

SKOKI VALLEY GRAND TOUR

Slate Range

**Canadian Rockies,
Banff National Park**

*Alberta and British Columbia,
Canada*

DISTANCE: 28 miles (43 km) round-trip

TIME: 3–4 days

PHYSICAL CHALLENGE: 1 2 3 4 5

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGE: 1 2 3 4 5

STAGING: Lake Louise, Alberta

Tucked away behind the sprawling Lake Louise ski area, in the heart of Alberta's Canadian Rockies, lies the impressive Slate Range. This remote collection of 10,000-foot (3,050-m) peaks harbors some of the best hiking in a part of the world renowned for great hiking. Just beyond Deception Pass and majestic Redoubt Mountain lies the pretty Skoki Valley, a worthy destination in itself but also the gateway to greater backcountry adventure farther afield. There may be no better way to sample the renowned beauty of Banff National Park than to trek through this landscape.

Just getting to Skoki Valley calls for a world-class hiking day. From the end of the Temple Lodge access road, behind the popular ski area, the route works up through the trees into a sprawling open meadow, and from there up to Boulder Pass and the first views of the impressive peaks of the Slate Range beyond. From here, Mount Richardson, Pika Peak, and Ptarmigan Peak form the impossibly dramatic climax of the Slate Range. The route follows the shore of pretty Ptarmigan Lake before climbing steeply up to Deception Pass, the high point on the approach to the valley.



From the pass, the route offers spectacular views of the peaks beyond before dropping into the Skoki Valley. The last few miles come with tantalizing glimpses of the turquoise, glacial-silted waters in Skoki Lakes.

A three- or four-day hike into the heart of the Slate Range makes for perhaps the perfect Canadian



Beyond Deception Pass, the high point on the hike into Skoki Lodge, the views open up into the heart of the Slate Range.

PHOTO BY PETER POTTERFIELD.

Rockies package, allowing for an outstanding back-country journey combined with a bigger sightseeing trip on the drive up. This excursion begins at the Calgary airport and the two-hour drive to the Rockies, which rise in the west like a great, jagged wall as you drive. Stops in laid-back Canmore and busy, precious

Banff itself set you up for the final hour up Highway 93, which becomes the storied Icefields Parkway, to Lake Louise. Call this the quiet corner of the Banff National Park milieu, one where the scenery reigns supreme, and crowds are less concentrated.

A night here in Lake Louise (in the village or a few