Stranded — Inexperience

Canada, Alberta, Jasper National Park, Mt. Athabasca

The climber (barely visible in the yellow circle) stranded on Athabasca. Photo: Parks Canada

On July 21, Parks Canada received a phone call that an individual was stranded partway up the southeast side of Mt. Athabasca (3,491m). They stated that they had been hiking up the glacier and noticed that the crevasses were getting bigger, so they decided to start climbing straight up the mountain instead. They stopped when the terrain was starting to get more technical but had already ascended some small cliffs that they could not descend. They then called for help. Parks Canada was able to reach the individual at their location with a helicopter long-line extrication.

ANALYSIS

The climber had a very vague idea of where they were going and weren't necessarily trying to follow a defined route. They had a helmet but no other gear. They did not have any knowledge of the hazards posed by solo glacier travel or climbing up unfamiliar technical rock terrain. (Source: Parks Canada.)

Images



Mt. Athabasca looms directly above the Columbia Icefield visitor center. To the uninitiated, the peak might look approachable, but in July 2025, a climber (barely visible in the yellow circle) wandered up the southeast aspect and became stranded.

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