

Uncover the Enchanting Icefields Parkway: Your Essential Driving Guide with Maxine Hong Kingston

Prepare to be captivated as you embark on an unforgettable journey along the Icefields Parkway, a 232-kilometer stretch of breathtaking beauty that connects Banff and Jasper National Parks in the Canadian Rockies. As your trusted companion, Maxine Hong Kingston's insightful driving guide will unveil hidden gems, unveil the grandeur of towering peaks, and immerse you in the rich history and culture of this awe-inspiring destination.



Icefields Parkway Driving Guide by Maxine Hong Kingston

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 39124 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 170 pages
Lending	: Enabled



The Route

The Icefields Parkway winds its way through a breathtaking tapestry of landscapes, each offering a unique and unforgettable experience.

- **Lake Louise to Banff:** Embark on your adventure from the picturesque shores of Lake Louise, renowned for its turquoise waters

and stunning mountain backdrop. As you drive east, marvel at the towering peaks of the Canadian Rockies and the pristine beauty of Bow Valley.

- **Castle Junction to Lake Louise:** This section of the parkway is a photographer's paradise, with countless opportunities to capture iconic images of towering peaks, emerald-green lakes, and cascading waterfalls.
- **Jasper to Castle Junction:** As you head north, the scenery transforms into a rugged and wild landscape, characterized by towering mountains, vast glaciers, and abundant wildlife. Don't miss the breathtaking views from the Athabasca Glacier, a massive ice field that is easily accessible.
- **Banff to Jasper:** The final stretch of the parkway is equally breathtaking, offering panoramic views of the Canadian Rockies and the chance to spot wildlife such as bears, elk, and bighorn sheep.

Attractions

Along the Icefields Parkway, you'll discover a treasure trove of natural wonders and cultural attractions. Here are just a few highlights:

- **Lake Louise:** Renowned for its vibrant turquoise waters and stunning mountain backdrop, Lake Louise is a must-see destination. Take a scenic stroll along the shoreline, admire the iconic Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, or embark on a tranquil canoe ride.
- **Moraine Lake:** Often referred to as the "Gem of the Rockies," Moraine Lake is a breathtaking sight. Its crystal-clear waters reflect the surrounding mountains, creating a picture-perfect landscape.

- **Emerald Lake:** Nestled in the heart of Yoho National Park, Emerald Lake is another stunning alpine lake. Take a leisurely hike around the lake's perimeter or rent a canoe to explore its tranquil waters.
- **Takakkaw Falls:** Located in Yoho National Park, Takakkaw Falls is one of Canada's highest waterfalls. Admire the thunderous cascade from various viewpoints or take the challenging hike to the base of the falls.
- **Columbia Icefield:** The Icefields Parkway takes its name from the vast Columbia Icefield, one of the largest non-polar ice fields in the world. Visit the Athabasca Glacier, an accessible portion of the ice field, and take a guided tour to witness its awe-inspiring beauty.
- **Athabasca Falls:** This powerful waterfall is a testament to the raw power of nature. Walk along the short trail to the base of the falls and feel the spray of the cascading water.
- **Peyto Lake:** Perched high above the Bow Valley, Peyto Lake is renowned for its vibrant turquoise waters. Take a short hike to the viewpoint and capture breathtaking panoramic shots.

Wildlife

The Icefields Parkway is home to an abundance of wildlife. Keep your eyes peeled for:

- **Grizzly bears:** These powerful predators can be spotted throughout the parkway, particularly in the less-visited areas. Take precautions and store your food properly to avoid encounters.
- **Black bears:** More common than their grizzly counterparts, black bears are often seen foraging for food. They are generally less

aggressive but still need to be treated with respect.

- **Elk:** Large herds of elk can be seen grazing in the meadows and forests along the parkway. Witness their majestic antlers and impressive size.
- **Bighorn sheep:** These agile climbers can be found on the rocky slopes and cliffs. Observe their sure-footedness and admire their distinctive horns.
- **Marmots:** These playful rodents are often seen scampering around rocks and meadows. Their comical antics and loud whistles will surely entertain.
- **Golden eagles:** The sky above the Icefields Parkway is often graced by the presence of golden eagles. Watch them soar effortlessly and marvel at their impressive wingspans.

Accommodations

The Icefields Parkway offers a range of accommodations to suit all budgets and preferences. Here are some recommended options:

- **Lake Louise:** For a luxurious stay, consider the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, nestled on the shores of the iconic lake. For a more budget-friendly option, try the HI Lake Louise Alpine Centre, a cozy hostel with a welcoming atmosphere.
- **Banff:** The Banff Springs Hotel is a historic landmark offering a grand and comfortable stay. For a more affordable choice, check out the Banff International Hostel, known for its friendly staff and lively atmosphere.

- **Jasper:** The Jasper Park Lodge is a rustic yet elegant resort situated within Jasper National Park. For a more economical option, consider the HI Jasper Alpine Club, a cozy hostel with a convenient location.

Tips for Driving the Icefields Parkway

To make the most of your driving experience along the Icefields Parkway, here are some helpful tips:

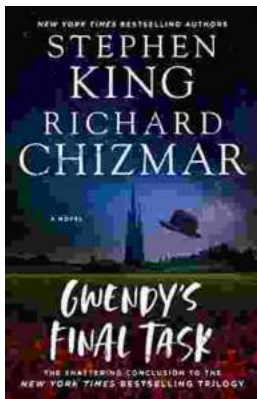
- **Plan ahead:** Research the parkway and the attractions you want to visit. Book accommodations and tours in advance, especially during peak season.
- **Allow plenty of time:** The Icefields Parkway is a long and winding road, so give yourself ample time to drive and explore. Plan for frequent stops to admire the scenery and take photographs.
- **Be prepared for changing weather:** The weather in the Canadian Rockies can be unpredictable, so come prepared for sunshine, rain, and snow. Pack appropriate clothing and keep an eye on the weather forecast.
- **Obey speed limits:** The speed limits along the Icefields Parkway are strictly enforced for safety reasons. Adhere to the posted limits and be mindful of wildlife crossing the road.
- **Pull over for wildlife:** Wildlife is abundant along the parkway, so be prepared to pull over and let animals cross the road safely. Never approach or feed wildlife.
- **Respect the environment:** The Icefields Parkway is a pristine wilderness area. Pack out what you pack in and dispose of garbage properly. Help preserve the beauty of this special place.



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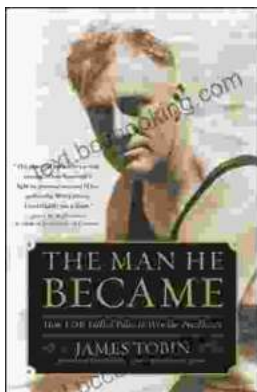
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