

# Lake Agnes



Lake Agnes is hidden in a hanging valley high above Lake Louise. It has been one of the Canadian Rockies' most popular hikes ever since Lady Susan Agnes Macdonald, wife of Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, hitched up her skirt and scrambled to its shores in 1890.

**THE HIKE:** The trail to Lake Agnes begins at the same point as the [Lake Louise Shoreline Trail](#)—to get to the official trailhead, follow the paved trail in front of the Fairmont Chateau

Lake Louise north 200 metres (0.1 miles) to the trail sign, but instead of walking along the shoreline, take the trail leading uphill to the right.

The initial climb allows open views across Lake Louise and then for the next 30 minutes you'll be following a broad, moderately graded trail through dense subalpine forest. After 1.7 kilometres (1 mile) the first switchback marks a break in the trees where you have a clear view down to the pale turquoise waters

## NEED TO KNOW

**LENGTH:** 3.5 km (2.2 miles) one-way

**ELEVATION GAIN:** 405 metres (1,330 feet)

**WALKING TIME:** 1 to 1.5 hours one-way

**RATING:** easy/moderate

**TRAILHEAD:** In front of the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise

of Lake Louise.

Another 800 metres (0.5 miles) of steady uphill walking brings you to Mirror Lake—a tiny sink lake that takes its name from its round looking-glass appearance. The dark, layered cliffs of Big Beehive loom above, and, in the gap to the right, the roof of Lake Agnes Tea House is just visible.

By taking the [Plain of the Six Glaciers](#) highline trail to the left at the Mirror Lake junction, you can make a direct ascent to Lake Agnes via a steep trail that traverses the rockslide beneath Big Beehive. (This short cut branches right from the highline trail 150 metres/0.1 miles beyond this junction.) But if this steep trail is wet, icy or snowy, avoid it and follow the traditional route that branches right at Mirror Lake (it's only 200 metres/0.1 miles longer). Regardless of which option you choose, the

journey to Lake Agnes is completed on one of two steep, wooden staircases that surmount a cliff band beside the waterfall created by the lake's outlet stream.

**THE DESTINATION:** Arriving at the narrow opening where Lake Agnes tumbles from its basin, the entire length of the lake suddenly appears, stretching westward to a jagged backdrop created by Mounts Whyte (2,983 metres/9,787 feet) and Niblock (2,976 metres/9,764 feet).

Lake Agnes Teahouse sits atop the cliff on the north side of the outlet stream overlooking the lake. The original teahouse was constructed in the early 1900s and the present-day version was built in 1981. It serves refreshments and light snacks from mid-June to early October and is one of the attractions for many who do this hike. While its covered porch is a relaxing place to sit and admire the view, it is usually very busy. (We like to stop there shortly after it opens at 10 am or just before 6 pm closing to avoid the crowds.) The area surrounding Lake Agnes abounds with wildlife of the upper subalpine forest, especially those species that like to be where people are eating. Least chipmunks, golden-mantled ground squirrels, Clark's nutcrackers and grey jays congregate around the teahouse porch and beg for food. (Don't feed them! They do well enough from the crumbs they find on the ground.) The hoary marmots and pikas, who whistle and cheep from the rocky slopes above the lakeshore, are somewhat less corrupted by humanity.

**OPTIONS:** For those keen to hike beyond the lake, there are options for energetic souls, including side-trips to the summits of [Little Beehive](#) and [Big Beehive](#). You can also complete a full day circuit by crossing over the Big Beehive to the [Plain of the Six Glaciers](#).



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