



## The Wapta Traverse

There is no need to travel to Europe for hut to hut skiing in the high mountains. Canada has a great hut system and far bigger glacier systems than the lower 48. They also speak a variation on English, have OK beer and are very friendly and the mountains are far less crowded than the European Alps. So a trip here has a lot to recommend it.

The Wapta traverse is Canada's best known and popular backcountry ski. The Wapta Icefields and its glaciers are extensive, but not too difficult to travel across. The crevasse danger is low but must still be assessed and dealt with. The skiing is generally pretty easy, but there are a few steeper slopes to descend and some tree skiing at the end of the trip. And with a couple of layover days there is some great skiing from the huts. And for those of us used to the Sierra Nevada, the presence of huts means that there is no need to carry tents, stoves and all those snow camping accessories, meaning nice light packs.

The traverse does not involve a lot of step skiing and the pass crossings are short and easy. One does not need to be an expert skier to enjoy this trip and on the layover days we will have a variety of descents to choose from and with a larger group and two guides we can readily split into two parties for the day skis.

The area is easy to get to from Calgary and many airlines fly in here so in a day from home you can be on skis in the Canadian backcountry.

**Itinerary:** We meet in Calgary and travel to the trailhead at Peyto Lake.

Day 0 Arrive in Calgary.

Day 1 First actual day of the trip. We will load up the rental vehicle and drive to the trailhead near Peyto Lake. From here we cross Peyto Lake and make a long climb up to Peyto hut.

Day 2 layover and ski from the Peyto Hut. There are some fun peak ascents and skis from the summits.

Day 3 Travel to the Balfour Hut across the Wapta Icefield

Day 4 layover and ski from the Balfour Hut

Day 5 Travel to the Scott Duncan hut over the Waputik Glacier via a short steep pass crossing.

Day 6 Descend to the trans Canada Highway and get picked up by our shuttle and taken back to Calgary.

**Meeting place and time:** We will arrange a hotel in Calgary or Canmore. Once flight arrival times are confirmed we can best determine where to meet and where we will stay.

**Dates and Prices:** Check the latest brochure, call us or go to our web site for dates and rates. Should minimum participant numbers not be reached you will be given the option of paying our private rate, rescheduling, or cancelling. Price includes transportation from and return to Calgary, two hotel nights, huts, guiding, permits and group ski gear. In town meals are not included.

**Ratios:** One guide and four participants

**Notes and other information:** The best map is "Touring the Wapta Icefields" by Murray Toft.

For a guide book the "Summits and Icefields", Canadian Rockies by Chic Scott will not only give you information on this trip, but offer a lifetime of suggestions for future adventures.

**Prerequisites:** Intermediate to advanced ski skills with the ability to carry a moderately heavy pack.

# Equipment List for Wapta Traverse

The following list is a general guide and will assist you in packing for this program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have specific questions regarding equipment or if you need assistance prior to making a purchase. Please try to pack lightly and compactly. Items on the list with an \* may be rented from SMC.

## **Ski Equipment**

- Ski Boots – Randonée (Alpine Touring) or Telemark. The heaviest, stiffest boots tend to perform better on the downhill, but are less comfortable on the uphill. If buying new boots, be sure that they are comfortable for both touring and turning. A good mid-weight plastic ski boot is ideal. Consider a custom “thermo-fit” boot liner to save weight while adding comfort and warmth.
- Skis – Randonée or Telemark These days both types skis are virtually interchangeable. Most skiers of either type can get by with a modern “midfat” to “fat” ski with mid-range stiffness. Do not bring strictly “touring” skis! Your skis need to be designed specifically for downhill skiing in all conditions. Fatter skis are generally better for turning. If you are strong on the touring but weak on the turning, you might even consider a “super-fat” ski. Have them tuned and check the bindings for tightness.
- Ski Crampons - Ski crampons are an essential. All of the major brands of Randonée bindings offer compatible ski crampons. For Telemark skis, it can be a bit tricky to find this item. The best are made by a French company called Sk'Alp.
- Ski Brakes/Leashes - All skis should be equipped with some type of ski brake or leash. Ski brakes are preferred, if you have the option. If your bindings do not have ski brakes, make sure that you have leashes that are easy to put on and take off.
- Skins - Make sure they cover the width of your ski at the waist. Any more than about 4-5mm narrower than the ski at the width will cause skins to slip on steeper climbs.
- Ski Poles - A two section adjustable pole.

## **Climbing equipment**

- Ice Axe\*. A standard 70 cm. general purpose axe will suffice.
- Harness\*. An adjustable leg loop type such as the Black Diamond Bod or Wild Things Espresso will accommodate layering changes.
- Carabiners\*. Two locking carabiners (Screwgates are more secure than twist lock style and easier to manipulate) and two regular carabiners are required.
- Prussik system. Or bring 20 feet of 6mm cord to make them up.

## **Other essentials**

- Large Pack. A 3000 cubic inch will hold everything for the traverse
- Sleeping Bag. A bag rated to about 0F will be needed.
- A pair of hut shoes

## **Clothing**

- 2 pair synthetic liner socks
- 2 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks
- Gaiters. These should fit snugly over the top of the boots.
- Long underwear top and bottom. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable.
- Pile pants.

- Warm pants. Tights or Expedition weight Capilene
- Warm shirt. Expedition Capilene or light Synchronilla
- Another fuzzy sweater top of some sort
- Pile jacket. The Windstopper fabric works well and is not too bulky.
- Down jacket; synthetic fill is second choice.
- Good quality rain/wind pants and rain jacket. Must be water proof and jacket must have a hood.
- Warm hat that covers the ears.
- Visor hat (for sun).
- Mid to heavyweight capilene or Windstopper gloves.
- Shell gloves or mittens.

## **Etc.**

- Sunglasses, high quality with keeper leash. The type with side shields are recommended. If you wear corrective glasses you might want a second pair.
- Ear plugs for noisy huts.
- Personal kit; tooth brush, etc.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen. A 1oz. bottle will be sufficient.
- Two 1-quart plastic water bottles with insulating jackets
- A pee bottle is far more pleasant than getting out of the tent in the middle of the night. Mark it well though to avoid confusion!!
- Personal first aid kit, foot care, and any required medications. We will have a large group medical kit; go light on your own kit. Bring plenty of blister treatment items.
- Headlamp with extra batteries and bulb.
- Camera, film and spare batteries.
- Eating utensils. Bowl, cup, fork and spoon.
- A Swiss Army type knife

## **Food**

- We will provide breakfast, dinner and lunch but bring some snack items like cliff bars, power bars, gorp concoctions. A days worth for most people would be 2 bars, 3 ounces of gorp, and perhaps a candy bar. Don't over do it.

## **Shared Equipment Provided by SMC**

- Avalanche beacon. Bring yours if you have one
- Snow shovel. Bring yours if you have one.
- Probe. Bring yours if you have one.
- Group first aid kit.

## **You specifically don't need**

- ⊗ Cell phones. They rarely work anyway.
- ⊗ Big first aid kits (we have a comprehensive one)
- ⊗ Deodorant or any toiletries beyond those listed above.