

Visitor Guide and Map 2021/22



Enjoy a true wilderness experience 35 minutes east of Edmonton

A short drive east of Edmonton lies Elk Island National Park, a year-round oasis where bison roam freely, sun glistens off lakes and stars light-up the night sky. Learn the story of how bison were saved from the brink of extinction, hike or bike more than 90 km of trails, paddle around the islands in Astotin Lake or gaze at a night sky full of stars.

To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience, plan your visit and pack appropriate equipment:

PLAN

- Visit parksCanada.gc.ca/elkIsland for the latest info on park activities, events and conditions.
- Select a trip that best fits the group's abilities, experiences, interests, equipment and time available.
- File a trip plan with friends or family.
- Check weather and road conditions.
- Learn what to do if encountering wildlife.
- Stop at the Visitor Information Centre for park updates and to purchase your entry pass.
- Check the time, make sure you can complete your trip before the sun sets or be prepared to travel in the dark.

PACK

Natural hazards exist in any national park; being prepared can minimize risky situations. Pack the basics:

- Weather appropriate clothing
- Visitor guide and map
- First aid kit
- Sun protection
- Insect repellent
- Fully-charged phone*
- Flashlight
- Food, water and equipment to be self-sufficient

*Cell coverage varies and may not be available in all areas of the park.

Some activities require additional gear. Visit adventuresmart.ca for more information on how to stay safe and what to pack.

Enjoy drop-in programs FREE with paid park entry

Programs include:

- Bison Backstage tours
- Bird watching
- Stargazing
- Campfire programs

Stop by the Visitor Information Centre or visit parksCanada.gc.ca/elkIsland for seasonal program schedules.

PRIVATE PROGRAMS

Parks Canada interpreters are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Private programs are available for school groups, organizations and families.



Sleep under the stars

Share stories around the campfire as the stars in the night sky twinkle above. **Reserve your campsite today for camping dates between May 21 and October 10, 2021:**

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

ASTOTIN LAKE CAMPGROUND

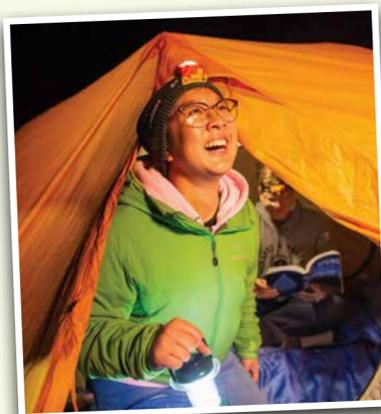
Nestled in the Astotin Lake Recreation Area, this campground is walking distance to the beach, boat rentals, playground, golf course and theatre.

Astotin Lake Campground offers:

- Potable water
- Hot showers
- Flush toilets
- Picnic shelters
- Firewood (fee)
- RV dump station

OSTER LAKE BACKCOUNTRY CAMPGROUND

This **hike-in only** (4 km) campground provides a truly unique camping experience on the west shore of Oster Lake.



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 Recreation Area and the Bison Loop area are open spaces ideal for viewing the night sky above. Bring a blanket and experience seasonal meteor showers, the northern lights and shooting stars.

STARGAZING TIPS

1. Find an open dark area with few obstructions. View as much of the sky as possible.
2. Use a red light to preserve night vision. Standard white lights disrupt night vision.
3. Know when to look. Season, time, and weather all impact what is visible in the night sky. Check the weather forecast and astronomy calendars online.
4. Use a star chart or app. Have the proper tools to help identify constellations.

Contact the Visitor Information Centre or visit parksCanada.gc.ca/elkIsland for information on dark sky programs taking place throughout the year.

Emergency
911 – Police, fire and ambulance

Parks Canada Dispatch
1-877-852-3100 – Wildlife incidents, campground disturbances, poaching or off-leash pets

Visitor Information Centre & Gift Shop:

780-922-5790
pc.pnelkIsland-elkIslandnp.pc@Canada.ca
parksCanada.gc.ca/elkIsland

Parks Canada Campground Reservation Service:

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

DRIVING DIRECTIONS 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.

The first large Elk Island National Park sign on Highway 16 marks the park boundary. Continue 7 km further east to reach the main park gate.

Come prepared with a full tank of gas as there is no gas station in the park.

Services and facilities may be subject to COVID-19-related restrictions. Please be patient and follow all health guidelines.



Hiking

Explore the park at a slower pace

With over 90 km of trails to explore, a memorable experience awaits. Watch a busy beaver construct its dam, listen to songbirds sing a tune or take in a breathtaking 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.

Cycling

Feel the breeze while pedaling through nature.

Bring a bike and breathe in the fresh air while cycling along trails or roadways in the park.

TRAIL RIDING

Watch for wildlife as you cycle through forest and across open grasslands on more than 80 km of trails suitable for cycling.

ROAD CYCLING

With ample wildlife viewing opportunities, paved roads in Elk Island National Park are a great option for road cyclists. Travel the parkway (20 km one-way) or the administration road (5 km one-way).

! CYCLING SAFETY

- Fast, quiet travel increases the chance of sudden wildlife encounters. Slow down, stay alert and make noise.
- Pair up with a motor vehicle to navigate through bison herds gathered near the road.
- Ride single file to allow motor vehicles to safely pass.
- Wear a helmet and high visibility clothing.

Paddling



A canoe or kayak is the best seat in the house

Paddling is a great low-impact way to discover the natural wonders of the park.

Bring a canoe, kayak or paddleboard or rent one at the Astotin Lake Recreation Area. Gas and electric motors are not permitted.

For information on watercraft rentals, visit haskincanoe.ca or call 780-922-4324.

Please note services are only offered in English.

! PADDLING SAFETY

- Wear a Canadian approved personal flotation device (PFD).
- Check the forecast and monitor changing weather conditions.
- Carry essential safety equipment on board, as required by Transport Canada.

Wildlife viewing

Moose



Wildlife viewing tips

- Visit at dawn and dusk when animals are most active. Be alert as females and their young travel at these times.
- Slow down. Bison and coyotes often travel the parkway.
- Get wet. Moose and waterfowl are most active in rainy weather.
- Be patient. Stop, look around and wait to see what wanders 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 throughout the year!

Stay safe and protect wildlife

- **Keep a safe distance from all wildlife.**
- **Do not approach or entice wildlife.** Store all food, garbage and scented items when not in use.
- **Give wildlife the right of way.** When encountering elk, moose or bison on a trail make noise to alert animals. Wait for them to move on or slowly back away.
- **Avoid startling wildlife.** Be aware of surroundings and travel in groups.
- **Stay in the vehicle when driving by wildlife.** Only stop to observe if it is safe to do. Move on after a few moments to prevent traffic jams.
- **Do not stop to view bears.**
- **Keep dogs on leash and under control at all times.** Pets cause stress for wildlife.

Use your thumb

Animals in the park are wild and may react to perceived threats when startled, threatened or protecting their young. Protect yourself and wildlife by giving animals space. To determine if you are at a safe distance use your thumb:



1. Hold your fist straight out in front of you
2. Raise your thumb
3. Cover the animal with your thumb

If the animal is totally covered by your thumb, you are a safe distance away (about 100 m). If your thumb does not cover the animal you are too close and should retreat.

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 in the park range from easy finds with vehicle access to challenging half-day finds on longer trails. Try to locate them all!

Visit geocaching.com or pick up the **Elk Island Guide to Geocaching brochure at the Visitor Information Centre.**

Xplorer Program

Elk Island National Park is a great place to have fun with your family, explore nature, and watch bison, moose, and beavers. Become an explorer and learn about Elk Island National Park by completing Xplorer challenges around the park. Start your adventure by picking up your Xplorer booklet from the campground kiosk. The Xplorer program is free of charge.



Golfing

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

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

Legend

- Hiking
- Cycling
- Picnic area
- Picnic shelter
- Accessible
- Easy
- Moderate
- Difficult

Larger trail numbers on map indicate trailheads. All trailheads outside the Astotin Lake Recreation Area have parking, outhouses and garbage facilities.

- 1 Hayburger Trail**
11.6 km loop (3-4 hours) – Flat terrain
Used as a wagon path 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**
2.6 km loop (1-1.5 hours) – Rolling hills
This trail makes its way through aspen forest and rolling hills. Open areas along the trail offer the opportunity to watch beavers and muskrats in action.
Note: This trail begins on the north side of Tawayik Road 100 m east of the Tawayik parking lot.
- 3 Shirley Lake Trail**
11.6 km loop (3-4 hours) – Rolling hills
Numerous shallow lakes and ponds are nestled between aspen forest and meadows. Listen for the calls of frogs filling the air and watch for nesting birds.
- 4 Moss Lake Trails**
Listen to the call of songbirds on trails that wind up and down hills, around ponds and through the forest. The west side of the difficult trail passes through grassland habitat ideal for spotting bison and deer.
 - 4A Moss Lake Moderate Trail**
4.8 km loop (1.5-2.5 hours) – Rolling hills
 - 4B Moss Lake Difficult Trail**
12.6 km loop (3.5-4.5 hours) – Rolling hills
- 5 Amisk Wuche Trail**
2.7 km loop (1-1.5 hours) – Moderate to steep terrain
This diverse trail winds through aspen, birch and spruce stands. Floating boardwalks cross small kettle lakes and beaver ponds. Rolling hills provide elevated views of forest and grassland habitat.
- 6 Lakeview Trail**
3.7 km loop (1-2 hours) – Limited steep sections
Discover changing vegetation as the trail bends through aspen and black spruce forest. With panoramic views overlooking Astotin Lake, this trail provides wonderful photo opportunities.
- 7 Beaver Pond Trail**
3.6 km loop (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 bison grazing in the winter.
- 8 Living Waters Boardwalk**
400 m loop (15-30 minutes) – Boardwalk
Starting just behind the Astotin Theatre, this boardwalk loops over the water of Astotin Lake. Watch for beavers and birds or peer into the water to see aquatic life.
- 9 Tawayik Lake Trail**
15.1 km loop (4-5 hours) – Rolling hills
Winding through an aspen forest and meadows, this trail is great for watching birds and bison graze. Fire pits, picnic tables and a bench commemorating the 1984 visit of Saint John Paul II are available near the trailhead.
- 10 Shoreline Trail**
6 km return (2-3 hours) – Flat terrain
This paved trail follows the original road around Astotin Lake. Short paths off this trail lead to clearings that are great for observing waterfowl or picnicking on the shore of Astotin Lake.
- 11 Wood Bison Trail**
15.6 km loop (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.

Legend

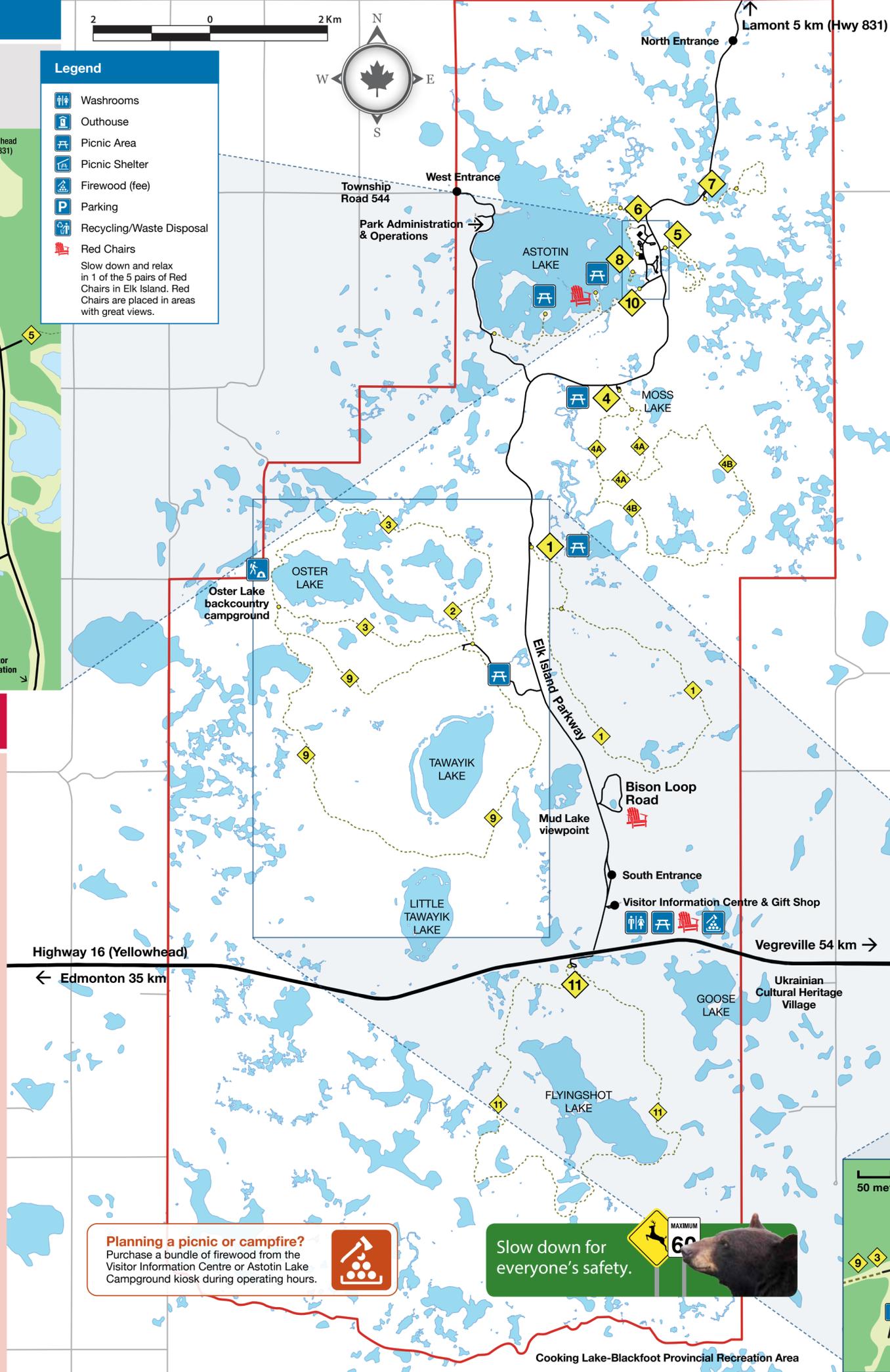
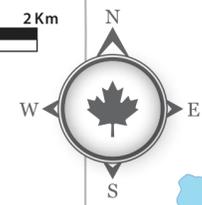
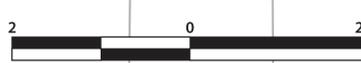
- Trail
- Road
- Forest
- Grassland
- Water
- Beach



Legend

- Washrooms
- Outhouse
- Picnic Area
- Picnic Shelter
- Firewood (fee)
- Parking
- Recycling/Waste Disposal
- 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.



Safety information

Safety is a shared responsibility

- **Trails and beaches are not patrolled:** use at own risk.
- **Be self-reliant:** prepare for changing weather conditions and emergency situations.
- **Create and share a trip plan.**
- **Stay alert:** be aware of surroundings and avoid using headphones.
- **Respect wildlife:** wildlife encounters are possible. Learn more on the other side of this guide.
- **Check the local weather forecast:** conditions can change from minute to minute and place to place.
- **Check for closures and restrictions:** review the website or contact the Visitor Information Centre.
- **Stay hydrated:** bring enough water and food to last through an emergency or unexpected delay.
- **Do not rely on a cellular telephone:** cell coverage varies and may not be available in all areas of the park.

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

DO NOT FEED OR APPROACH WILDLIFE.

KEEP DOGS ON A LEASH AT ALL TIMES.

NO CAMPFIRES OUTSIDE OF DESIGNATED FIRE PITS.

NO DRONE ZONE!
All Parks Canada places are "no drone zones." Leave drones at home and enjoy Elk Island National Park from the ground!

Planning a picnic or campfire?
Purchase a bundle of firewood from the Visitor Information Centre or Astotin Lake Campground kiosk during operating hours.

Slow down for everyone's safety.



Millions of bison once roamed across the continent from Alaska to Mexico. However, within a single human lifetime, bison populations in North America declined to less than a thousand.

The Canadian government purchased one of the last herds of bison and between 1907 and 1912 over 700 wild bison were shipped by train to Elk Island National Park.

- Today, there are more bison in Elk Island National Park than there were in the whole of North America in 1890.
- Elk Island National Park is the only national park that maintains herds of both subspecies of North American Bison; Wood Bison on the south side of Highway 16 and Plains Bison on the north side.
- Wood bison are the largest land mammal in North America.
- Elk Island National Park provides bison to conservation initiatives around the world.



Join a park program or stop at the Visitor Information Centre for more information on bison conservation.

Tawayik Lake Area

- Trail
- Road
- Forest & Grassland
- Water



Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area