

# Waterton Lakes' major attractions have now reopened

## TALES FROM THE ROAD



ARLENE &amp; ROBIN KARPAN

While all national parks went through tough times due to COVID-19, Waterton Lakes National Park in southwestern Alberta had to contend with a double whammy.

The pandemic struck while it was still rebuilding after the massive Kenow Fire of 2017 that burned more than one-third of the park. The townsite was spared, barely, but the fire destroyed roads, trails, and the Crandell Mountain Campground. Sections of the park gradually reopened as restoration took place, but it was the recent reopening of two top attractions — the Bear's Hump Hike and the Red Rock Parkway — that made it feel as if things were returning to normal, or as close to normal as we can expect these days.

The Bear's Hump is among the most spectacular short hikes in the Rockies. The name comes from the shape of the mountain resembling the hump on a grizzly bear. The 2.8-kilometre return walk is a steep, steady climb with an elevation gain of 225 metres. All the huffing and puffing seems worthwhile when we reach the top and enjoy breathtaking views over the townsite, scenic lakes, and mountains beyond.

The 15-kilometre Red Rock Park-



The iconic Prince of Wales Hotel is a majestic railway hotel built in 1927 and perched on a hilltop with one of the most magnificent views in Canada. | ARLENE & ROBIN KARPAN PHOTOS

way leads to famous Red Rock Canyon with pinkish-red hues so vibrant that they look unreal. Short trails line each side of the colourful canyon while another kilometre-

long path leads to Blakiston Falls.

Hiking is a major draw, with trails from easy strolls to more serious backcountry treks. Cycling, horse-back trail riding, wildlife viewing,

canoeing, and kayaking round out some of the more popular activities. The guided boat trip along Upper Waterton Lake has recently resumed, although the trip is a bit

shorter than before the pandemic.

The park is mostly about enjoying the awesome landscapes. A unique

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## Binge drinking can lead to significant health problems

### HEALTH CLINIC



CLARE ROWSON, MD

**Q:** I am concerned that my adult son is a binge drinking alcoholic. He can go for one or two weeks without having a drink. He is now living with me since his wife left him because of his drinking. How do you recognize binge drinking and what can be done to stop it?

**A:** We often think of university students and younger adults as being the most common binge drinkers, but this pattern of alcohol abuse can occur at any age and is quite common in the United States in people over 65.

Men are more likely to engage in this behaviour, although the numbers are increasing in young women. Binge drinking is defined as a person having a blood alcohol level of more than .08 percent on a regular basis, which is equivalent to consuming five drinks or more in a two-hour period. It can be any type of alcoholic beverage, so one glass of wine is equivalent to one bottle of beer or one shot of hard liquor.

Binge drinking can lead to signifi-

cant health problems in the short and long term. Sudden death can occur due to acute alcohol poisoning and long-term effects include heart, liver or brain damage. There are also social consequences such as domestic violence, unemployment and drunk driving charges.

If you are not sure whether a person has a problem with alcohol, ask them the following questions, bearing in mind that lying to cover up the problem is common:

- Do you ever consume more than four drinks in a day?
- Do you ever forget what happened while you were drinking?
- Do you feel guilty or ashamed when you drink too much?
- Do you think that you need to reduce your drinking?

- Do you feel surprised when you drank more than you planned?
- Do other people comment on how much you drink?
- Do you forsake other responsibilities to make time to drink?

Once you determine there is a problem, here are some tips for dealing with it:

First you need to confront your son and try to get him to admit he has a problem. He will probably lie and try and minimize the situation at first. Even if you get him to seek medical help, he is likely to come home saying that the doctor said he was fine and that he didn't have a problem.

Once he comes clean, ask him to keep a diary of when and how much he drinks and what triggers

the behaviour. Is he celebrating or drowning his sorrows? Who is he with? Binge drinkers tend to socialize with others who have the same problem.

Do not keep any alcohol at home and replace it with other drinks such as tea, coffee or pop. I am not a fan of Alcoholics Anonymous and their 12-step program because they don't make an appreciable difference to outcome, according to their own statistics, but their buddy system is a good idea.

A friend can be recruited as a go-to person to contact when the alcoholic is tempted to drink.

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Red Rock Canyon features pinkish-red hues that are so vibrant they look unreal.

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aspect is that the prairie comes right up to the mountains, with no foothills as in other parts of the Rockies.

Waterton has been designated an International Dark Sky Park. To capitalize on this, long-time resident Keith Robinson, along with his three brothers, started Dark Sky Guides to help visitors enjoy what the night sky has to offer. We joined one of Keith's trips, starting at 10:30 p.m. with a drive to Red Rock Canyon, then a walk to Blakiston Falls. The goal was to be where it was totally dark, well away from any light pollution.

At the falls we turned off our headlamps, the only light coming from the millions of stars overhead glowing with an intensity we seldom see. Robinson related stories of stars, planets, and constellations, occasionally pointing out features with his special laser light that looked as if it could reach the heavens. Many stories

have local origins such as the Blackfoot legend of how the Big Dipper came to be. Rather than simply looking at the stars, Robinson showed us how to better appreciate and understand what we were seeing.

Waterton townsite is small and low-key. Yet it has everything visitors need including eateries from take-out to fine dining and accommodation from simple to swanky, plus a large campground. Topping the swanky scale is the iconic Prince of Wales Hotel, a majestic railway hotel built in 1927 and perched on a hilltop with one of the most magnificent views in Canada.

A few things still weren't open during our mid-August visit, such as the Akamina Parkway, a scenic road leading to Cameron Lake. However, reconstruction was near completion. There are plans to rebuild Crandell Mountain Campground along the Red Rock Parkway, although this will be a longer project.

The border closure with the United States has had a big effect. Waterton is next to Glacier National Park in Montana and is part of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. The normally steady cross-border traffic is now gone.

The most obvious change since the fire is the number of dead trees, although the undergrowth is greening up even faster than experts anticipated. During our visit, brilliant stands of fireweed carpeted large parts of the previously burned forest.

Waterton has long been famous for having the top wildflower displays in the country, especially in spring and early summer. Frequent visitors to the park told us that since the fire, the flowers are even better.

For more information, check out the Waterton Lakes National Park website at [www.mywaterton.ca](http://www.mywaterton.ca)

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Blakiston Falls is worth the hike.

## Stress, anxiety two distinct ailments that require help

### SPEAKING OF LIFE



JACKLIN ANDREWS, BA, MSW

**Q:** I am not sure what to do about all of this. It seems that I am wired up most of the time. I don't know what to call it, whether it is stress or anxiety, tensions, pressure or what have you, but whatever it is, it is driving me crazy. I am so restless some nights that I get next to nothing for sleep, and then I'm tired and cranky the next day. I get impatient, angry and sometimes just plain rude to my family, the most important

people in my life.

I would like to relax, to sit back and enjoy things more. What do you suggest that I do?

**A:** Let's talk about two of the more common ailments that may be bothering you — stress and anxiety — and see if we can come up with some suggestions that might help.

Imagine that inside your head you have a heavily armed platoon of soldiers. The tasks of these soldiers are to protect your well-being and to lead the charge in making things better for you.

There are other soldiers out there. The weatherman has his army, out to catch your soldiers in unpredictable summer storms or in frigid temperatures in winter. The commodities markets are well-armed with their fluctuating daily prices,

as are the revenue offices for those tax collectors bearing down on your bank accounts. There are soldiers fighting for your children's schools and soldiers protecting the basement for your Sunday morning church services.

Stress comes when too many soldiers are gathered out there for your army to protect you. Your guys start running around, keeping you awake at night, shoveling in as much food as they can at supertime, and just generally being afraid of all of those other armies.

To overcome stress, you would best reduce the numbers of soldiers challenging your soldiers. Maybe you can resign from the school board and let those soldiers torment someone else, or would it be better to step down from coaching your daughter's hockey team?

Anxiety is something a little bit different. People get anxious when they lose confidence in their soldiers' ability to ward off the other armies. It does not matter how many armies are out there, or whether or not you are able to reduce the number of soldiers getting set to go after your guys. You don't believe in your army's abilities and no matter what they do, you are convinced that they will lose.

You need to build up confidence in your own army. That is not easy to do. You might well have spent a lifetime being beaten down by your parents' armies, your Grade 7 science teacher's army and more recently those deployed by an intrusive father-in-law. Building that requisite confidence in your own army is difficult.

The good news is that you can get

help. Your family doctor will talk to you about support and medication and your mental health team can direct you to some exercises to fortify self-esteem and self-confidence.

Your task is to figure out what kind of support you need to garnish for your armies. Are there too many battles out there for your guys to pursue all at once? Maybe you need to cut back a bit. My guess is that whoever is your life-skills coach will have great suggestions for you.

It is possible to turn things around and to be proud of your soldiers and march into victory. Just get a little help.

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