

Adapted wilderness adventures

Mobility

Inclusive travel & stay



Two weekend participants at the top of Parkers Ridge in Banff National Park in Alberta, Canada

Summary

Partnering with the Canadian Paraplegic Association in 2011, HI-C-Pacific Mountain began the journey to make wilderness experiences available to travellers on the Ice Fields Parkway in the Alberta Rockies. The passion brought to the project by the people who provide activity services for people with disabilities is an essential component of the initiatives.

For HI-C-PM, after conducting an informal accessibility audit with representatives of Canadian Paraplegic Association (now Paralympic Sports Association), we received financial support via a specialized federal funding program which allowed us to retrofit four hostels.

The first weekend was held in 2013 at HI-Rampart Creek. A second was organized in 2014 to include a new partner, the Rocky Mountain Adaptive Sport Centre (based in Canmore) and a third in 2015 at HI-Athabasca Falls. The ultimate ambition is to see a multi-day hand cycle trip on the iconic Ice Fields Parkway that would include all three of these hostels plus HI-Beauty Creek.

National HI Association

HI Canada

Hostels

HI Hostels in Alberta

SDG Contribution



Objectives

- Create and promote access to wilderness and outdoor activities not currently available to persons with limited mobility
- Increased capacity of the hostelling community to include persons with limited mobility
- Reduce barriers by retrofitting and renovating existing buildings and facilities at our wilderness hostels to accommodate persons with limited mobility and an interest in benefiting from outdoor and wilderness experiences.
- Help to break down myths about the capabilities of persons with a disability.
- Facilitate access to wilderness and the outdoors, in turn, to all the physical, emotional and mental health and well being benefits that come with exposure to nature and wilderness.

Economic

Hostels open for all
Opportunities for service providers

Social

Inclusive initiative
Community development

Environmental

Low impact activities
Nature enjoyed by all

Key messages:

- These initiatives are reliant on partnerships with organizations that specialize in providing supported outdoor and adventure activities for persons with disabilities.
- It is important to highlight the level of accessibility and the type of experience. I.E. Ours does not aspire to appeal to independent individuals, rather to groups that organize supported activities for people with disabilities.
- The weekends provide everyone with an opportunity to learn and to breakdown myths of what is possible for people with disabilities.
- The hostel settings are natural venues for the usual conversations and exchanges with others not part of the group, becoming another element in hostelling's diverse fabric.

Testimonials:

Before we started this initiative, here's what our accessibility auditor said: *"As we explored the potential, the key was a spirit of open communication. Everyone's eyes, mine included, were opened to possibilities. We schemed and dreamed up grand and simple solutions that are no longer whimsy, but material improvements that extend mine and others' global freedom just a bit further."*



Here are some participant testimonials:

“What a wonderful weekend in the clean fresh air of the mountains. Couldn't believe I was rock climbing and using an outhouse. Hope we do it again next year. It's adventures like this that make you feel less handicapped and more positive. Thanks for that”

“I never thought I would stay at a hostel due to accessibility, after staying at the HI Rampart Creek hostel it opened my eyes. I am looking forward to traveling more and staying at more accessible hostels. It's a wonderful way to travel cheap and to meet new people.”

“It was fun. I liked the hiking best. The rest was pretty awesome too. “

“I was quite surprised how accessible cabins, kitchen even toilets were”.

“This was an AMAZING trip! My first time in the Trail Rider. I hope to be invited to do this again soon!”

Technical details

Target audience: Organizations that promote and provide outdoor activities for persons with disabilities.

Reach: National

Frequency: Currently once or twice a year, hopefully this will grow.

Duration: Adapted activity weekends usually are held over two days.

Risks: Normal risks in offering accommodation to groups

Partners involved: Paralympic Sports Association and the Rocky Mountain Adaptive Sport Centre

Communication plan: Communications and promotions are directly with organizations that promote and provide outdoor activities for persons with disabilities.

Estimated number of participants: There are usually 10 to 20 people involved in a weekend. Half of those are family members and/or volunteer support

Would like to know more about this initiative?

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Read more about HI Canada's Sustainability initiatives [here](#)

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Experience at Rampart Creek Wilderness Hostel, summer 2013:

Last summer (2013) we had the opportunity to stay and play at Hostelling International's [Rampart Creek Wilderness Hostel](#). What made this an extra special trip was that we were a part of a group of people with various physical disabilities.

Through the Canadian Paraplegic Association's [Adapted Adventures](#) program, we travelled from Edmonton, AB to HI-Rampart Creek from July 19th to 21st 2013. Our group included three individuals with a high level spinal cord injury, two people that have had fairly severe strokes and two people with cerebral palsy. Together, with the help of volunteers we were able to rock climb, cycle and hike all while enjoying the mountains.



HI-Rampart Creek Wilderness Hostel was recently renovated to become more accessible to those with limited mobility. We had multiple wheelchair users in our group and with the addition of ramps, accessible washrooms and accommodating staff we were able to experience all that the hostelling environment had to offer!

We had a fun filled weekend planned that started in the main cabin over homemade lasagna, fresh salad and chocolate cake. Mmmm! The cabin provided a perfect starting point to this adventure, symbolizing the many opportunities that were to come!

We took full advantage of the overhanging rock face at the hostel's site for our adapted rock climbing. Each individual was able to climb in an outdoor environment for the first time. Quick modifications and the help of a talented guide from the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) provided our group with a unique and positive climbing experience.





The location of the hostel was very close to a large number of hikes and activities in the surrounding area. We hiked Parker Ridge, located only a few minutes down the road from HI-Rampart Creek. For our participants who use wheelchairs, we used a device called the TrailRider. This device allows anyone to go off the concrete paths and into trails full of rocks, roots and switchbacks. Each TrailRider is propelled by two “sherpas”, or volunteers who walk with the device up the trail. Each participant was able to see the scenery and socialize with our group while climbing a mountain regardless of their mobility challenges.



The last activity of the trip was adapted cycling. With the mountains providing a perfect backdrop to the scene, participants were able to cycle using handcycles, adult tricycles and wheelchair attachment cycles. Each participant was able to try the bike out and go for a ride.

This trip was an enormous success. Hostelling International made it possible to allow more individuals with mobility challenges to experience the beauty of the mountain environment. We were able to introduce the group to activities that were new and exciting like hiking up a mountain or climbing a rock face. The volunteers, HI staff, Adapted Adventures staff and participants made this weekend possible!

