

Lake O'Hara Bus Service Enhanced for 2004

— Bill Overend, Exploring Canada Tours

Bus service into Lake O'Hara is being operated this year by Exploring Canada Tours Inc., which is in its second season as operator of shuttle buses to Lake O'Hara.

In response to user surveys conducted in 2003, the company has introduced a number of service enhancements for 2004. The most obvious change is the bus schedule. Through consultation with Parks Canada and the O'Hara community, extra capacity has been scheduled for the afternoon return shuttles from the Lake. This should alleviate waits that some area users experienced on peak volume days in 2003. The scheduling change does not expand Parks Canada user quotas for O'Hara, but re-aligns bus service capacity with the times area users prefer to depart from Lake O'Hara.

The company's focus will be to continue to provide safe, efficient, prompt, and courteous transportation services to and from the Lake, under a contract agreed with Parks Canada in 2003. Exploring Canada Tours managers and staff are members of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club and the company is proud to be a donor to the club for the second year.

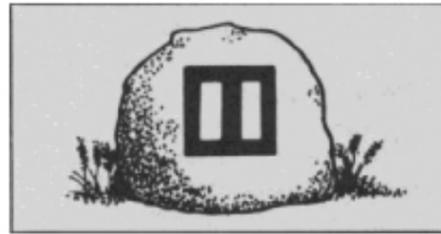
For summer 2004 the bus service to O'Hara operates from Friday June 18 to Sunday Oct. 3 between the Trans-Canada Highway and the Lake. All reservations for the service, which costs \$15 for adults and \$7.50 for youths 6-16, will continue to go through Parks Canada (the number is 250-343-6433). The full bus schedule is available on the web at <http://www.pc.gc.ca/pnnp/bc/yoho/>.

The company is again inviting rider feedback on its service levels. Rider feedback is one component of the drivers' bonus pay. Comment cards are available on the buses and may be left in drop boxes located both in the base staging area (at the parking lot) and Le Relais at the Lake.

More information on Exploring Canada Tours can be found at:

www.exploringcanada.com

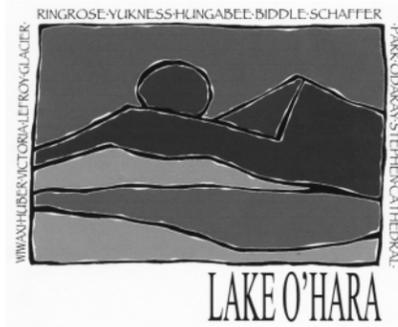
When You See This Symbol...



Rocks painted with a blue and yellow symbol mark the way on alpine routes. These routes are exposed and steep and are most suited for experienced hikers. Please exercise judgement before embarking on one of these alpine routes and ensure that all members in your party are sufficiently experienced and properly equipped to enjoy this route safely.

Order the 2004 Trails Club T-Shirt by Mail!

To commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the opening of Le Relais day shelter, the Club is re-issuing the T-shirt design from 1989. This was one of our most popular shirt designs.



If you are not visiting the lake this year, you don't have to miss out. You can obtain yours by mail. For Canadian orders, send your cheque or money order for C\$30 (shipping and handling included) to:

Lake O'Hara Trails Club
Box 98, Lake Louise, AB T0L 1E0
Canada

For US or international orders, please send a bank draft or postal money order for US\$30 to the same address.

Receive Your Newsletter by Email

Mailing the newsletter is the Club's single most expensive administrative cost. To reduce printing and postage costs, the Club is making newsletters available over the internet. Members can help the club reduce its newsletter expenses by registering on our new web site www.lotc.ca to receive the current newsletter by e-mail. Check the Club's web site for back-issues of the Club's annual newsletter, as well as for more immediate and current information between newsletters.

You Can Make a Difference!

The Lake O'Hara Trails Club is funded with proceeds from sale of memberships and merchandise. The Club also relies heavily on donations to support its activities. If you are interested in helping us in our endeavours by making a donation, please make your donation in person at Le Relais or send your cheque or money order to:

Lake O'Hara Trails Club
Box 98 Lake Louise, AB. T0L 1E0.

Your donation is tax-deductible. The Trails Club is a registered non-profit organisation and receipts will be issued by mail. Unless you request otherwise, donors will be recognised in our donation album housed in Le Relais.

Would You Like to Join Us?

Life membership in the Lake O'Hara Trails Club is available at Le Relais for a mere \$25. For this you will receive this newsletter annually and help support club activities in the Lake O'Hara area.

ANNUAL MEETING

The 2004 Annual Meeting of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club will be held at Le Relais at 8:30 p.m. on Monday, August 9, 2004

Agenda will be posted on the website www.lotc.ca by July 30, 2004

All Members Welcome!

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O'Hara 2004

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Bus & Reservation Changes

— Beth Weaver, Supervisor, Parks Canada

Parks Canada's Lake O'Hara staff extends a warm welcome to new and returning visitors to this special place in Yoho National Park. While the spirit of Lake O'Hara is timeless, we continue to refine our customer services to improve reservation and on-site services.

Based on your feedback, and with input from the Lake O'Hara Trails Club, the Alpine Club of Canada and Lake O'Hara Lodge, we've made improvements to this season's bus schedule. Every day, two buses will depart from the O'Hara parking lot at 08:30, 10:30, 15:30 and 17:30, and two buses will return from Le Relais at 09:30, 16:30 and 18:30. To provide an early afternoon departure, a single bus will depart from Le Relais at 11:30 and 14:30. All departures from Lake O'Hara are first-come, first-served.

Another important change relates to our 24-hour Lake O'Hara bookings. Parks Canada reserves six day-use seats and three to five campsites for 24-hour bookings. In the past, these places could be reserved only in person. To open up this opportunity to more people, these places can now be reserved only by telephone. Twenty-four hour bookings can be made the day before you wish to visit O'Hara. Please call the O'Hara Reservation line: 250.343.6433, open daily from 8am to 12pm and 1pm to 4pm. Each caller may reserve either two day-use places, or one campsite. We anticipate these places will still go quickly, so be sure to have a back-up plan.

Parks Canada's Lake O'Hara Team is responsible for the management and operation of the O'Hara reservation system and the park facilities at Lake O'Hara. We value the opportunity to meet each visitor in person at the bus. This allows us to provide you with current information, answers to your questions and advice on how you can help protect this unique wilderness environment.

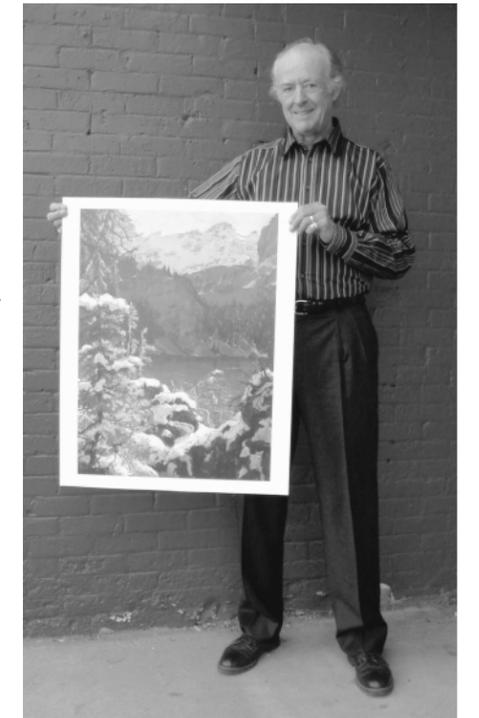
Fund Raising with Champagne Gift

— Lisa Shea, LOTC

Trails Club activities are funded by income from Le Relais sales, membership fees and the generous donations of our members and the public. One such donation in kind has come from Horace Champagne, Quebec artist, Trails Club director, and long time friend of the O'Hara community. Horace has generously donated four beautiful lithographs of the O'Hara area to the Club to assist with fundraising efforts.

We will be conducting a raffle for one of the framed prints this summer. Tickets will be available at Le Relais. If you aren't able to make it up to Lake O'Hara this summer, you can still get in on the raffle by contacting us at odaray@hotmail.com. Raffle details will also be posted on the Lake O'Hara Trails Club web site (www.lotc.ca).

Plans for how best to use the remaining prints are being considered. We are exploring several options. Check the website in late summer for an update on our plans.



Horace Champagne with donated print.
Photo courtesy of Masters Gallery

Your 2004 Parks Canada O'Hara Team includes:

Lorraine Zirke
Susan Devlin
Melanie Wood
Beth Weaver, Supervisor

Please continue to provide your comments and suggestions to help us improve the reservation and bus service. Feedback forms are available on the bus. More information on Lake O'Hara can be found at:

www.parkscanada.gc.ca/yoho

In summary, 2004 bus schedule is as follows. Number in parentheses indicates number of buses.

Bus Schedule 2004

Inbound	Outbound
from O'Hara parking lot	from Le Relais day shelter
8:30 AM (2)	9:30 AM (2)
10:30 AM (2)	11:30 AM (1)
3:30 PM (2)	2:30 PM (1)
5:30 PM (2)	4:30 PM (2)
	6:30 PM (2)



EAST OPABIN TRAIL WORK

— Stan Munn, LOTC

Those of you who hiked the East Opabin trail in 2003 are aware of last spring's avalanche that destroyed the suspension bridge. Parks Canada responded quickly, sending two trails crews to construct two temporary bridges and rehabilitate a washed-out section of very old, abandoned trail between the two bridges. The work was a temporary fix to ensure the trail would be in use for the 2003 season. The Trails Club

has been collaborating with Parks Canada in planning permanent remedial work to replace the section of trail made redundant by the loss of the bridge. As this newsletter went to press, plans had been agreed for a trail crew to build a new East Opabin trail alignment early in the 2004 season. The work will be funded by a grant from the Trails Club to Parks Canada, and will be managed by Don Gardner, whose expertise in trail design is well known and respected. Cost of the proposed new trail is

estimated to be in the order of \$10,000.

Construction of a new bridge in place of the old was deemed unworkable because of more stringent design and construction standards (driven by health-safety-environment standards and legal concerns) imposed on Parks Canada since the original suspension bridge was built. These standards make a replacement prohibitively expensive. The old bridge had lasted 17 years and was, at the time of its demise, already in need of potentially costly remedial work. Most of the debris from the bridge was removed by Parks Canada late in the 2003 season, and remaining cleanup will be completed when the new trail is constructed. Parks Canada bore the cost of temporary trail construction in 2003 at a cost of over \$2000 plus cleanup.

Several alternative trail alignments were thoroughly considered before arriving at a plan to build a short 275 metre section of new trail up the east side of the Opabin Creek drainage. The new trail will extend from the lakeshore to link with a 100-metre segment of previously-abandoned old trail that exists below the former suspension bridge. The temporary trail used in 2003 made use of this pre-existing trail from the east abutment of the suspension bridge down to a temporary bridge across the eastern creek branch. There, the temporary trail adopted an old, abandoned trail alignment which traversed the Opabin Creek alluvial fan between the east and west branches of the creek. Another temporary bridge across the western creek branch connected to the established trail down to the lake shore. Thus, the loss of the suspension bridge has eliminated the section of trail across the boulder field to the west of the bridge. Experienced area visitors have told us they do not miss the boulder field or the suspension bridge, popular as they may have been with some younger hikers.

The temporary trail built in 2003 was not considered a viable permanent replacement. The old trail between the two temporary bridges is a natural drainage channel and would very likely require repairs every year. It was made useable in

2003 only after an extensive cleanup of old flood damage. Furthermore, the two bridges over the creek branches would be at the mercy of spring runoff, and would likely require costly annual maintenance if not replacement. Removable bridges are impractical for the East Opabin area. Parks Canada budgets have been under increasing pressure in recent years, necessitating a low maintenance solution. The anticipated annual cleanup and bridge maintenance costs, whether borne by Parks Canada or by grants from the Trails Club, would divert moneys from more permanent and beneficial trail maintenance that the area is sure to need in the future. Long-standing members may recall that the suspension bridge was originally built to eliminate this seasonal problem on the lower trail. The new trail alignment is a better solution to an old problem; it will be virtually maintenance-free into the future compared to all alternatives.

A group of Trails Club directors walked the alignment of the proposed trail with Parks Canada's Back Country Trails Manager Kim Baines, and together considered alternative trail alignments and

their pros and cons. Parks Canada agreed with the Club's concern that new trail construction should be designed to minimize the visual impact of the new trail at lake level, particularly from vantage points on the northern and eastern shores of Lake O'Hara. The new trail will lie beneath tall trees on a mossy slope along the eastern edge of the Opabin alluvial fan. Constructed will be completed with minimal disturbance. Soil and plant cover will be conserved for reuse in rehabilitation and construction. The new trail should improve access to Opabin for hikers who found the suspension bridge and boulder field difficult to negotiate. It will also minimise seasonal flood damage and the cost of annual cleanup. While the crew is working in the area, the Club is also fund the repair of a short section of the Adeline Link Lakeshore Trail where it is subject to seasonal high water near the new East Opabin trailhead.

The Trails Club wishes to thank Parks Canada for its gracious incorporation of the club's input to the planning process for the new trail.



The remains of the East Opabin Suspension Bridge in June 2003. Parks Canada photo.

2004: A Year of Anniversaries and a New Focus on the Future

— Stan Munn, LOTC

This year, the Lake O'Hara Trails Club marks its 55th anniversary. The Club came into being on August 18, 1949 and was initially led by Dr. George K. K. Link of Chicago, Mr. Harry Green of Winnipeg and Mr. Carson Simpson of Philadelphia. All three gentlemen were frequent visitors to Lake O'Hara and were active in early "unofficial" construction of trails, many of which remain in use today. According to original documentation, the Club was organised "to enhance co-operation between the Yoho National Park, authorities in Ottawa and the Club to maintain and extend the system of trails."

Twenty-five years ago, the Lake O'Hara Trails Club logo "Preservation through Appreciation", shown at the end of this newsletter, was introduced. The logo was originally commissioned by Club Director Tim Wake and designed by Merle McKnight, of Lake Louise. It made its first appearance in the header of the 1979 Newsletter. The "Preservation Through Appreciation" Logo will be featured on the Club's annual T-shirt.

Twenty years ago, in 1984, the "Do Not Step on the Flowers" logo was introduced by the Club as both a pin and an embroidered patch. The design has proven to be popular; you have probably seen it elsewhere in the

mountain parks. The Club is planning to re-introduce this logo for sale as a pin. Watch for it at Le Relais.

Fifteen years ago, on September 3 1989, the Club opened the Le Relais day shelter. To commemorate this anniversary, the Club is re-issuing the 1989 T-shirt design, one of the most popular shirt designs. The T-shirt can be purchased for \$25 (Canadian) at Le Relais. You can also obtain one by mail. For Canadian orders, send your cheque or money order for C\$30 (shipping & handling included) to Lake O'Hara Trails Club, Box 98, Lake Louise, AB, T0L 1E0, Canada. For US or international orders, please send a bank draft or postal money order for US\$30 to the same address.

2004 will see significant trail work on the East Opabin Trail and along the adjacent Lakeshore Trail. Members have called attention to trail erosion and maintenance issues elsewhere on the Lake O'Hara trail network. The Trails Club has invited Parks Canada to participate in a new audit of trail conditions to determine the basis for a five-year work plan to address these and other trail design and maintenance issues. The final stage of this planning process for the club will involve a funding plan.

Walk Softly

— reprinted from 1992 newsletter

It's hard to imagine that one person hiking a trail could do much damage, but how about the 120 people a day over 100 days a year that visit O'Hara? The area's flower-strewn meadows and lake shores – its most-loved and visited destinations – are the most vulnerable to damage, and 12,000 people add up to potential disaster. The way you hike makes an enormous difference.

- Remain on the trail no matter what the conditions. Microhabitat alongside the trail is fragile. Hikers who choose the upper edges of the trail to keep their feet dry create furrows where erosion can get a start. Soon a series of parallel rutted paths develop, encouraging hikers to walk abreast. Eventually, wide, trampled trails result. Short cutting on switchbacks also creates new paths for erosion. Take pride in getting your boots wet or muddy.
- Wear runners or lightweight, waterproof hiking boots when hiking in the meadows and lake shores. A heavy sole damages the soil base.
- Pack out all garbage and leftover food, but leave flowers and other natural objects behind for all to enjoy.
- Be considerate of the other hikers. Noise pollution from groups larger than about six people, radios and tape recorders are intrusions that can ruin a wilderness experience.

