

## **Boulton Creek Trail**

Welcome to the Boulton Creek Trail in Kananaskis Country. Take this guide with you to help you enjoy your walk. At each numbered stop, open the booklet for some exciting discoveries about the past of Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. This trail is almost 5 km return — a walk of about an hour.

### **Voices from the Past**

**(Stop 1)** The Kananaskis valley has a rich human heritage that stretches back to a time when the mountain glaciers were just receding.

Listen to some of the voices of Kananaskis past: chants of prehistoric people ... hoofbeats of bison ... hunting and battle cries of Stoney Indians ... explorers urging their horses through the highcountry passes ... echoes of the loggers' songs ... the roar of dynamite breaking rock for the dams on the Kananaskis Lakes.

Today, you are likely to hear the sound of muted conversation around a glowing campfire, since the valley has become a popular destination for campers.

Many voices speak from the past in Kananaskis, as the valley has been used in many ways. Hikers, like you, who come to enjoy the wilderness, can add their voices to the local story.

As you stroll through the woods to the next stop, take an imaginary journey back to the time when man's footsteps had not yet been heard.

### **The Ancient Land**

**(Stop 2)** You are now standing on the banks of an ancient glacial stream. This stream course was carved during the ice age, when rivers were swollen by water from melting glaciers. Boulton Creek occupies only a small part of the original channel.

Ice filled the valley many times and, for thousands of years, the climate was too cold for most plants and animals to survive.

About 10,000 years ago, the climate warmed and the glaciers began to melt. Gradually, plants and animals returned to this valley through the low mountain passes and followed the receding glacier up the Kananaskis Valley.

The first humans were soon to arrive in the valley. The 'spirit' of one of these people awaits you at the next stop.

### **Man Arrives**

**(Stop 3)** Eight thousand years ago ... A man crouches here, carefully chipping a small flake of stone. As the tiny chips of rock fly through the air, the jagged point of a spear takes form.

This man is one of the earliest inhabitants of the Kananaskis valley. His people are hunters and gatherers who come here in summer when game is plentiful and the berries are ripe. With the coming of winter they will follow migrating elk and bison back to more sheltered areas in the lower Kananaskis valley.

Artifacts, such as the rock flakes which have been found at this site, tell us about the activities of these early people.

They also tell us that many rock materials used for tool-making were locally acquired. The grassy clearing between the first and second stops on this trail was an important work area for producing spear points and tools.

Few marks were left on the land by these early people, or by the peoples who, at various times over the following thousands of years, lived and hunted throughout this valley.

## **Bison and Man**

**(Stop 4)** This land has changed: the dense tree cover that surrounds you may not have been here 5,000 years ago.

As the climate grew warmer and dryer, grasses invaded the valley, providing a larger range for wildlife. A form of wood bison, larger than its plains relative, roamed to the summits of the mountain passes.

At this time, man was still dependent upon stone-tipped spears to hunt bison and other large animals. These animals provided food, clothing, cooking utensils, and shelter in the form of skin teepees.

Man's dependence on large animals was to continue until the nineteenth century.

## **Wapamathe!**

**(Stop 5)** The voices of many Indian tribes have been heard in the valley: among them, Blackfoot from the plains, Kootenays from over the western passes.

Less than 200 years ago, the Stoney arrived along the eastern slopes of the Rockies. Known to their enemies as the Wapamathe or "throat cutters", the Stoney bravely defended their newly-found hunting grounds.

The bison that the Stoney were dependent upon were disappearing ... probably because of disease, over-hunting, and severe winter conditions. Being nomadic hunters, the Stoney followed the large game to the Kananaskis Lakes during the summers. Whenever possible meat was dried and mixed with fat and berries for use over the winter months.

Soon the white man's trade goods would arrive and the crack of rifles would be heard in the Kananaskis valley.

## **Traders and Explorers**

**(Stop 6)** By the 1850s, trade goods such as steel axes, kettles and guns were common in the Stoney camps. However, because of the warlike Blackfoot nation, the main focus of the white man's fur trade remained to the north. The Stoney trapped some beaver for barter, but their nomadic hunting lifestyle stayed the same.

In 1858 John Palliser rode into the valley. Little was known of the area, and the Palliser expedition was here to look for a pass suitable for road or railway. It was Palliser who named the river "Kananaskis", after a legendary Indian who made a remarkable recovery from an axe blow to the head.

Travel was difficult for the explorers, since deadfall from recent fires blocked many of the trails. Palliser later wrote: "The obstacle which a burnt forest presents to the traveller is of all others the most arduous!"

With axemen clearing the way for the horses, Palliser followed the Kananaskis River to its source, crossing the North Kananaskis Pass into the main ranges of the Rockies.

You can follow part of Palliser's route by taking a pleasant walk along the Kananaskis Canyon Trail about seven kilometres north of here, near Canyon campground.

## **The Railway and a Resource Base**

**(Stop 7)** The route chosen for the Canadian Pacific Railway did not pass through the Kananaskis valley. Instead, the C.P.R. forged through the Bow Valley, crossing the Rockies by the Kicking Horse Pass.

Although the rails had bypassed the Kananaskis, their coming had significance.

The need for a local source of coal to power the steam locomotives prompted a flurry of prospecting activity. Coal was discovered by George Pocaterra about 10 km from here on upper Boulton Creek. However, because of transportation problems and lack of funding, this coal was never mined.

Bustling towns, springing up along the C.P.R. main line, needed raw materials. A major logging camp was set up near the present Eau Claire campground, 25 km to the north of here. This operation also provided lumber for building many of Calgary's earliest homes.

The railway had created both a strong demand for timber and an effective means of transporting it to market from the mill in Calgary. The logging industry flourished for nearly 25 years but began to decline after several major fires in the valley. Follow the trail to the next stop to find out more about forest fires.

## **Forest Fire!**

**(Stop 8)** Imagine this forest on a hot August afternoon: the resinous fragrance of the trees fills the air ... dry pine needles crack underfoot. The sun is hidden by clouds that promise much-needed rain. Suddenly, a bolt of lightning strikes. A tall pine bursts into flames. Soon, a raging fire is sweeping through the forest, jumping from crown to crown of summer-dried trees.

Fire has been a part of life here since prehistoric times. The first written evidence of a lightning fire is from John Palliser's journals of 1858: "... the mountain trees burnt in places so precipitous that no human hand could ever have reached them!"

Some major blazes have been caused by people. The fire that destroyed this forest in 1933 started from a discarded cigarette. It burned in a "V" pattern from an outhouse to engulf the entire Boulton Creek area. Because of forest fire risk, campfires are now allowed only in designated fireplaces in the park.

The lodgepole pine growing around you dates from the 1933 fire. As you continue down the hill to the next stop, you can see the fire-charred wood that resulted from the careless act of one person.

## **Water for People**

**(Stop 9)** The water below you flows from Boulton Creek into the Lower Kananaskis Lake. Downriver from the lake, water has been used to transport logs and to control forest fires in the valley. Today it also generates hydroelectric power.

Calgary's rapidly growing population created a demand for electricity. Generating stations were built below the confluence of the Kananaskis and Bow Rivers, but by the 1930s, the turbines there did not generate enough power to meet Calgary's needs.

The dams on the Kananaskis Lakes were developed to increase the power production of the plants downstream. Generating stations were built at the outlets of Upper Kananaskis Lake and Lower Kananaskis Lake in 1955. These two stations generate 20,000 KW of electricity an hour ... enough electricity to power your home for over a year!

The Kananaskis Lakes serve as an important water reservoir for the people of Alberta. They are also a centre for picnicking, fishing, and other recreational activities.

For a panoramic view of the Upper and Lower Kananaskis Lakes, try the short hike around the Canadian Mount Everest Expedition Trail.

## **The Valley Changes**

**(Stop 10)** The voices of the Kananaskis valley speak of 8,000 years of human activity. Attitudes toward the valley have changed over that time.

Native people depended upon the valley for their very existence: food, shelter and clothing. More recently, the bountiful timber and water resources have been put to use. With improved access, more people have come to enjoy the adventure of the mountains.

The valley has changed over the years and now offers a park visitor centre and modern camping facilities. There are many opportunities for wildland recreation. Hike the backcountry trails and enjoy the full heritage of Peter Lougheed Provincial Park.