

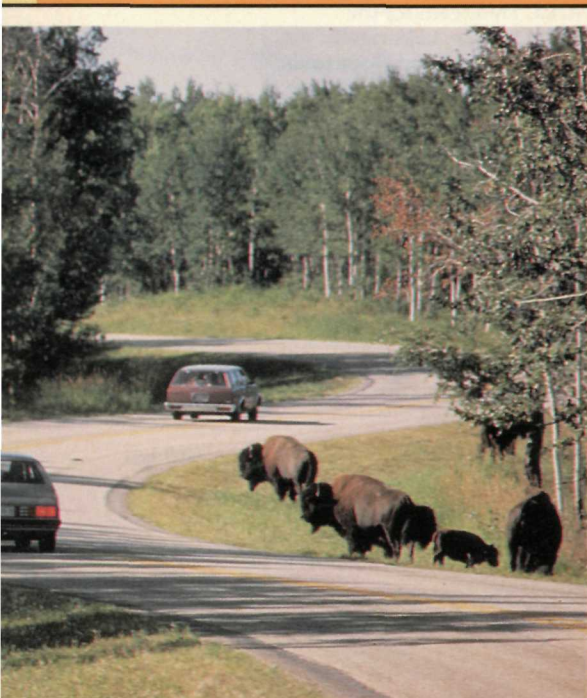


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# ELK ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

Alberta



## Elk Island National Park

Elk Island National Park is surrounded by grain fields, pastures, industries, and towns, but within its boundaries lie a trace of what was once natural to the Beaver Hills — forests and meadowlands, wandering herds of elk and bison, quiet lakes and beaver ponds. That's why Elk Park was renamed Elk Island in the early 1900s — it's an island of nature in the landscape of man.

Elk Island was Canada's first federal wildlife sanctuary for the elk. In 1906, the park was set aside to preserve a herd of 20 native elk that roamed the area. Since then, the park's rich habitat has protected generations of rare, threatened, and endangered species, including the wood bison, the plains bison, and, most recently, the trumpeter swan.

The park is small — only 195 square kilometres — but its low, rolling, aspen covered hills and numerous ponds provide a haven for North America's largest native mammal, the wood bison, as well as the world's smallest flowering plant, the wolffia. Elk Island National Park is one of a handful of prairie parks that



preserve the remaining 20% of natural aspen parkland in Canada.

Located 45 kilometres east of Edmonton, Elk Island National Park is reached by Hwy 16 from the south and Highway 15 from the north. The park is open year-round and offers a variety of services, including interpretive programs, camping areas, more than 100 km of trails, a nine-hole golf course, and other visitor facilities.

We hope that you will enjoy and respect this small, but important, part of Canada's natural heritage.

## Where to Stay

- Camping** is limited to a two-week stay in either of two main areas in the park:
- Sandy Beach Campground** in the Astotin Recreation Area is a 112-site semi-served campground available on a first-come, first-served basis. The campground has showers.
- Oster Lake Group Tenting Area**, a more primitive campground for organized non-profit or educational

groups, is available by reservation. Make your reservations at the south entrance gate (922-5833) during the summer season or at the park administration building.

The Oster Lake Group Tenting Area may also be used by hikers, skiers, and snowshoers. When tenting at Oster Lake, please register at the information centre (summer season) or at the park administration building.

- Group Camping** sites are also available in the Astotin Recreation Area. A 24-site area is geared to self-contained, organized groups, and services are limited. For information and reservations call Visitor Services at (403) 992-6380.

- Winter Camping** is available in the Astotin Recreation Area by the boat launch during late autumn, winter, and early spring.

**Camping is not permitted on the islands of Astotin Lake.**

- Commercial accommodation** is available in Edmonton and Sherwood Park, 45 km west of the south park entrance along Highway 16; in Fort Saskatchewan, 25 km west; and in Lamont, 5 km north of the park boundary.

## Activities

### Year Round Activities

**Wildlife watching:** Elk Island National Park is home to 44 different kinds of mammals, including wapiti (elk), moose, white-tailed deer, coyotes, beavers, muskrats, and porcupines. The most noticeable of the park's mammals are the two different sub-species of bison. Wood bison are found in an area south of Highway 16, and the smaller plains bison may be seen north of the highway. In the summer, a display herd of plains bison can be viewed from your car in a paddock located off the parkway, 2.6 km north of Highway 16.

**Bird watching:** The park is crossed by major migratory flyways. About 230 species of birds have been identified in Elk Island National Park, and most of them nest here. Year round residents include hairy, downy, and pileated



woodpeckers, ruffed grouse, blue jays, magpies, and black-capped and boreal chickadees. Winter visitors include pine grosbeaks, common and hoary redpolls, and, occasionally, Bohemian waxwings, crossbills, evening grosbeaks, rosy finches, and northern shrikes. A viewing platform, telescope, and exhibits on bird identification are located at the Tawayik Lake picnic area.

**Flora:** Elk Island National Park's dominant tree is the trembling aspen, but balsam poplar, white and black spruce, tamarack, and white birch may also be found. Grass and sedge meadows contain numerous prairie plants whose flowers bloom from late June to late August. Some 450 types of shrubs and herbaceous plants find refuge at the national park, including horsetails, marigolds, pondweeds, duckweeds, willows, hazel nuts, currants, cinquefoils, violets, buffalo berries, honeysuckles, orchids, and asters.

- Astotin Interpretive Centre:** Located in the Astotin Recreation Area, the centre is open year-round. It features a lobby display, an information desk, and filmed or live interpretive programs to help you learn more about Elk Island National Park. For more specific information on the centre's hours and programs, please phone 992-6392.

## Summer Activities

A summer interpretive program schedule advertises events well in advance. For details, contact park staff at the information centre, the Astotin Interpretive Centre, the south and north entrance gates, or the park administration building on the west shore of Astotin Lake.

- Hiking and walking:** A variety of trails allow you to explore the park and view its wildlife. Some sections of the trails at Elk Island National Park may be wet and muddy because of beaver activity or seasonal flooding. Be sure to wear appropriate footwear and to stay on the trails. Remember — **You Are In Bison Country.**

For a relaxing walk, try the Amisk Wuche, Lakeshore, and Lakeview interpretive trails, and the disabled accessible Shoreline Trail along the south shore of Astotin Lake.

- Picnicking:** Picnic facilities are located at Sandy Beach, Beaver Bay (along the Shoreline Trail), Moss Lake, and Tawayik Lake. Group picnic facilities are located in the Astotin Recreation Area.

- Trail bicycling:** Trails are **not** suitable for trail bicycles. For more information contact park staff.

- Disabled Access:** A number of facilities in Elk Island National Park are accessible to physically disabled park visitors. Accessible washrooms are available at the information centre, the administration building, the Astotin Interpretive Centre, the snack bar concession, and the Sandy Beach Campground. The Shoreline Trail is paved and accessible to the disabled, but assistance may be required on some of the trail's steeper inclines.

- Swimming:** Swimming is **not** recommended. It is natural for lakes such as Astotin to have algae and leech populations which can make swimming unpleasant. A change house and cold outdoor showers are available for sunbathers at Sandy Beach.

- Fishing:** Because the park's lakes and ponds support only minnows and sticklebacks, fishing is not permitted.

- Boating:** Canoes, rowboats, sailboats, and sailboards are allowed only on Astotin Lake. Motorized boats (including electric motors) are prohibited in the park. A

boat launch and dock are located at the north end of the Astotin Recreation Area.

- Golfing:** Elk Island National Park boasts a fine nine-hole golf course with licensed dining facilities and a pro-shop. For more information and tee off times, call 998-3161.

- Dining:** During the summer, light meals are available at the golf course clubhouse and the beach snack bar concession. The concession also offers limited supplies for campers.

- Playgrounds:** There are playgrounds in the Astotin Recreation Area near the ball diamonds, the group picnic area, and in the campground.

**Baseball diamonds:** The two baseball diamonds in the Astotin Recreation Area are available for casual play or for fun ball tournaments. Reservations are required for tournaments.

- Ukrainian Pioneer Home:** Ukrainian clothing, historic photos, and artifacts are displayed under the thatched roof of this replica of a Ukrainian settler's home of the early part of the century. The home is open for public viewing, free of charge, from the Victoria Day weekend to Labour Day (closed Wednesdays and Thursdays).

## Winter Activities

- Skiing and snowshoeing:** are ideal ways to enjoy Elk Island National Park and its wildlife. Several well-marked ski trails are maintained in the park, and the Lakeview and Amisk Wuche trails can be used for snowshoeing.





## Park Story

The Beaver Hills region was first settled by the Sarcee and Plains Cree Indians. These natives trapped beaver and hunted bison and elk, as did the European settlers who followed. By the late 1800s the animals were trapped and hunted to the verge of extinction, and the Indians were forced to seek sustenance elsewhere.

The concern of the remaining local residents was aroused by the near-extinction of the animals in the area. The last major elk herd known to exist in Alberta, outside the mountain region, inhabited the Beaver Hills, and the settlers were determined to protect them.

The first step toward conservation of the elk in the Beaver Hills was the creation of a federal timber reserve in 1899. Five local conservationists, named Lees, Walker, Carscadden, Cooper, and Simmons, then petitioned the federal government to set aside an elk preserve in the area. In 1906, their efforts were rewarded with the establishment of Elk Park, a 41 square kilometre preserve containing at least 20 elk.

In 1907, the federal government purchased 716 head of plains bison from the Pablo and Allard herd on the Flathead Indian Reserve in Montana. The government planned to establish the animals on a national range in Wainwright, but the fence wasn't finished at the newly created Buffalo National Park, so 400 head of plains bison were shipped to Elk Park. They remained for two years before being rounded up to complete their journey to Wainwright. During this round up, about 50 bison evaded capture and remained in Elk Park. Those animals became the nucleus of today's park herd.

Elk Park was renamed Elk Island, and became a dominion park in 1913 and a national park in 1930. It continued to play an important role in the preservation of dwindling wildlife species, and as wildlife populations grew, so did the park's area. Land was added in 1922, 1947, 1957, and 1978.

Today, Elk Island National Park has grown to a 195 square kilometre sanctuary for 44 kinds of mammals, including moose, elk, deer, lynx, beaver, and coyote. The park is home to Canada's largest herd of plains bison, and a



small herd of rare wood bison. Elk Island's fire-formed mosaic of aspen and mixed-wood forests, meadows, and wetlands are also a habitat for more than 230 bird species including ducks, gulls, terns, grebes, loons, owls, flycatchers, woodpeckers, warblers, and swallows.

### Canadian Parks Service Radio

Elk Island National Park operates a low-power radio station at 1540 AM. The station presents taped messages featuring park information and highlights of seasonal activities.

### Topography

Elk Island National Park is in the northern section of Alberta's Beaver Hills, which rise 30 to 60 metres above the surrounding plains. The landscape, known as dead-ice moraine, was created at the end of the last ice-age. While the main glacier retreated to the northeast, ice in the Beaver Hills melted in place. The deposits of glacial debris that were left behind formed a landscape characterized by hills, hollows, and poorly-developed drainage patterns.

## Remember — You Are In Bison Country

Bison are wild animals. Although they may look docile, they are dangerous, unpredictable, and may charge without warning. Please read these tips so that the largest native land mammals in North America can be seen and appreciated in safety.

- Stay in your vehicle and do not approach bison on foot.
- Keep at least 50 to 75 metres away from bison at all times.
- During the rut (late July to late August) bulls are aggressive and even more dangerous than usual.
- Avoid approaching bison in open meadows or clearings. If a bison has no escape route into the trees it may charge you.
- If you encounter bison while hiking, don't try to scare them away, don't yell at them, and don't approach them. Walk around the animals at a safe distance and always keep an eye on them.
- Never enter a herd of bison or get between two animals, especially a cow and its calf.



## Park Regulations and Information

- Fires:** Only designated fireplaces can be used. If you see an untended fire, please extinguish it. If it is out of control, report it to park staff immediately.
- Pets:** We do not recommend bringing pets to any national park. Because of the potential conflict with bison, dogs are not allowed on park trails. They must be on a leash at all times when in picnic areas, campgrounds, or at the Astotin Recreation Area.
- Water:** Surface water in Elk Island National Park is stagnant and not suitable for drinking unless boiled for several minutes. Take along an adequate supply of water when hiking or skiing the trails.
- Please do not litter.**

### For More Information

Information about all aspects of the park can be obtained at the information centre (0.8 kilometres north of Highway 16) and at the south and north entrance gates from late spring until early September.

Information is available year-round at the park administration building (992-6380) during regular office hours on weekdays, at the Astotin Interpretive Centre in the Astotin Recreation Area (992-6392), or from park staff.

Information is also available by writing to:

The Superintendent,  
Elk Island National Park,  
R.R. #1, Site 4,  
Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, T8L 2N7.



### In the Event of an Emergency

Please obtain the details of the incident and convey them immediately to a park warden or to park staff. Information on the nature of the accident, injury or fire, the exact location, the number of people involved, and any emergency action taken will help us respond to the emergency.

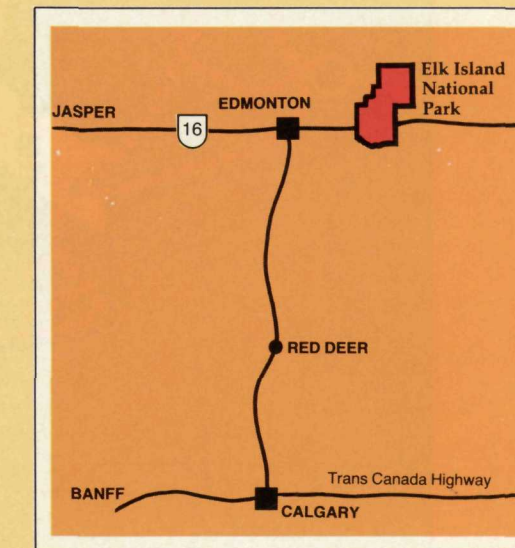
Emergency telephones are located near the Astotin Interpretive Centre, the beach snack bar concession in the Astotin Recreation Area, and the information centre (0.8 km north of Highway 16).

All park wardens are certified first aid attendants.

### Park Telephone Numbers

Duty Warden	
(Taped message after hours)	992-6389
Administration Building	992-6380
R.C.M.P. Fort Saskatchewan	998-3737
Sherwood Park	467-7741
Edmonton	477-9330
Hospital Fort Saskatchewan	998-2256
Lamont	895-2211
Information Centre	992-5790
Astotin Interpretive Centre	992-6392
Elk Island Info-Line (Taped hiking/skiing trail information)	922-5790
Sandy Beach Campground	992-2653
Golf Course	998-3161

Elk Island National Park is only 440 km from Banff, 340 km from Calgary and only 45 km east of Edmonton along Highway 16.



*"Come to the Island"*

*Aussi disponible en français*

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Canada



# Guide to ELK ISLAND NATIONAL PARK



## TRAILS OF ELK ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

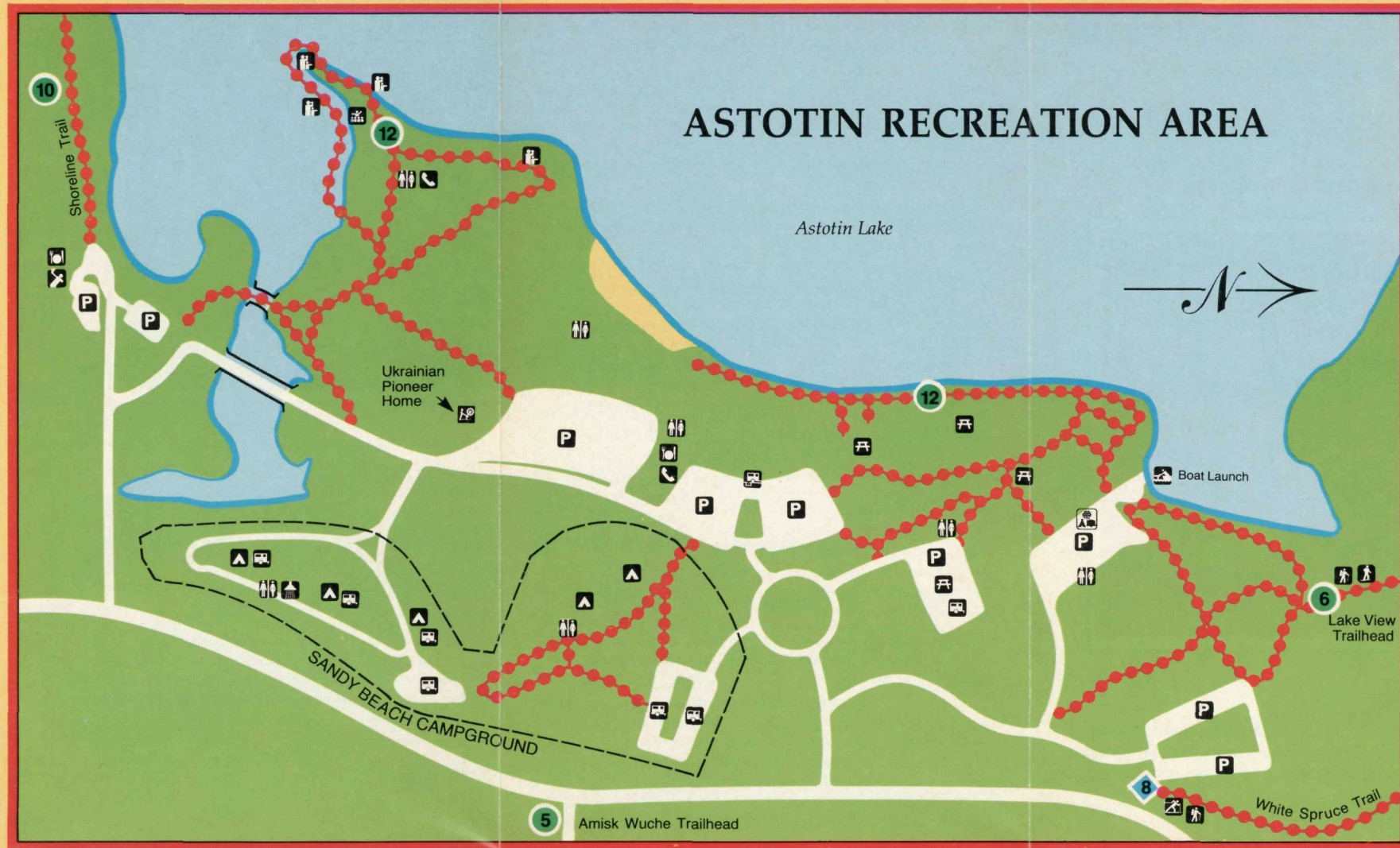
- |                          |                             |   |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1 Hayburger (12.1 km)    | 5 Amisk Wuche (2.5 km)      | 9 Tawayik Lake (16.8 km)  |
| 2 Simmon's Loop (4.6 km) | 6 Lakeview (3.3 km)         | 10 Shoreline (6 km return)  |
| 3 Shirley Lake (12.6 km) | 7 Beaver Pond (3.5 km)      | 11 Wood Bison (18.6 km)   |
| 4 Moss Lake (13 km)      | 8 White Spruce (9.7/7.6 km) | 12 Point of Good Hope/Living Waters/Boardwalk/Lake Shore (1.4 km) |

### LEGEND

- |  |                |  |                                     |
|--|----------------|--|-------------------------------------|
|  | Park Boundary  |  | Camping                             |
|  | Lakes & Rivers |  | Group Tenting                       |
|  | Trails         |  | Winter Camping                      |
|  | Trails         |  | Accommodation                       |
|  | Viewpoint      |  | Exhibit                             |
|  |                |  | Astotin Interpretive Centre/Theatre |
|  |                |  | Hiking                              |
|  |                |  | Picnic                              |
|  |                |  | Bicycle Trail                       |
|  |                |  | Disabled Access                     |
|  |                |  | No Swimming                         |
|  |                |  | No Fishing                          |
|  |                |  | Golf                                |
|  |                |  | Restaurant                          |
|  |                |  | Playground                          |
|  |                |  | Museum                              |
|  |                |  | Cross Country Ski Trail             |
|  |                |  | Snowshoe Trail                      |
|  |                |  | Information                         |
|  |                |  | Telephone                           |

### CROSS COUNTRY SKI DIFFICULTY LEVELS

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
|  | Easy      |
|  | Moderate  |
|  | Difficult |



## POINTS OF INTEREST

This guide will help you explore and enjoy Elk Island National Park

Distance from Highway 16	POINTS OF INTEREST NORTH OF HIGHWAY 16	Distance from North Gate	Distance from Highway 16	POINTS OF INTEREST NORTH OF HIGHWAY 16	Distance from North Gate
A 0.0 km	HIGHWAY 16	19.5 km	I 14.0 km	ASTOTIN RECREATION AREA	5.5 km
B 0.8 km	INFORMATION CENTRE	18.7 km	J 14.4 km	AMISK WUCHE TRAILHEAD	5.1 km
	Drop into the information centre for helpful publications, trail conditions, directions, and schedules of interpretive events.		K 16.3 km	BEAVER POND TRAILHEAD	1.9 km
C 1.5 km	SOUTH ENTRANCE GATE	18.0 km	L 19.5 km	NORTH ENTRANCE GATE	0.2 km
D 2.6 km	BISON PADDOCK	16.9 km		LAMONT	
E 4.7 km	OSTER TRAIL	14.8 km		The town of Lamont is located 5 km north of the park, and provides a number of services for the park visitor. The nearest hospital is located here.	
	A secondary road leads to a secluded picnic area at Tawayik Lake, a good area for bird watching. The Tawayik Lake Trail begins here. The road also allows access to the Oster Lake Group Tenting Area. The narrows between Little Tawayik and Tawayik Lake are impassable until freeze-up.				
F 6.7 km	SHIRLEY LAKE TRAILHEAD	12.8 km			
	The 12.6 km Shirley Lake Trail and the 4.6 km Simmons Loop Trail begin here.				
G 7.1 km	HAYBURGER TRAILHEAD	12.4 km			
H 11.7 km	MOSS LAKE TRAILHEAD AND PICNIC AREA	7.8 km			
	The location of a small secluded picnic area, and the trailhead for the 13 km Moss Lake Trail.				