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Four Canadian parks join World Heritage list

Canada's Rocky Mountains, which encompass four national parks, was designated a World Heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) late in October, at the UNESCO World Heritage Committee meeting in Buenos Aires.

The UNESCO World Heritage list designates cultural and natural properties throughout the world which are considered to be of outstanding universal value. Properties nominated should represent the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history, important ongoing geological processes, biological evolution and human interaction with the natural environment. As well they should contain superior natural phenomena, formations or features or areas of exceptional natural beauty and contain the foremost natural habitats where threatened species of animals or plants of outstanding universal value still survive.

Announcing the designation of the Canadian Rockies World Heritage Site, Environment Minister Suzanne Blais-Grenier said that "about nine million visitors come to the mountain national parks each year to admire a

natural setting of exceptional beauty". She added that "the Canadian Rockies area also provides unparalleled opportunities for experiencing nature and for appreciating the value of conserving Canada's natural heritage".

Canada's four national mountain parks in the Canadian Rockies World Heritage Site, Banff, Jasper, Yoho and Kootenay, are in Alberta and British Columbia.

First national park

Banff National Park, established in 1885, was the first of its type in Canada. During 1985, Canada is celebrating the one-hundredth anniversary of the establishment of Banff and the beginning of Canada's system of national parks. Located 130 kilometres west of Calgary, Alberta, on the Trans-Canada Highway, Banff attracts more than three million visitors each year. It is noted for its breathtaking scenery and excellent facilities.

Visitors can travel to the top of 2 500-metre mountains in gondolas, from where they can see the sandstone statuary, mineral hot springs, glaciers, lakes the colour of jade and milky blue, and an extensive variety of wildlife and wilderness.



Mary Lake in Yoho National Park, which lies in the heart of the Rocky Mountains.



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