



HIKING TRAILS



Easy

Generally on well-maintained trails with little change in elevation and no major hazards. Hiking boots are not necessary.



Moderate

Trail may involve significant changes in elevation and moderate distances. Hiking boots recommended. Topographic map useful but not usually essential.



Challenging

Will have either major change of elevation, significant distance or a major hazard. Route finding skills may be required. Topographic map essential. Must have hiking boots.



Very Challenging

Difficult route with major change in elevation. Mountain scrambling and route finding skills required. Must be prepared with appropriate gear.



Discover Crowsnest Heritage

The route or the final destination are significant in the history of the Crowsnest Pass and southern Alberta.

HIKING IN THE CROWSNEST PASS

Wildlife

The Crowsnest Pass is wildlife country! Even on an *Easy* trail, you may encounter wildlife, including bears. Do not approach or feed wildlife. Be bear aware. If you are hiking in bear habitat, hike in groups and make lots of noise. Wood ticks are common on grassy slopes in the first six weeks of spring.

Hoary marmot



Hazards

Like any natural area, the Crowsnest Pass has many hazards that hikers need to deal with. Be aware that the weather can change suddenly in the Crowsnest Pass. A sunny day can quickly become cold and rainy. In the fall, hunters can be found in many areas of the Crowsnest Pass outside the municipal boundaries. If hiking in the fall, stay on well-marked trails and wear bright clothing.

Private Property

Make sure you have permission before crossing into any private property.

Drinking Water

Although most waters in the Crowsnest Pass look pristine, they may be unfit to drink. Do not depend on creeks, rivers or lakes for your water. Provide your own source of hydration.

1 Leitch Collieries (0.8 km loop)



Trailhead: Leitch Collieries Provincial Historic Site - Highway 3, 5 km east of Bellevue
Self-guided interpretive trails lead visitors through the remains of Leitch Collieries, a coal mine that operated from 1906-1915. The trails are gravelled and are wheelchair accessible. Interpretive staff is on site each summer from May 15 to Labour Day.

2 Bellevue-Hillcrest Path (2.2 km one way)

Trailhead: 9th Avenue in Hillcrest; 23rd Ave in Bellevue
This paved path connects the communities of Bellevue and Hillcrest. The path parallels the West Hillcrest Access for most of its length, crossing the Crowsnest River on the vehicular bridge at Riverbottom. A tunnel takes hikers under busy Highway 3.

3 Frank Slide Trail (1.5 km loop)



Trailhead: Frank Slide Interpretive Centre parking lot
This gravel pathway leads into the rocks of the Frank Slide of 1903, giving hikers an up-close look at the awesome power of nature. An interpretive guidebook is available for a minimal cost from the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre gift shop and is keyed to numbered markers along the trail.

4 Hastings Ridge (3.5 km one way)

Trailhead: Height of land on Adanac Road, 9.5 km from East Hillcrest Road
Follow the old road that leads west from the cattleguard, taking left forks when faced with an option. The road slowly climbs the ridge, emerging above the remains of an open pit coal mining operation from the 1940s. From the height of the ridge, there are expansive panoramic views in all directions. The Flathead Range to the west dominates the vista that extends south to Waterton Park.

5 Livingstone Range Raptor Migration Viewpoint (2.6 km one way)

Trailhead: Abandoned well site on gravel road north of Frank Slide Centre. The access road leads north across the cattleguard from the hairpin turn on the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre access road. Follow the main road up the hill, keeping right at the main junction. Eventually this leads to an open meadow (abandoned well site) beneath the Livingstone Range. From the well site, there are game trails and a few worn routes that lead steeply up the grass and forest ridge, and those with good route-finding skills will have few problems. Once on the ridge, find the internet transmission station (looks like a plastic porta-potty). The viewpoint is on the eastern face of the ridge, overlooking Rock Creek valley. In the spring and fall each year, thousands of large raptors make their way north and south along this flyway, using the thermals to lift them high above the valley floor. Golden eagle counts are taken from this location each migration season.

6 Livingstone Range Chert Quarries (2.3 km one way)



Trailhead: Pipeline access road north of Frank Slide Centre. The access road leads north across the cattleguard from the hairpin turn on the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre access road. Follow the main road up the hill, keeping right at the main junction and then left to the gas pipeline (watch for the orange pipeline warning signs). Although it is possible to drive part of this road (rough 4WD), it is best to hike from where you first reach the pipeline. Hike the pipeline road up to the windswept pass at the crest of the Livingstone Range. From here make your way less than half a kilometre back east to the base of the large electrical transmission tower. The "quarries" are found on the bench overlooking the Crowsnest Valley, another 100m southeast of the tower. It was at this location, in the waist-deep pits, that the K'tunaxa and the Piikani dug out nodules of chert, a flint-like material, which they used for tool making.

Note: This hike can easily be combined with the Livingstone Range Raptor Migration Viewpoint (Hike #5) to make a loop trip. The distance from the Chert Quarries to the Raptor Migration Viewpoint is approximately 0.5 km. It is approximately 1.0 km between trailheads.

Livingstone Range Chert Quarries



7 Lille (6.3 km one way)



Trailhead: North of Frank Slide Centre access road (another option is to park at the Frank Slide Centre and walk back down the paved access road to the cattleguard at the hairpin turn). Cross the cattleguard at the hairpin turn on the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre access road. Take the second road to your left (approximately 250 m from the cattleguard). Park in the meadow. Hike on the rough road that leads into the forest. Once the rough road rejoins the main Lille access road (approximately 1.5 km from the start), turn left and follow the road up the Gold Creek Valley. There is one small crossing of Green Creek, followed by two more substantial crossings of the Gold Creek. For both Gold Creek crossings, there are snow-mobile bridges upstream from the vehicle ford. One final crossing at Morin Creek brings you out into the open at what once was the coal mining community of Lille. A bit of searching will find basement depressions, bricks, rusted metal and a couple of fire hydrants. Once in the meadow, if you veer to the left, you will come across the basement foundation of the Lille Hotel, a fine two-storey structure in its day. Continuing in this direction will lead to a large pile of slack coal and the remains of Lille's Bernard-type coke ovens.
Note: Lille is an Alberta Provincial Historic Site. Do not disturb or take anything from the site.



Coke ovens at Lille

8 Turtle Mountain (North Peak) (3.1 km to summit - 780 m elevation gain)



Trailhead: The trail begins on the pipeline right-of-way at the west end of the rocky spur that extends down to the Blaimore subdivision on Turtle Mountain's slope. A back alley off of 16th Avenue onto the pipeline right-of-way will lead down to a parking area below the trail. Painted yellow rocks indicate the start of the trail. The trail begins rather steeply and roughly, fighting its way up the west shoulder of Turtle Mountain. The trail is generally well-defined throughout its length. Although there is no actual climbing involved, good scrambling and route finding abilities are an essential. The route comes very close to a number of sheer precipices, so those who do not like very exposed views should not attempt this trail. From the top of North Peak, there are fantastic views in all directions, but especially down onto the rocks of the Frank Slide in the valley below.

View of Frank Slide from Turtle Mountain



9 Blaimore Riverside Path (1.9 km one way)

Trailhead: Blaimore's 20th Avenue (East Access Bridge and West Access Bridge)
This paved path follows the south bank of the Crowsnest River for the entire length of Blaimore, crossing Blaimore's Centre Access at its mid-point. Easy walking connections to downtown Blaimore.

10 Miner's Path (1.0 km one way)



Trailhead: Flumerfelt Park in Coleman
This path follows Nez Perce Creek for 1.0 km to Rainbow Falls. A side branch at the 0.4 km mark crosses the creek and leads steeply up stairs to the old McGillivray Mine site, which still has many remnants of a bygone coal mining era. It was along this same path that miners would walk to work each day.

11 Star Creek Falls (1.2 km to falls viewpoint)

Trailhead: Take Willow Drive west from West Coleman for 1.7 km to the bridge over Star Creek. 100 m past the bridge turn left and drive 700 m (rough road) to the trailhead sign. This route leads through a small canyon to 15 m high Star Creek Falls. In the spring of the year, the creek has much more flow and you will have to stick to the main trail. In autumn, when water levels are much lower, it is possible to make your way up the canyon floor to the falls.

12 Saskatoon Mountain (1.8 km to summit)

Trailhead: There are several informal routes that lead from the Pineview subdivision in Coleman to Saskatoon Mountain. This route leads from the Kananaskis Highway (Highway 40). Drive north from Coleman on Highway 40. Stop just beyond the cattleguard indicating the beginning of the Forest Reserve. There is no formal trail leading up "Saskie". From Highway 40, follow the fence line west as it steadily climbs up through forest and open grassland. The true summit of Saskatoon Mountain is about ten minutes after the first lower summit.

13 Wedge Mountain (1.8 km to summit - 430 m elevation gain)

Trailhead: There is no specific trailhead for this hike. Follow the McGillivray Creek (Gun Range) Road from the west end of Coleman. From the cattleguard at 2.5 km on the road, Wedge Mountain stands out to the right (north). Turn right at the next intersection and park in one of the primitive camping areas near the mountain's base. Wedge Mountain is one of the line of peaks that make up the Crowsnest Volcanics, a geologically unique formation in the southern Rockies. The hike does not follow any trails, and one must simply slog their way up the rough volcanic rocks. Views from the large cairn at the summit are impressive, especially towards the looming face of Crowsnest Mountain.
Note: Good hiking boots are a must for this hike.



Chinook Lake

14 Chinook Lake Circuit (2.3 km loop)

Trailhead: This trail begins along the shoreline of Chinook (Allison) Lake
This pleasant 2.3 km loop encircles Chinook Lake, and the trail is seldom far from the shores of this peaceful pond. If hiking clockwise, watch for the trail as it heads down into the forest a few hundred metres beyond the western end of the lake. The campground is busy spring through fall, and there is generally kid activity in the summer along the trail at the 'beach'.

15 Deadman Pass (7.3 km to pass)

Trailhead: Trail begins as the Chinook Lake Circuit, heading northwest from the boat launch. Continue straight where the Chinook Lake Circuit cuts to the right. This forest-enclosed hike leads to a low Continental Divide pass northwest of Chinook Lake. Three kilometres from the lake, a rough 4WD road is encountered. Turn left and follow the road, taking a right fork 100 metres down the 4WD road. A number of streams and beaver ponds are found near the actual Alberta-B.C. border. The trail does continue into B.C., but it is a long walk down (12 km+) to Highway 3.

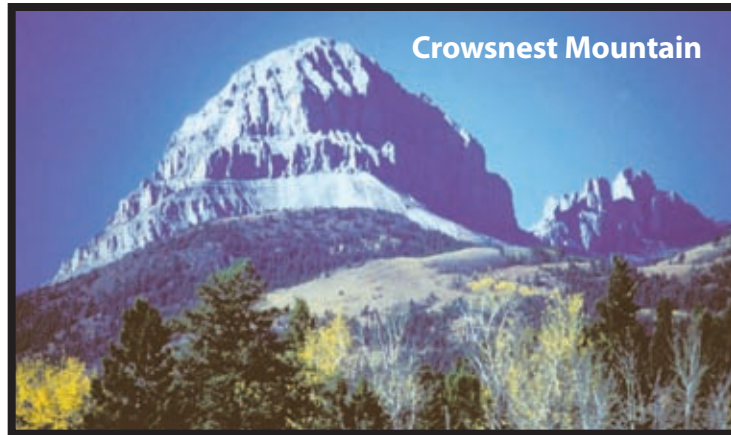


Prairie crocus

Trail descriptions adapted from and distances taken from *Hiking the Southern Rockies* by Joey Ambrosi. Photos courtesy Frank Slide Interpretive Centre.

16 Crowsnest Mountain (5.8 km to summit - 1040 m elevation gain)

Trailhead: Drive north on the Allison Creek/Atlas Road for 9.7 km, keeping right at the junction for Chinook Lake. From the parking area, the trail leads back south. Crowsnest Mountain is the crown jewel of hikes in the area. The massive form of the mountain can actually be summited by hikers without having to do any technical climbing. However, it is a long and difficult hike, with many hazards including danger from falling rock and some very exposed sections. The trail leads through the forest and begins to climb at a very steady pace, eventually reaching treeline just before the 3 km mark. From here the route leads up open scree slopes to the base of the massive cliffs above. Once at the base of the cliffs, the route works its way to the left, eventually reaching 'the Chimney', the crux of this route. In dry conditions, the 50m long chute is generally not a major problem. In early season, if snow persists or in foul weather, the Chimney can be treacherous. Once above the Chimney, the route follows a series of tracks steeply through loose scree, eventually reaching the peak. Being the highest point in the Crowsnest Pass at 2785 m, views are unparalleled from the summit.
Note: Good scrambling and route-finding skills are a must for this hike. This hike can be extremely dangerous for those unprepared or unskilled.



Crowsnest Mountain

17 Window Mountain Lake (2.0 km to lake)

Trailhead: Drive north on the Allison Creek/Atlas Road for 16.5 km, keeping right at the junction for Chinook Lake. At km 16.5 a rough road leads left (west) for 2 km, ending at a parking area. A well-defined path leads steeply up and over the headwall from the parking area into the basin holding the stunning blue-green waters of Window Mountain Lake. The lake is a very popular spot in the summer with day hikers and anglers. Despite its name, the "window" on Mount Ward cannot be seen from the lake.

18 Mount Ward (1.6 km from lake to summit - 630 m elevation gain)

Trailhead: The route begins on the scree slopes at the far end of Window Mountain Lake
For those keen to see the "Window" on Mount Ward, it is a tough scramble up the loose scree slope from the southwest corner of Window Mountain Lake. Follow the general direction of the gully as it leads around the back of Mount Ward, eventually ending up below the Window. To actually reach the Window will require some climbing skills.

19 Racehorse Pass (3.2 km to pass)

Trailhead: Drive north on the Allison Creek/Atlas Road for 17 km to the bridge that crosses Racehorse Creek. Take the next side road to the left and park. An abandoned road leads from the Racehorse Creek valley to open meadows at this Continental Divide pass. In summer, showy wildflowers are abundant in the pleasant meadows at the pass.

20 Phillipps Pass (4.1 km to pass)



Trailhead: Turn north off of Highway 3 at the east end of Crowsnest Lake, past the small collection of buildings, to the bridge over the Crowsnest River. Park once across the bridge. The route follows the road that turns left across the C.P.R. tracks. The route follows the road along Crowsnest Lake and then up a narrow valley to Phillipps Pass. Tiny Phillipps Lake (on the Alberta-B.C. border) signifies your crossing of the Continental Divide. The route continues down the west side of the pass for 3.2 km to Crowsnest Provincial Park on Highway 3 in B.C.
Note: The landowners have been accommodating to hikers in the past, but this route can potentially be closed off at any time.

21 Crowsnest Ridge (1.4 km from Phillipps Pass road to summit)

Trailhead: The route begins from the Phillipps Pass trail, approximately 0.5 km west of Phillipps Lake
The steep access road to the communications tower on Crowsnest Ridge can be hiked from the Phillipps Pass road. There are very dramatic views down to Crowsnest Lake from the ridge.

22 Lynx Creek (5.6 km to the end of the road)

Trailhead: Follow Sartoris Road south from Blaimore for 10 km, where a rough road leads northwest up Lynx Creek. Park at the junction and hike the road. The road leads up through the forests burned out in the Lost Creek Fire of 2003. Mt. Coulthard and the Flathead Range dominate the views to the west. It is possible to hike beyond the end of the road to the meadowed slopes above.

23 Ironstone Lookout (3.0 km from gate on York Creek road)

Trailhead: Take the York Creek Road south from Coleman. Depending on your vehicle, you may not want to drive much of this road. The gated road to Ironstone is approximately 6.5 km from Coleman. Add whatever distance you don't drive to the 3.0 km from the gate to the lookout. From the gate, the road climbs steadily and steeply up Willoughby Ridge to the fire lookout. There are expansive views of the area burned in the Lost Creek Fire in 2003.

24 North York Creek (6.2 km from York Creek bridge)



Trailhead: Take the York Creek Road south from Coleman. Approximately 4 km from Coleman, you can park at the bridge over York Creek. Cross the bridge and follow the route that leads up the south bank of York Creek. The route eventually forks, and hikers take the right fork across York Creek and up the North York Creek drainage. The route ends where in 1946 an RCAF DC-3 Dakota crashed into the valley, killing all on board. The upper valley, below the face of Mt. Coulthard, has pleasant meadows.

25 The Promised Land (8.7 km to pass - 985 m elevation gain)

Trailhead: Turn south off of Highway 3 just east of the bridge over Crowsnest Creek, 11 km west of Coleman. Drive on the gravel road for 3 km and park at the junction. The route follows the rough road to the left (south). The first 2/3 of this route cross back and forth over the bubbling waters of Ptolemy Creek and can make for a nice outing in itself. At the end of the road, a well-defined trail climbs very steeply up through the forest to a rocky pass into the moonscape of 'The Promised Land'. There are several significant caves in the immediate area, including Cleft Cave, Gargantua Cave and Yorkshire Pot.
Note: Caving can be extremely dangerous. Do not enter any caves without proper equipment and training.

Take a Hike in the Crowsnest Pass

