



The Icefields Parkway

As you head south through Jasper National Park you enter the Icefields Parkway. This 232-kilometre stretch of highway through the heart of the Rockies runs alongside the continental divide and the Columbia Icefield, and has a history as an important travel link through the mountains.

The original road through this region was created in 1885, bringing some of the first tourism to the Alberta Rockies. During the Great Depression in the 1930s a single-lane highway was built by hand by 600 workers, and in 1961 the modern two-lane highway was opened.

The Columbia Icefield itself is over 200,000 years old! It is so remote and hard to reach that it wasn't discovered by Europeans until 1898. The icefield is 325 square kilometres in size, varies from 300 to 1200 feet thick, and receives up to 23 feet of snow each year. The ice feeds six major glaciers, including the Athabasca Glacier, and water from the icefield flows into all three oceans — Pacific, Atlantic, and Arctic — making it a rare triple continental divide.



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