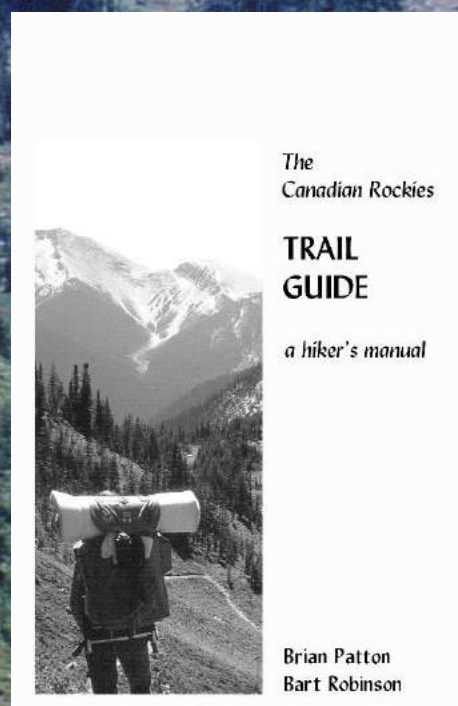


It started with two young men setting out to write a comprehensive hiking guide to the Canadian Rockies. In 2022, over 50 years later, Brian Patton and Bart Robinson's *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* remains the ultimate resource for locals and visitors alike.

# Canadian Rockies Trail Guide

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## Introduction

First published in 1971, the *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* by Brian Patton and Bart Robinson was the first comprehensive hiking guide to the region and was one of the first hiking guides in North America.

Today, over 50 years later, the original authors continue to spend much of their time hiking, exploring, and writing about and photographing the Canadian Rockies.

### FACTS ABOUT THE CANADIAN ROCKIES TRAIL GUIDE

- One of the first hiking guides in North America
- The first hiking guide to the Canadian Rockies
- Canada's longest running, still in publication hiking guide
- Possibly the world's oldest hiking guide under original authorship
- Over 270,000 copies sold

## About Summerthought Publishing

The *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* has been published by Banff-based Summerthought Publishing since 1971. Summerthought is Alberta's oldest non-academic publishing house (only the University of Alberta Press

is older, having been established in 1969). We are a vibrant, proudly independent local publisher producing books that we believe in and that we think readers will enjoy.

**Publisher contact:** Andrew Hempstead ([info@summerthought.com](mailto:info@summerthought.com), 403/762-0535) for more information, author interviews, and electronic files.



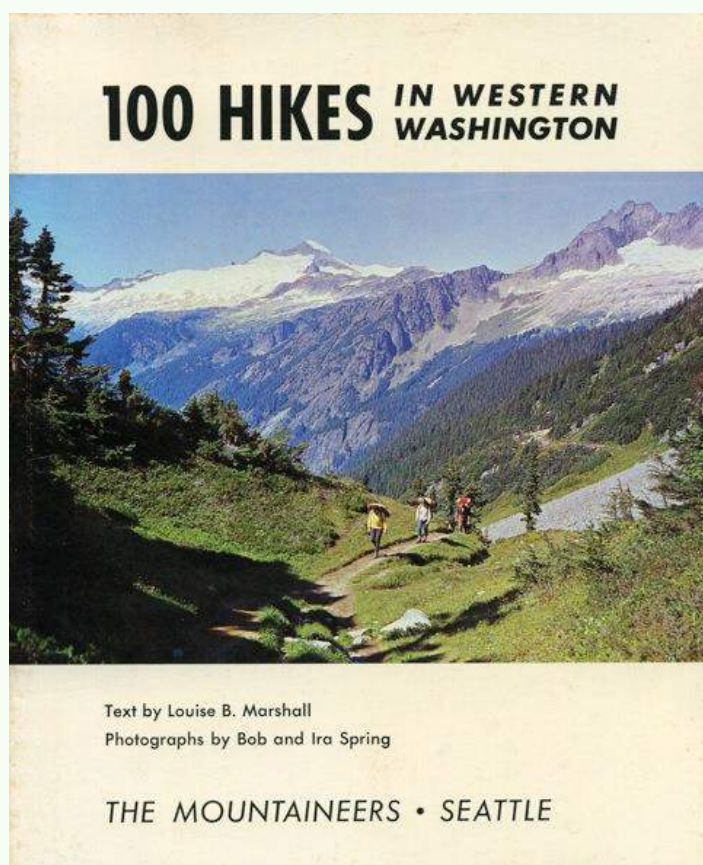
## Early Hiking Guidebooks

Most early hiking guidebooks were produced by non-profit mountain clubs, including North America's oldest hiking guide, the 115-year-old *White Mountain Guide*, compiled by club members and published by the Appalachian Mountain Club. Other early books include *100 Hikes in Western Washington* (1966), the first title for The Mountaineers Books. From a similar era was Tom Winnett's *Sierra North* (1967), the

beginning of Wilderness Press, and *100 Oregon Hiking Trails*, published by Don and Roberta Lowe under the Touchstone Press imprint in 1969.

Climbing guides to the Canadian Rockies were published as early as the 1920s, including J. Monroe Thorington's *A Climber's Guide to the Rocky Mountains of Canada*. Thorington's 1966 4th edition was an inspiration for the *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide*. (The authors were delighted to meet Thorington at Lake O'Hara while they were doing fieldwork for the 1st edition of their own book).

Other local guidebooks predating the *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* were government publications such as *Jasper Trails* written by Mabel "MB" Williams and published by the Department of the Interior in the 1930s. Williams, the secretary of James B. Harkin, the first commissioner of the Dominion Parks Branch, authored several other guidebooks, but they were not designed strictly for hikers.



## History of the First Edition

In 1969, Brian Patton began making plans to write a hiking guide to Banff. When Bart Robinson offered to help, the original plan expanded into a guidebook that would cover all the mountain national parks, including Glacier and Revelstoke as well as Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park and the Berg Lake trail in Mount Robson Provincial Park.

It was an ambitious project, as not only would trails need to be measured, but, unlike books such as *100 Hikes in Western Washington* which concentrated hikers onto the most popular trails, Brian and Bart envisaged a comprehensive guidebook that treated all trails equally and would help spread use beyond the most popular trails. It would also include overnight backpacks, maps and photos.

The Banff Springs Hotel opened for its first winter season in 1969, and while working in the security department, Brian spent his spare time over an ancient CPR Underwood typewriter writing park superintendents and planning

fieldwork for the coming summer. He was encouraged by Jim Thorsell, whose earlier trail survey of Banff and Yoho national parks served as a template for trail descriptions in those parks.

The spring of 1970 was spent meeting with park superintendents, chief park wardens and interpreters in all the parks, gathering information while also announcing their publication intentions.

Though Banff superintendent Steve Kun offered to loan Brian and Bart the Park Service survey wheel to measure hiking trails, they considered a small-diameter survey wheel too tiny to push over rocks, roots and logs. Instead, they had local bike enthusiast Bob Capel fashion 27-inch bicycle wheels with “banana” handlebars and mechanical odometers so they could record accurate distances. The “trail wheels” were tested and refined on the Tunnel Mountain trail in the spring of 1970.

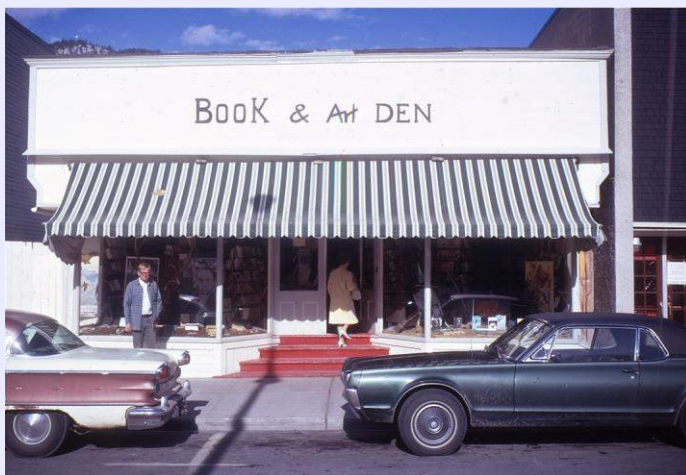
Parks Canada had previously measured trails in Yoho and

Waterton Lakes National Parks, but Brian and Bart were the first to accurately measure trails in Banff, Jasper and Kootenay National Parks—and they re-measured those in Yoho and Waterton Lakes as well.

### BANFF BOOK & ART DEN

The Banff Book & Art Den was opened by Peter and Barb Steiner in 1965. The original location was downstairs in the Mount Royal Hotel on Banff Avenue. When a fire destroyed the hotel in 1967, the Steiners moved their bookstore to 110 Banff Avenue. In 1974 that building was replaced by the Clock Tower Mall, where the Book & Art Den remained until 1999, at which time it moved to 94 Banff Avenue, beside the CIBC bank building.

Brian had been employed as a manager at the Banff Book & Art Den in the summer of 1968 and Bart was working at the same bookstore when plans for the guidebook were formulated.



*Brian Patton outside the Book & Art Den, early 1970s.*

Through the summer of 1970, Brian and Bart hiked and measured every trail that would be written up in the first edition—a total of 1,330 kilometres between them. Brian hiked with his wife-to-be Louise Mayer and Bart, working part time at the Book & Art Den, broke away to do hikes with friends, often as overnight backpacking trips.

In the early 1970s, only the most popular trails were “official,” and were promoted in Parks Service hand-outs. The CPR built all the trails at Lake Louise and Moraine Lake and was still maintaining them at this time. Before the authors set out with their trail wheels, distances had mostly been estimated by wardens on horseback, who thought they knew how fast their horses travelled and extrapolated from that. Brian recalls having a coffee with warden Ed Carleton after the Trail Guide was first published, and Carleton was aghast at the distance quoted in their book for the Twin Lakes trail. “I don’t believe it,” he said.



“I won’t believe it until you and I hike and chain the trail.” (“Chaining” an old forester’s style of getting distance measurements in the woods). And Brian relates the following: “In 1971, after measuring the trail from Sunshine Village to Lake Magog, I met Assiniboine pioneer Erling Strom. When I told him my measurement of 17 miles, he just smiled and said ‘we always said it was 20,’ and you could see he didn’t believe this young whipper-snapper with a bicycle wheel.”

In the winter of 1970-71, while Brian and Bart were completing their manuscript in a converted apartment bedroom on Cougar Street, Peter Steiner, owner of the Banff Book &

Art Den, and Jon Whyte, a Banff-born poet, writer, and conservationist, offered to publish the book. Design and editing of the 1st edition were done by Jon Whyte and the book was printed by Toronto’s Hunter Rose company. Distribution to local bookstores and outdoor retailers began in July 1971.

Summerthought Publishing was officially incorporated as a vehicle to publish the book, with Steiner and Whyte as shareholders. The name “Summerthought” originated from the fact that Banff folks had lots of time during the winter to come up with business schemes for the busy months of summer.

*This photo of Tumbling Pass (Kootenay National Park) was used on the cover of the 1st edition.*



Initial sales *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* were brisk and by the end of 1971, the book had sold 5,835 copies. It had also reached number 2 on the *Calgary Herald*’s bestsellers list, behind only Pierre Berton’s *The Last Spike*. The 1st edition was reprinted multiple times and when the 2nd edition was published in 1978, sales continued to increase, reaching their pinnacle in 1980 with 13,376 copies sold.

## THE CANADIAN ROCKIES TRAIL GUIDE

a hiker's manual

a Summerthought Publication

\$3.95

□ The movement to the hills and the alpine areas away from the highway has just begun — and the further reaches of the Canadian Rockies are still untainted by the rush of the road, and the air is quiet and clear. We who live in the Rockies are aware of the growing interest in backpacking and wilderness trekking; and many of us would like to see the "out of the car and into the hills" approach become a more popular activity, even if it means that some of our old and favourite private haunts will no longer be as personal as they used to be.

□ The **Canadian Rockies Trail Guide** is just a slight misnomer, for the book is concerned with the mountain national parks of Yoho, Kootenay, Banff, Jasper and Waterton Lakes in the Rockies, and the parks of Glacier and Mount Revelstoke in the Selkirks of British Columbia. During the summer of 1970 the authors covered and measured with trail wheels (cyclometers) all of the primary trails in the aforementioned national parks, providing for the first time accurate trail mileages.

□ The book itself (6" x 9", 208 pp., 64 photographs, 13 maps, indexed) is Smythe sewn for extra durability, is paperbound for portability and ease of use, and is laid out to facilitate rapid reference. It has an introduction concerning hiking in the Rockies, specific problems and policies in national parks, as well as much general advice garnered from experience.

□ Each major trail is given a two-page display and supplies information in a standardized format — overall mileage to end of trail, synopsis that provides information on how to get to the trail-head, how long the trip should take, how much altitude is gained, plus an outline that the hiker can employ as an odometer to figure out how far he has gone and how far he has to go. A trail description dominates each two-page layout, giving botanical, geological, historical and cultural notes and pointing out many of the features seen along the way. The text is frequently laced with the rich descriptions given the areas by their first explorers, ranging from David Thompson to Walter Wilcox. Along with the photographs taken by the authors during their field studies, are several scenes of historical interest from the files of the Archives of the Canadian Rockies. Included are shots of the first explorations near Lake Louise and the earliest known photograph of Mount Assiniboine.

□ In addition to the primary trails, over 100 secondary nature and wilderness trails are outlined with mileages and map references, making the book one of the most complete guides covering such a vast area ever produced. Much of the supplementary information was provided by the wardens and the naturalists of the National and Historic Parks Branch, who assisted the authors throughout the project.

□ The authors - Brian Patton and Bart Robinson - bring to their work an interest in wilderness for its own sake, plus a knowledge of the Rocky Mountains earned in two lifetimes of experience (not full lifetimes, since both authors are under thirty) and a respect for the values that national parks provide. Both permanent residents of Banff National Park, they invite the reader to one of the last great mountain wilderness regions on the North American continent.

□ Trade inquiries are invited. Terms - 33% on two - four copies; 40% on five or more copies. Fully protected.

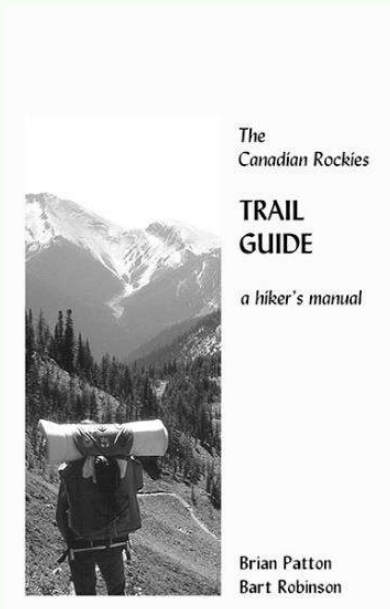
Summerthought  
Box 1420  
Banff, Alberta

*1971 Press release announcing the 1<sup>st</sup> edition.*

## All Editions

### 1st EDITION

1971; NO ISBN; \$3.95

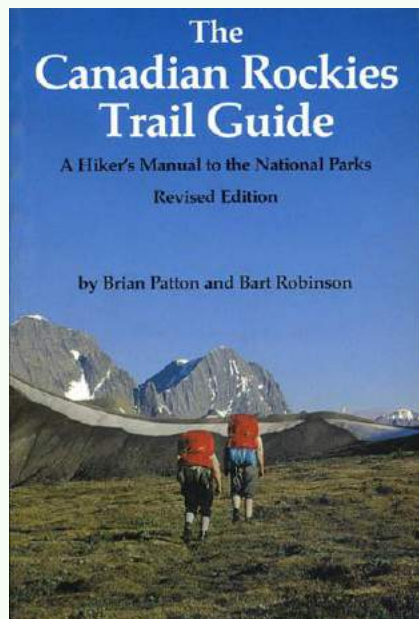


Summerthought Publishing was born with the publication of the *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* in 1971. It included trail descriptions within Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, Yoho, Waterton Lakes, Glacier, and Mt. Revelstoke National Parks, as well as select trails around Mt. Assiniboine and the Berg Lake Trail in Mt. Robson Provincial Park. A six-page description of the Great Divide Trail written by Jim Thorsell appeared at the end of the book.

**Cover:** Louise Mayer on Tumbling Pass (Kootenay National Park) by Brian Patton.

### 2nd EDITION

1978; ISBN 0-9690806-0-3; \$5.95



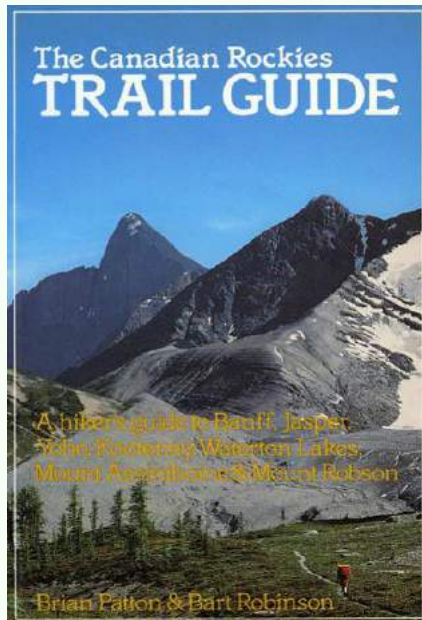
All trail descriptions were revised and the book redesigned. Chapters on Glacier and Mt. Revelstoke National Parks were dropped. With more detailed trail descriptions and the addition of trails such as Fish Lakes-Molar Pass, Howse Pass, Jonas Pass, and the North Boundary Trail, the page count increased from 209 to 266. This edition included the first written description of the Sawback Trail (a name bestowed by author Brian Patton), between Mt. Norquay and Lake Louise.

**Cover:** Park wardens on the approach to Numa Pass (Kootenay National Park) by Jim Thorsell.



### 3rd EDITION

1986; ISBN: 0-919934-14-5; \$12.95



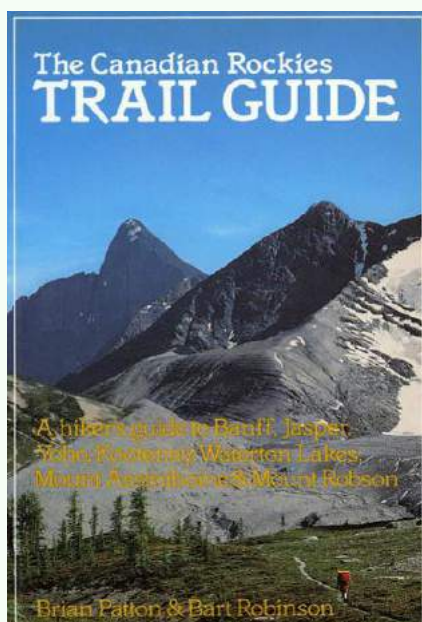
The authors ushered in a new era by using a computer (Kaypro II) to produce the manuscript for the 3rd edition.

With more detailed trail descriptions, the inclusion of the ambitious South Boundary Trail, and the use of photos taken in the most remote regions of the Canadian Rockies, the page count was increased from 266 to 363. Mount Assiniboine and Mount Robson Provincial Parks were presented as separate chapters, with several trails within these parks described in print for the first time.

**Cover:** Taken by author Brian Patton, the cover image depicted a single backpacker on the Rockwall Trail (Kootenay National Park).

### 4th EDITION

1990; ISBN: 0-919934-22-6; \$14.95

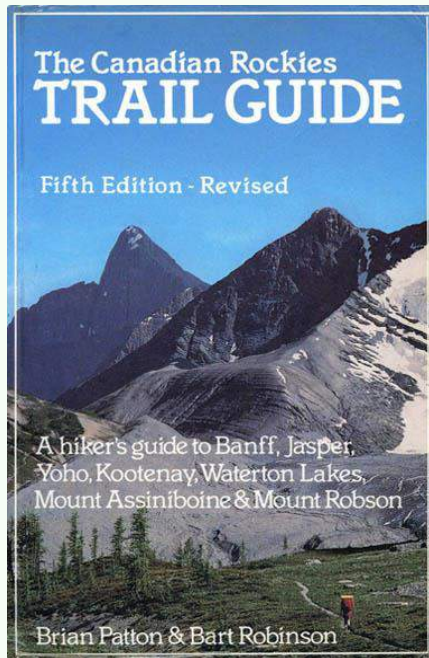


Revisions were made where necessary, with expanded coverage of the newly rebuilt Iceline Trail and the Mount Shark access route to Mount Assiniboine via Bryant Creek.

**Cover:** The cover remained the same as the 3rd edition.

## 5th EDITION

1992; ISBN: 0-919934-23-4; \$14.95

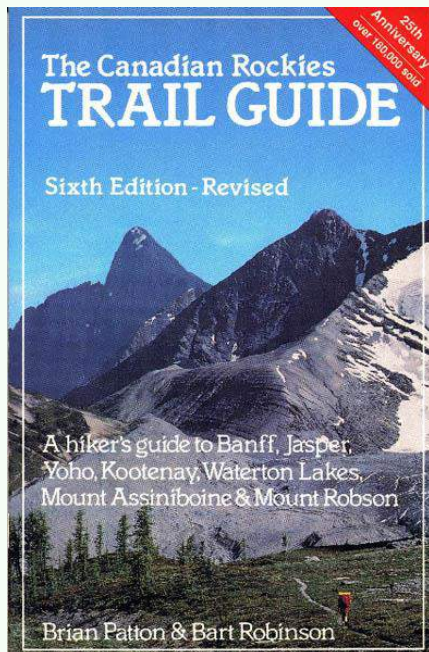


A straightforward update, with the authors revising 45 trails.

**Cover:** The book is identified as the 5th edition on the cover, and white type replaced gold for the book's subtitle and author names.

## 6th EDITION

1994; ISBN: 0-919934-23-4; \$14.95

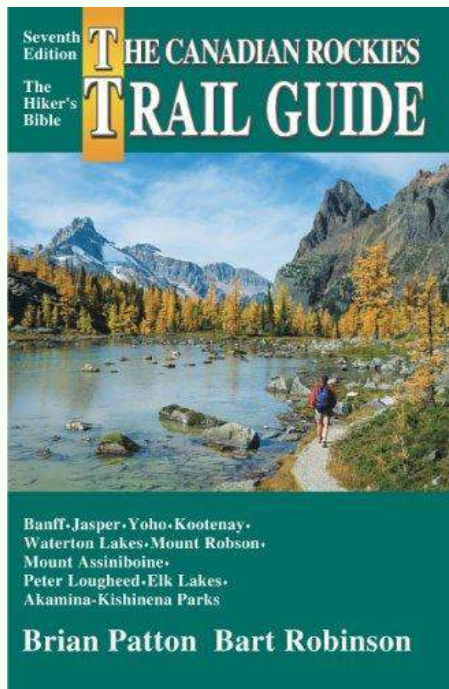


Another simple revision, with updated information included for at least 35 trails.

**Cover:** A red band across the upper right corner of the cover identifies this as the 25th anniversary edition, and that 180,000 copies had been sold.

## 7th EDITION

2000; ISBN: 0-9199349-0-0; \$19.95

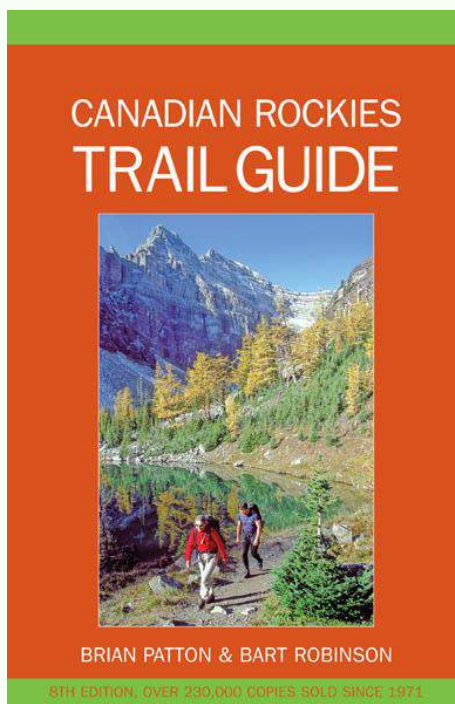


Total revision and redesign. Trails in Peter Lougheed, Akamina-Kishinena, and Elk Lakes Provincial Parks added; map count was expanded from 25 to 40, and all were produced digitally. Many new photos included. The Great Divide Trail appendix was deleted.

**Cover:** Opabin Plateau (Yoho National Park) by Brian Patton.

## 8th EDITION

2007; ISBN: 978-0-9782375-0-9; \$24.95



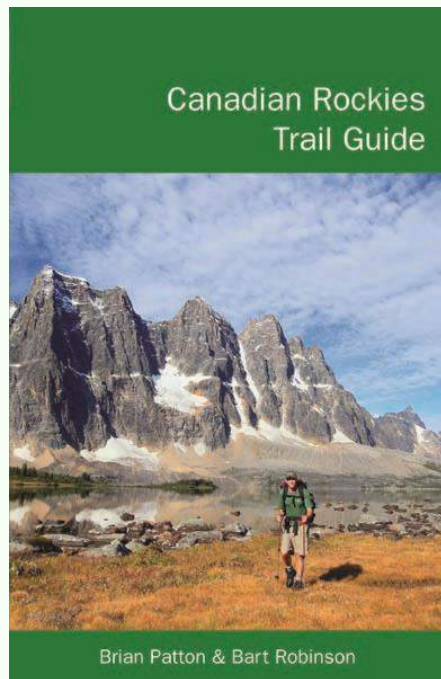
Revisions throughout the book, including major rewriting of trails in Kootenay National Park to reflect 2003 wildfires. There were also some simple design changes and new photos.

**Cover:** Lake Agnes (Banff National Park) by Pat Morrow, a well-known photographer and filmmaker who makes his home in the Canadian Rockies.



9th EDITION

2011, ISBN: 978-0-981149-18-9; \$24.95

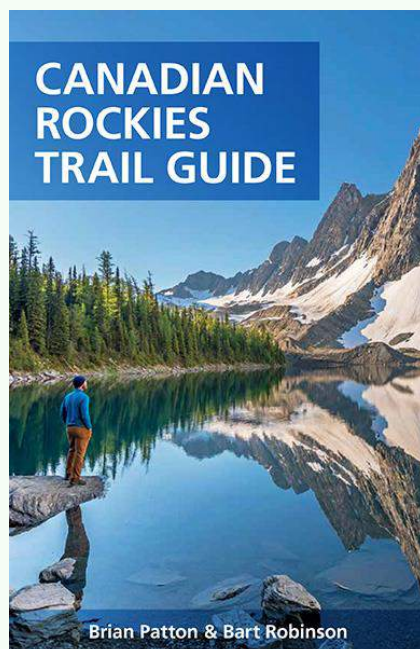


The 9th edition was a major revision with comprehensive update of all trails. GPS coordinates were added to all trailheads.

**Cover:** Tonquin Valley (Jasper National Park) by Canmore photographer John Marriott.

10th EDITION

2022; ISBN: 978-1-926983-53-0; \$29.95



To commemorate over 50 years in print, the *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* was redesigned and published in full colour.

The basic elements that have made the book so successful remain—distance outlines, extensive updates, and coverage of every official trail in the mountain parks—but the layout has been modernized. With the change to full colour, the distinctive 3D topographical data used by Gem Trek maps has been used to better illustrate the regions and trails.

**Cover:** Floe Lake (Kootenay National Park) by Brigid Scott.

## About the Authors

For the past 50 years, **Brian Patton** has interpreted the natural and human history of the Canadian Rockies, including stints with CBC Radio, The Banff Centre, the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, and as a park naturalist. He has also appeared as an historical interpreter and storyteller in five documentary films about the region. His other books include *Parkways of the Canadian Rockies*, *Tales from the Canadian Rockies*, *Mountain Chronicles: Jon Whyte*, *Bear Tales from the Canadian Rockies*, and *Best Day Hikes in Banff National Park*. He continues to work on a variety of projects from his home in Invermere, British Columbia.

Following the publication of the *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide*, **Bart Robinson** authored several books on the Canadian Rockies: *A Castle in the Wilderness: The Story of a Hotel*, *Columbia Icefield: A Solitude of Ice*, and *Great Days in the Rockies: The Photographs of Byron Harmon*.

He has enjoyed a long career as a



*Bart Robinson (with trail wheel) and Brian Patton on Molar Pass, 1999.*

journalist, editor, and conservationist. He was an editor with *Equinox* magazine from 1982 to 1994, and Executive Director of the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative from 1996 to 2003. He lives in Canmore, Alberta, where he stays busy with community-based conservation projects.

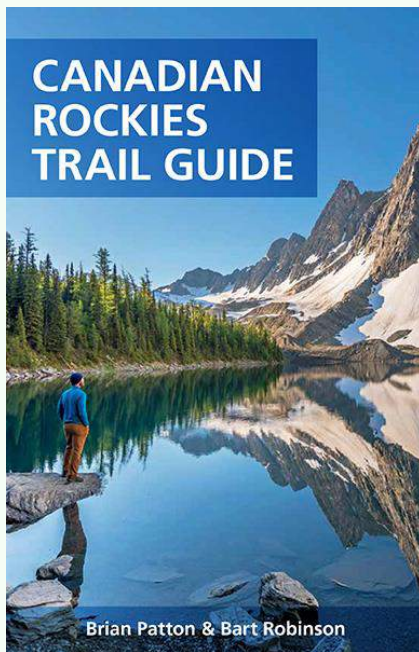
In 2021, Brian and Bart were inducted into the prestigious Royal Canadian Geographic Society's College of Fellows for over five decades of exploring and writing about the Canadian Rockies.



## Press Release

Contact: Andrew Hempstead  
403 762 0535  
info@summerthought.com

### *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* (50th anniversary edition)



Known affectionately as “the Bible” by outdoor enthusiasts, the *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* was the first guidebook with accurate distances and detailed descriptions to the trails of the Canadian Rockies. Now in its 10th edition, the popular tome is the most comprehensive and well-known guidebook to hiking in the region.

The *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* includes:

- **Extensive coverage:** 227 hikes for all levels of fitness are detailed with distance outlines and in-depth trail descriptions.
- **Respected authors:** Brian Patton and Bart Robinson are regarded as the ultimate authority on hiking in the Canadian Rockies.
- **Market awareness:** Not only is *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* known locally as “the Bible,” it is the only hiking guide to the region recommended by Fodor’s, Frommer’s, and Lonely Planet.
- **Track record:** With over 270,000 copies in print, the *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* is one of the best-selling non-fiction books in Canadian publishing history

10th edition / ISBN: 978-1-926983-53-0 / Brian Patton and Bart Robinson  
May 2022 / \$29.95 / Softcover / 432 pages / 5.5 x 8.5 inches

**summerthought.com**

**Tel** 403 762 0535 • **Fax** 403 762 3095 • PO Box 2309 Banff, AB T1L 1C1, Canada