

# **Banded Peak CHALLENGE**



IN SUPPORT OF EASTER SEALS CAMP HORIZON

## **TRAIL DESCRIPTION**

By John Heilig

### **BIG ELBOW BIKE TRAIL**

The bike portion can be divided into two distinct sections. The first section from the trailhead to Big Elbow Backcountry Campground is appropriate for novice to intermediate mountain bikers, and children comfortable riding off pavement. The second section is significantly more challenging. It is appropriate for intermediate to advanced mountain bikers and skilled/fit youth riders.

### **LITTLE ELBOW TRAILHEAD (STAGING AREA) TO BIG ELBOW CAMPGROUND (OUTPOST 3)**

**Length: 8.3 km      Height Gain: 158 meters**

This portion of trail is relatively flat and does not include any steep climbs, descents or sustained technical difficulty. The return trip is primarily downhill cruising and easy going.

0-1.5 km      Gradual Climb      1.5—2.0 km      Gradual descent to a rocky crossing of South Glasgow Creek.

2.0-5.0 km Long flat section along the River followed by a climb and descent over a low ridge to a rocky crossing of Cornwall creek.

5.0—8.3 km Flat section along river, followed by a short gradual climb to Big Elbow Back Country Campground.



### **OUTPOST 3 TO MOUNTAIN BASE CAMP (OUTPOST 5):**

This portion of trail is significantly more physically challenging with some steep and sustained climbs and descents. It is also more technically challenging with loose rocks and boulders on some of the steeper sections. The return trip is also difficult especially for tired riders with a few big climbs and technical descents.

8.3—9.9 km Generally flat to the 1st bridge across the Big Elbow River.

9.9—12.4 km 80 vertical meter climb over a ridge and back down the other side to the 2nd bridge across the Big Elbow River. Steep climb followed by roller coaster single-track with sections of loose rock and boulders. (Hike begins at the cairn before the descent to Outlaw Creek.)

### **BANDED PEAK ASCENT**

The route up Banded Peak follows a well marked, unofficial trail and is therefore less developed than typical Kananaskis Country trails. From the mountain base camp to Outpost

8 the terrain is not overly steep and most active people with hiking experience will be comfortable traversing this section. From Outpost 8 to the summit the terrain is significantly more difficult with very steep scrambling over scree or snow to be expected. Those people unfamiliar with steep slopes or with a low tolerance for vertigo may choose to turn around at this point. (Great accomplishment! You can be proud.) Participants should be prepared for rough weather as precipitation and temperature can turn an otherwise straightforward route into a challenge. Even if the weather looks great, be prepared with extra clothing and food.

The Banded Peak Challenge is in support of the children with disabilities and special needs at Easter Seals Camp Horizon . All funds raised go directly towards our camp programs. Visit [www.easterseals.ab.ca](http://www.easterseals.ab.ca) and [www.bandedpeakchallenge.com](http://www.bandedpeakchallenge.com) for more information.

All photos provided by Mac & Tom Walker





### **MOUNTAIN BASE CAMP - OUTPOST 6:**

This section of trail begins by crossing gradually upwards along the east slope of the Outlaw Creek Valley. The trail begins in a pine forest and eventually traverses to open rocky slopes with Outlaw Creek far below and the ridgeline of Banded Peak above. The trail is fairly narrow and it is important to watch your footing. Trail markings consist of cairns and flagging tape. Outpost 6 is found in an area of stunted trees and open rocky slopes.

### **OUTPOST 6 TO OUTPOST 7:**

From Outpost 6 to Outpost 7 the route continues traversing gradually upwards along open rocky slopes. Cross a number of dry (or wet) creek beds as you climb. This trend will continue until you reach Outpost 7.

### **OUTPOST 7 to OUTPOST 8**

From outpost 7 to Outpost 8 the trail becomes more difficult. As you approach the head of the valley the route crosses from the east to the west. At the head of the valley the trail follows a line through the rocky headwall below Outpost 8. This section has some brief steep sections of scrambling .

### **OUTPOST 8 to SUMMIT:**

Outpost 8 provides a great vantage point down the valley and up towards the summit. This is a good turnaround point for those not interested in the steep summit push. (You've come a long way—well done!) From Outpost 8 to the summit, the trail traverses open and relatively flat slopes until the base of the summit pitch. At this point the slope increases dramatically and a scramble to the top begins. This is the most exposed part of the route and caution must be taken from this point on to the summit. Strong winds and poor footing may be complicating factors on this section. At the summit hang on, have a look at the incredible panorama, snap a photo with our flag and event founder John Lajeunesse who has been greeting participants up there since 2001. On your way down, please be aware of other participants and try to avoid dislodging rocks onto other climbing or descending parties. Enjoy the way down! (Watch out for young cyclists making their way up. )



### **A note from your event organizers:**

Your safety is our number one concern. With that, we reserve the right to reroute, postpone or cancel the event due to bad weather or area closures within Kananaskis. As the weather is unpredictable in the mountains, we won't know if everything will go ahead until the day of the event. Even though it may be raining in Calgary, the weather systems can be very different here and conditions can change quickly.

Volunteers, including medics and bike mechanics, are stationed throughout the event and remain in constant contact with each other. Failure to follow the guidance of the event volunteers may result in elimination from the event. The volunteers are here to support you so feel free to stop and have a chat!



Have fun and travel safely.