

DISCOVER CAMPING™ RESERVATION SERVICE



DISCOVER CAMPING
CAMPGROUND RESERVATION SERVICE

GUIDELINES FOR PARK FACILITY OPERATORS



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Service Description

- Discover Camping™ is a campground reservation service. A single toll free telephone call lets campers reserve a campsite in one of 66 provincial parks and one national park.
- Discover Camping™ was created to help visitors plan ahead, avoid waiting in line-ups and ensure a campsite upon arrival to the park.
- The service is provided through a partnership between Tourism BC, BC Parks and Parks Canada.
- The provincial government does not subsidize the reservation service. Toll free lines, the computer based reservation service infrastructure, the call center operations and the website are services provided by Discover Camping™.
- The service opens March 1, the earliest reservable date for a booking is March 15 and the last reservable date is September 15.
- Most parks have a combination of reservation sites and first come first served sites in the campgrounds with the exception of 3 with 100% reservable sites.

Provincial Statistics

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Incoming Calls	245,849	269,531	239,000	196,700	175,123	168,038
Agent Handled	92,280	120,893	125,754	96,900	81,750	74,627
Reservations	47,931	58,410	64,800	66,000	66,800	65,244*
Cancellations	5,259	6,751	8435	6,000	7,394	7,107
Parks on Service	45	49	67	67	67	66

* 50% of all reservations were made via the website.

Discover Camping™ Call Center - Invitation

Tourism BC has extended an invitation to all PFOs to visit the Discover Camping™ Call Center. See how the reservation service is operated, meet the staff, ask questions? If you have some time to drop by please make arrangements with Pierre Drouin, Manager, Discover Camping at (604) 660-3682.



Role of Discover Camping™

Discover Camping™ is responsible for booking the reservation with the customer. They have up to 30 agents trained during the summer months. Other duties include:

- sending daily faxes to Park Facility Operator;
- notifying park of changes, cancellations;
- collecting and transferring park revenue to Park Facility Operators accounts;
- ensures policies are adhered to as set by BC Parks;
- reconciles with Park Facility Operator at end of season any money owing;
- communicates with Park Facility Operator to ensure quality service delivered; and
- handling and/or referring complaints to BC Parks.

Role of Park Facility Operator

You play an important part in delivering the reservation service since you are the “front line”! Your duties include:

- filling out information sheets in the late fall/winter so Discover Camping™ has accurate information;
- administering the reservation service in your park;
- taking responsibility for customers upon arrival;
- registering the customer into the campground in a polite and friendly manner;
- issuing refunds according to policy;
- communicating with Discover Camping™ as needed;
- cooperating and handling any booking errors that from time to time do occur (wrong dates, wrong campground, overbooking, etc.); this may require setting aside a site for the customer;
- reconciling with Discover Camping™ at the end of the season any money owing; and
- making a line available for a fax and phone. Campers with reservations must be able to reach you by phone and/or leave a message on an answering machine if they have car trouble, etc.

Role of BC Parks

- developing policies and guidelines;
- providing program direction;
- assisting in resolving complaints as needed through regional officers;
- participating in annual reviews to ensure policies are working and are user friendly;
- advertising the reservation service; and
- monitoring public feedback through surveys, contract management, etc.

Advertising

- Discover Camping posts a brochure on the website which can be downloaded;
- Press releases go out in March, mid season and at the end of the season;
- Discover Camping advertising includes Super Camping, Accommodations Guide, Talking Yellow Pages, Beautiful BC Travel Guide, Super Natural BC, Accommodations Guide, White Pages, etc.; and
- Discover Camping is often advertised in local tabloids.

Answering Machine Messages

Answering machines can be used to deliver up to date messages to the public concerning campground availability, the status of the first-come, first-served sites and special information e.g.: fire closures, local conditions.

Suggested message: *“Thank you for calling X Provincial Park. Office hours are X. It is MONTH at TIME. Although the reservation sites are fully booked from X date to X date, there are X first come first served sites presently available. Please be advised there is SPECIAL MESSAGE (e.g.: an extreme fire hazard and no campfires are permitted). Thank you for calling X Provincial Park.”*

Discover Camping Internet Bookings

Reservations can be made by telephone or through the Internet at <http://www.discovercamping.ca>. Customers can print off a copy of their reservation confirmation if they reserve through the internet.

Park & Reservation Information

Information about your park can be found at <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks>. Your local BC Parks regional office has provided this information. Please notify your Area Supervisor of any errors and recommended changes.

The information on the Discover Camping website has also been proofed and approved by your local regional. Please advise your Area Supervisor of any errors.

Administration of the Reservation Service

Parks With Gatehouses

The gatehouse serves as a control point to allow campers and visitors access to their sites. The reservation service is one of the many administrative functions that are managed from this control point. Faxes are sent from Discover Camping with information concerning arrivals, changes and cancellations.

Site management is usually handled by setting up a numbering system that represents the sites in the campground. These systems can be as sophisticated as a computer program designed to manage reservations (Sher-tek Software Inc.) to an enlarged map on the wall in the gatehouse. Usually these systems are already in place in the gatehouse. Reservable sites are marked with a different colored tag to note where the site is and whether the site is occupied.

Parks Without Gatehouses

Daily faxes are received where the information from the faxes can be recorded and a special request organized well before the customer arrives. The day of arrival, the information is transferred to a white board at the park (see Signs and White Boards).

The Mix of Sites

In some campgrounds there are campsites which are more favorable and in high demand. When deciding which sites should be on the service, it is important to get a mix of the more favorable sites with the average sites to ensure that the non-reservation customer has equal access to the sites.

Marking the Sites

Parks With Gatehouses

Since the campsite is administered from the gatehouse, there is no need to mark the sites in the campground in any way. The sites are marked on the map or registration board in the gatehouse. This allows more flexibility in accommodating campers and managing the sites.

Parks Without Gatehouses

Reservable sites are marked with a green tag attached to the number post that says, "reserved". A bull dog clip is used to attach the camping permit to the number post.

If any reservation sites are unoccupied, a first-come, first-served camper may occupy the sites on a one night at a time basis.

Additional tags can be made up saying "available for 1 night, available for 2 nights, available for 3 nights". These tags usually cover the "reserved" tag to ensure that the campers looking for a site can see that there is a vacancy and how many nights the site is available for. This helps the camper plan ahead and allows you to maximize the use in your campground.

Signs and Whiteboards

Shoulder Season

During the shoulder season when the park does not fill up, use the sign with the following wording:

Reservation Information

A reservation service is now available in this park. To ensure a site during the high use periods, it is recommended you reserve in advance. Phone 1-800-689-9025

Parties with a Reservation

Please select a vacant site. An attendant will confirm your reservation.

Parties Without a Reservation

Please select a vacant site. An Attendant will collect the fee.

Peak Season - Parks without Gatehouses

White board and signs in combination are used to help people find what site they are in. The white board identifies the camper's name, site number and departure date. The adjacent sign has the following wording:

Reservations
Attention Campers

- 1) Check for your name on the reservation board.
- 2) Proceed to your assigned campsite.
- 3) A park attendant will confirm your reservation on their rounds.

TYPICAL SIGN LAYOUT FOR A TYPE II SHELTER



TYPICAL SIGN LAYOUT FOR A TYPE I SHELTER



Special Requests

Park Facility Operators have the option of taking special requests. Requests are usually for a specific site, a double campsite or a specific location in the campground. As per policy, these sites are NOT guaranteed:

- **assign sites** according to the camper's request, if available. It is NOT recommended to allow the camper to choose sites on a first-come, first-served basis, as many complaints have been generated from using this method;
- complete campsite assignment early in the day; and
- if a camper wishes to move sites, please try to accommodate.

Note: 1) Special Requests are not solicited by DC Agents; 2) Requests for double campsite are booked as 2 singles, each with the special request noted; and 3) If the Park does not want to take special requests, **no** requests will be taken by Discover Camping.

Extending Stays

Occasionally, campers may want to extend their stay once on site at the campground. Campers are encouraged to book as many days as possible through Discover Camping as there is no guarantee that a site would be available if the camper chooses to extend their stay. If campers do want to extend their stay beyond their reservation, they are advised by Discover Camping to inform the PFO at the park upon arrival. . Note: Campers can NOT book through the reservation service within 2 days (or 5 days for some parks) before the desired dates.

Most campgrounds with gatehouses use wait lists in peak season to help manage vacated sites. Campers simply place their names on a wait list and at a regular time each day at the gatehouse (usually 1:00 PM), names are called out until the vacancies are filled by campers who are present at that time

Check In/Check Out Times

These times should apply for all campers*.

Check-In: 1:00 PM

Check-Out: 11:00 AM

*Note: The *Park and Recreation Area Regulations* have not been updated to reflect the 11:00 a.m.

Check-Out time, however a consistent application of the Check-Out time should be maintained, whether for a reservation or first-come, first-served customer.

Refunds

Once on site, the **Park Facility Operator** is responsible for refunds.

From the Operations Permit *Operations Standards* section:

- *Any park user who does not wish to stay after paying for a campsite is entitled to a refund for the remaining prepaid fees provided the campsite is vacated prior to 11:00 a.m.*
- *A park user, after occupying a campsite overnight is entitled to a refund if an exceptional circumstance occurs such as an emergency evacuation, stolen or vandalized property, damage to property or injury by a natural occurrence and a medical emergency (refund upon receipt of a medical or death certificate).*

Note: Ideally, the park user should vacate before 11:00 a.m., but as it may not be possible to contact the permittee or his/her staff prior to this deadline, some discretion should be used. The

Permittee should also bear in mind the desirability of keeping the customer satisfied and avoiding conflict.

Party Size Definition

Camping party:	1-4 persons 16 years of age or older. Maximum of 8 persons including children (15 yrs. of age and younger).
Vehicles per Camping Party:	One vehicle and trailer. Either one (but not both) may be a RV. A second vehicle (non-RV) may be allowed on site for an additional nightly charge of ½ the campsite fee.
Campsite Maximum:	1 camping party per site, unless otherwise authorized

Fees Applied to Persons with Disabilities and Seniors

Persons with Disabilities

You must be designated as a Person with Disabilities under the BC Employment and Assistance Program (administered by the Ministry of Human Resources) or have a child who is eligible for the At Home Program (administered by the Ministry of Children and Family Development) to be eligible for free camping. Apply the same “party size” definition to the pass holder and their party.

Upon your arrival to the campground, one of the following must be shown to the campground operator at the park:

- a Release of Information form issued by the [Ministry of Human Resources](#). Persons currently designated as a Person with Disabilities under the BC Employment and Assistance Program from the Ministry of Human Resources may obtain this Release of Information form ([click here to view a sample page](#)) by contacting their local Employment and Assistance Centre. **OR**
- a letter of eligibility stating that your child is eligible for the At Home Program issued by the [Ministry of Children and Family Development](#).

AND a second piece of ID

Seniors

Senior citizens (65 years of age and older) and their spouse who are residents of British Columbia, pay half the full front country camping fee in the shoulder season (the day after Labour Day to June 14 of the following year). The full fee applies during the summer season (June 15 to Labour Day). This exception does not apply to back country campsites, dock and mooring buoys, group camping, day use areas and back country cabins.

If the senior and spouse have more persons in their party, additional fees may apply.

Incident Reports

Discover Camping service agents handle reservation service complaint. These complaints are tracked on Incident Reports and are cc'ed to Regional offices and/or BC Park HQ. Park Facility Operators receive any park-related complaints, and it is up to you to respond. Please ensure the customer is called back **within 72 hours** to advise the customer:

- the complaint has been received; and
- when the complaint will be resolved.

You may have to get more information from Discover Camping to resolve the complaint. Just call the Discover Camping number, enter the short cut code, and then speak with a customer service agent for details.

Prompt attention in responding is appreciated!

Alternative Method of Payment

BC Parks has partnered with Government Agent (GA) offices to offer customers who do not have a credit card the ability to pay for their reservation at any GA office in BC.

- Customers make reservations as usual through Discover Camping from their home;
- Customers have until the end of the business day to go to any GA office to pay for their reservation; and
- GA office accepts the payment after confirming with Discover Camping.

Customer Service Issues

Here are a few common customer service issues. Please review applicable policies and procedures as necessary.

Refunds

Once on site, the Park Facility Operator is responsible for refunds if the person needs to leave earlier than paid for and if their circumstances fit into the refund policy (see Refund section, above). Discover Camping does not issue refunds once the camper is on site without authorization from the PFO through a *Request for Campsite Fee Refund Form*. Note: Please do NOT advise the campers to call Discover Camping for a refund.

Site Assignment

As your faxes arrive, you will have a record of special requests for specific sites. If available, place the customer in the site requested. Obviously, the sooner a reservation is made within the 3-month window, the more likely the special request can be accommodated. Customers are advised by Discover Camping agents (and via the website) that special requests are NOT guaranteed.

If you use whiteboards, make updates early in the day. When customers arrive, they will see their name on the whiteboard and will be able to proceed to their site.

A few PFOS use the first-come, first-served concept to assign reserved sites. Example: early arrivals have the first pick of the reservation sites, later arrivals have the remaining sites to choose from. This method generates complaints. People feel that if they booked 3 months in advance they should be assigned to a site and not feel stressed that they have to rush to the campground to get a “good” reservation site. This method of managing reservation sites is NOT recommended.

Reservation Record

Customers want to know that there is a record of their arrival, i.e. confirmation by PFO staff in the gatehouses or by seeing their name on a whiteboard at the information shelter. If whiteboards and arrivals lists are not kept up-to-date, the customer feels that they wasted their money making a reservation.

No-show

Just a reminder that a customer's campsite is held until 11:00 the morning after their first reserved night. If a customer does not arrive at the campsite or contact the campground operator, the customer forfeits the use of the campsite and the full reservation service and campsite fees paid. The PFO may then rent the campsite for the number of nights remaining on the reservation.

Appendix I - Emergency Procedures

Occasionally, emergencies occurring in provincial parks require a temporary park closure. In the event of this happening, here are some guidelines to assist you in managing the situation.

BC Parks HQ or Regional Office

- Will arrange a conference call to include:
 - BC Parks Headquarters, Regional delegates e.g.: PPA Section Head, Area Supervisor;
 - Park Facility Operator; and
 - Discover Camping (Operations Manager).
- Will discuss / establish:
 - the approximate length of the closure;
 - details to be relayed to Reservation Agents, campers, media, etc. (incl. frequency of updates from all concerned);
 - details about issuing refunds (see below); and
 - a contact list of above mentioned organizations / individuals.

Discover Camping

- Will issue an URGENT bulletin to the Reservation Agents (c.c. BC Parks HQ / Regional Office, PFO).

Refunds During Emergencies

For campers that are in the park at the time of the closure:

- Discover Camping will refund campers the campsite fees ONLY for the remaining number of nights on their reservation.
- PFO will approve the list of campers (*supplied by Discover Camping*) and the applicable refund amounts. The list *supplied by Discover Camping* will include:
 - Reservation number;
 - Camper name;
 - Camper telephone number;
 - Number of nights remaining on their reservation;
 - Refund amount; and
 - Comments (*for PFO / Regional Office use*).

- Once approved by the PFO, the Regional Office will call campers on the list to advise them of the applicable refunds.
- Once the Regional Office has completed the callbacks, Discover Camping will process refunds to the campers' credit cards.

Note: Once the park is re-opened campers, wanting to return to the park for the remainder of their stay, will be advised by the Regional Office. Any applicable refunds will be handled on site by the PFO. Any calls concerning additional compensation will be directed to the Regional Office.

For campers scheduled to arrive in the park during the closure:

- Regional Office will call the list of campers (*supplied by Discover Camping*) to explain:
 - the approximate length of closure;
 - options (in the following order):
 1. change reservation to alternate dates (no change fee) [*campsite availability charts supplied by Discover Camping*];
 2. change reservation to alternate park / campground if available (no change fee); **or**
 3. cancel reservation with a full-refund of campsite and reservation fees (no cancellation fee).
- Discover Camping will process the chosen option once the Regional Office has completed the callbacks (c.c. PFO).
- The list *supplied by Discover Camping* will include:
 - Reservation number;
 - Camper name;
 - Camper telephone number;
 - Number of nights on their reservation;
 - Reservation fee;
 - Campsite fee;
 - Total fees;
 - Chosen option (*for Regional Office use*); and
 - Comments (*for Regional Office use*).

For campers who arrive after the closure:

- The usual reservation policies will apply.



Good Luck with the Camping Season!