

Mindful Mountain Hiking Program

Want to head for the hills? Join the Mindful Mountain Hiking Program for the summer and early autumn. Day hikes in Kananaskis Country and the Rockies are led by ACMG Day Hiking Guide Debbie Maclean and assisted by ACMG Executive Director Peter Tucker. The pace of these hikes is designed to enable everyone to achieve the destination and enjoy the outing while keeping personal safety paramount. Here's how to participate:

STEP 1 – Inform Yourself

Read all the information provided in this PDF hiking document to help you decide on a hike and download the necessary forms

- Refer to the program schedule or GameTime for dates and locations
- Par-Q+ form, medical form and registration are required

STEP 2 – Complete the Par-Q+ form and the offsite medical Form

- Complete the Par-Q+ form. Your registration will not be confirmed until the forms are on file at Wellspring Calgary. Documents are available on the Wellspring Calgary website. Please give yourself several weeks for paperwork as it may include a phone consultation with a CEP from the Thrive Lab at the University of Calgary. Directions to fill out a Par-Q+ form and the U of C phone number are on our website.
- Request the offsite medical form and hand in or scan to the office at Carma House.

STEP 3 – Register for a Specific Hike

- Registration for each hike starts 4 weeks prior to the hike. Read descriptions below to choose your hike.
- You may register for one hike per season ONLY. However, if you put yourself on the general Mindful Mountain Hiking Waitlist, you may be called one or two days before any hike when cancellations happen.
- Register online using our Online Programs Registration system or phone Wellspring Calgary Carma House at (403) 521-5292 or Wellspring Calgary Fountain Court at (587) 747-0260. You will be asked if you have a current Par-Q+ on file with Wellspring Calgary. Once confirmed, you will get reminders from one of the staff members with updates about the hike.
- Southland Transportation has graciously donated a bus service. If for some reason the bus is not available, be ready to tell us if you are able to drive, and offer car-pooling to other members.
NOTE: Registration is not considered confirmed until required Par-Q+ form is at the office!!
- *If you are NO longer able to participate in a hike, please call Wellspring Calgary and ask for a staff member or email bobbif@wellspringcalgary.ca. We will call someone from the Waitlist for that spot.*

STEP 4 – Go Hiking!

- Meet the facilitators at the appointed place and time. There you will sign the ACMG waiver and leave for your amazing day in the mountains.
- Have a beautiful day!!

Summer Hiking Locations: Look in the program schedule to check the date of your hike

Fullerton – Bobcat – Sugar Mama; East Kananaskis

- Meeting Times & Locations: Carma House 7:30 AM or Bragg Creek Shopping Centre 8:00 AM
- Description: Combining an old scenic route with some newer built trails, this trail is a great way to warm up your legs for the hiking season. Rarely steep, but always scenic, there are several view points that provide fabulous views of the Elbow-Sheep Range to the west.
- Total Hiking Distance: 9.3 km
- Elevation gain: 300 meters (approximately 1000 feet)
- Terrain profile: Gentle to moderate walking through forest throughout the day
- Approximate driving time to trailhead: 45 minutes

Powderface Ridge – Jumping Pound area; Kananaskis Country

- Meeting Times & Locations: Carma House 7:30 AM or Bragg Creek Shopping Centre 8:00 AM
- Description: Considered to be one of the best ridge traverses in the Elbow Valley, this route offers exceptional panoramas along the east edge of the Rocky Mountains. The wildflowers are abundant and brilliant.
- Total hiking distance: 9.2 km
- Elevation gain: 300 meters (approximately 1000 feet)
- Terrain profile: Steady moderate uphill to first saddle; undulating subalpine ridge; return the same way
- Approximate driving time to trailhead: 75 minutes. Involves a 7 km drive on gravel road.

Chester Lake – Peter Lougheed Park; Kananaskis Country

- Meeting Times and Locations: Carma House 7:30 AM or Petro-Canada 8:00 AM
- Description: Starting from the high point of the Smith Dorrien Road, the trail climbs moderately for the first half, levelling out into stunning subalpine meadows. The final destination is a gorgeous subalpine lake nestled beneath the awesome cliffs of Mt Chester.
- Total hiking distance: 10.2 km
- Elevation gain: 310 meters (approximately 1010 feet)
- Terrain profile: Moderate angle climbing easing to a gentle valley amble up to a high lake
- Approximate driving time to trailhead: 100 minutes

Sunshine Meadows - Banff National Park

- Meeting Times & Locations: Carma House 7:30 AM or Petro-Canada 8:00 AM
- Description: On this amazing hike, we let a shuttle bus do much of the work getting us to the alpine environment of Sunshine Meadows. If you think it is great to ski there in the winter, you will be astonished at the beauty of the endless alpine meadows carpeted with flowers of all kinds. The hiking itself is gentle on well-maintained paths and the views of Mt Assiniboine, as well as many other peaks, are breath-taking.
- Please note that there may be a \$35 cost for the shuttle bus. Price subject to change.
- Total hiking distance: maximum 8.5 km
- Elevation gain: 240 meters (approximately 800 feet)
- Terrain profile: Gentle to moderate uphill to the first viewpoint; gently rolling terrain through alpine meadows
- Approximate driving time to trailhead: 75 minutes

Fall Hiking Locations: Look in the program schedule to check the date of your hike

Elbow Pass – Highwood Area of Kananaskis Country

- Meeting Times & Locations: Carma House 7:30 AM or Petro-Canada 8:00 AM
- Description: The trail to Elbow Lake and Elbow Pass is a bit steep to begin with, but in less than 1.5 km levels off into one of the most spectacular valleys in Kananaskis Country. The walking after this is nothing short of idyllic as you wander through meadow after meadow with stunning peaks all around. Catch a glimpse of the Rae Glacier and, if all goes well, find a secret waterfall along the way.
- Total hiking distance: 7 km
- Elevation Gain: 170 m (560 feet)
- Approximate driving time to trailhead: 90 minutes

Ptarmigan Cirque - Highwood Pass area, Kananaskis Country

- Meeting Times & Locations: Carma House 7:30 AM or Petro-Canada 8:00 AM
- Description: Imagine starting your hike from the top of the highest paved road in Canada! From Highwood Pass, a short but sustained ascent takes you into the stunning alpine environment of Ptarmigan Cirque. Situated on the West Side of Mt Rae, the upper valley not only has great views across to the Little Highwood Valley, there are waterfalls and rocky meadows to explore. Options exist to visit a high barren basin below the summit of Mt Rae.
- Total hiking distance: 4.5 km
- Elevation gain: 225 meters (approximately 750 feet)
- Terrain profile: Sustained climb for 1 km; gentle rolling path in the alpine; steeper, narrow ascent if you opt for the high basin
- Approximate driving time to trailhead: 100 minutes

Meeting Places

Primary Location Wellspring Calgary Carma House: at 1404 Home Road NW

Secondary Location Petro-Canada: Exit onto Highway 22 North toward Cochrane and in 100 meters, take a left into the Petro-Canada service road. Park near the north end where you entered.

Secondary Location Bragg Creek Shopping Centre: Exit Highway 22 on Balsam Ave., pass the Shell gas station, the shopping centre parking lot is on your left.

A Typical Hiking Day

- *Once the group at the Carma House is assembled, you'll car pool out to the Petro-Canada station at the junction of the Trans-Canada Highway and Highway 22. Here the entire group will meet and sign the Association of Canadian Mountain Guide (ACMG) waiver. The group will then car pool to the trailhead.*
- *At the trailhead, the facilitators will give a brief introduction to the hike by talking about some risk management matters, leader's capabilities, pace, objectives and meditative hiking. The concept of mindfulness and the process of meditative hiking will also be introduced at this time. Throughout the gentle walk, there will be periodic checks from the leaders to ensure that everyone is doing OK. The pace is such that the group is always reasonably close together and conversation is not impeded by having to catch your breath.*
- *Along the way, there will be some discussion about interesting aspects of natural history. As well, we will engage in two or three sessions of meditative hiking. These consist of short stretches of walking in silence, during which you are encouraged to be more deeply enmeshed in your moment to moment sensory experience than in outward conversation.*
- *Lunch is generally held at the hiking objective for the day, but we may stop earlier if the group is hungry. There will also be opportunities to stop for water and snacks along the way. Back at the trailhead, there's a short debrief before heading back home.*
- *Although the hikes are not difficult, you should look carefully at the individual descriptions to help you determine whether the distance, elevation gain and nature of the terrain are appropriate for your physical condition.*

Equipment List

It is important to understand that mountain conditions are often variable. It may be sunny and warm in Calgary, but cool and rainy in the mountains. That's why it's good to be prepared with a bit of extra equipment as outlined in the list below. It's better to have a little extra with you than to be caught unprepared.

- Warm gear: ski hat (toque), sun hat, light gloves/mittens
- Basic clothes: t-shirt, warm shirt, fleece pullover/jacket, rain jacket and pants, hiking pants, shorts
- Footwear: socks, hiking shoes/boots, gaiters
- Day pack: water bottle, sunglasses, sunscreen, toilet paper, food, bug repellent
- Optional gear: collapsible trekking/ski poles, camera and/or binoculars

FAQs: Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Can I bring another person along?** No. This program is only for members of Wellspring Calgary. Anyone participating in this class has to be a member, register and complete all the paperwork.
2. **Can I bring my dog?** Park regulations do not always allow for pets. As well, some people are frightened of dogs and conflicts with wildlife or other pets are possible. Please leave your pet at home.

3. **What time do we meet for the hikes?** 7:30 AM at Carma House or 8:00 AM at the Petro-Canada station at the junction of Highways 1 and 22.
4. **What if I have to be home at a certain time?** Return times are extremely variable. You may get home later afternoon from some of the hikes that are closer to Calgary, but this may be early evening for ones that are further away. Weather, group pace and unforeseen situations preclude us from guaranteeing a specific return time. If you have an important appointment to make, consider carefully before joining us on the hike.
5. **I'm a slow hiker. What if I can't keep up?** Members of hiking groups often have widely differing physical abilities. We pace our hikes such that most people who would consider going hiking in the first place would be able to reach the objective without physical hardship. If a participant decides that he/she is unable to reach the day's objective, one of the facilitators can stay with that person or escort him/her back to the trailhead.
6. **What happens if the weather is really bad on the morning of the hike?** Conditions in the mountains may be different than Calgary. It will be up to the facilitators to determine whether the hike that day will be cancelled or the destination will be changed. If you choose not to come or are concerned by the weather, please contact one of the facilitators by 7:30 AM at the cell numbers provided to you.
7. **How much food should I bring?** Bring a reasonable lunch for your particular nutritional needs, along with some snack items that can be used to boost your energy along the way. As well, bring at least one liter of water; more if you tend to get thirsty on exertion.
8. **Are bears an issue?** Many of our hikes are into areas where bears exist. However, there has never been a recorded incident of a bear encounter with groups of four or more people. In the unlikely event of a bear encounter, facilitators are equipped with bear spray to use as a last resort. As well, trail reports are checked for reports of recent wildlife activity.
9. **Do we reimburse drivers for gas?** If car-pooling, check with the driver. It is polite to share the cost of gas.
10. **Why is there a limit to the number of participants on any given hike?** As an ACMG Guide, I operate under land access permits for Kananaskis Country and the Mountain National Parks. These permits have regulations around the numbers that may go on commercially guided hikes. The limits are 12 for National parks and 13 for most trails in K-Country.
11. **Do I have to carry a pack?** Yes. You will need to bring along food, water, a rain jacket and anything else from the equipment list that you think will be useful. The best way to carry these items is in a two-strap backpack.
12. **Is it OK to hike in running shoes?** Running shoes are the minimum acceptable kind of footwear. You will be much better off with a supportive shoe or boot with an aggressive sole for traction. Street shoes or floppy runners are recipes for ankle injuries.
13. **Do the facilitators like chocolate?** Yes!!!!!!