nileGUIDE
ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP

Lianne Viau

Be Inspired in Banff

Banff, 3 Days

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Guide Description

AUTHOR NOTE: Banff's arts and culture scene is still a well-kept secret, overshadowed by its reputation for all things outdoors. But mountain people have a culture of their own, and people come to Banff to allow the beautiful and natural surroundings inspire their own creativity. And if you know where to look, you may find something that will inspire you.

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Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Banff

DAY NOTE: This is the best place to start your creative journey. The Banff Centre offers classes and development training courses throughout the year in areas like art, writing, dance, theatre, professional development and more. Check their website to find a course you might be interested in. There are also arts-related events throughout the year, as well as seasonal festivals such as the Mountain Book Festival. If you can find one that fits into your visit, or gives you a reason to visit, it's worth the experience. If not, the centre is still worth checking out when you're in town – it's also home to the renowned Walter Phillips art gallery

Banff Centre
World class music, theater and more in downtown

Banff Mountain Book Festival
Literary mountain adventures

Day 2

DAY NOTE: There are several museums in the area, but two of the more popular ones are the Banff Park Museum, which is now home to a huge collection of natural wildlife that was, or is, found in the area. If you can't see real living wildlife outside, this is the next best way to do it. The other museum worth checking out is the Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum, which reflects the history of the First Nations people who were the first to live in the area, and the original mountain people. This place is a must for the Canadian history junkie. If you're still looking for more history, go to the Banff tourist information centre to find other museums in the area.

Day 3

DAY NOTE: Banff is home to a large number of art galleries that sell the work of many local artists. If you just walk around Banff Avenue, and the downtown area in general, you'll find several galleries featuring a variety of art mediums, and a variety of price ranges. The Whyte Museum, founded by local artists Catharine and Peter Whyte, offers extensive exhibits, as well as guided walks and tours and public programs, including some for kids.

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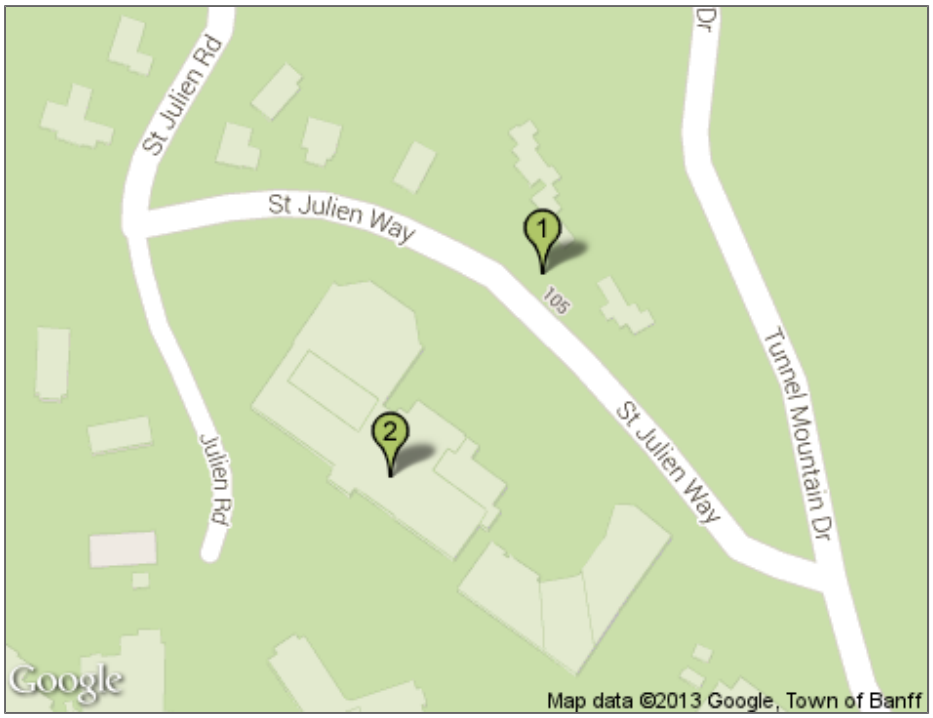
Day 1 - Banff



QUICK NOTE

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contact:
tel: 403 762 6100
fax: +1 403 762 6444
http://www.banffcenter.cap

location:
107 Tunnel Mountain Drive
Banff AB T1L 1H5

1 Banff Centre

DESCRIPTION: All the creativity and inspiration of the mountains comes together at the Banff Centre, which has been around for almost 77 years, founded in 1933. The Centre offers art showcases, concerts, exhibitions and events, including the well-known Banff Summer Arts Festival. The festival alone has over 180 performances and events. The Banff Centre also offers cultural events including the Banff Mountain Film and Book festivals, photography competitions, leadership development programs, conferences services and accommodations, with over 400 guest rooms and 60 meeting spaces. Check their website for seasonal events taking place during your visit. © NileGuide

mastermaq

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contact:
tel: 403 762 6675
fax: 403 762 6277
http://www.banffcentre.ca/mountainculture/festivals/book/

location:
Banff AB T1L 1H5

2 Banff Mountain Book Festival

DESCRIPTION: There is no better place to celebrate the literature of mountain culture than in Banff, at the Banff Centre, and the Banff Mountain Book Festival is a great event for visitors to get a feel for that culture and see the creativity of the local people. The annual book festival brings together writers, photographers and readers for signings, readings, literary luncheons and book fairs. There's also an international book competition and the festival usually brings in interesting crowds of visitors, local authors and renowned writers. © NileGuide

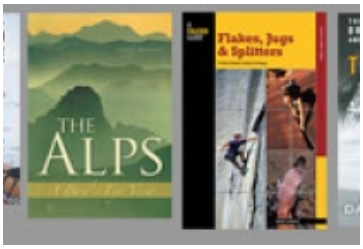

Photo courtesy of Banff Mountain Book Festival

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Banff Snapshot

Local Info

The Canadian Rockies are a majestic, mountain landscape, full of peaks, glaciers, lakes, waterfalls, canyons and caves stretching from the Montana border up to the Liard River in British Columbia. Five national parks are located in the Canadian Rockies, including Banff, Jasper, Yoho, Kootenay, and Waterton Lakes, as well as numerous other provincial parks. For many, the Canadian Rockies are the iconic symbol of wild spaces, and they are deservedly famous for their beauty. Although the Rockies are not the tallest mountain range in Canada, many people mistake them for it, as their sheer ruggedness can feel overwhelming when you're up close.

Dating back to 1885,Banff National Park was Canada's first national park and only the second national park in the world. In the 1888, the Canadian Pacific Railway built the Banff Springs Hotel to encourage tourism to Western Canada. Now, it is a world-famous icon, visited by almost 5 million tourists per year. CPR also built Chateau Lake Louise on the shores of the beautiful, emerald lake. Banff National Park is a year-round tourist destination, offering majestic scenery to hikers and skiers alike. Located only 100 kilometers west of Calgary, Banff offers its many visitors quaint shops, world-class restaurants, luxurious hotels, and curious wildlife, such as elk, deer, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and black bears. Banff Avenue is the heart of the town, but across the river are the Banff Springs Hotel, the Upper Hot Springs, and the famous Banff Springs Golf Course. Banff National Park has three ski hills: Lake Louise, Sunshine, and Mount Norquay. The Icefield Parkway to Jasper and Highway 93 to Radium are possibly the most beautiful scenic highways in the world.
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History

Originally inhabited by First Nations, such as the Kootenay, Cree, Sarcee, and Blackfoot tribes, the Canadian Rockies became a tourist destination in the late nineteenth century because the Canadian Pacific Railway built through the Rogers Pass in the 1880s. During construction of the railway, three workers discovered the hot springs at theCave and Basin National Historic Site, near the modern day Banff townsite. The Federal government designated the area around the hot springs as Canada's first national park, Rocky Mountains Park. In order to facilitate tourist traffic, the Railway built the Banff Springs Hotel and Chateau Lake Louise to draw people westward. Banff quickly gained a reputation for its luxury and revitalizing mineral pools.

In 1962, the Federal government build the Trans-Canada Highway, which opened up the park even more. The Sunshine Village and Lake Louise ski areas joined Mount Norquay as destinations, and the popularity of down hill skiing soared. Banff became a thriving resort destination, full of world-class restaurants, hotels, and shops, and it is now one of Canada's top tourist attractions.
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Hotel Insights

InBanff, the hotels are plentiful. Nevertheless, during both the summer and winter months it is wise to reserve a room in advance due to the crowds. The town has something for every type of traveler. The Banff Springs Hotel is fit for royalty, the Samesun Backpacker Lodge is fit for the broke student ski-bum, and there's the whole range in between. Norquay's Timberline Inn is in a beautiful location, close to town but away from the hustle and bustle.Lake Louise has a smaller number of hotels, which runs the gamut from a comfortable lodge to the palatial Chateau Lake Louise. Sunshine Village Inn accommodates the type of skier that wants to ski as soon as they wake.
© NileGuide

Restaurants Insights

Banff sets high standards for its restaurants. Most hotels have restaurants, but for the most part the best options are found on Banff Ave. If you want to try Italian- Giorgio's; Greek- Balkan; Canadian- The Maple Leaf; French- Bistro; Chinese- Silver Dragon; Steak- The Saltlik; or Traditional Pub- St. James Gate. The Rimrock Hotel has a AAA five-diamond restaurant, Eden. The only thing missing is a Tim Horton's.
© NileGuide

Nightlife Insights

Nightlife inBanff is pretty famous. The Aurora Nightclub is the top of the class. Outtabounds caters to the ski and snowboarding crowd; it's dance floor can get quite raucous. The Pump and Tap Tavern is the best place to find soccer or rugby on TV. St. James Gate is a traditional Irish pub, which oftentimes has live music. Wild Bill's is a western bar with huge glasses of beer.

Shopping along Banff Ave will satisfy your need for an eclectic mix of souvenirs, Christmas ornaments, and athletic gear. The best are the candy stores, of course. Welch's is very famous in Calgary, as most people have experiences of it from childhood. The Fudgery will put you into a sugar high.

The Banff Mountain Film Festival is world-famous, particularly for its National Geographic movies. Movie-goers can enjoy blockbusters at the Lux, or you can attend the Banff Centre for live performing arts. The Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, the Museum of the Rockies, and the Banff Museum of Natural History are open year-round.
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Things to Do Insights

The Canadian Rockies are best enjoyed outside! This region offers year-round activities for those who want to experience life to the fullest with adventure or with luxury.

Summers are for hiking, biking, spelunking, white-water rafting, horse-back riding, camping, rock climbing, fishing, scuba diving, and sight-seeing. Winters offer skiing(alpine, cross-country, heli, back-country), skating, dog-sledding, ice fishing, ice climbing, snow shoeing, and shopping.

The mountain lakes provide much of the spectacular scenery, and they are well worth visiting. In Banff, Lake Louise, Lake Minnewanka, and Moraine Lake are breath-taking. Lake Minnewanka even has scuba diving tours!

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The ski hills in this region are world-class. Lake Louise is one of the most famous ski resorts in the world. Sunshine Village is mere minutes from Banff and offers the longest ski season in the Rockies(November to May).

At Lake Louise, guests can skate around ice sculptures on the lake in winter. They also offer dog-sledding around the lake. Dog-sledding is quite popular around the Spray Lakes, near Canmore, as well. The Spray Lakes are good places to ice fish, too. Snow shoeing allows for a peaceful hike in a winter climate, and it is one of the more traditional activities done in the mountains and can be enjoyed along most of Banff's hiking trails.

There's thousands of kilometers of hiking trails in the Rockies. In Kananaskis, there are a number of operators for horse-back rides, such as Boundary Ranch. Camping is also plentiful for those who want to experience the great outdoors more fully. Especially in Kananaskis, rock climbing is a popular form of recreation. Spelunking is a unique experience most people never try. Castleguard caves in the Northwest corner of Banff are Canada's longest cave system, but spelunking should only be done with the guidance of a professional tour operator. Rat's Nest Cave in Canmore is a local favorite.

The Rockies have a lot of great golf courses in the summer. Kananaskis Golf Course is, in my opinion, the best value for your dollar in Alberta, but the Banff Springs Golf Course is world famous for good reason, too. Silvertip and Stewart Creek in Canmore are gorgeous and challenging.

Of course, shopping in both Jasper and Banff is a treat with 100s of little, quaint and unique shops vying for your dollar, and the restaurants in the area are excellent.
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Travel Tips

Getting There: By Air:

Banff is serviced by Calgary International Airport(+1 403 735 1200/http://www.calgaryairport.com), located approximately 80 miles away. Its terminals house the following airlines:

Alaska Airlines(+ 1 800 426 0333/http://www.alaskaair.com) Air Canada(+1 800 776 3000/http://www.aircanada.ca) American Airlines(+ 1 800 433 7300/http://www.aa.com) Canadian North(+1 800 661 1505/http://www.canadiannorth.com) Continental(+1 800 525 0280/http://www.continental.com) Delta(+1 800 221 1212/http://www.delta.com) Jetsgo(+ 1 866 440 0441/http://www.jetsgo.net) Northwest(+1 800 225 2525/http://www.nwa.com) QuickAir(+ 1 800 551 7845/http://www.quikair.ca) United(+1 800 241 6522/http://www.ual.com) US Airways(+1 800 428 4322/http://www.usairways.com) WestJet(+ 1 800 538 5696/http://www.westjet.com)

The Banff Airporter(1 888 449 2901/http://www.banffairporter.com) and the Banff Canmore Airport Express(+1 877 992 2633/http://banffairporttaxi.com) offer transit options to and from the airport.

Rental Car companies include: Tilden Rent-A-Car(+1 403 762 2688) Banff Rent A Car(+1 403 762 3352) Avis(+1 800 831 2847/http://www.avis.com) Budget(+1 800 527 0700/http://www.budget.com) Hertz(+1 800 654 3131/http://www.hertz.com)

By Train: Banff is serviced by VIA Rail Canada(+1 888 842 7245/http://www.viarail.ca). Royal Canadian Pacific(+1 403 508 1407/http://www8.cpr.ca/cms/English/RCP/default.htm) offers a Royal Canadian Rockies tour that includes Banff National Park.

By Bus: Banff can be reached by National Motor Coach Systems(+1 403 240 1992) and Greyhound(+1 800 661 8747/http://www.greyhound.ca). Transportation to Calgary is available on Red Arrow Motorcoach(+1 800 232 1958/http://www.redarrow.ca/home).

By Car: Banff can be reached from Trans-Canada Highway 1.

Getting Around: Public transit in Banff is limited and visitors should plan accordingly. Banff is serviced by Banff Transit, known as the"Happy Bus," which offers service to destinations along two routes. The Banff Bus(+1 403 760 8294) provides local service during the summer and passes by downtown and the major hotels.

By Bike: Bike Rental Shop(+1 403 762 4581) CanUSA Cycle Adventure Tours(+1 800 938 7986;http://canusacycle.ca/)

By Foot: One of the best modes of transportation in Banff is on foot.

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Fun Facts

1. Interesting fact: Banff was always planned as a tourist town with the main drag, Banff Avenue, lined up with perfect views of Cascade Mountain. As the saying goes,"if you can't bring the mountains to the people, bring the people to the mountains."

2. Weird fact: Often during the months of April and May, you could go skiing in the morning and rock climbing in the afternoon.

3. Random fact: The famous Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel was actually built backwards by accident. Renovations were made to put the front desk on the appropriate side...eventually.

4. Fun fact: In the fall, you can hear(and see) elk rutting in the treed areas that surround the town and sometimes right in Central Park.

5. Interesting fact: Where does"Banff" come from? The name is derived from Banffshire, Scotland, the birthplace of two of the town's founders.

6. Cool fact: The waters of the Bow River in Banff eventually run all the way to the Hudson Bay.

7. Surprising fact: Castleguard Caves in Banff National Park are the longest cave system in Canada.

8. Neat fact: Banff is the highest town in Canada at about 4500 feet above sea level.

9. Geek fact: Banff was the first national park established in Canada and the third established in the world.

10. Random fact: Banff National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

11. Weird fact: Banff has a special law called the'need to reside' clause which states that in order to live in the national park one has to have full time employment in Banff National Park.

12. Fun Fact: You can go scuba diving at Lake Minnewanka in Banff and visit an underwater abandoned town.
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