

Frequently Asked Questions

Yamnuska / Îyâ Mnathka Project

Bow Valley Wildland Provincial Park

Where is Mount Yamnuska?

Mount Yamnuska is located in Bow Valley Wildland Provincial Park at the most easterly point of the Bow Valley, accessed off Highway 1A. The mountain features a beautiful south facing cliff wall that stands over 360 m in height and provides hiking, scrambling and climbing opportunities.

What is the history behind the Indigenous name?

The story about the history of this place comes for Îyârhe which means 'mountain people' now called Stoney Nakoda Nation. Stoney Nakoda Nation call this place Îyâ Mnathka or E-Yamnuska which means 'flat-faced' mountain.

What is the Yamnuska / Îyâ Mnathka Project?

Alberta Parks is upgrading sanctioned trails and constructing a new trail on the mountain including:

- Main East Trail - Upgrade to Raven's End. Decommission all other unsanctioned routes.
- Main West Trail - Upgrade to the bottom of the scree slope.
- Climber's Access Trail - Upgrade to the base of Yamnuska Cliffs.
- New West Col Descent Trail - Construct a new descent trail that connects the West col to the bottom of the scree slope and the Main West Trail.
- Scramble Route - Install directional wayfinding signage.

Why is Alberta Parks working on Yamnuska / Îyâ Mnathka?

Over the years, Yamnuska / Îyâ Mnathka has increased in popularity with hikers and scramblers. With the increase of visitation, Kananaskis Public Safety and Conservation Officers are consistently responding to over 50 rescue calls/year. Public safety incidents include lost or exhausted hikers, minor injuries, life-threatening and life-altering injuries, and fatalities. This high number of public safety calls on one mountain is straining limited resources.

By upgrading the existing mountain trails, increasing wayfinding signage on the scramblers route and constructing a new descent trail off the West col, Alberta Parks is striving to reduce the number of public safety incidents on the mountain.

In addition, many of the sanctioned and unsanctioned trails on the mountain have become eroded. Trail upgrades include fixing the trail tread, addressing drainage issues, avoiding routing near Whitebark Pine (a federally listed species at risk) and decommissioning all informal spur trails.

Why is Alberta Parks closing the entire mountain?

To support trail construction activities, Alberta Parks is closing all access to Yamnuska / Îyâ Mnathka for the following reasons:

- To reduce danger to hikers, scramblers and climbers as contractors work on the mountain including falling trees, moving heavy equipment around sloped terrain, long-lining heavy helicopter loads, and dislodging rocks.
- The contractor needs to be safe from public moving around the mountain potentially dislodging rocks onto workers.
- It is more time and cost effective. The contractor needs to be able to work efficiently without keeping track of the public in the area. Alberta Parks wants to complete the project as efficiently as possible.

Conservation Officers will enforce the area closure under the *Provincial Parks Act*.

What does the area closure include?

The area closure includes:

- The trailhead parking lot.
- All access and all trails, routes and climbs on the mountain.
- The scramble route and the hiking trail accessing the east and west sides of the mountain.
- The climbers access trail to the base of the mountain.
- The Yamnuska Cliffs, Yamnuska Bluffs and Big Choss bouldering.
- Access from the Yamnuska Day Use (parking lot) to CMC valley.
- Access to the mountain from Goat Buttress and CMC Valley.

Can I access the mountain from other areas including the quarry, Big Choss, CMC Valley or Loder Peak/Goat Buttress?

No. Parks is enacting a full mountain closure to support the Yamnuska / Îyâ Mnathka Project. Access from the parking lot and all other areas that hikers, scramblers and climbers may think to access the peak, are closed.

The mountain is fully closed to all recreationalists for the duration of construction.

Conservation Officers will enforce the area closure under the *Provincial Parks Act*.

Can I walk cross country, bushwack or hike some informal route to get on the mountain?

No. Parks is enacting a full mountain closure to support the Yamnuska / Îyâ Mnathka Project. Access from the parking lot and all other areas that hikers, scramblers and climbers may think to access the peak, are closed.

The mountain is fully closed to all recreationalists for the duration of construction.

Conservation Officers will enforce the area closure under the *Provincial Parks Act*.

How long will construction take?

Construction is tentatively scheduled to start at the end of May and continue to November 2021. Alberta Parks will update the final schedule on www.albertaparks.ca/advisories. The full mountain closure will be in effect until construction is complete.

Why can't the contractor work on either the west or east side so the alternate can stay open?

The contractor will have more than one crew working on the mountain in different areas. Closing and opening various sections of trails or providing reroutes is costly, time consuming and inefficient.

To support completing this project in 2021, allowing access to some areas of the mountain is not feasible.

What happens if I get caught in the closure?

If the contractor encounters you in the closure, they must stop work. After making note of your description, they will notify other crews working on the mountain, then notify a Conservation Officer through Kananaskis Emergency Services, that you are in the closure. Conservation Officers will charge anyone found in the closure.

To support completing this project in 2021, stay out of the closure and let the contractor finish the project without getting in their way.

Why can't I have access to the Yamnuska Bluffs?

The Yamnuska Day Use (parking lot) will be closed during construction. The trail to the turn-off to Yamnuska Bluffs is being upgraded and will be under construction. Access to the bluffs via the quarry road is trespassing.

Why can't I have access to the Big Choss bouldering?

All these locations pose safety threats to the contractor and vice versa. Closing the entire mountain is the most efficient way to complete this project in 2021.

Can I walk cross-country east of the park boundary to access CMC valley?

The land east of Yamnuska / Îyâ Mnathka and Bow Valley Wildland Provincial Park is Stoney Nakoda Nation reservation land. Please do not access any area on or behind the mountain through reservation land. You would be trespassing.