

When British Columbia Campgrounds Open and Close

Methods and Limitations

BC Cycle Tourism Society

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Preliminary — working data, subject to revision

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The companion documentation for an open dataset of the seasons of the 1,395 campgrounds in the BC Bike Stops directory: when each one opens and closes, which stay open all year, where we found that, and how sure we are.

Version	Date	Notes
1.0	October 2026	First published version

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1. What this file is

A cyclist touring British Columbia in the shoulder season needs to know something no one publishes in one place: which campgrounds are still open. Each operator posts its own season, in its own format, on its own page, and many post nothing at all. So we went and read them.

The result is `bc_campground_seasons`: one row for each of the 1,395 campgrounds in our BC Bike Stops directory, with its season as far as we could find it. Every campground the directory publishes is in the file, including the ones we found nothing for, so the gaps are visible rather than silently missing.

It joins to the `bc_stops` file on **listing_key**, which carries each campground's website, ownership, and amenities. The same key is the address of its page on our site: `bccycletourism.ca/www/stop/` followed by the key.

What we found	Campgrounds	What it means
A season	858	dates, a pattern such as 'mid-May to late September', or a statement that it is open all year
No posted season	430	a real record with no season in it; mostly Recreation Sites (section 7)
Not checked yet	75	mostly campgrounds with no website to read
Looked, found nothing	16	the sources we read did not cover it
Wrong match	10	the listing could not be matched to a campground source; some may not be campgrounds at all
Closed	6	3 permanently and 3 for now, as the operator says

One caution that applies to every row, and it is the reason this document exists: A blank cell means we have not recorded that thing. It never means zero, and it never means the answer is no. A blank closing month is a campground whose closing month we could not find, not one that never closes.

2. Where the seasons come from

We read three kinds of source, and saved a copy of each before reading it, so that every first-pass answer can be checked against exactly what was read.

- **BC Parks data.** The data service behind `bcparks.ca`, which gives gate, operating, and reservation dates for each campground within a park.
- **Recreation Sites and Trails BC data.** The provincial Recreation Sites layer and each site's record from the data service, including fee schedules and status comments.
- **The campground's own website.** Its home page and up to five pages that look like they hold season information, such as rates, reservations, or frequently asked questions.

Of the 858 campgrounds with a known season, 428 came from a website, 349 from BC Parks data, and 81 from Recreation Sites data. The pipeline below turned those sources into the file.



From a list of campgrounds to a published season for each one we could find.

The collection ran between 30 September and 2 October 2026. The quote check in section 5 ran on 18 October 2026.

3. How a season is read

An AI model (Claude Sonnet 5.5, from Anthropic) read each campground's saved sources and returned one season record. It was told to use only what was in front of it, and never to infer a season from the region, the climate, or what campgrounds usually do. The main rules:

- **Camping and services are different seasons.** When you can camp (open_start, open_end) is kept apart from when the campground is staffed, with water on and fees collected (serviced_start, serviced_end). Many BC Parks campgrounds stay open for walk-in camping after the services stop.
- **Open all year needs saying.** year_round is yes only when a source says the campground is open all year, or gives a 1 January to 31 December season. Otherwise it is no or unknown.
- **A fee schedule is not a season.** Recreation Sites fee records often run for several years at a time. That is how long a price is valid, not when you can camp.
- **This year's dates first.** 2026 dates are preferred. Where only an older year was posted, its dates are kept, window_year says which year, and confidence drops.
- **Month and part when there is no date.** Many operators say 'late May to mid-October'. That becomes open_month, open_part, close_month, and close_part, and no exact date is invented.
- **Quote the evidence.** Each record carries the words it was read from, in the evidence column.

417 of the 858 known seasons have exact dates for when you can camp. The rest have a month and part, a pattern, or a statement that the campground is open all year.

The model missed a season for several hundred campgrounds, often because the season was on a page we had not saved. Those went through two more passes of AI-assisted web search (Claude, on claude.ai), which looked for the season anywhere online and returned the same kind of record. Rows the passes flagged as doubtful were triaged, and a person decided which corrections to make.

How the season was found	Campgrounds	Quotes come from
Read from sources we saved	673	our saved copy of the page or record
AI-assisted web search	178	the live web; checked word for word, section 5
Corrected by a person	7	the person's own check

4. How sure we are

The confidence column is our own judgment of the evidence, not the operator's. 'high' means an official source gave this year's dates or said plainly that the campground is open all year. 'medium' means older dates, or a stated pattern with no dates. 'low' means the evidence was thin: an indirect hint, a listing site rather than the campground's own page, or a web search result we could not confirm on the page it linked to. Patterns across a region hold up well. A single campground's date can be wrong.



confidence of the 858 campgrounds with a known season, after the quote check

The levels are the model's call against written definitions, then lowered by rule in two cases: a season found only on a listing site that copies operators, and a web-search quote we could not confirm. The handful of rows a person corrected carry the confidence that person gave them.

Read confidence as a statement about the evidence, not about the campground. A low-confidence date is often right. It is low because the evidence is thin, not because we think the date is wrong.

5. The quote check

Before publishing, we spot-checked a handful of web-search quotes against their pages. Three of eight were nowhere on the page they cited, nor in our saved copy of the BC Parks data. One misspelled the place it described. A made-up quote is worse than no quote, so we checked all of them.

A script fetched the page behind each of the 213 web-search quotes and looked for the quote word for word, ignoring only case, spacing, and the style of quotation marks and dashes. A quote with an ellipsis was split at the ellipsis, and every piece had to be found. Where the live page did not have it, the script also looked in our saved copies. No AI was involved in the check.

Result	Quotes	What we did
Confirmed	144	kept the quote; quote_check is confirmed
Not confirmed	69	removed the quote, set quote_check to not_confirmed, and lowered confidence to low (60 of these had a season)

Not confirmed is not the same as wrong. Looking at a sample by hand, some of the quotes leave out a few words without marking it, or stitch a table's columns into one sentence, and the dates they support are real. Others we could not find in any form, and a few pages could not be fetched at all. We could not tell these apart automatically, so all of them are treated the same way: the season stays in the file, flagged, as a lead to check.

The check only covers web-search quotes. First-pass quotes come from our own saved copies of each page, and the notes column, which is the model's explanation of its reasoning, is published as written and not checked.

6. What the seasons show

Of the campgrounds with a known season that are not open all year, 231 close in September, 282 in October, and 27 in November or December. 250 say they are open all year, 190 of them with high or medium confidence.

Open all year means different things. Some are serviced campgrounds with hot showers. Others are unplowed, with a pit toilet, and some private parks that stay open all winter take only RVs or monthly stays then. Whether a campground lets you camp outside its season is the weakest part of the file:

off_season_camping	Campgrounds	
allowed_serviced	89	camping allowed, with some services
allowed_unserviced	90	camping allowed, no services
not_allowed	60	the source says no camping out of season
unknown	619	the source does not say

For riders, our Field Note 'Where can I camp this fall?' walks through these patterns region by region (bccycletourism.ca/field-note/where-can-i-camp-this-fall/). It counts only high and medium confidence, and it was written before the quote check, so its numbers differ a little from this file's. Its list of campgrounds that take tents in winter was checked one by one against each campground's own page, with verbatim quotes, before the article named any of them.

There is also a map of every campground, coloured by when it closes:

bccycletourism.ca/research/campground-seasons/

7. Recreation Sites

Most Recreation Sites and Trails BC campgrounds post no season at all. They are mostly unstaffed and usable whenever the road is open and free of snow. A row with season_status no_posted_season is that: a real campground with no season to report, not a gap in our work.

Recreation Sites records also carry status comments, such as a closure for wildfire, an evacuation alert, or danger trees. These have no date, and many are years old. We do not publish them: they are removed from the evidence, notes, and off_season_notes columns of every Recreation Sites row. For current closures, check the site's own Recreation Sites and Trails BC page.

8. What we left out on purpose

- **Current closures.** Our season data has a current-closure field. It is drawn mostly from those undated status comments, so it is not in the file.
- **Contact details.** No telephone numbers or email addresses. Websites are in the bc_stops file.
- **Our bookkeeping.** Review flags, file paths, and pending decisions that only make sense inside our pipeline.

9. Who wrote this, and the licence

Almost every season here was read by an AI model, and the how_found column says which way. The season_summary and notes columns are machine-written too. A person designed the rules, decided the corrections, and reviewed this document.

Licence: Open Database Licence (ODbL) 1.0, with the attribution © OpenStreetMap contributors. Most of these listings began as OpenStreetMap records and still carry their OpenStreetMap identifier, which makes this a derivative database rather than a work of our own, so it is share-alike whether we would have chosen that or not. Use it, redistribute it, build on it. If you publish a database derived from it, that database has to carry the same licence.

The campgrounds are rows of our directory, and most of the directory began as OpenStreetMap records, which is why this file is ODbL and our transit files are public domain. The osm_id column says which rows began that way.

10. Limitations: what this does not tell you

- **It is a snapshot of autumn 2026.** Campgrounds change their dates every year, and some had only last year's posted.
- **A single date can be wrong.** Patterns across a region hold up. Any one campground's date is a lead to check, at every confidence level.
- **It covers our directory, not every campground.** A campground that is not in BC Bike Stops is not in this file.
- **Unknown is common.** Whether you can camp out of season is unknown for 619 of the 858 campgrounds with a season.
- **A season is not a vacancy.** Open means the campground operates, not that there is a site free. Book where you can.

We collected these seasons between 30 September and 2 October 2026, and checked the web-search quotes against their pages on 18 October 2026. Campgrounds change their dates every year. The window_year column says which year a stated date belongs to, and some campgrounds had only last year's dates posted when we looked.

Check before you go. A campground that was open on these dates in 2026 may open later, close earlier, or close for a season because of fire, floods, bears, or spawning salmon. The source_url column is where we found the season, and the operator's own page is the answer that counts.

We do not run, own, or represent any of these places, and almost none of them know they are in here. Corrections are welcome, from anyone, including from the businesses themselves: heather@bccycletourism.ca

The code that produces this file is not secret: ask and we will share it.