

ATHABASCA PASS

Photo: R. Gruys

WILDLAND

- 98 km return
- Elevation gain 842 m and loss 311 m, from Moab Lake Road, one way
- Maximum elevation 1755 m

In summary

This remote historic trail follows the Whirlpool River Valley, the traditional route of early fur traders crossing the Rocky Mountains. Large gravel flats and glaciers dominate the scenery in sections as you climb toward Athabasca Pass National Historic Site. You may encounter some horse traffic on this trail.

The details

The Athabasca Pass is a historical hike with incredible scenery and amazing wildlife viewing opportunities. Much of the trail has not changed since the days of the fur trade. The further you travel, the more you will be rewarded with huge vistas, beautiful glaciers, and some of the most significant historic sites in Jasper National Park. The trail starts on an old fire road, which is great for biking (biking is allowed until Simon Creek). After 6 km, you will arrive at Whirlpool Camp. This small camping area right on the river is a great spot for beginner backpackers.

As you continue along the trail you will travel through dense forest until you reach historic Tie Camp. Here you will find the ruins of the Otto brothers' camp. Trees from this area were used to cut railway ties in the early 20th century. They were floated down river to Jasper for the railroad construction. Continue through the forest and eventually you will arrive at Middle Forks Camp, a beautiful site alongside the river. Beyond Middle Forks, the valley opens up and you will begin to feel the significance and beauty of this trail. The experience of true wilderness intensifies as yet another massive peak reveals itself. Four kilometers after Middle Forks you will arrive at the Scott gravel flats—an expanse of old river bed with stunning views. Five kilometers later you arrive at Scott Camp, undoubtedly one of the nicest camping areas on the trail. In low water you can ford the Whirlpool River here and make your way to a large tarn immediately below the spectacular Scott Glacier.



Fires permitted.



Biking allowed until Tie Camp. The trail is very rough beyond km 8.

Expert hikers only

This is a rarely maintained, remote trail. Most creeks and rivers are not bridged, and the Whirlpool River ford near Kane Meadows can be dangerous. The trail may be overgrown and hard to find in places and campsites are not regularly maintained. Advanced backcountry skills are required. The section past Scott Camp is only recommended after early August when water levels are lower.



Beyond here the trail alternates between forest and gravel flats until you arrive at what used to be a bridge over a canyon. A reroute takes you to a view across the Whirlpool River below Kane Meadows Camp. Take care crossing during high water. Once around the re-route you will arrive at Kane Meadows Camp; another one of the more beautiful sites along the trail. From this camp you are only eight kilometres away from the National Historic Site of Athabasca Pass and the Committee's Punchbowl. There is another hiker campground 1 km below the pass. Fur traders traditionally stopped here and toasted the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company. Make sure you stop here and take some time to drink it all in.

What you need to know

The hiker bridge below Kane Meadows has been removed; the marked reroute leads to a ford of the Whirlpool River above Kane Creek. It is no longer necessary to ford Kane Creek. The typical safe hiking season is late August to early October. Bikes are allowed to Tie Camp Campground.

Directions to trailhead

Located 35 km south of Jasper off Wabasso Road (Highway 93A).

From Jasper

Take the Icefields Parkway towards Banff and turn right after the park gate onto Wabasso Road. Continue along Wabasso Road for 15 km and turn right onto the unpaved Moab Lake Road or Whirlpool. The trailhead is at the end of the 6.8-km road.

From Banff and Lake Louise

Follow the Icefields Parkway north towards Jasper. Turn left at the junction to Wabasso Road and Athabasca Falls, 200 km north of Lake Louise. Continue for 9 km and turn left onto unpaved Moab Lake Road. The trailhead is at the end of the 6.8-km road.

SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

OPTION 1 : 1 NIGHT

Spend a night at either Whirlpool Camp or Tie Camp and explore part of this historical route.

OPTION 2 : 3-4 NIGHTS

Bike to the end of the fire road and hike to Middle Forks. The next day, camp at Scott Camp and explore Scott Glacier. The next day walk out in one day or camp at Middle Forks on the way back.

OPTION 3 : 3-5 NIGHTS

Walk the entire trail. The length of stay is based on how many kilometres you are comfortable travelling each day.

Trail distances (in km)

	Parking Area						
Whirlpool	6.6	Whirlpool					
Tie Camp	11.2	4.6	Tie Camp				
Middle Forks	21.1	14.5	9.9	Middle Forks			
Scott Camp	30.9	24.3	19.7	9.8	Scott Camp		
Kane Meadows	41	34.4	29.8	19.9	10.1	Kane Meadows	
Athabasca Pass	48.5	41.9	37.3	27.4	17.6	7.5	Athabasca Pass

Special Considerations

This is a very remote trail that receives very little maintenance. It should only be attempted later in the season by strong hikers.



SAFETY

You are responsible for your own safety. Be prepared for extreme weather and mountainous terrain. Cell phone coverage is unavailable in most areas.

TRAIL REPORT

Before leaving, check the Jasper National Park trail report for up-to-date conditions at www.pc.gc.ca/JasperTrails.

TRAIL INFORMATION

780-852-6177

pc.gc.ca/JasperBackcountry

RESERVATIONS

1 877-737-3783

pc.gc.ca/BookJasperBackcountry

EMERGENCY

call 780-852-3100

or 877-852-3100

Campground information

CAMPGROUND	DESCRIPTION	# OF SITES	FIRE PIT	UTM
Whirlpool	A nice little camp spot on the river, great for families.	2	yes	11U 432762-5831268
Tie Camp	A camp on the edge the forest close to the ruins of the Otto Brothers' Camp.	4	yes	11U 429859-5828494
Middle Forks	A nice site right on a clearing with a spring water creek.	2	yes	11U 427613-5822011
Scott Camp	A spectacular campsite on the Whirlpool River with great views of Scott Glacier	4	yes	11U 424019-5814972
Kane Meadows	Right next to Kane Creek with open views	4	yes	11U 418614-5809695
Athabasca Pass	A small site on the edge of the pass	4	yes	11U 419003-5804471



Maps, GPS data and elevations are provided for reference purposes only. Maps are not meant for navigation. Parks Canada Agency (PCA) makes no guarantees, representations or warranties respecting these data, either expressed or implied. PCA assumes no responsibility for damages or other liabilities due to the accuracy, availability, use or misuse of the information herein provided.

LEAVE NO TRACE



FOOD STORAGE

These campsites do not have bear poles, you may find a bar to hang your food but be prepared to store your own food either by hanging it or by carrying a bear proof container.



HUMAN WASTE

All campsites through the pass have bar toilets.



FISHING

A National Park fishing permit is required. All fish waste should be burned hot in the fire rings. This good bear safe practice will eliminate grease, odours and food attractants.



GARBAGE

Please—Pack it in and pack it out! You are responsible for everything you take into the backcountry and this includes garbage. Do not dispose of garbage in toilets—it may attract animals.



WASHING

To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 70 m away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Strain out those last bits of food waste and pack them out. Disperse strained water on land.



WATER

Boil or treat all drinking water.



CAMPING

Please camp only at the campsites indicated on your Backcountry Camping Permit and use the tent pads.



CAMPFIRES

Use the metal fireboxes provided, keep your fire small and use only deadfall. Tend to your fire at all times and extinguish it completely before you move on. Gas stoves are cleaner and more efficient for cooking. We recommend you use one.

No fires from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.



SHORTCUTTING TRAILS

Shortcutting between trail switchbacks damages both the soil and plant life. This not only ruins the look of an area, but makes it susceptible to further damage by erosion.



COLLECTING NATURAL OR CULTURAL OBJECTS

Rocks, fossils, horns, antlers, wildflowers, nests and all other natural or historical objects in a national park are protected by law. Leave them as you found them for others to enjoy.

BACKCOUNTRY EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

Have you got it?

This is a list of suggested equipment for Jasper's backcountry trails. Visit www.parkscanada.gc.ca/jasperbackcountry for a comprehensive list. Mountain weather is unpredictable; be prepared for winter conditions at any time of the year. Snow may persist in high mountain regions into the summer and avalanche danger may occur in any season. This equipment list does not account for the special knowledge and equipment required to travel in avalanche terrain.

CLOTHING	SHELTER	OTHER ESSENTIALS	OPTIONAL
Long underwear	Tent with waterproof fly	Wilderness pass	Binoculars
Wool sweater, down vest or fleece jacket	Food should include enough for an extra day	Bear spray and the knowledge to use it	Altimeter
Raingear - pants and jacket, gaiters	Water filter, purification tablets or extra fuel for boiling your water	Topographic map	Field guide(s)
Hat and gloves / mittens	Bear-proof container or other food storage	Compass	GPS
Boots with ankle support and good soles		Waterproof matches and/or lighter	SPOT™ Device or satellite phone
Sandals or runners for fording streams and at camp		Insect repellent	
		Flashlight and extra batteries	
		First Aid kit	
		Signaling device (whistle or mirror)	
		Toilet paper	
		Rope - approx. 8 m. A throw bag works well	

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MAPS

National Geographic
Jasper South

For more information on low impact travel in the backcountry contact:

leavenotrace.ca
1-877-238-9343



Backcountry camping permits

A backcountry camping permit is mandatory for all overnight trips. It can be obtained by visiting pc.gc.ca/BookJasperBackcountry, calling 1-877-737-3783 or by visiting the Jasper Information Centre.