

The Rocky Mountains consist of numerous ranges, each adding to the unique alpine beauty of the mountain parks.

The Continental Divide forms 150 miles of the western border of Banff National Park in Alberta and parts of the eastern borders of both Yoho and Kootenay National Parks in British Columbia.

In the interior of Banff National Park are the Sundance, Palliser, Sawback and Fairholme Ranges. Covering an area of 2,564 square miles, Banff is the third-largest national park in Canada. It is situated 80 miles west of Calgary.

Banff and Jasper National Parks meet at the Columbia Icefields. In Jasper a series of ranges run roughly parallel -- the Miette, Jacques and Colin Ranges, with the Desmet Range lying to the north. Jasper, 240 miles west of Edmonton, covers an area of 4,200 square miles.

Within the 507 square miles of Yoho National Park are the Van Horne, Ottertail, Waputik and President Ranges. A total of 28 peaks rise over 10,000 feet within this park. The east park-gate is 25 miles west of Banff.

Bordering Kootenay National Park are the Vermillion, Brisco and Mitchell Ranges. The park lies along the southwestern border of Banff National Park and covers 543 square miles.

In the southeast corner of Alberta, 70 miles from Lethbridge, mountain and prairie meet in Waterton Lakes National Park. The Canadian section of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park covers an area of 203 square miles.

The entire 75-square-mile area of Elk Island National Park is enclosed by a fence. While deer, elk and moose roam at will within the park, two sections isolate herds of plains bison and wood bison from visitors. The park is 30 miles east of Edmonton.

The Northwest Territories and Alberta share Canada's largest national park. Wood Buffalo National Park, 17,300 square miles of forest and open plain, is home to the largest remaining herd of bison in North America and is the only known nesting-ground of the rare whooping crane. Under strict protective measures by Canada and the United States, the whooping crane population has increased to approximately 60 birds.

Saskatchewan's only national park is located 35 miles north of the city of Prince Albert. Covering 1,496 square miles, Prince Albert National Park shows the transition between the northern forest and prairie grassland.

Riding Mountain National Park on the Manitoba Escarpment preserves 1,150 square miles of evergreen and hardwood forests, lakes and a variety of wildlife. It is situated 60 miles north of Brandon.