



5 Tips to play safe on the Elk River

- 1 Know where you are going and **be aware of hazards** i.e. rapids, sweepers and logjams. Stay to the inside on sharp corners to avoid colliding with woody debris. If you do collide with debris, climb on top to avoid getting trapped under water.
- 2 Always **wear a PFD/lifejacket and shoes** for walking on rocks and pushing off obstacles.
- 3 If you end up in the water, **swim defensively** on your back with feet downstream avoiding obstacles like rocks, trees and logjams where you can easily get pinned.
- 4 Be prepared for cold water and changes in weather conditions. There is a **high risk of hypothermia** if part or all of your body is in the Elk River for a length of time.
- 5 **Lose the booze** and keep a clear head. You might need it to help a friend or avoid a bad situation. Celebrate your float or paddle on a warm sunny beach or deck afterward.

General Elk River Fishing Regulations:

See the BC Freshwater Fishing Regulations for specific Elk River tributaries. www.fishing.gov.bc.ca

- The Elk River watershed is known for its world-class fishing. In response to high fishing pressure and in order to maintain the high quality of angling experience, the Elk and its tributaries have been designated 'classified waters' by the BC Government.
- The Elk River is a Class II Water and requires supplementary license to fish.
- No powered boats on the entire length of the Elk River
- **NO FISHING** from April 1 to June 14.
- Single barbless hooks must be used all year.
- Elk River has a bait ban June 15-October 31.
- Trout/char release June 15-October 31 from: Lower Elk Lake to Forsyth Cr, from Line Creek bridge to CPR bridge at Sparwood, from Hwy #3 bridge at Hosmer to the northern Hwy #3 bridge at Fernie, AND from the bridge at Morrissey to Elko Dam.
- Daily quota in open sections June 15-October 31:
1) Above the Elko Dam: trout/char = 1 (none under 30 cm).
2) Elk River downstream of Elko Dam - trout/char= 1 (no cutthroat under 30 cm, no bull trout under 75 cm)
- Trout/char release from November. 1 to March 31.

Resources

RAFTING, GUIDING, GEAR, RIVER EXPERTISE, BOAT RENTALS

Board Stiff: 542 2nd Ave. Fernie, 250-423-3473
Canyon Raft: Canyonraft.com Fernie, 250-423-7226
Edge of the World: 421B 2 Ave Fernie, 250-423-9292
Elevation: 596 2nd Ave, Fernie, 250-423-3328
Elk River Guiding Company: 791 7th Ave, Fernie, 250-423-7239
Fernie Wilderness Adventures: 742 Highway 3 (Park Place Lodge), Fernie, 250-423-6704
Gear Hub: 401 1st Ave, Fernie, 250-423-5555
Kootenay Fly Shop: 821 7th Ave, Fernie, 1-877-423-4483
Mountain High Adventures: Raffernie.com, Fernie 250-423-5008

FISHING LICENSES:

Elkford Mini Mart & Fas Gas: 60 Alpine Way, Elkford, 250-865-2415
Elk Valley Precision and Cab Inc.: 719 Douglas Fir Road, Sparwood, 250-425-0083
Service BC: Greenwood Shopping Mall Suite 96, 101 Red Cedar Dr., Sparwood, 250-425-6890
Sparwood Ezzo: 111 Aspen Drive, Sparwood, 250-425-2118
Sparwood Heights Food Store: 105- 1290 Ponderosa Dr, Sparwood, 250-425-2535
Elk River Guiding Company: 791 7th Ave, Fernie, 250-423-7239
Fernie Wilderness Adventures: 742 Highway 3 (Park Place Lodge), Fernie, 250-423-6704
Kootenay Fly Shop: 821 7th Ave, Fernie, 1-877-423-4483
Service BC: 401 4 Ave (Courthouse), Fernie, 250-423-6845

VISITOR INFORMATION:

Elkford Visitor Information Centre: 750 Fording Dr, Elkford, 250-865-4015
Sparwood Visitor Information Centre: 141 Aspen Dr, Sparwood, 250-425-2423
Fernie Visitor Information Centre: Two locations: 102 Commerce Rd, Fernie and the Fernie Museum in Historic Downtown 778-519-0748
www.elkford.ca
www.sparwood.ca
www.tourismfernie.com

5 Fishing Friendly Tips

Fish **experience stress** when they are caught that can cause short and long term effects on their health, especially later in the summer when water temperatures rise. Help keep the fish of the Elk River healthy by eliminating contact with dry surfaces, minimizing air exposure and reducing handling.

- 1 **Reduce fight duration.** Land your fish quickly without playing it to exhaustion.
- 2 **Fish barbless hooks.** It is the rule to only use barbless hooks in the entire Elk River Watershed. If you see a barb on a hook, crimp it. Barbless hooks cause less damage to a fish's mouths and to your fingers!
- 3 **Use a rubber net.** Rubber nets are less abrasive to fish, reduce handling time and allow the fish to recover in the water while unhooking or photographing.
- 4 **Keep the fish wet.** Touching fish with dry surfaces can damage their protective mucus and make fish more susceptible to diseases. Always try to land fish in the water, wet your hands prior to handling fish, hold fish in or slightly above the water, not over the boat or land.
- 5 **Photograph fish wet.** Minimize air exposure by keeping the fish's gills and mouth underwater as much as possible. Underwater photos look amazing! If a fish is momentarily taken out of the water, keep it as close to the water as possible and let the photographer call the shots - 1, 2, 3...raise the fish...and click.

Ways to Explore the Elk River

Paddle down the Elk River in a canoe, kayak or stand-up paddle board (SUP). River sections range from mellow floats with a few waves to a raging canyon with challenging whitewater. Make sure to match your skill with the classification of each section.

Cast your line in the pristine waters of the Elk River, world renowned for its Westslope cutthroat and bull trout both blue-listed (Special Concern) in BC. Spectacular fish habitat can be accessed by foot along the bank or in a drift boat on the river. Explore on your own or hire a guide.

Hike, bike or walk along the river bank trails in Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford. Keep your eyes out for wildlife that are also enjoying the river including great blue heron, moose, beavers and river otters.

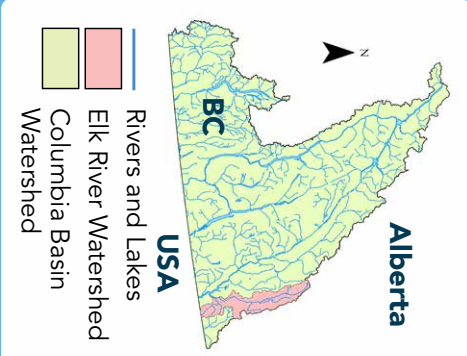
Go for a swim in a lake or one of the many local river swimming holes to cool off on a hot summer's day. It is likely to be a quick refreshing dip as the water stays cool all summer.

Go for an exciting rafting trip down the scenic Elk River Canyon with one of the local rafting businesses. It is sure to be an adventure you'll always remember.

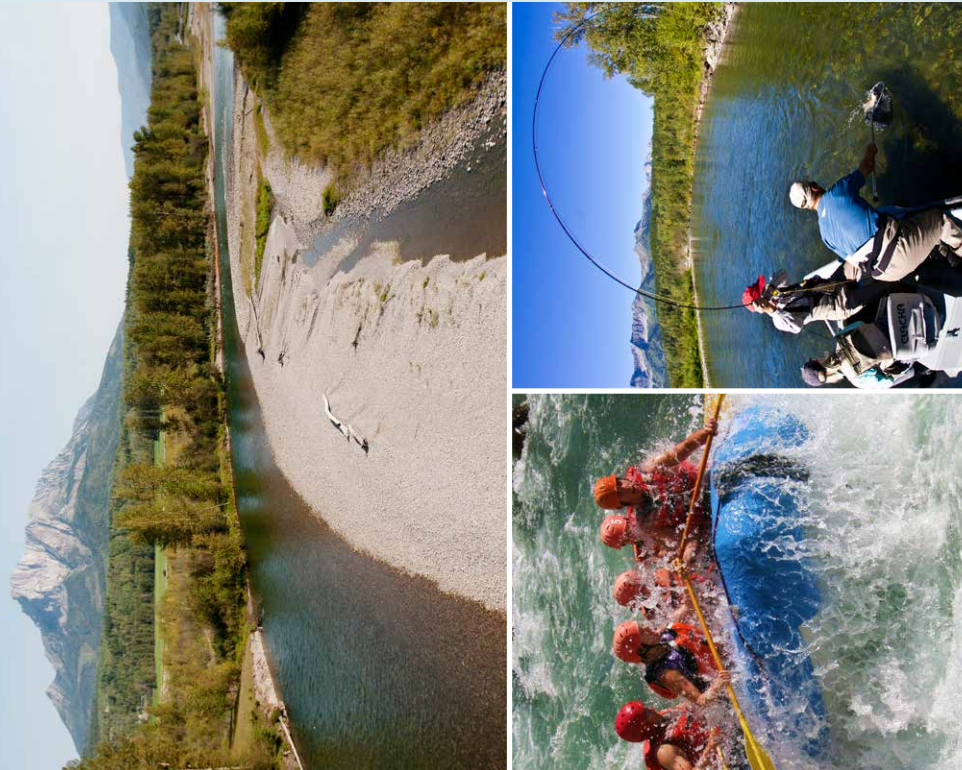
For visitor information visit www.tourismfernie.com

www.elkriveralliance.ca

The Elk River Alliance (ERA) is a community based water group that aims to connect people to the Elk River ensuring it is drinkable, fishable and swimmable for future generations. ERA delivers watershed education programs, collects scientific watershed data, and facilitates community input about sustainable water decision-making. The Elk River Map & Guide supports the ERA goal to promote safe and sustainable recreational use of the Elk River.



ELK RIVER MAP & GUIDE



DISCLAIMER: The Elk River is a free-stone river and can change dramatically over time. Flooding can change river channels, move woody debris and change rapids. **Appropriate activities may be affected by flow and temperature. High flow is typically May-June.** If you see big logs, buildings or cows floating down the river, it is likely too high to paddle! Use your best judgment for your own safety. Due to the changing nature of the river, the Elk River Alliance or its partners are not responsible for the accuracy of the information provided.

International Scale of River Difficulty

- Class I - Easy**

Fast moving water with riffles and small waves. Few obstructions, all obvious and easily missed with little training. Risk to swimmers is slight; self-rescue is easy.
- Class II - Novice**

Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels which are evident without scouting. Occasional maneuvering may be required. Swimmers are seldom injured. Rapids that are at the upper end of this difficulty range are designated Class II+.
- Class III - Intermediate**

Rapids with moderate, irregular waves which may be difficult to avoid and which can swamp an open canoe. Complex maneuvers in fast current and good boat control required; large waves or strainers may be present but can be avoided. Strong eddies and powerful current effects can be found, particularly on large-volume rivers. Scouting is advisable for inexperienced parties. Injuries while swimming are rare; self-rescue is usually easy but group assistance may be required to avoid long swims.
- Class IV - Advanced**

Intense, powerful but predictable rapids requiring precise boat handling in turbulent water. Large, unavoidable waves and holes or constricted passages demanding fast maneuvers under pressure. Rapids may require "must make" moves above dangerous hazards. Scouting may be necessary the first time down. Risk of injury to swimmers is moderate to high, and water conditions may make self-rescue difficult. Group assistance for rescue is often essential but requires practiced skills. For kayakers, a strong roll is highly recommended.
- Class V - Expert**

Extremely long, obstructed, or very violent rapids which expose a paddler to added risk. Drops may contain large, unavoidable waves and holes or steep, congested chutes with complex, demanding routes. Rapids may continue for long distances between pools, demanding a high level of fitness. Scouting is recommended but may be difficult. Swims are dangerous, and rescue is often difficult even for experts. Proper equipment, extensive experience, and practiced rescue skills are essential.
- Class VI - Extreme**

These runs have almost never been attempted and often exemplify the extremes of difficulty, unpredictability and danger. The consequences of errors are very severe and rescue may be impossible. For teams of experts only, at favourable water levels, after close personal inspection and taking all precautions.

Elk Lakes Provincial Park to Round Prairie
Class III+, Multiple days
Wilderness trip. Massive log jams (8 city blocks long). Several rapids that require scouting and navigation. Woody debris on most corners. Remote with limited access to road.
This section is trout/char catch and release only upstream of Forsyth Creek. Below Forsyth Creek to Elkford you may keep 1 trout/char per day (none under 30 cm).

Elkford

Round Prairie to Elkford
Class II • 6.5 km • Approx. 2hrs
Relatively flat gradient so possible log jams and woody debris on corners. This section is appropriate for intermediate to advanced canoeers. Lots of gravel bars with walk and wade fishing opportunities.
In this section you may keep 1 trout/char per day (none under 30 cm).

Elkford to Line Creek
Class II+ • 215 km • Approx. 6hrs
NOT suitable for drift boats. Significant log jams (2 city blocks long) with woody debris on most corners. Class II+ rock ledges in high water just upstream of Line Creek Bridge. This section is appropriate for more advanced canoeers and kayakers that are willing to portage their boats around major log jams and navigate woody debris in the channel. There are also some excellent opportunities for walk and wade fishing.
In this section you may keep 1 trout/char per day (none under 30 cm).

Line Creek to Sparwood
Class II+ • 18 km • Approx. 4hrs
This sections has log jams that can cover the entire width of the river in places and one Class III rapid during high water upstream Sparwood CP Rail Bridge. Please note the boat launch in Sparwood is walk in only with limited public parking and requires carrying your boat down a steep hill.
This section is trout/char catch and release only until the CPR bridge just above Sparwood.

Sparwood to Olsen's Gravel Pit
Class II • 13.5 km • Approx. 3hrs
The volume in this section increases as Michel Creek joins the Elk River at Sparwood. There are a couple class II rapids on this section that require some navigation. This section can be paddled in a canoe, kayak or SUP with moderate experience. There are good opportunities for walk-and-wade fishing along the Elk River Trail in Sparwood.
In this section you may keep 1 trout/char per day (none under 30 cm).

River Etiquette

- Avoid overtaking other paddlers in rapids - wait for flatwater to pass another boat.
- Give walk and wade fishers standing in the river lots of room to avoid entanglement with lines and hooks.
- Respect the solitude and privacy of other groups having a river experience on the shore.
- At boat launches park on the right hand side with your car facing the stream when lining up to put your boat in and on the right hand side with your car facing away from the water when waiting to pick up your boat.
- Please keep the Elk River and its banks litter free! Pack out what you pack in.
- Look upstream before pulling an anchor. Give moving boats the right of way.

9 Interesting Facts About the Elk River

- Glaciers carved out the U-shaped Elk Valley. Today the headwaters of the Elk River have retreated to Elk Lakes Provincial Park in the fragmented glaciers of the Petain, Castlneau, Elk and Abruzzi glaciers.
- The Elk River is a "free stone" or gravel bed river made up of shifting pebble, cobble and boulders on a bed of gravel, sand, silt and clay.
- The flow of the Elk River is driven by snow melt peaking in late spring between mid-May and mid-June.
- The Elk River bisects three biogeoclimatic zones: Montane Spruce is in two locations, from Elkford to just past Sparwood and 5 kms upstream of Elko; Interior-Cedar Hemlock 20 km downstream of Sparwood to near the tunnel south of Morrissey and Interior Douglas Fir downstream of Elko.
- Threatened species that can be seen along the Elk River are: Western toad, Great blue heron, American bittern, Western painted turtle, olive-sided flycatcher, fisher, and grizzly bear.
- The Elk River is a free-flowing river with a flow-through dam at Elko using diversion channels to generate electricity.
- Forty percent of vertebrate animals can be found in riparian habitats next to rivers, lakes and wetlands. Marsh wetlands exist in off channels of the Elk River, many created by dams built by beavers. These are excellent places to view muskrats, river otters, beavers, moose, painted turtles, and a variety of wetland birds.
- The Elk River has healthy riparian habitat. During the ERA Elk Valley Bottom Assessment, 74% of this transition zone between the river and drier upland areas is forested and undisturbed between Elkford and Elko.
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada manages the Ancient Cottonwood Trail near Morrissey. Draped in dense green moss, these 400-year old black cottonwood trees are some of the oldest in the world.

Elk River Geocache

- Geocaching is a cross between technology, outdoor exploring and treasure hunting.
- Use a GPS to look for 14 Elk River Geocaches from the headwaters at Elk Lakes to its mouth at Kooacanusa Reservoir.
 - Solve puzzles with clues from each cache and enter your answers to win prizes.
- Look for details at www.elkriveralliance.ca/elk_river_geocache