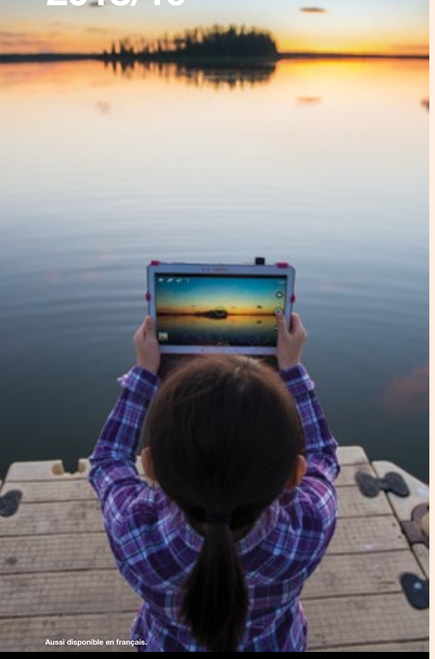
Elk Island National Park

# Visitor Guide and Map 2018/19



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Parks Canada Parcs Canada

Canada

## Top 5 Activities

Elk Island National Park is open year-round; how many of these activities will you try in the winter?

1. **UNFORGETTABLE WILDLIFE**
   Perk your ears and listen for the thundering hooves of bison, moose, and elk as you hike, bike, or drive throughout the park.
2. **SPECTACULAR SKIES**
   Experience seasonal meteor showers, the northern lights, or count the number of stars you see twinkling in the night sky above.
3. **FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND FUN**
   Pack a picnic and head to Astotin Lake for a full day of fun! Paddle the lakes many islands, visit the Astotin Theatre, start a game of tag, or take a short hike for stunning lake views.
4. **CACHE THE EXCITEMENT**
   Pick up the new Guide to Geocaching brochure and challenge yourself to find each of the caches hidden in the park!
5. **A DAY OF DISCOVERY**
   Go behind the scenes of bison conservation and experience Elk Island's 110 year conservation legacy on a scheduled tour. Pick up a seasonal program schedule for tour times.

## Guided Programs

### Enjoy drop-in programming and events FREE with paid park entry

**Programs include:**

- Bison Backstage tours
- Bird watching
- Pemmican making
- Campfire programs
- Pond-dipping
- Winter survival

**ASTOTIN THEATRE**

Stop by the Astotin Theatre in the summer to watch a film, speak with an interpreter, borrow a Discovery Kit, or pick-up an Xplorer book!

**PRIVATE PROGRAMMING**

School groups, organizations, and families can book paid programs throughout the year. Contact einp.info@pc.gc.ca for info.

**Stop by the Visitor Centre or visit parkscanada.gc.ca/elkisland for seasonal program schedules.**

## Discovery Kits

### Pick up a pack to fun

Visit the Astotin Theatre in summer or the Visitor Centre in winter to borrow a free Discovery Kit. These themed backpacks are loaded with tools such as binoculars, animal identification guides, pond dipping kits, trail maps, GPS units and other items to suit your park exploration interests.

**Choose between the:**

- Nature kit
- Pond-dipping kit
- Geocaching kit
- Winter kit

## Geocaching

### Hide and seek

Geocaching is a fun high-tech adventure where participants use a GPS (Global Positioning System) to hunt for containers called "caches."

Caches range from easy finds with vehicle access to challenging half-day finds on longer trails. See if you can locate them all!

**Visit geocaching.com or pick up the Elk Island Guide to Geocaching brochure to find the Elk Island cache clues.**

## Camping

### Enjoy a true wilderness experience less than an hour east of Edmonton

With so much to do, why not spend the night? Share stories around the campfire as the stars in the night sky twinkle above. **Reserve your site today for camping dates between May 19 and October 8, 2018:**

reservation.parkscanada.gc.ca
1-877-737-3783

**ASTOTIN LAKE CAMPGROUND**

With 64 un-serviced sites for **RVs and tenting**, Astotin Lake Campground is the perfect spot for those wanting to escape the city but remain close to the activities at Astotin Lake.

**Campground offers:**

- Potable water
- Flush toilets
- Hot showers
- Picnic shelters
- Firewood provided with fire permit

Want the experience of camping, but don't have the gear you need? **5 oTENTik and 2 Equipped Camping sites are available at Astotin Lake Campground.**

**OSTER LAKE BACKCOUNTRY CAMPGROUND**

This **hike-in only** (6 km) 6 site campground provides a truly unique camping experience on the west shore of Oster Lake.

**Campground offers:**

- Food lockers
- Pit toilets
- Picnic tables
- Fire pits
- Firewood provided with fire permit

**WINTER CAMPING**

Winter camping creates unforgettable memories for those who conquer cool winter conditions. Winter campsites are available at the Astotin Lake campground on a first come, first served basis in the shoulder and winter seasons.

## Contact Information

### Visitor Centre & Gift Shop

780-922-5790
elk.island@pc.gc.ca
parkscanada.gc.ca/elkisland

Follow us on Twitter: @ElkIslandNP

**Parks Canada Campground Reservation Service:**
1-877-737-3783
Reservation.parkscanada.gc.ca

**EMERGENCY**

**Dial 9-1-1** – RCMP, Fire, and Ambulance

**1-877-852-3100** – 24-hour Emergency Parks Canada

**DRIVING DIRECTIONS**

Traveling from Edmonton: Travel east on Highway 16. The park entrance is located on the north side of Highway 16 approximately 35 minutes east of Edmonton.

**Note: The first large Elk Island sign on Highway 16 marks the park boundary. Continue 7 km further east to reach the main park entrance.**

## Save the Date

### Elk Island National Park is home to a number of exciting events every year:

**BISON FESTIVAL –** June 2, 2018
**CANADA DAY –** July 1, 2018
**PARKS DAY –** July 21, 2018
**MILKY WAY DAYS –** September 2, 2018
**FAMILY DAY –** February 18, 2019

**Visit parkscanada.gc.ca/elkisland for event details**

## Hiking

### Explore the park at a slower pace

With over 80 km of trails to explore, your day will be filled with unique and memorable experiences. Watch the busy beaver as it constructs its dam, listen to songbirds sing you a tune, or breathe in the fresh air as you watch the sunset over Astotin Lake. Most trails have parking, viewpoints, washrooms, and garbage facilities. Trail descriptions and locations are listed on the back of this guide.

## Paddling

### Your canoe or kayak is the best seat in the house

Paddling provides you with a unique vantage point; the perfect spot to watch wildlife from a safe distance. Paddling is a great low-impact way to discover the natural wonders of the park.

Bring your own canoe, kayak, or paddleboard or rent one at the Astotin Lake Recreation area.

Remember to wear a PFD at all times and to carry a whistle, rope, and bailing device while on the water.

## Cycling

### Feel the breeze as you pedal through nature

Bring your bike and breath in the fresh air as you cycle along trails or roadways in the park.

**TRAIL RIDING**

Bring your trail bike to tackle loops up to 16.5 km. Experienced riders wanting longer adventures can park at the Tawayik Lake trailhead to access over 25 km of trails.

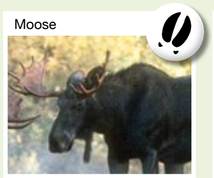
**ROAD CYCLING**

With ample wildlife viewing and slow traffic speeds the paved roads in Elk Island are a great option for road cyclists. Travel the parkway (20 km one-way) or the newly paved administration road (5km one-way).

**CYCLING SAFETY**

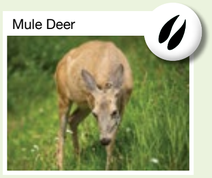
- Fast, quiet travel increases the chance of sudden wildlife encounters. Slow down, stay alert, and make noise.
- Be aware that the shoulders of the parkway are narrow.
- Wear a helmet and high visibility clothing.

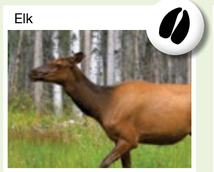
## Wildlife Viewing


Moose

### Wildlife Viewing Tips

- Dawn and dusk are the best times to view wildlife; many animals escape mid-day heat by staying among the trees.
- Slow down on the parkway where bison and coyotes often travel. Better yet, go for a hike!
- Get wet; moose and waterfowl are active in rainy weather.
- Be patient; stop and look around, kick back and wait to see what will wander by.


Mule Deer


Elk

Wolf

Coyote

White-tailed Deer

Black Bear

Beaver

Plains Bison

Wood Bison

**Bring your binoculars: Over 250 species of birds can be spotted in Elk Island through the year!**

### Stay Safe and Protect Wildlife

- **Keep a safe distance from all wildlife.**
- **Do not feed wildlife.**
- **Avoid startling wildlife** by being aware of your surroundings, moving slowly, traveling in groups, and making noise.
- **If you encounter elk, moose, or bison on a trail make yourself known** by singing a song or whistling a tune. Walk slowly around them at a safe distance or return the way you came.
- **Watch for Bison Warning signs.** A raised tail, pawing the ground, or snorting are signs you are too close to bison!
- **Stay in your vehicle if you encounter wildlife near the roadway.** Only pull over if it is safe to do so and you are not blocking the roadway.
- **Follow posted speed limits.**
- **Keep dogs on leash.**

## Stargazing

### Lose yourself in the wonder of a star-filled sky!

Navigate the sky of the Beaver Hills Dark Sky Preserve from Elk Island National Park; without the glow of city lights around you'll see more than you knew existed.

**The Astotin Lake area and the Bison loop are two open areas that are great for looking into the sky above**: lie down on a blanket and experience seasonal meteor showers, the northern lights, or shooting stars.

**STARGAZING TIPS**

1. **Find dark areas with few obstructions.** You want to view as much of the sky as possible.
2. **Use a red light to preserve your night vision.** Standard white lights will disrupt your night vision.
3. **Know when to look.** Season, time, and weather will all impact what you may see in the night sky. Check the weather forecast and search astronomy calendars online.
4. **Use a star chart or app.** Having the proper tools will help you identify constellations.

**Visit parkscanada.gc.ca/elkisland or call 780-922-5790 for details on dark sky programs.**

## Picnicking

### Everything tastes better in the great outdoors

**Choose from one of these scenic areas to enjoy your picnic:**

- Astotin Lake
- Beaver Bay (along Shoreline Trail)
- Tawayik Lake

Be sure to bring matches, paper, and a hatchet if you plan to use a firepit.

## Golfing

Designed by Stanley Thompson, the 9–hole Elk Island Golf Course blends nature and recreation. Enjoy a round or grab refreshments at the clubhouse.

**For more information or to book a tee time visit elkislandgolf.com or call 780-998-3161.**

# Safety **Information**

## You are responsible for your own safety

- **Be self-reliant:** make a trip plan and pack adequate equipment.
- **Share your trip plan with a friend or family member.**
- **Bring a map and stay on trails:** trails are not patrolled.
- **Watch your step** on paths and boardwalks.
- **Be alert and use caution;** wildlife encounters are possible.
- **Check the weather forecast** before coming to the park.
- **Stay hydrated:** bring water and food.
- **Follow posted speed limits.**

**Visit adventuresmart.ca for more safety information and trip planning templates.**

**PET OWNERS**

- **Keep all pets on leash and under control at all times** to protect your pet and wildlife.

# Infrastructure **Update**

## Your fees at work!

To ensure visitors have the best experiences connecting with nature and our history, Parks Canada is renewing structures like trails, fences and parkways in sites across the country.

When visiting or driving through Elk Island National Park, you may encounter one or more construction zones or reduced services while we complete this important work. Please plan ahead before you travel to avoid inconvenience. Visitors are asked to drive with care and obey all signs in and around the affected work areas.

# Winter

## Come play in the snow!

Experience a whole new adventure by visiting Elk Island in the winter. Track wildlife prints through the snow, borrow winter geocaching kits from the Visitor Centre, share stories around a glowing campfire, or enjoy the following winter activities:

**SNOWSHOEING**

Snowshoeing is a magical way to explore snow-covered trails. Stomp over snow on park trails or blaze your own path in the Bison Loop or on Astotin Lake. Snowshoe rentals are available from the Visitor Centre.

**SKATING**

Lace up your skates and glide around Astotin Lake. Enjoy a cleared trail around Archer Island or bring out gear for a game of shinny.

**STARGAZING**

Take advantage of the early sunset and gaze into an amazing night sky full of stars: you may even see the Northern Lights!

**WINTER PROGRAMS**

Join a Parks Canada staff member to learn about the night sky above, winter survival tips, or how wildlife survive cold winters.

**WINTER CAMPING**

Winter camping creates unforgettable memories for those who conquer cool winter conditions. Gather your winter gear and head to Astotin Lake Campground to take on the challenge.

**Visit parkscanada.gc.ca/elkisland or contact the Visitor Centre for more information on winter activities and program schedules.**

# Legend & **Astotin Lake Area**

- Visitor Centre & Gift Shop
- Parking
- Astotin Lake Campground Kiosk
- Washrooms
- Outhouse
- Accessible
- Golf Course & Café
- Hiking
- Cycling
- Playground
- Picnic Area
- Picnic Shelter
- Beach
- Canoe/Kayak Rental
- Boat Launch
- Trailer Dump
- Astotin Theatre
- Recreational Vehicle Camping
- Back-country Camping
- Camping
- Walk-in Camping
- Group Camping
- Overflow Camping
- Firewood

Red Chairs

Slow down and relax in 1 of the 5 pairs of Red Chairs in Elk Island. Red Chairs are placed in areas with great views.

# Trail **Information**

Easy | Moderate | Difficult

Larger trail numbers on map indicate trail heads.

**1 Hayburger Trail** — Easy

12.2 km (3-4 hours) - Flat terrain

Used as a wagon path by the Hayburger family until the 1930s, this trail winds through open forest and meadows. Keep an eye out for bison and moose where the trail crosses a black spruce forest.

**2 Simmons Trail** — Moderate

5 km (1-2 hours) – Rolling hills

This trail makes its way through aspen forest and rolling hills. Open areas along the trail offer a chance to watch beavers and muskrats in action.

**3 Shirley Lake Trail** — Moderate

12.5 km (3-4 hours) – Rolling hills

Numerous shallow lakes and ponds appear as you travel through aspen forest and meadows. Listen for the calls of frogs filling the air and watch for nesting waterfowl.

**Note:** This trail intersects with Tawayik Lake Trail; keep your eyes open for trail markers and maps at intersections.

**4 Moss Lake Trail** — Moderate

13 km (3.5-4.5 hours) – Rolling hills

Listen to the call of songbirds as you walk this winding trail up and down hills, around ponds, and through mixed wood forest. The west side of the trail passes through grassland habitat good for spotting bison, elk, and deer.

**5 Amisk Wuche Trail** — Moderate

2.5 km (1-1.5 hours) – Moderate to steep terrain

This diverse trail winds through aspen, birch, and spruce stands. A series of floating boardwalks cross small kettle lakes and beaver ponds. Part of the trail follows ridgelines, providing elevated views of forest and grassland habitat.

**6 Lakeview Trail** — Easy

3.5 km (1-2 hours) - Limited steep sections

Take note of the changing vegetation as you travel through aspen and black spruce forest. With panoramic views overlooking Astotin Lake this trail provides wonderful photo opportunities.

**7 Beaver Pond Trail** — Easy

(3.5 km 1-2 hours) - Flat terrain

Open aspen forest and sedge meadows along this trail are ideal for spotting birds or beavers in the summer and observing large mammals grazing in the winter.

**8 Living Waters Boardwalk** — Easy

300 m (15-30 minutes) – Boardwalk

Starting just behind the Astotin Theatre this boardwalk loops onto the water of Astotin Lake. Watch for beaver and waterfowl above the surface or peer into the water to see what aquatic life you can spot.

**9 Tawayik Lake Trail** — Moderate

16.5 km (4-5 hours) – Rolling hills

Traveling through aspen forest and meadows this trail is great for watching grazing wildlife and waterfowl. Take advantage of fire pits and picnic tables at the trailhead before starting your journey and note the bench commemorating the 1984 visit of Saint John Paul II near the trailhead.

**Note:** Portions of this trail are shared with Shirley Lake Trail and a staff only access road; keep your eyes open for trail markers and maps at intersections.

**10 Shoreline Trail** — Easy

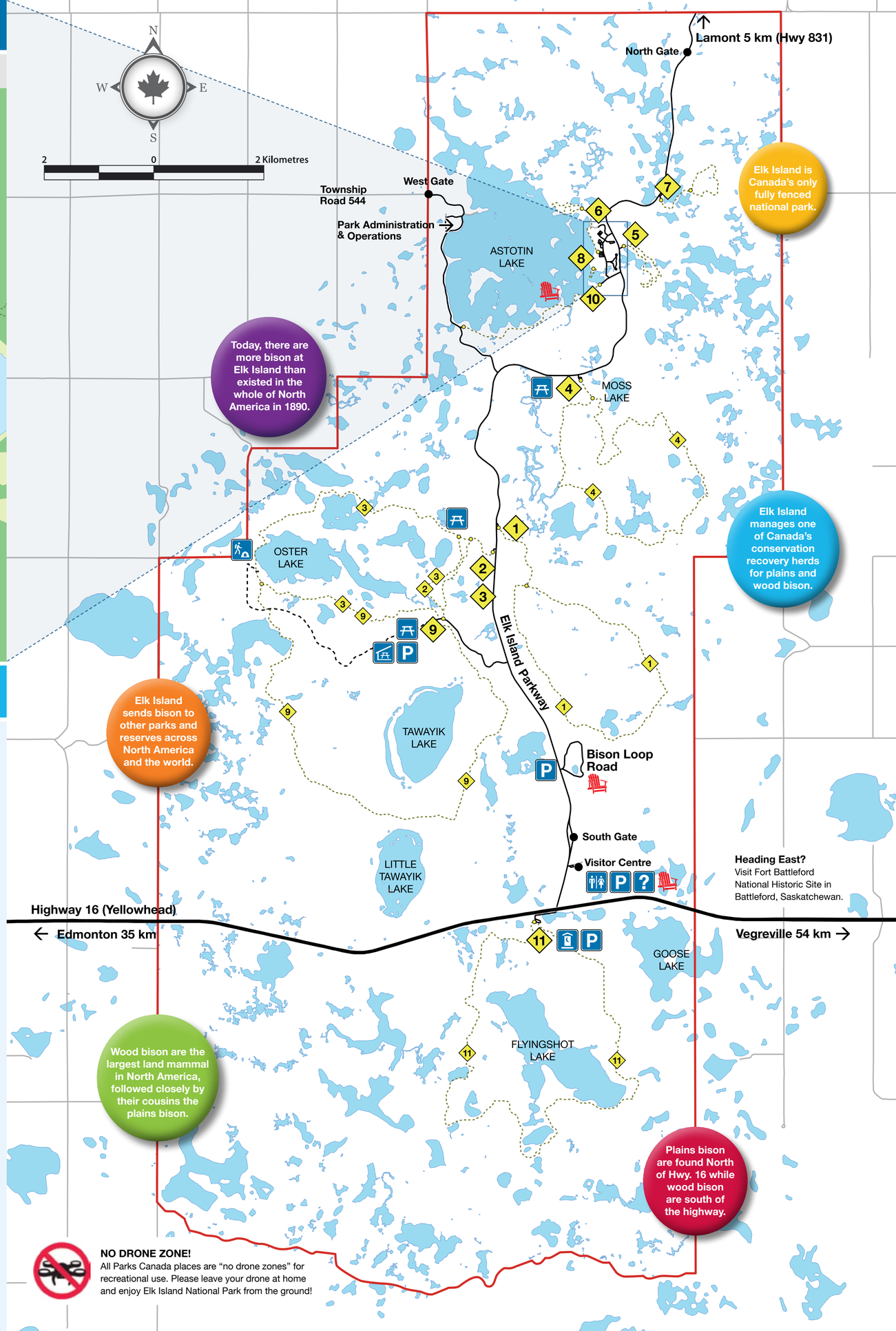
6 km return (2-3 hours) – Flat terrain

This paved trail follows the original road around Astotin Lake. Small bays along the shore provide the opportunity to observe waterfowl and view the islands on Astotin Lake.

**11 Wood Bison Trail** — Difficult

16 km (4-5 hours) – Rolling hills

Spot wood bison, the largest land mammal in North America from the only trail south of Highway 16. This challenging trail crosses through aspen forest, wetlands, and along ridges.




**NO DRONE ZONE!**
All Parks Canada places are "no drone zones" for recreational use. Please leave your drone at home and enjoy Elk Island National Park from the ground!