

Winter Recreation In The Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks: Pilot Study

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According to Canadian Tourism Commission studies, the Rocky Mountains have one of the highest rates of participation in winter outdoor activities. Despite the fact that Canadian Rocky Mountain National Parks are world renowned as a winter playground, there are few studies on patterns of winter recreation. The objective of this research is to explore the current state of winter recreation in Banff, Yoho and Kootenay National Parks by taking a closer look at cross-country skiing, backcountry skiing and ice climbing. Both qualitative (in-depth interviews) and quantitative (trail counters and a paper-based intercept survey) approaches were taken to better understand visitor demographic information, visitor experience and motivations for participation, as well as determine patterns of visitor use. The study found a distinct difference in demographic characteristics and preferences between the three main user groups (cross-country skiers, backcountry skiers and ice climbers). These results are further discussed in relation to implications for park managers.