

## HIKING MOUNT LADY MACDONALD

Hello Fellow Adventurer!

Located on the north side of the town of Canmore is Mount Lady Macdonald. Lady Mac is a big old piece of rock that offers plenty of stunning Rocky Mountain views the whole hike up. Lady Mac is a challenge and really allows the hiker to experience what it's like hiking in the Canadian Rockies. Because of its convenient location, it is a local favorite and is one of the mountains climbed as part of Canmore's Triple Crown or 4 peak challenge.

### ADVENTURE STATISTICS

**Time Required:** 4-6 Hours

**Location:** NE of Canmore – Bow Valley Wildland Provincial Park

**Distance:** 11km round trip

**Highest Elevation:** 2600m

**Elevation Gain:** 1180m

**Difficulty:** 7/10 – Rapid elevation gain and extreme exposure at the summit.

**Season:** June to mid-October

**Additional Requirements:** N/A



Image 1: Lady MacDonald Ridge

## DRIVING DIRECTIONS

**From Canmore:** Follow Benchlands Trail north of the Trans Canada and then take the second exit at the traffic circle to continue on Benchlands Trail. At any point after that traffic circle, find a spot in the parking lot to your right. If it's full try to find parking on the street.

## WHAT TO BRING

- **Comfortable Footwear:** Hiking shoes. Make sure your shoes are broken in prior to tackling this hike to prevent unexpected blisters. You could get away with running shoes but having extra grip on the rock surfaces will definitely come in handy!
- **Water:** This hike is long with lots of elevation gain to reach the summit. Be sure to bring enough water for 5-6 hours of physical exertion.
- **Snacks:** Bring some of your favorite snacks to enjoy along the hike. Some of our favorite snacks are trail mix, bananas, beef jerky and licorice.
- **Weather appropriate clothing:** You will be exposed to the elements throughout this hike. It can be deceptively cold up at the summit, and especially windy. Check the weather forecast and plan accordingly.
- **Sunscreen:** If it is sunny and you're like Mattson, who easily burns, bring sunscreen!
- **Insect Repellent:** Insect repellent can greatly improve your hiking experience.
- **Bear Spray:** You are in bear country. Always hike with bear spray that is easily accessible.
- **Camera:** There are numerous photo opportunities you won't want to miss.
- **This Guide:** Print a copy of this guide to reference throughout the hike

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

**Wildlife:** You will be hiking in bear country. It is always advisable to check in at the local Visitor Information Center to learn of any trail closures due to wildlife. Carry bear spray in an easily accessible location. Travel in groups of multiple hikers and make lots of noise to avoid an unexpected encounter.

**Leave No Trace:** It is important that we enjoy the outdoors responsibly and sustainably. Some key principles to consider when hiking to “Leave No Trace” are:

- **Plan ahead and prepare:** Proper planning allows adventurers to hike safely while minimizing damage to the land.
- **Travel on durable surfaces:** Stick to the trail when possible. If there is no trail, or you must travel off trail, stay on durable surfaces to reduce your impact.
- **Dispose of waste properly:** Pack it in, pack it out.
- **Leave what you find:** Leave rocks, plants, archaeological artifacts and other objects of interest as you find them.
- **Respect wildlife:** Observe wildlife from a distance. Never feed wild animals.
- **Be considerate of other visitors:** Be courteous to others to allow everyone to enjoy their outdoor experience.

To learn more about “Leave No Trace” visit <http://www.leavenotrace.ca>

## HIKING DIRECTIONS\*\*

**Summary:** This hike begins at the parking lot on Benchlands Trail and begins by following the wide rocky outwash from cougar creek. From there the trail winds up switchbacks to the “Teahouse” above the tree line. Then to reach the summit you must ascend a scree slope and cross a very narrow exposed ridge.



Image 2: Hiking Lady MacDonald Adventure Map

### Step-By-Step Guide:

From the parking lot (**Route marker #1 on the map**), walk along the west side of the gravel outwash for about 700m. At this point there will be a trail to enter into the trees and a sign marking Montane Traverse Trail.



Image 3: The gravel outwash



Image 4: Montane Traverse trailhead

Follow Montane Traverse Trail for a little ways until you reach another fork. Take the right fork onto Lady Macdonald Trail. If you go left, you'll stay on Montane Traverse Trail. At first the trail is well travelled and relatively effortless to walk on, but it quickly starts to gain elevation up long switchbacks.



Image 5: The fork to Lady Macdonald Trail



Image 6: The trail map

Eventually, you'll poke out of the trees and begin hiking the rockier section of the trail. Keep following the trail up the mountain and eventually you'll reach the "Teahouse" (**Route marker #2 on the map**). Here you'll find a big old wooden helipad. This is a great spot to stop for a break before you make the push to the summit. They call it the "Teahouse" because there was an unfinished teahouse being built in the mid 1990's that was suddenly abandoned. The plan was for it to be open to the public Friday through Sunday as a place to stop during the hike, enjoy a cup of tea and take in the amazing views. When the construction was cut short the building was left half finished. In 2013, the Bow Valley Wildland Provincial Park decided to tear down the teahouse and an old wooden helipad is all that remains.

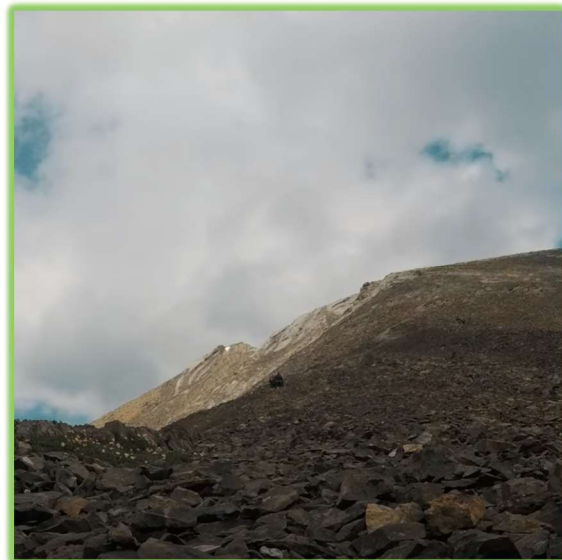


**Image 7: The Teahouse helipad**

The helipad is the turnaround point for many hikers. The rest of the hike is substantially more difficult and there is dangerous exposure on the ridge to the summit. From the helipad you can see a very faded goat path up the scree slope. If you are choosing to hike to the summit take the path up the scree slope. It can be frustrating hiking up the scree because for every step you take, it feels like you're sliding back down a half step.



**Image 8: Anderson hiking up the scree slope**



**Image 9: The trail to the summit ridge**

Once you reach the top of the scree slope, you've made it to what people call "the knife edge summit". If you're adventurous enough you can walk the knife edge and make it to the true summit (**Route marker #3 on the map**). Take as much caution as possible as this ridge has an extreme amount of exposure on either side and is very dangerous. If the weather conditions aren't right or you're not comfortable with the exposure, don't risk it.



**Image 10: The ridge walk**




**Image 11: Crossing the knife edge ridge**


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See you on the next adventure,

Anderson & Mattson

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