

You can camp again in backcountry provincial parks starting June 1

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Beginning June 1, 2020, backcountry camping is available in the 20 operating Ontario provincial parks that offer it, as well as all non-operating provincial parks and conservation reserves. This photo of backcountry camping at Kawartha Highlands Provincial Park was kawarthaNOW's top Instagram photo in July 2018. (Photo: Jasmine Starr @jasminenstarr / Instagram)

Beginning Monday, June 1st, the Ontario government is reopening backcountry camping in the 20 operating provincial parks that offer it, as well as all non-operating provincial parks and conservation reserves.

Backcountry camping involves hiking or paddling through park lands and setting up camp in remote areas, where small groups of campers are fully equipped with supplies and don't have access to washrooms, showers, or other amenities.

No more than five people will be allowed to occupy a backcountry campsite during their stay, unless they live in the same household.

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In the greater Kawarthas region, operating provincial parks offering backcountry camping include Algonquin Park, Kawartha Highlands, and Bon Echo. All backcountry access points, paddle and portage routes, and hiking trails will be available (with some restrictions depending on the park).

The government is also allowing recreational camping again on Crown land beginning on June 1st.

While Ontario Parks is also expanding day-use activities to include picnicking and off-leash pet areas, all other overnight camping and some day-use activities at provincial parks and conservation reserves will remain unavailable until at least Sunday, June 14th.

All buildings and facilities including campgrounds, roofed accommodations, visitor centres, park stores, playgrounds, and beaches also remain closed, although some washroom facilities may be available.

Ontario Parks will begin collecting fees for day use and backcountry camping access as of June 1st. Reservations or registrations will be required at most of the parks offering backcountry camping.

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For more information on fees and reservations, as well as any restrictions at individual parks, visit ontarioparks.com.

The government is asking all campers and park visitors to adhere to public health directions, including practicing physical distancing, wearing a face covering when physical distancing is a challenge, and frequent hand washing.

Ontario Parks has been conducting critical maintenance and other park start-up procedures and ensuring operational and safety protocols are in place so that more recreational activities and facilities can open when it is safe to do so.