

# Kootenay National Park of Canada

## Climate

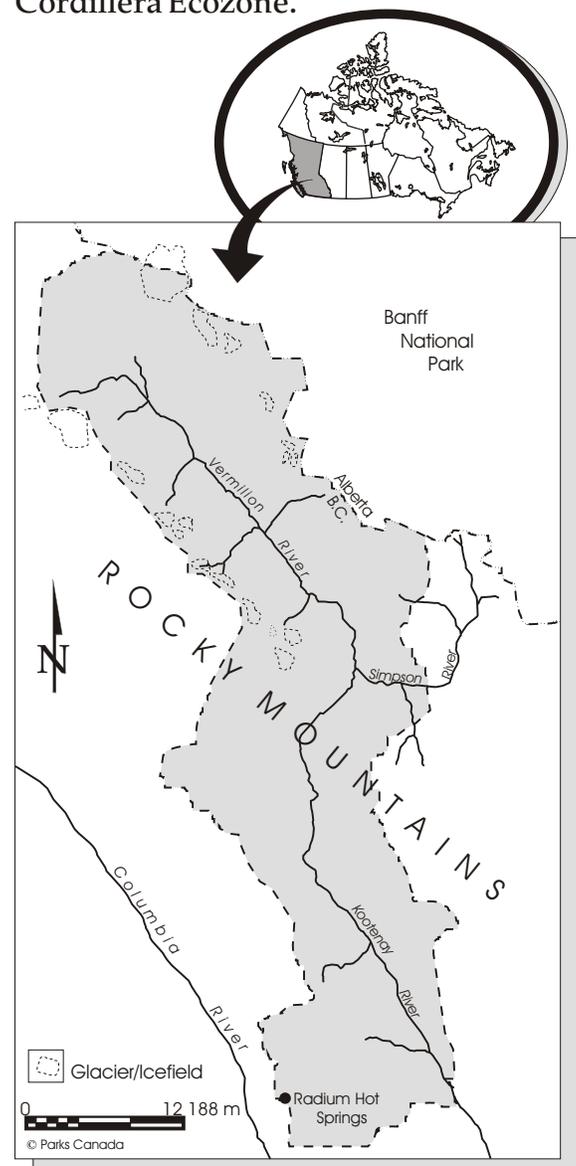
Dramatic variations in Kootenay's climate are caused by a combination of elevation, rainshadow effects, and latitude. Generally, winters are long and summers cool and short, with only occasional hot spells. Average January highs are  $-7^{\circ}\text{C}$ , while July averages to  $22^{\circ}\text{C}$ . These temperatures apply to valley bottoms. At higher elevations temperatures are about  $5^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $7^{\circ}\text{C}$  cooler. Annual precipitation ranges from less than 380 mm at lower elevations to over 1 250 mm at higher elevations.

## Geology

The Western and Main Ranges of the Rocky Mountains are found in Kootenay. They are composed of thick layers of limestone, sandstone, and shale. It is believed that the Rockies have seen at least four ice ages. Significant geologic features include the famous Radium Hot Springs, faults, canyons, karst formations, and the fossils of the Stephen Formation. For protecting a part of one of the earth's geologic and scenic treasures, Kootenay (along with Jasper, Yoho, and Banff National Parks and Mount Robson, Hamber and Mount Assiniboine Provincial Parks) was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985 on the 100th anniversary of Canada's national parks system.

## Location

Kootenay is Canada's 10th national park. It was established in 1920. Located in southeastern British Columbia on the Alberta border, Kootenay is part of the world-famous Rocky Mountains with all their rugged splendour and scenic beauty. The 1 406 km<sup>2</sup> park is about 800 km east of Vancouver, and is one of the five national parks (also includes Yoho, Banff, Jasper, and Waterton Lakes), that represents the Rocky Mountains Natural Region. Kootenay is located in the Montane Cordillera Ecozone.

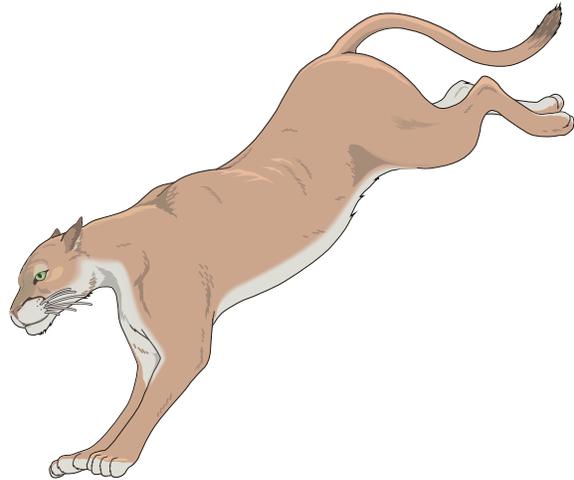


## Vegetation

Three distinct vegetation zones exist in this mountainous region, largely because of the inherent changes in elevation. The montane zone is the lowest of the three, and is characterized by grassy meadows, and Douglas fir, white spruce, trembling aspen, and lodgepole pine. The subalpine zone of the slopes supports a largely closed coniferous forest of Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, and lodgepole pine. Some open meadowland can also be found in upper subalpine regions. During summer, these meadows are covered with a thick carpet of wildflowers. The highest of the three zones, the alpine region, cannot support trees. Vegetation is sparse, with some alpine meadows, and as one goes higher up still, one enters the exclusive domain of hardy lichens that cling to the bare rock.

## Wildlife

Kootenay, like all of the Rocky Mountain parks, is famous for its wildlife. Some 57 mammal species are found here, including moose, elk, mountain goat, bighorn sheep, white-tailed deer, mule deer, cougars, black bears, wolves, and a secretive population of grizzly bears. More than 280 species of birds, including golden and bald eagles, have been identified. The park's major watersheds contain rainbow trout, brook trout, lake trout, northern pike, and whitefish. Reptiles and amphibians are scarce because of the severe climate. Only one species of toad, three frogs, one salamander, and three types of snakes have been recorded.



## Activities

Visitors to Kootenay can enjoy a multitude of activities, including camping at one of three campgrounds, hiking or skiing along trails, canoeing on the Kootenay River (experienced paddlers only!), and taking scenic drives. The park offers excellent fishing, mountain climbing, cycling, picnicking, canoeing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Taking a dip in the hot springs is also popular. A full range of accommodations is offered at the site.

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