) or toll-free 877-537-2757
- Alberta Outfitters Association**; [www.albertaoutfitters.com](http://www.albertaoutfitters.com)

**Refer to other websites within the text.**

This map includes designated, managed trails; many can be used year-round. Trail quality and difficulty of use can vary considerably, with surface materials ranging from pavement and groomed snow to dirt and corduroy. Some trails are signed and regularly maintained; others are not. Even maintained trails can be challenging when wet or covered in fresh snowfall.

Similarly, major access roads range from paved highways to good gravel (i.e. Forestry Trunk Road/Highway 40 north of Nordegg) to poorer gravel (i.e. Grave Flats Road south and east of Cadomin and spur roads west of Highway 40), which may not be regularly maintained.

Temperatures can range from winter lows of -40 Celsius to summer highs in the upper 30s. Precipitation and harsh conditions can occur at any time. Bugs can be bothersome, especially in wet and shaded areas, in late spring and summer.

Much of the area in this map is avalanche terrain, and backcountry winter trail users should be well equipped and trained to deal with avalanche hazards. Check regular avalanche bulletins at 800-657-1105 or [www.avalanche.ca](http://www.avalanche.ca).

You may encounter wildlife, including grizzly, black bears, cougars and large ungulates. For bear information in Jasper National Park, talk to park staff, consult Parks Canada publications or visit [www.pc.gc.ca](http://www.pc.gc.ca). Fall hunting is permitted in some areas outside Jasper National Park of Canada; be aware, and dress and behave appropriately.

Trails may be remote from services or help. Carry sufficient food, water, clothing, first aid and emergency/survival supplies, repair gear, navigation equipment and a mobile phone. Note: mobile phones may not have reception in all areas.

