

Kootenays Trip Report Nov. 14-17, 2025
SD73 International Student Program



On Nov. 14, 2025, 30 students and several chaperones left Kamloops at 7:00AM and travelled east towards the Rocky Mountains. We stopped for washroom/food breaks at Sicamous, Rogers Pass, and Golden before arriving in Radium Hot Springs at 3:30PM Mountain Time. As we were checking in, we noticed several Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep on the street in front of our accommodations. We checked in, had some free time to explore the area, and then met for burgers on the grill at 5:30 PM. Thanks to the Gables Motel for providing the bbqs and seating areas for us to eat.



After dinner we left at 6:45 and traveled the 1-2kms to the hot springs. We then enjoyed the hot springs from 7-9:00.





The next morning we had breakfast before meeting at the bus for a wildlife drive at 9:00AM. This 2-hour drive produced many Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, Elk, lots of Mule Deer, bear and beaver signs, and some nice birds. We were back at the motel by 11:00 and then had free time to see the town and have lunch.



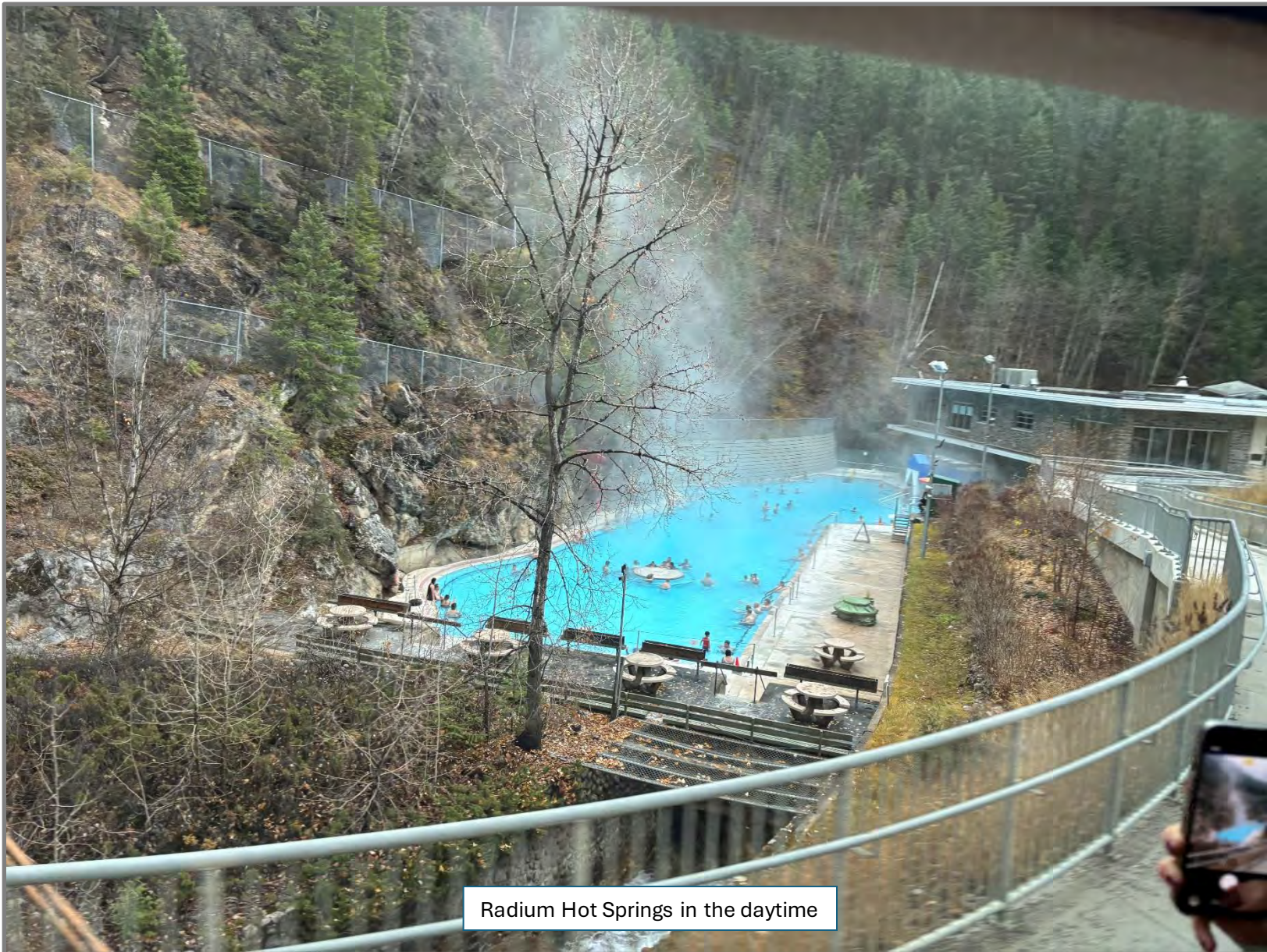


At 1:30 we drove into Kootenay National Park and enjoyed the views of the Rocky Mountains. We made it to Marble Canyon and did a short walk to the first bridge and back. This was our first encounter with real snow and some of the students had a snowball fight. We were thankful for the high clouds so we could see the mountains.



We then stopped at Simpson River and did the 3.2km return hike through a burnt forest. We had timed it so that we would drive back at dusk and hopefully see some wildlife but ended up not seeing much. Dinner was 5:15-6:45 and then we drove the 1km back to the hot spring and enjoyed that from 7-9PM.





Radium Hot Springs in the daytime

The next day we checked out of our motel and left on the bus by 9:00AM. We briefly stopped at a supermarket to get snacks and drinks knowing that we would not be around food again until well after lunch time. We also stopped at the Visitor's Center and enjoyed a few minutes there. We then drove north towards Banff and stopped at the Paint Pots hike. This is a trail that is just under 2kms return and was a relatively easy walk with fantastic views. Some students had a snowball fight, made snow angels, or made snowmen. The walk goes over a small river and ends at some springs where iron-rich water comes out of the ground creating orange coloured water.





After this, we drove the remaining amount to Castle Junction and turned west towards Lake Louise on the Bow Valley Parkway. We looked for wildlife along this route but only saw a Great Gray Owl that did not want its photo taken. At Lake Louise, we checked into the hostel, had a bit of free time, and then left for Banff at 3:00PM. We drove the Bow Valley Parkway looking for wildlife again but saw nothing the entire way to Banff. Once in Banff, the students had 2 hours of free time for dinner and exploring the town. We arrived back at the hostel at 8:00PM where we had a campfire with smores and hot chocolate.





The last morning of our trip, we left the hostel at 8:30AM, stopped at a nearby supermarket, and then drove to Lake Louise. When we arrived at the lake, there was low fog, so the visibility wasn't that good. Near the time we had to leave, the fog lifted and we enjoyed gorgeous views of this famous lake. By 10:30AM we were back on the highway and drove to Golden. We had a 12:00PM tour booked at the Northern Lights Wolf Centre and we rolled in right on time. The students were treated to a 30-minute talk about wolves in the area and their importance. We then drove the short distance back to Golden and had almost an hour for lunch. The rest of the way back to Kamloops happened without incident and we arrived at 6:00PM.





Students on this trip were from: Germany, Bulgaria, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, and Brazil.

Mammal List from the Trip: Mule Deer – 16, White-tailed Deer – 1, Elk – 5, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep – 35, Red Squirrel – 4

Accommodations:

Radium Hot Springs: The Gables Motel. The owner Tom seemed happy to have us there and made staying with a large group quite seamless. We were able to use the bbqs there and the area behind the motel for grilling burgers for dinner on the first night. We also had access to discounted hot spring passes through him.

Lake Louise: HI (Hosteling International) Hostel located right in the town of Lake Louise. We have stayed here on other trips and it always goes well.

My Favourite Moment

1. **Summer – The hot springs because they were beautiful, the atmosphere was great, and we had had good talks.**
2. **Josefine – The hot springs and Banff. I liked the vibe of Banff and how it looked. It reminded me of a ski resort in Switzerland. The hot springs were really chill and comforting.**
3. **Emily – Banff because I liked how it looked, the food, and the stores.**
4. **Lia – Looking at Lake Louise because the view was very beautiful and there was snow everywhere. Also playing pool at the hostel with everyone.**
5. **Nathalie – In Banff when we went to visit a small Christmas show with some lights and got hot chocolate at that shop.**
6. **Maya – Banff and taking pictures of nature because it was fun with my friends.**
7. **Ida – The campfire because it was really fun to have a snow fight there.**
8. **Juli – The Paint Pots hike because we had a snowball fight there.**
9. **Anna – The first time we were in the Rocky Mountains because it was crazy to see them.**
10. **Himari – Going to Banff because I really wanted to go there, it was my dream. I got some souvenirs there for my family.**
11. **Kaisa – The drive to Lake Louise and Banff because of the pretty scenery and the Christmas lights in Banff.**
12. **Friederike – Going to Banff because it was really like a Christmas heaven. The mountains, the small stores, the lights, etc...**
13. **Laura – When we went to Banff and Lake Louise because they were both pretty.**
14. **Cosima – Lake Louise because it was so pretty and I was so happy when the sky cleared up.**
15. **Saho – Shopping in Banff because the view was really good. The buildings there were really beautiful with the mountains.**
16. **Julius – Just being in the Rockies in general but Lake Louise was so pretty with the mountains and the mist.**
17. **Marit – The Paint pots hike because we had a snow fight there.**
18. **Willem – The snowball fight at Marble Canyon because of the snow and the river there was beautiful to see.**
19. **Matey – The first time we drove to Lake Louise and when we arrived at Lake Louise because I liked the scenery and it was a clear day.**
20. **Finn – When we had the snowball fight near the mineral spring because it was nice scenery and it was fun interacting with other people.**
21. **Johannes – The snowball fight at Marble Canyon because it was so fun.**
22. **Nike – Being at the hot springs because it was really fun and relaxing.**
23. **Jessica – The walk by Marble Canyon and having the snowball fight there because it was a lot of fun with the snow and it was also a very beautiful place.**
24. **Sophia – Being at the hot springs, talking with my friends, and enjoying nature.**
25. **Nanami – Having dinner with my friends because I taught them Japanese and we talked about other countries.**
26. **Sarah – Playing pool and chess at the hostel because I made some new friends from different schools.**
27. **Lucie – Lake Louise when the fog started to clear up because it felt magical and I was the most excited for this on this trip.**
28. **Anina – The longer walks because the scenery was really beautiful on them.**
29. **Jonna – The Marble Canyon walk because it was really pretty.**
30. **Lara – I really liked the Paint Pots walk because it felt like such a short walk and the snow was beautiful.**

One Thing I Learned

1. Summer – That wolves aren't that scary.
2. Josefine – That wolves can survive 3-6 years in the wild.
3. Emily – That wolves communicate through howling.
4. Lia – Wolves are very important for a healthy and balanced ecosystem.
5. Nathalie – A lot about wolves and how endangered they are.
6. Maya – How important wolves are to keep an environment balanced.
7. Ida – That wolves are very important for an environment.
8. Juli – How dangerous compound 1080 (poison) is for an ecosystem.
9. Anna – How important wolves are for nature and the world.
10. Himari – How forest regenerate after a forest fire. This taught me to try harder and have more courage when I have challenges. Also I learned how to take initiative to participate in more English conversations.
11. Kaisa – That nature pretty much does not work without wolves.
12. Friederike – How important wolves are for the environment. The bigger parks need them to keep the structure in tact.
13. Laura – How wolves live in the wild and work as a family.
14. Cosima – How important wolves are for an ecosystem. Also that they can hear or smell up to 8kms away.
15. Saho – We should make Canada poison free for wildlife.
16. Julius – Wolves are afraid of people and important for nature.
17. Marit – That wolves can't bark, instead they howl.
18. Willem – I learned that Canada has not enough wolves in this region (Banff) and then the deer are not healthy as well.
19. Matey – That wolves can't bark and that they are important for the environment.
20. Finn – in an ecosystem all the plants and animal depend on each other.
21. Johannes – That almost all wolf types are actually Grey Wolves.
22. Nike – How wolves are afraid of humans and are really sensitive.
23. Jessica – That wolves are crucial to the health of a national park.
24. Sophia – That wolves are crucial to an environment and to other animals being healthy.
25. Nanami – I learned to not give up but to keep trying to have conversations in English.
26. Sarah – Wolves are important for preventing other species overpopulation which would destroy the environment/habitat.
27. Lucie – That wolves are a keystone species and that without them, the ecosystem starts failing.
28. Anina – There are a lot of ways in which humans can influence and ecosystem, even by just being in an area.
29. Jonna – How Yellowstone was much better after wolves were brought back there.
30. Lara – That the Canadian government has poisoned wolves and that shocked me a lot.