

# Winter Trails and Trail Reports for Banff and Kananaskis

Stay safe this winter by sticking to official winter trails; researching your route; and checking the trail report, avalanche report, and weather before you head out.

Winter outdoor adventures are wonderful, but require a bit more planning to stay safe. By traveling on designated winter trails, you can minimize your exposure to avalanche terrain and lower the chances you will get lost in the cold. Once you've chosen a trail, research your route, check trail and avalanche reports, check the weather, pack [The Ten Essential Systems](#), and let someone know where you're going (and when you anticipate getting back).

## Know Before You Go

**Avalanche season is from November until June in the Canadian Rockies.** If you do not have avalanche skills training, I strongly encourage you to stick to official winter trails (below). Banff and Kananaskis winter trails for hiking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, and fatbiking are in Simple (aka Class 1) Terrain that are relatively low risk when the avalanche danger is low. The other benefit of traveling on official trails is that they are usually well signed so it's less likely you'll get lost.

**Low risk does not equal no risk.** Some official winter trails cross avalanche paths! Other Class 1 / Simple Terrain trails end right before dangerous features (cliffs, large avalanche slopes) so you need to carry a map and know where to turn back. For example, if you snowshoe to [Fairview Lookout](#), you must stop at the lookout and return the way you came. There is a major slide zone past the lookout!

**You should always research your route for potential hazards (avalanche slopes, gullies, cliffs, cornices, etc.) and check the Avalanche Report\* at [Avalanche Canada](#) before heading out.** Danger levels are reported from 1-Low to 5-Extreme. See the Avalanche Danger Rating Scale below. **Avoid ALL avalanche terrain when avalanche danger is Extreme/High!**

**\*Avalanche reports are available daily from mid November until late spring.**

North American Public Avalanche Danger Scale				
Avalanche danger is determined by the likelihood, size and distribution of avalanches.				
Danger Level		Travel Advice	Likelihood of Avalanches	Avalanche Size and Distribution
5 Extreme		Avoid all avalanche terrain.	Natural and human-triggered avalanches certain.	Large to very large avalanches in many areas.
4 High		Very dangerous avalanche conditions. Travel in avalanche terrain <u>not</u> recommended.	Natural avalanches likely; human-triggered avalanches very likely.	Large avalanches in many areas; or very large avalanches in specific areas.
3 Considerable		Dangerous avalanche conditions. Careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding and conservative decision-making essential.	Natural avalanches possible; human-triggered avalanches likely.	Small avalanches in many areas; or large avalanches in specific areas; or very large avalanches in isolated areas.
2 Moderate		Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify features of concern.	Natural avalanches unlikely; human-triggered avalanches possible.	Small avalanches in specific areas; or large avalanches in isolated areas.
1 Low		Generally safe avalanche conditions. Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features.	Natural and human-triggered avalanches unlikely.	Small avalanches in isolated areas or extreme terrain.

Safe backcountry travel requires training and experience. You control your own risk by choosing where, when and how you travel.

Avalanche Danger Scale | Image Credit: [avalanche.ca](#)

Source: <https://www.playoutsideguide.com/2017/11/ab-winter-trails-and-trail-reports/>

## Banff National Park Trail Reports, Avalanche Bulletin, and Winter Trails

For current trail conditions in Banff National Park, visit [Banff - Lake Louise Trail Report](#).

The [Banff, Yoho, and Kootenay National Parks Avalanche Bulletin](#) is updated daily from mid November to late spring.

Check the [Banff Weather Forecast](#) and dress/pack accordingly. :)

Area	Trail Descriptions
Banff	<a href="#">Banff Cross Country Ski Trails</a> <a href="#">Banff Snowshoe &amp; Walking Trails</a> <a href="#">Ferland Loop &amp; Vermilion Lakes Drive</a> <a href="#">Johnson Lake</a> <a href="#">Stewart Canyon</a> <a href="#">Sulphur Mountain</a> <a href="#">Surprise Corner to Hoodoos</a> <a href="#">Tunnel Mountain</a> <a href="#">Upper Stoney Loop</a>
Bow Valley Parkway (1A)	<a href="#">Bow Valley (Hwy 1A) Cross Country Ski Trails</a> <a href="#">Johnston Canyon</a> ( <i>check <a href="#">Parks Canada Bulletins</a> for road closures</i> )
Lake Louise	<a href="#">Lake Louise Winter Trails</a> <a href="#">The Best Beginner Cross Country Ski Trails in Lake Louise</a> <a href="#">Fairview Lookout Snowshoe Trail</a> <a href="#">Lake Louise Lakeshore Trail</a> <a href="#">Pipestone Cross Country Ski Trails</a>
Icefields Parkway (Hwy 93N)	<a href="#">Icefields Parkway (93N) Snowshoe Trails</a>

## Kananaskis Trail Reports, Avalanche Bulletin, and Winter Trails

For Kananaskis trail information, visit [Alberta Parks | Kananaskis Trails](#) and search for the trail (e.g. Penstock Loop) or type of activity (e.g. snowshoeing) in the search bar. Kananaskis fatbiking trails may be viewed [here](#).

Visit Avalanche Canada for the current [Kananaskis Country Avalanche Bulletin](#). If you are unsure of the avalanche risk for a certain trail, please call the Kananaskis Information Line at 403-678-0760 or inquire at a Visitor Centre.

Area	Trail Descriptions	Trail Report
Bow Valley	<a href="#">Flowing Water Trail</a> <a href="#">Grotto Canyon Ice Walk</a> <a href="#">Heart Creek Interpretive Trail</a> <a href="#">Jura Canyon Ice Walk</a> <a href="#">Prairie View / Barrier Lake Fire Lookout / Mount Yates</a>	<a href="#">Bow Valley Trail Report</a>
Canmore & Area	<a href="#">Grassi Lakes</a> <a href="#">Cross Country Skiing at Canmore Nordic Centre</a>	<a href="#">Canmore Trail Report</a> <a href="#">Canmore Nordic Centre Trail Report</a>
Elbow Valley	<a href="#">Elbow Falls Interpretive Fullerton Loop</a> <a href="#">Prairie Mountain</a>	<a href="#">Elbow Valley Trail Report</a>
Glenbow Ranch	Various - <a href="#">Tiger Lily Loop</a> is good for kids	<a href="#">Glenbow Ranch Trail Report</a>
Kananaskis Valley	<a href="#">Ribbon Creek Snowshoe Trail</a> <a href="#">Troll Falls &amp; Upper Falls</a> <a href="#">XC Ski, Snowshoe, Fatbiking, and Hiking Trails</a>	<a href="#">Kananaskis Valley Trail Report</a>
Mount Shark	<a href="#">Watridge Lake Snowshoe Trail</a> <a href="#">Karst Spring</a>	<a href="#">Mount Shark Trail Report</a>
Peter Lougheed	<a href="#">Chester Lake Snowshoe Trail</a> <a href="#">Elkwood Loop (Marl Lake) Snowshoe Trail</a> <a href="#">Hogarth Lakes Loop Snowshoe Trail</a> <a href="#">Penstock Loop Snowshoe Trail</a>	<a href="#">Peter Lougheed Trail Report</a>
Sandy McNabb	<a href="#">Sandy McNabb Interpretive</a>	<a href="#">Sandy McNabb Trail Report</a>
Sheep & Highwood	<a href="#">Bluerock Interpretive</a>	<a href="#">Sheep &amp; Highwood Trail Report</a>
Sibbald Flats	<a href="#">Deer Ridge &amp; Sibbald Flat Interpretive</a>	<a href="#">Sibbald Flats Trail Report</a>
Spray Valley	<a href="#">Rummel Lake</a>	<a href="#">Spray Valley Trail Report</a>
West Bragg Creek	<a href="#">Snowy Owl Snowshoe / Fatbike Trail</a> <a href="#">Snowshoe Hare Snowshoe / Fatbike Trail</a>	<a href="#">West Bragg Creek Trail Report</a>

## Important Notes regarding the Kananaskis Conservation Pass & Cross Country Ski Fees

- As of 2021, a Kananaskis Conservation Pass is required to stop anywhere in Kananaskis. The fee includes cross country ski trail grooming. Buy your pass at <https://www.alberta.ca/kananaskis-conservation-pass.aspx>.
- Cross country ski trail fees are in effect at Canmore Nordic Centre until 5 pm daily. For more information, see our story: [Cross Country Skiing at the Canmore Nordic Centre](#).

## More Winter Fun

Our [Winter Activity Guide for Calgary & Area](#) tells you where to ski, cross country ski, snowshoe, snow tube, and ice skate near Calgary.

Discover [Where to Snowshoe Near Calgary](#) with our curated list of best snowshoe trails in Banff and Kananaskis.

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