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ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Lianne Viau

The Rockies complete tour

Banff, 5 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: You can do all three mountain towns in five days, if you're lucky enough to have that long.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1

DAY NOTE: Begin in Canmore, just west of Calgary. One of the most noteworthy parts of Canmore is the Nordic Centre where you can go cross-country skiing in the winter and mountain biking in the summer. Another noteworthy place in Canmore is the Crazyweed Kitchen - this restaurant comes highly recommended.

chance to see every day. Book a guided tour as you'll learn much more.

Day 2 - Banff

DAY NOTE: For day 2, drive the short distance to Banff. A good place to start is on Banff Ave. where you'll find the Visitor Information centre, where you'll be able to find out about all the seasonal activities available and hiking conditions. There's also lots to see just walking up and down Banff Ave. One of the most popular hikes in the area is Johnston Canyon - it's not too strenuous and it's beautiful.



Johnston Canyon and the Ink Pots

Unbeatable mountain scenery along an easy-to-hike trail

Day 3

DAY NOTE: One more day in Banff. The tour agencies in this town really know what they're doing, and most tours are educational, so it's always a good idea to book at least one. One activity that is especially popular in the mountains is white water rafting and there are multiple rafting companies to choose from. Another point of interest for eating is the Grizzly House. Located right on Banff Ave., it really offers something different than anywhere else in town.

Day 4

DAY NOTE: Day 4 - head to Jasper! A good place to start your trip is at the Information Centre, where you'll find information and help to plan your two days here.

Day 5

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contact:

http://www.banff.ca/activities-events/summer/banff-hiking/johnston_canyon.htm

location:

1A Hwy
Banff AB



Johnston Canyon and the Ink Pots

DESCRIPTION: This self-guided hiking trail 20 km west of Banff is one of the more famous hikes in the area for a reason. The trail is a good choice for any level of outdoorsman, from the energetic hiker to those looking for a casual walk through the woods. Johnston Canyon's views are breathtaking, with a creek, a series of waterfalls and beautiful rock formations. If you have more energy, continue on to the end of the 5.5 km trail where you'll find the Ink Pots, natural springs that appear to be coloured by glacial sediment. © NileGuide



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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 the Cave 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 built 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

In Banff, 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.

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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.

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Nightlife Insights

Nightlife in Banff 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 breathtaking. Lake Minnewanka even has scuba diving tours!

Banff Snapshot continued

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.quickair.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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