

ESSENTIAL TRAVEL GUIDE SERIES

YOHO NATIONAL PARK,
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA



styled to sparkle

YOHO NATIONAL PARK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Canada has many stunning National Parks but those that are found within the Canadian Rocky Mountains are really something special. I know that Banff is famous worldwide for its stunning scenery and long list of things to see and do, but when someone who has never visited the Canadian Rockies before asks me where to go to really experience the “real Canada”, I always point them

in the direction of Yoho National Park.

Yoho National Park is located in British Columbia. It is right next to Banff National Park in Alberta. Some may say that this park is really just the British Columbia side of Banff National Park as the two kind of flow into one another. What I love about Yoho is that it is a little bit further from “civilization” than

Banff and Lake Louise making it a little quieter. There also are not as many hotels, shops or restaurants which is part of what makes it a great place to unplug and get away from it all.

My favorite place in Yoho National Park, and the place you will hear mentioned throughout this guide, is Emerald Lake. It is one of the most beautiful and serene places to stay in all of Canada and boasts amazing scenery in all four seasons.

Logistics: When to Visit, Where to Stay, How to Get Around

Something important to note is that you will be required to display a National Park Pass in the windshield of your vehicle if you stop anywhere within Canada’s National Parks. These passes can be purchased at the National Park Gates when you enter from Alberta (right before Banff), or when you enter from British Columbia.

When to Visit

There are two seasons that are busier than others, Summer and Winter, with shorter less busy and less expensive, Spring and Fall shoulder seasons. This area is incredibly beautiful any time of year so if you have the opportunity to return in each of the four seasons, I highly recommend it. Winter is of course one of the most gorgeous times to visit the Canadian Rockies as everything looks so magical when covered in a heavy blanket of snow. Spring time offers budding and blooming trees as well as warmer skiing weather in the higher elevations. Summer brings with it warmer weather and an opportunity to take advantage of hiking trails and waterfalls that are closed in the colder seasons. Fall offers stunning foliage, the most crisp and fresh mountain air and often a chance to experience the first magical snowfall of the year.

Where to Stay

There are not too many places to stay in Yoho National Park. Your options would be campgrounds (summer only), guest houses and bed and breakfasts in Field, BC and finally Emerald Lake Lodge. Many visit Yoho National Park just to stay at Emerald Lake Lodge, a hotel that I believe is one of the jewels of the Canadian Rockies.

Emerald Lake Lodge is one of the most romantic winter getaway spots in all of Canada. It’s quiet, it’s quaint, it’s peaceful. It’s





a true getaway and perfect for a romantic weekend. Rather than being one large building along the lake, Emerald Lake Lodge features a large main lodge and then several small sets of cabins. Some are multi-bedroom, some are semi-detached, all are wonderful. The rooms feature

views of the lake and mountains (depending on location) and feature private balconies where you can sit and immerse yourself in the stillness of nature.

Spend a winter morning cross country skiing, take a stroll around the lake with a cup of hot chocolate and curl up beside the fire in your private cabin with a good book! Relax in their stunning hot tub and take in the scenery after a long hike. For all the details on Emerald Lake Lodge and how to have a magical stay in Yoho National Park, you can read more [here](#).

Getting Around

The best way to get to, from and around Yoho National Park is by car. There are mountain bus tours that include a stop in Yoho, but these are limited and don't allow you to explore at your own pace. If you're coming from far away, I recommend flying into Calgary International Airport (YYC) and renting a car from there.

It is worth noting that cellular service is hit and miss throughout the area. There is free Wi-Fi at Emerald Lake Lodge (main building) as well as at the tourist information center. What this offers is a great opportunity for a digital detox and to really get away from it all. If you need to be reached or require some way of communicating while on back country hikes (in case of emergency), I suggest a Garmin inReach satellite communication device.



What to Pack & What to Wear

When visiting the Canadian Rockies at any time of year, I highly recommend dressing in layers. Temperatures are known to fluctuate quite a bit throughout the day. It is also not unusual to experience snowfall in all twelve months of the year. There's no need to be dressed fancy in the Canadian Rockies. In fact, almost everyone you encounter is likely to be wearing some piece of technical outdoor gear (think: base layer, hiking pants, technical running shoes, etc.).

For Summer, consider that you will experience really warm days but cooler nights so layers or multiple outfits are always a great idea. For Spring and Fall, I recommend transitional outerwear pieces. For Winter, I recommend packing outerwear based on your chosen activities. For skiing, hiking or just

enjoying yourself, you can find everything you need here.

Other noteworthy items to pack for Spring, Summer, Fall include:

Sunscreen: despite what you might think, it gets quite hot in the mountains in the summer. I suggest something mineral based in case you are in and out of the water, it is more environmentally friendly. A good bug spray: I highly recommend PiActive because it is family friendly (safe for children and pets), deet free, and works for mosquitos, black flies and ticks. It is also non-scented so it will not attract unwanted attention from bears.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

There are countless things to do in Yoho Na-



tional Park. This is a place to get outdoors and enjoy the stunning scenery. What's great is that no matter what your activity level, there is an accessible trail for you to take. If you're looking to go canoeing, hiking or just sit quietly and breathe it all in, you can do that in Yoho!

Hiking + Nature Walks

Canada's National Parks feature hikes that range in intensity from a light stroll to full-on mountain climbing! If you're looking for an easy stroll for the whole family, or perhaps a romantic walk for two, I suggest taking a walk around Emerald Lake. The majority of the walk around the lake is a paved/gravel



pathway but about a third of it is through trees and over a few logs. It really is a great way to experience Canada's natural environment without having to go into the back country. Dogs are welcome here, too, but they must be on a leash. For a complete map of hiking routes and trails, please see Tourism BC + AllTrails App.

Keep in mind for all spring, summer and fall walks, hikes and outdoor activities that you are in bear country, so it is important to be aware of how to protect yourself. Information on how to be safe in bear country is available here as well as in our YouTube Video of Yoho National Park. It is a good idea to pack bear spray and even a bear banger to deter bears should you meet one.

Please do not approach wildlife in Canada's National Parks. Our wildlife in Canada is just that - wild. Animals such as black bears, grizzly bears, mountain lions and moose can be very aggressive (moose being the most aggressive).

Takakkaw Falls

A great place to see and explore while in Yoho National Park is Takakkaw Falls, the tallest waterfall in Canada. What's great about this area is how accessible it is - the path to and from the parking lot is paved making it easy for those in wheelchairs or with strollers. This is a great spot to enjoy a picnic, take a small hike or nature walk or to take a guided trip behind the falls. For more details, see my YouTube video here.

Canoeing, Kayaking, Stand Up Paddle Boarding

Emerald Lake is quiet and peaceful and the calm of the lake only adds to this feeling. Its calm waters and scenic views make it perfect for a canoe ride. Canoes are available for rent right at Emerald Lake or you are welcome to bring your own. Because the lake is so calm, it's ideal for kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding as well. The lake is swim-



mable, however, it is glacier fed, so even in the peak of summer can be quite chilly. You are likely to see a few tourists brave it and jump right in!

White Water Rafting + River Kayaking

There are two main rivers that flow through Yoho National Park – the Yoho River (naturally) and the Kicking Horse River. The Kicking Horse River boasts some of the best white water rafting in Canada and this adventurous trip down the river comes with gorgeous scenery, too! There are a number of different outfitters that provide guided white water rafting and river kayaking trips. I highly recommend doing this with a guide, unless you are at an expert level yourself. These outfitters will provide all the safety gear you require, too.

Mountain Biking Located 65km east of Emerald Lake inside Yoho National Park is Kicking Horse Mountain Resort in Golden, BC, where you'll find amazing summer mountain

bike trails. This four-season resort offers incredible skiing in the winter and mountain biking and other extreme adventures in the summer.

Skiing: Nordic/Cross-Country + Downhill

Emerald Lake is home to some of the most scenic and serene cross-country ski trails in the country. Whether you're an avid skier or a first timer, this is a beautiful way to spend a day at Emerald Lake in the Winter season. Yoho National Park is nicely situated between two of Canada's best ski resorts. It is 38km west of Lake Louise Ski Resort and 65km east of Kicking Horse Mountain Resort in Golden, BC. Each winter Lake Louise is host to World Cup Skiing events. For spectator information, see Lake Louise Ski Resort Events for more details.

Where & What to Eat

I have two favourite places to eat in Yoho National Park. Keep in mind that there are



not many places to eat while you're there, but even if these places were in a city full of restaurants, I would frequent them because their cuisine is so fantastic. It's honestly worth the drive.

Mount Burgess Dining Room at Emerald Lake Lodge If you are visiting Emerald Lake, I highly recommend dinner in the Mount Burgess Dining Room. It is renowned for its signature local Rocky Mountain Cuisine and comfortable, warm atmosphere. I love being able to sample local dishes such as free-range elk, bison and caribou as well as seafood, pastas and a stunning selection of desserts. They also offer an award-winning wine list and artisan cocktails. Be sure to try their Port Maple Smoked Old Fashioned! Reservations are recommended.

For a more casual experience, you can also dine at the Kicking Horse Lounge for a similar menu in a more relaxed setting. This menu also offers some more casual favourites and is great for lunch or après ski. If you

can, I highly recommend taking advantage of one of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Resorts Stay & Dine packages!

Truffle Pigs in Field, BC In the town of Field, British Columbia hides an amazing dining experience. Truffle Pigs is a delightful restaurant featuring local cuisine in a small, quaint atmosphere. Learn all about this lovely little rail town and experience some of the best food found in the Canadian Rockies.

Shopping

A list of items to buy might seem a little strange in a travel guide about one of Canada's National Parks, but like anywhere, there are souvenirs to acquire! Although Yoho National Park isn't a shopping destination by any means, there is an adorable little shop located next to the lake (where the canoe rentals are) at Emerald Lake. Here you will find some lovely Canadiana items and goods from brands local to Alberta (mainly Calgary) and British Columbia.



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