

### Helen Lake and Cirque Peak Hike on August 3



Our weekend adventure began with all nine hikers meeting at the rustic Mosquito Creek hostel on Friday, August 2. Our illustrious leader, Dion, had scouted out the trail with Amanda two weeks before. They said it had been very busy, so by staying at the hostel, which was only five minutes away from the trailhead, we were able to be on the trail at 8:30 am. We were blessed to start the day with crisp blue skies and puffs of clouds. The initial part was upward through the trees. After four kilometres, it levelled off into meadows with an abundance of wild flowers in their full glory. This trail is sometimes closed because of bears in the area, so Trish, Jan and Stephan decided to test the operation of their bear sprays in the open, in the event they might really be needed.

At the surprisingly small, green colored Helen Lake, we stopped for a snack and water break and were entertained by several of the marmots running around and fish jumping from the lake. The hike so far had been 6 km and 422 m elevation gain. We also looked up, way up to the top of Cirque peak which was another 621 m over 2 km. With Dion's experience, he was able to point out the best route.

We then continued up a well defined switchback trail up to the rocky ridge above Helen Lake. Some scrambling was needed to get over large rocks on the way. The views started to become more and more specular. Marilyn decided to stop here.



For the rest of our group, it became a tougher slug over dirt and scree from the ridge. It was slow going and the higher we went, the steeper it became. There was a short scramble to the top of a false summit. It was somewhat exposed and windy. A hiker who prefers to remain nameless felt her heart flutter. Amanda, the trooper, reassured everyone that the real summit was achievable and so under her guidance, the goal was reached. All eight enjoyed the view at the top for the next half hour. The expansive scenery included Peyto, Bow and Katherine Lakes, and the two ice fields, including the Wapta.



The steep descent was hard on the knees as people slid through the loose scree near the top. The rock bands changed colors on the way down. The total time to ascend and then descend back to the ridge above Helen Lake was about two hours. Several of the seasoned hikers expressed that the second part up to Cirque peak had been the most challenging hike they had done so far this year. Although the guide book had rated it as moderate, some felt it was more realistically a strenuous level. Everyone was back to the parking lot by 6:00 pm. We all thank Dion for his excellent leadership and enjoyable companionship on this beautiful and memorable hike.

