Six ways to see the *mountains* most travellers *miss.*

Perched on a 4,200-foot plateau along Highway 40, the Hamlet of Grande Cache is Alberta's hidden mountain gem.

Surrounded by 21 mountain peaks, two stunning river valleys, and the only public gateway to the expansive 4,600 km² Willmore Wilderness Park, it's a destination where adventure, solitude, and unforgettable scenery come together.

Whether you have a weekend or several days, these six itineraries invite you to experience the best of Grande Cache at a relaxed pace, with time to discover hidden gems, scenic viewpoints, and outdoor adventures along the way.

Grande Cache At a Glance

Elevation	*4,200 feet above sea level*
Trail Network	*2,700+ kilometres of trails*
Mountain Peaks	*21 named summits visible*
To Jasper	*2 hours via Hwy 40 & 16*
To Edmonton	*4 ½ hours via Hwy 40 & 16*

Day 1: Arrive, Ascend, Unwind

Three Days of Summer

A classic first-visit blend — iconic viewpoints, a riverside day, and the Willmore Wilderness gateway.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	First time visitors
LENGTH	3 days, 2 nights
SEASON	Late May - September
PACE	Moderate
HOME BASE	Grande Cache

Day 1: Arrive, Ascend, Unwind

Afternoon — Settle in on the plateau. Roll into town and head straight for the Tourism & Interpretive Centre on Highway 40. Staff know every trail and river crossing worth knowing about. The on-site museum covers ice-age fossils, dinosaur trackways, and the fur-trade history that gave the area its name. Outside, the Bird's Eye View Interpretive Park has trails, murals, and a life-size replica of the elevated cache Ignace Giasson built between 1818 and 1821.

Late afternoon — Lakes Trail warm-up. The 5-km route drops from the edge of town to Victor Lake, follows the canal across to Grande Cache Lake, and ends at a quiet beach with the Rockies reflected in the water.

Evening — The prime rib tradition. Grande Cache has built a quiet reputation among Alberta locals for serving a standout prime rib. A celebratory dinner at High Country Steak & Ale (inside the Grande Cache Hotel) is the right way to start a mountain trip. Book ahead on weekends.

Day 2: The Big Views Day

Three Days of Summer

A classic first-visit blend — iconic viewpoints, a riverside day, and the Willmore Wilderness gateway.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	First time visitors
LENGTH	3 days, 2 nights
SEASON	Late May - September
PACE	Moderate
HOME BASE	Grande Cache

Day 2: The Big Views Day

Morning — Sulphur Gates & the Crack of Doom.
A short drive north of town brings you to the Sulphur Gates staging area, the main gateway to Willmore Wilderness Park. The main lookout delivers four cliff-top viewing platforms above the confluence of the Smoky and Sulphur rivers. Continue to Eaton Falls (3.5 km one way), or tackle the dramatically named Crack of Doom — a narrow cleft in the rock that's become a local icon.

Midday — Lunch in town & the Labyrinth.
Casual lunch at a cafe or Mountainview Family Restaurant, then walk off the meal at Labyrinth Park — a contemplative stone labyrinth near the edge of the hamlet.

Afternoon — Summit Mount Louie.
Of the summits within reach of town, Mount Louie (1,844 m) is the friendliest first peak — 5.5 km one way up a northwest ridge, four to six hours return. Bring layers, water, and bear spray; you're in grizzly country.

Evening — Golf Course Sunset.
Wind down on the patio at Grande Cache Golf and Country Club.

Insider Tip:

Sulphur Gates & Crack of Doom
Go early. The light hits the canyon walls best before 10 a.m. Parking is easier, and you'll often have the lookouts to yourself.

Day 3: Rivers, Roads, and the Goodbye

Three Days of Summer

A classic first-visit blend — iconic viewpoints, a riverside day, and the Willmore Wilderness gateway.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	First time visitors
LENGTH	3 days, 2 nights
SEASON	Late May - September
PACE	Moderate
HOME BASE	Grande Cache

Day 3: Rivers, Roads, and the Goodbye

Morning — Whitewater on the Sulphur

If you only do one guided activity in Grande Cache, make it a half-day rafting trip. Wild Blue Yonder, based on Hoppe Avenue, is an established local operator that runs Class I–IV trips suitable for first-timers and families. Book in advance — seats fill through July and August.

Afternoon - The Slow Drive South

Pick up a coffee at The Coffee House and drive Highway 40 south. The 30-minute detour to Pierre Grey's Lakes Provincial Park is well worth the time: a chain of five small lakes holding rainbow, brook, and bull trout, a historic trading-post site, and a quiet picnic spot. Only electric motors are allowed in the water, which keeps the place properly quiet.

Day 1: Into the Interpretive Landscape

Weekend in the Wilderness

Backcountry immersion — horseback through Willmore, fossil-rich exhibits, and golden-hour at the Crack of Doom.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	Backcountry-curious travellers
LENGTH	2 ½ days, 2 nights
SEASON	Mid June - Mid September
PACE	Moderate to active
HOME BASE	Grande Cache

Day 1: Into the Interpretive Landscape

Morning — Fossils, traplines, and trackways.
Begin at the Tourism & Interpretive Centre — a compact museum covering years of Grande Cache history. If you have time for a second cultural stop, the Willmore Wilderness Foundation keeps an office in downtown Grande Cache with a 250-year archive of the Canadian Rockies, plus books and the acclaimed 13-part Canadian Rockies Series on DVD.

Afternoon — Walk the Griffiths Trail.
Versatile network with options from 1.5 to 15 kilometers. If the weather turns, two Indigenous-owned operators offer hands-on workshops: Ochitow Lifestyle & Design runs hide-tanning and beadwork sessions year-round, and Holistic Habits offers wellness workshops featuring locally harvested plants.

Evening — Settle in at a local lodge.
Grande Cache Inn & Suites, or the Grande Cache Hotel, for the full mountain-town feel.

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Day 2: The Wilderness Day

Weekend in the Wilderness

Backcountry immersion — horseback through Willmore, fossil-rich exhibits, and golden-hour at the Crack of Doom.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	Backcountry-curious travellers
LENGTH	2 ½ days, 2 nights
SEASON	Mid June - Mid September
PACE	Moderate to Active
HOME BASE	Grande Cache or Staging Area Camp

Day 2: The Wilderness Day

Today is the reason you came. Willmore Wilderness Park is 4,600 km² of fully protected, non-motorized Rocky Mountain landscape immediately north of Jasper. There are no bridges, no maintained signage — but over 750 km of traditional trails.

A day trip on horseback from Sulpher Gates is the single most rewarding way to experience Willmore in a short window. Three outfitters: High Country Vacations (traditional pack-horse trips), Indian Trail Adventures (Indigenous-owned, named for a centuries-old route), and Elk Ridge Quarter Horses (1.5–5 hour rides at UBAR Ranch). For a premium alternative, Indigenous Tours with Lauren Moberly offers helicopter tours over the traditional territory of the Rocky Mountain People — year-round, and one of the only ways to see the high alpine without a multi-day pack trip.

Evening — Sulphur Gates at Golden Hour

Finish at the lookouts with a sandwich and a thermos. Between 8 and 9 p.m. in July, the canyon walls turn a colour that's hard to describe and almost impossible to photograph well.

Insider Tip: Willmore Wilderness Park allows only foot, horse, and mountain-bike travel — no motorized vehicles, no drones, no leaving anything behind. Cell service ends at the parking area. File a trip plan, carry bear spray, and treat all natural water.

Day 3: Quiet Morning, Slow Departure

Weekend in the Wilderness

Backcountry immersion — horseback through Willmore, fossil-rich exhibits, and golden-hour at the Crack of Doom.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	Backcountry-curious travellers
LENGTH	2 ½ days, 2 nights
SEASON	Mid June - Mid September
PACE	Moderate to Active
HOME BASE	Grande Cache or Staging Area Camp

Day 3: Quiet Morning, Slow Departure

Morning - Lakes Trail.
Ease into the last day with the Lakes Trail to Victor Lake and Grande Cache Lake. Small-town quiet, with locals walking dogs and the occasional morning paddler.

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Midday — Central Park & Labyrinth.
Stop at Central Park (Hoppe Avenue and Shand Avenue), then a final walk at Labyrinth Park. If you have a few hours to spare, pick up the One Day Historical Driving Tour brochure at the Interpretive Centre — a nine-stop self-guided route through the area's fur-trade and coal-mining past.

Day 1: Track-Set Trails & Lake Ice

Winter Wonderland

Two days of Nordic skiing, ice fishing, and chinook-warmed snowmobile trails at Pierre Grey's Lakes.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	Nordic skiers, ice anglers, snowmobilers
LENGTH	2 days, 1 night
SEASON	December - March (best January - February)
PACE	Moderate - Cold Weather Kit Required
HOME BASE	Grande Cache Hamlet

Day 1: Track-Set Trails & Lake Ice

Early morning — Start at the Interpretive Centre. Staff are your best single source for current ski-trail grooming, ice-thickness notes, chinook warnings - all of which change daily in winter.

Morning — Pierre Grey's Lakes by cross-country ski. 30 minutes south on Highway 40. The Smoky River Nordic Ski Club volunteers set approximately 15 km of classic tracked trails through forested loops. Beginner to advanced, with a warm-up shack in the McDonald camping area. No cell service - plan to arrive self-sufficient.

Afternoon — Ice fishing. Pack a flask of something warm. Pierre Grey's lakes are stocked with rainbow, brook, and bull trout, and the chain is especially photogenic in winter light. Know your species before you keep anything.

Evening — Stargazing. Dinner at Smoky River Grill or Dragon Palace. Then head to the edge of the hamlet (golf-course parking lot or Sulphur Gates road) for stargazing. Dark-sky tourism is an emerging draw in the Northern Rockies, and a cold, clear February night here will show you why. Bring a blanket, a red-filter headlamp, and a thermos.

Insider Tip: Grande Cache sits in Chinook country — winds can arrive quickly, and 20-degree temperature swings in an afternoon are not unusual. Avoid alpine terrain if a chinook is forecast.

Day 2: Snow Trails & Warm Rooms

Winter Wonderland

Two days of Nordic skiing, ice fishing, and chinook-warmed snowmobile trails at Pierre Grey's Lakes.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	Nordic skiers, ice anglers, snowmobilers
LENGTH	2 days, 1 night
SEASON	December - March (best January - February)
PACE	Moderate - Cold Weather Kit Required
HOME BASE	Grande Cache Hamlet

Day 2: Snow Trails & Warm Rooms

Morning - Snowshoe the Griffiths Trail. The same trail network that's busy in summer is gloriously empty in winter. Most of it is suitable for snowshoeing or fat-biking, with the Sulphur Rim section a particular favourite for the canyon views.

Afternoon — The Recreation Centre. Warm up at the Grande Cache Recreation Centre — leisure pool with waves, a water slide, sauna, steam room, and hot tub. The Grotta climbing cave (climbing wall) is a hit with families. A perfect way to thaw out before the drive home.

Day 1: Lakes & Picnics

Family Mountain Getaway

A two-day plan for families with kids — short trails, interpretive exhibits, and the Spray Park at Central Park.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	Families with kids 4–12
LENGTH	2 days, 1night
SEASON	June – early September
PACE	Easy, kid-led
HOME BASE	Hamlet of Grande Cache

Day 1: Lakes & Picnics

Morning — The Drive In.
Break up the drive with a picnic stop at Pierre Grey's Lakes Provincial Park, 30 minutes south of Grande Cache. Kids love the short lakeshore loops, and there's a historic trading-post site that turns the stop into a small geography lesson. The five lakes hold rainbow, brook, and bull trout — if you brought a fishing rod, this is the spot.

Afternoon — Grande Cache Tourism & Interpretive Centre.
The Centre is the easiest indoor-outdoor activity in town. Kids respond particularly well to the dinosaur trackway exhibit, the full animal mounts, and the ice-age fossils
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Evening — Spray Park & Supper.
Central Park's Spray Park is the secret weapon of Grande Cache parenting in July. Pizza for supper: Joe's Pizza Stone, Vegas Pizza, or Grande Cache Pizza all deliver.

Day 2: Short Trails & The Drive Home

Family Mountain Getaway

A two-day plan for families with kids — short trails, interpretive exhibits, and the Spray Park at Central Park.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	Families with kids 4–12
LENGTH	2 days, 1night
SEASON	June–early September
PACE	Easy, kid-led
HOME BASE	Hamlet of Grande Cache

Day 2: Short Trails & The Drive Home

Morning — Lakes Trail then Grande Cache Lake. The Lakes Trail is the right length for kids — 5 km mostly downhill or flat, ending at the natural beach at Grande Cache Lake. Bring towels; on a warm day they'll want to swim.

Midday — Easy lunch & the Recreation Centre. Subway or A&W for picnic ease. Then the Grande Cache Recreation Centre's leisure pool and wave pool and slide before the drive home — one last good wear-out.

Day 1: Acclimatize & First Summit

Adventure Seeker's Four Days

For the athletic traveller— multiple summits, whitewater, and a Death Race training circuit.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	Athletic travellers, peak baggers
LENGTH	4 days, 3 nights
SEASON	June–early September
PACE	Hard · trail-fit traveller
HOME BASE	Hamlet of Grande Cache

Day 1: Acclimatize & First Summit

Morning — Sulphur Gates & Eaton Falls.
Walk the Sulphur Gates platforms, then push on to Eaton Falls (3.5 km one way). Light morning effort; saves the legs.

Afternoon — Mount Louie.
Head to Mount Louie (1,844 m, 5.5 km one way) via the Cowlick Creek staging area. The friendliest of the Grande Cache summits — four to six hours for most fit hikers. Back in Grande Cache, a light afternoon run on the Griffiths Trail adds a shakeout. While you're at the Interpretive Centre, pick up a Passport to the Peaks booklet — the 21-summit hiking program is built for trips exactly like this one. Peaks are divided into Bronze, Silver, and Gold tiers by difficulty, and each summit has a cairn box with a stamp. Complete a tier, and you earn a distinctive pin (for purchase), with your accomplishment recognized back at the Grande Cache Tourism & Interpretive Centre.

Adventure Seeker's Four Days

For the athletic traveller— multiple summits, whitewater, and a Death Race training circuit.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	Athletic travellers, peak baggers
LENGTH	4 days, 3 nights
SEASON	June–early September
PACE	Hard · trail-fit traveller
HOME BASE	Hamlet of Grande Cache

Day 2: Big Day - Mount Hamell

Mount Hamell (2,011 m) is the highest summit in the Death Race course and a real day for trail-fit hikers — 9.8 km one way via the back route, with extended scrambling near the top. Allow 8–10 hours car to car. Carry a full litre of water per two hours, real food, and bear spray. Register your trip plan with someone who isn't on the mountain.

Insider Tip: If a chinook arrives mid-day, turn around. The summit ridge is exposed and the wind drops body temperature fast even in July.

Adventure Seeker's Four Days

For the athletic traveller— multiple summits, whitewater, and a Death Race training circuit.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	Athletic travellers, peak baggers
LENGTH	4 days, 3 nights
SEASON	June–early September
PACE	Hard · trail-fit traveller
HOME BASE	Hamlet of Grande Cache

Day 3: Death Race Circuit

For runners training for August's Canadian Death Race or simply curious, Leg 5 (the River Crossing — 18.5 km) is the most accessible single-day taste of the course. Trail conditions vary; this is real backcountry, and the river crossing at Hell's Gate canyon should never be attempted without local advice on flow.

The full 118 km course summits three mountains, gains over 17,000 feet, and crosses the Smoky River at Hell's Gate.

The five legs — Downtown Jaunt (14.2 km), Flood & Grande Mountain Slugfest (29.6 km), Old Mine Road (20.5 km), Hamell Assault (35.2 km), and the River Crossing — can be tackled individually as training pieces.

Adventure Seeker's Four Days

For the athletic traveller— multiple summits, whitewater, and a Death Race training circuit.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	Athletic travellers, peak baggers
LENGTH	4 days, 3 nights
SEASON	June–early September
PACE	Hard · trail-fit traveller
HOME BASE	Hamlet of Grande Cache

Day 4: Recovery on Water

Recovery-day rafting is the reward. Book a morning half-day with Wild Blue Yonder on the Sulphur River — the fastest way to watch Grande Cache's landscape from water level.

Travelling in shoulder season when rafting has closed? Consider a guidedtrapping or hunting excursion with Tawatanaw Tours, an Indigenous-owned operator running multi-day camps in summer, fall, and winter — a different kind of recovery day, and an authentic window into a living land-use tradition.

The Day: Headlights to Headlights

Grande Cache in a Day

A no-overnight day trip built for visitors from the Peace Country – signature viewpoints, lunch in town, home after dinner.

Trip Snapshot

BEST FOR	Day-trippers from Peace Country
LENGTH	1 day
SEASON	Year-round
PACE	Easy, viewpoint-led
HOME BASE	Return same day

The Day: Headlights to Headlights

Pre-dawn — Leave Grande Prairie. Highway 40 takes about 2¾ hours from Grande Prairie. Leave by 6 a.m. in summer (5 a.m. if you want to see the sunrise at Sulphur Gates) or by 8 a.m. in winter (when the sun rises late and roads need light). Pack a thermos and a sandwich for the drive.

Mid-morning — Sulphur Gates. First stop, every time. The four cliff-top viewing platforms above the confluence of the Smoky and Sulphur rivers are 3–5 minutes from the parking area. If you have an extra hour, walk to Eaton Falls. Another option for a family-friendly trip is Twin Falls, which takes less than an hour (3.4km round-trip) and features a beautiful hike with waterfalls at the end.

Late morning — Grande Cache Tourism & Interpretive Centre. 30–45 minutes here is a deeply efficient use of time. Maps, the dinosaur exhibits, and the full animal mounts.

Lunch — In the hamlet. The Coffee House for something light, or High Country Steak & Ale at the hotel, if you want a heartier meal.

Afternoon — Pick one. Choose your character: Grande Cache Lake (beach, park, dock, kid-friendly); the Labyrinth (contemplative, 20 minutes); or the Lakes Trail down to Victor Lake (1 hour). For a longer afternoon, a half-day with Wild Blue Yonder on the Sulphur River turns this from a day trip into a story.

Late Afternoon — Pierre Grey's Lake, 30 minutes south, then a 20-minute lakeside stretch, then back on the highway. Stop by 21 Peaks for supper before you head back to Grande Prairie.

The local *essentials*

What's open, where to eat, and where to lay your head down. Grande Cache is small enough that you'll learn the place quickly — these are the answers travellers ask for first.

Where to *eat*

21 Peaks	Lunch & Dinner
A&W	Fast food · all-day
Aurora Sushi	Lunch & dinner · Sushi
Dairy Queen	Fast food · lunch & dinner
Dragon Palace	Lunch & dinner · Chinese
Grande Cache Pizza	Pizza · lunch & dinner
Green House	Lunch - Chinese
High Country Steak & Ale	Dining · locally owned
Joe's Pizza Stone	Pizza
Mountain View Family Restaurant	All-day
The Big Horn Bar & Grill	Dining - all-day Pub
Smoky River Grill	Breakfast & dinner
Subway	Fast food · all-day
Vegas Pizza	Pizza · dinner

Where to *stay*

Acorn Motel	Motel
Alpine Lodge Motel	Motel
Big Horn Motel	Motel
Grande Cache Campground	Municipal · in-town
Elk Ridge Tent & RV	Private · year-round
Grande Cache Hotel	Hotel · steakhouse on site
Grande Cache Inn & Suites	Hotel
Misty Mountain Inn & Suites	Hotel
Grande Mountain Lodge	Mountain-town feel
Hide-A-Way Camp	Private · group facility
Pierre Grey's Lakes Campground	Provincial · 33 km south
Sheep Creek Campground	Provincial · 25 km north
Smoky River South	Provincial · 4 km north
Sulphur Gates Rec Area	Provincial · staging area

Getting *there*

From Grande Praire	2 hrs 45 min · Hwy 40
From Edmonton	4 hrs 30 min
From Jasper	2 hrs · Hwy 40 north
From Hinton	1 hr 30 min
Nearest Airport	YQU · Grande Prairie
Fuel along Highway 40	Limited · top up early
Cell Service	In-town only
Best Window	Mid-Jun – mid-Sep

Want the full itinerary *guide?*

The complete document — six itineraries with every restaurant, lodge, outfitter, trailhead, and practical note — is yours to download at www.mdgreenview.ab.ca