

# Lake O'Hara Backcountry Map

Yoho National Park

[www.parkscanada.gc.ca/yoho](http://www.parkscanada.gc.ca/yoho)

*The Lake O'Hara area is a very special place within Yoho National Park. With its spectacular scenery, unique plants and wide variety of wildlife, the area is not only beautiful, but fragile and sensitive to human use.*

To help protect this special place and keep it in a natural state, please observe these regulations:

- Pack all garbage to the bear-proof garbage storage at Lake O'Hara Campground.
- Do not disturb or collect natural objects or historical artifacts.
- Do not feed or approach wildlife including birds, pikas, marmots and ground squirrels.
- Dogs are not allowed on the bus; visitors can walk their pets into the valley. Pets must be on a leash at all times.
- Anglers must have a National Park fishing permit.
- Stay on the trails to minimize trail braiding, trampling and erosion.
- Cycling is not permitted on the Lake O'Hara fire road.
- All vehicles in the O'Hara parking lot require a valid National Park pass.

## Bears

Read the brochure "**Bears and People: a guide to safety and conservation on the trail**". Bears frequent this area. Backcountry procedures for cooking and storing food must be followed to help protect both people and bears.

## Water

Water is available from the wells at Lake O'Hara Campground and the Lake O'Hara Warden Cabin. If you use water from lakes, creeks or streams for cooking or drinking, boil it for at least three minutes.

## Lake O'Hara Campground and Day Use Reservations

Reservations are required to take the bus to Lake O'Hara for day use and camping; the bus operates from June 19 through September 30 annually. You may reserve three months in advance of your visit by telephone only at 250.343.6433, March through September.

The campground's 30 sites offer a backcountry experience; prepare for self-sufficiency with limited common facilities.

## Alpine Routes

There are five Alpine Routes above the O'Hara basin for experienced hikers who are comfortable with route finding, heights and traversing exposed terrain. The Alpine routes are often shown by cairns, and may involve scrambling on scree slopes or over boulder fields where the way is marked by painted blue and yellow symbols. Expect early season closures on the Alpine Routes because of snow cover. These routes cross steep gullies and avalanche areas. Hikers must be aware of avalanche conditions year round, and follow protocols for travelling in avalanche areas.

- Wiwaxy Gap/Huber Ledges (11)
- Yukness Ledges (28)
- All Soul's (1)
- Abbot Pass
- Odaray Grandview (9): access via the Odaray Highline Trail (22). **Note:** to protect an important wildlife corridor, a voluntary program to limit use is in place for the Odaray Highline Trail.

## Sharing the Land

Conflicts between people and grizzly bears on the Odaray Plateau and in McArthur Valley resulted in access restrictions in these areas in 1993. Concerns for both public safety and the viability of local grizzly bear populations led to a five-year research project to study how people and wildlife use the area.

The research identified key grizzly bear habitat and an important wildlife corridor running through the area. In 1999, Parks Canada modified the McArthur Valley closure and rerouted short trail sections in McArthur Pass to better integrate visitor use within these important ecological areas.

- After August 15<sup>th</sup>, when seasonal plant foods favoured by grizzly bears have peaked, **McArthur Valley** is opened annually to two groups per week. A McArthur Valley hiking permit is required to hike this unmaintained wilderness route and can be obtained by phoning the Field Visitor Centre at 250.343.6783.
- The **Odaray Highline Trail** cuts across the McArthur Valley-Cataract Brook wildlife corridor at its most narrow point, McArthur Pass. Here, high levels of human activity can filter or even block use of the corridor by wary animals. To ensure wildlife can move freely through this pinch point in the corridor, Parks Canada asks you to **voluntarily limit** your use of the Odaray Highline trail. Please check with Park staff or at Le Relais for details.

- **Odaray Highline Trail(22) to Odaray Grandview (9): please limit your use of this trail**
- **Distance:** 1.2 km
- **Elevation Gain:** 90 metres
- **Trailhead:** McArthur Pass Trail

Just before McArthur Pass, turn right onto the Odaray Highline trail. The trail passes along the lower slopes of Mt. Odaray. Odaray Grandview Trail is an alpine route which travels west of Odaray Highline to Grandview Prospect.

## Lake O'Hara Shoreline Trail (25)

- **Length:** 2.8 km circuit
- **Elevation gain:** minor up and down

From the O'Hara Warden Cabin, go east across a bridge over Cataract Brook, and follow the north shore of the lake past the start of the Wiwaxy Gap/Huber Ledges Alpine Route (11) on the left. Continue along a steep hillside and across several gullies above the lake. At the eastern end of the lake, the trail passes the Lake Oesa Trail junction before passing below a huge outcropping of pink quartzite and Seven Veils Falls.

## Lake Oesa Trail (26)

- **Length:** 3.2 km one way
- **Elevation Gain:** 240 metres

The trail begins on the Lake O'Hara Shoreline Trail (25) near the eastern end of the lake and ascends a number of switchbacks to the top of a cliff at the end of the lake. Above the cliff, cross wide talus and scree slopes swept clear by avalanches every year. After passing through a stunted forest, climb over several steep, rocky outcrops on stone steps built by Lawrence Grassi. Just past the top of the steps is the trailhead for the Yukness Ledge Alpine Route (28), and Lake Victoria.

The Lake Oesa Trail continues from this junction through delicate meadows enclosed by copper-coloured quartzite cliffs and at several points along the way, tiny pools of Oesa Creek are visible below to the right. Finally, after climbing to the top of a short grassy slope, the trail passes through a trough cut in solid bedrock to the tilted rock slabs which contain Lake Oesa. The Wiwaxy Gap/Huber Ledges Alpine Route (11) joins the trail from the north just before the lake.

## Opabin Plateau Circuit

- **Length:** 5.9 km circuit
- **Elevation Gain:** 250 metres

Opabin Plateau is a beautiful hanging valley atop a rocky headband cliff above Lake O'Hara. West Opabin Trail (29) and East Opabin Trail (8) climb to the head of the valley from both sides of the cliff. By starting up either of these arms of the circuit and returning via the other, a tour of the valley can be made.

■ **Via West Opabin:** A sign on the southwest end of Lake O'Hara marks the beginning of the west arm of Opabin

Plateau Circuit. The trail climbs quickly to Mary Lake, follows the shore and then climbs steeply up an open talus slope for approximately 120 vertical metres until it mounts a grassy cleft onto the rolling terrain of Opabin Plateau. At this point, the All Soul's Prospect Alpine Route (1) joins the circuit from the west. Another small path travels east back out to the head of the cliff, a point called Opabin Prospect (32).

The Opabin Plateau Circuit continues into the little valley of Opabin Creek. It crosses a bridge over the creek and travels upstream, passing southwest of Hungabee Lake. Climbing over a knoll through more talus, the circuit arrives at Opabin Lake. A glacier about 800 metres long lies at the foot of Opabin Pass - the narrow gap in the peaks at the end of the lake. Hikers are warned to stay off the glacier because of dangerous crevasses.

Opabin Plateau Highline (31) connects East Opabin and West Opabin trails on the plateau.

The return arm of the circuit begins on the east shore of Opabin Lake. The trail descends back along the plateau past Hungabee Lake and follows the foot of the slope of Yukness Mountain, where the Yukness Ledge Alpine Route (25) to Lake Oesa begins. Continue through grassy meadows back to the brink of the valley and a 0.8 km series of switchbacks that drop to the shores of Lake O'Hara.

## McArthur Pass, and Lake McArthur Trails

- **Length:** 8 km circuit
- **Elevation gain:** 310 m

The trail begins at Le Relais Day Shelter and heads west, bearing right at the junction of the Big Larch Trail (2) which is part of the return arm of this circuit. Past the junction, the circuit then enters an alpine meadow where the Elizabeth Parker Hut and the junction of the Linda Lake Circuit are located. The Lake McArthur circuit travels southwest, climbing through larch forests for 800 metres before encountering a junction with the south end of the Big Larch Trail (2). The trail then crosses a bridge over Schäffer Creek and a short distance further, encounters a junction with the Lake McArthur Trail (17) which leads off to the south.

The Lake McArthur circuit continues straight ahead at this junction through McArthur Meadows to a junction with the Odaray Highline Trail to the west. A short distance beyond the junction, the Lake McArthur circuit reaches the summit of McArthur Pass where the trail forks. The west branch travels to Lake McArthur via the McArthur Low Level Trail (14) along a rock ledge and through an open meadow to the north shore of Lake McArthur.

Return to Schäffer Lake on the McArthur Highline Trail (10). At the end of the bridge across Schäffer Creek, follow the Big Larch Trail(2). Just east of the junction, the All Soul's Prospect Alpine Route heads off the circuit to the south. The circuit continues its return by traveling northeast beyond the junction, descends steeply to the Devil's Rockpile and then levels off in the alpine meadow and the trail back to Le Relais.

## Linda Lake Circuit and Morning Glory Lakes

- **Distance:** 3.5 km one way
- **Elevation Gain:** 140 metres
- **Trailhead:** Elizabeth Parker Hut

The Linda Lake Circuit follows the Lower Morning Glory Lake Trail to Lower Morning Glory Lake, then proceeds to Linda Lake, makes a circuit of the lake and descends to connect with the Cataract Brook Trail, eventually ending at Lake O'Hara Campground.

From the Elizabeth Parker Hut, the trail passes through the meadow and enters the forest. It maintains its level through the forest and after 1.6 kilometres, rounds the end of a long ridge separating the O'Hara valley from Duchesnay Basin. The trail travels a short distance to a junction with a cut-off trail leading north past Lower Morning Glory Lake (34)and a short return to the campground.

The Linda Lake Beeline (12) continues northwest and climbs steeply for the next 300 metres. Linda Lake is at the top of the slope. To complete the round trip, continue around the west end of the lake, where the Duchesnay Basin Trail heads west. The circuit continues along the shoreline of Linda Lake to a junction with the Linda Lake Trail (13), the first leg of the return portion of the circuit. Descend gradual switchbacks to a junction with the Lower Morning Glory Trail (34) or continue on the trail, which ends at the Lake O'Hara campground.

## Duchesnay Basin Trail

- **Length:** 3.2 km one way
- **Elevation Gain:** 230 m

Beginning at the west end of Linda Lake, the trail climbs gently through several meadows heading northwest for about 1.1 km to Cathedral Lakes. The northeast ridge of Odaray Mountain, a 900 metre rock buttress, towers over the south side of Duchesnay Valley.

Crossing a bridge over the lake's outlet, Vera Lake can be seen downstream. Most of the lakes in the area are known as kettle ponds and were formed after chunks of glacial ice melted, leaving poorly drained depressions in the glacial debris.

Follow the north shore of Cathedral Lake for 50 metres, then climb along a creek before crossing into the woods on the left. Following a wet meadow, the trail ascends a small hill and comes to an end as it encounters the Cathedral Basin Alpine Route branching sharply to the right.

Produced in partnership between Parks Canada and the Lake O'Hara Trails Club, a non-profit group dedicated to maintaining the integrity of this area. For information on Trails Club activities, visit Le Relais Day Shelter.