

Canada: Banff National Park & the Canadian Rockies

Bike Vacation Only

You'll witness one marvel of nature after another as you cycle among snow-covered summits, glistening lakes, rushing rivers and dramatic cascades. Visit Jasper and Banff national parks, with rides along the famed Icefields Parkway and Bow Valley Parkway. Stop along the way to take in the splendor of the enormous Columbia Icefield as it straddles the Continental Divide, the torrent of Athabasca Falls, the glassy surfaces of Maligne, Louise and Peyto Lakes, and so much more. Join VBT on this soul-stirring itinerary!

Cultural Highlights

Marvel at the turquoise hue of Maligne Lake, the Canadian Rockies' largest natural lake

Witness the magnificent Maligne Canyon, graced with sinkholes, streams, and caverns

Picnic near the fantastic cascade of 75-foot Athabasca Falls

Cycle among the spectacular vistas of Icefields Parkway Gain insight about Jasper National Park during a naturalist talk

Dig into traditional BBQ fare during dinner at your lodge in Sunwapta Falls

Stop to view the massive Columbia Icefield and the emerald-green waters of Bow Lake

Thrill to the panorama along the Bow Valley Parkway, a stunning wilderness corridor

What to Expect

This tour offers options on easier terrain with occasional hills and the opportunity for some longer rides and moderate climbing. The majority of the rides are on paved park roads alongside vehicular traffic, some with designated bike routes or a wide shoulder. Our VBT van support shuttle is always available throughout the trip.

Tour Duration: 6 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 15 - 40

Average Cycling Time: 01:15 - 03:30

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Jun 66°/42°, Jul 71°/45°, Aug 71°/44°, Sep 62°/37°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Jun 2.7, Jul 2.7, Aug 2.4, Sep 1.5

DAY 1: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Transfer to Jasper/ Warm-Up Ride

At 9:00 a.m., meet your VBT representative in the lobby of the Coast Edmonton Plaza Hotel (10155 105 St NW, Edmonton, AB T5J 1E2, Canada telephone + 780-423-4811). Please come dressed for cycling (with your pedals or saddle if you use your own), as there will be no place to change into cycling clothes before the warm-up ride. Transfer to Jasper at 9:30 a.m. promptly (travel time is approximately 4 hours). A box lunch will be provided. Check-in at your hotel is 4:00 p.m.

If your arrival at the Edmonton hotel is scheduled for later than 9:30 a.m., or if you are delayed, you must travel to the Jasper hotel at your own expense. SunDog Transportation and Tours Ltd. provides a daily shuttle service between Edmonton International Airport and Jasper National Park (\$99 CAD per person). Sundog Tours picks up at Door 10 on the Arrivals level at 3:15 p.m. or in the lobby of Fantasyland Hotel at West Edmonton Mall at 3:50 p.m. (\$89 CAD per person). You will arrive in Jasper at 8:00 p.m. and dropped off at your hotel. Reservations are required. Call + 1-888-786-3641 or visit <http://www.sundogtours.com/edmonton-edson-hinton-jasper-shuttle-services/>.

Your Jasper hotel is The Crimson Jasper (200 Connaught Drive, Jasper, AB T0E 1E0, Canada, telephone +587-802-3577) for all tours except the tour starting on September 1, 2019. Please contact The Crimson Jasper to advise them of any travel delays or changes, and the staff will pass your message on to your VBT Trip Leaders.

Your Jasper hotel for tour starting on September 1, 2019 is the Sawridge Inn and Conference Centre (76 Connaught Dr, Jasper, AB T0E 1E0, Canada, telephone 1 780-852-5111).

Once you arrive in Jasper, in the heart of the breathtaking Jasper National Park, meet your Trip Leaders for a safety and bike-fitting session. Then set off to stretch your legs on an invigorating warm-up ride. As you cycle, the true majesty of the Canadian Rockies reveals itself as snow-capped peaks rise around you. Your destination is Pyramid Lake, the pristine waters at the foot of its eponymous mountain, so named for its shape.

Raise a glass to your arrival in the splendid Canadian Rockies during a special welcome reception, followed by dinner at Whisky Jack, a local restaurant.

Hotel: The Crimson Jasper

Meals: Breakfast (for Air Package guests only), Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 10 miles (16 km)

DAY 2: Maligne Lake / Medicine Lake / Beauvert Lake

After a hearty breakfast, gather in the lobby for a breathtaking hour-long transfer, climbing some 2,000 feet to our ride's starting point at Maligne Lake. Before you get underway, linger a while to admire the vibrant blue waters and the magnificent peaks that ring the largest glacially fed lake in the Canadian Rockies. You'll be inspired by the beauty of Maligne Lake's still waters and by the stunning lofty peaks around you.

Begin your reel along Maligne Lake Road and look for the famous Rosemary's Rock. Somewhat of a curiosity for its several film associations, this semi-famous river rock appeared in the 1953 movie, "Rose Marie" and it's been said that Rosemary Clooney once climbed upon it. Continue riding along a magnificent road lined with deep emerald forest sloping up to massive mountains. This spectacular route leads to the famous "disappearing" Medicine Lake, a minor basin of Maligne Lake whose waters drop off underground at one end. Pause here to stroll along the shoreline and watch for pika, a tiny round rabbit-like mammal, hiding among the rocks. Down the road on the banks of the Maligne River, you will meet your Trip Leaders, who have prepared a picnic lunch. Enjoy your freshly prepared meal in this perfect dining room, keeping your eyes peeled for elk, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, and white-tail deer. Later, cycle to Maligne Canyon and hike some of the trails into the narrow 164-foot-deep karst ravine.

Your inspirational day continues as you ride to Beauvert Lake, the setting for Jasper Park Lodge. Here, you can take a break to sip tea or libations on the patio and celebrate the staggering beauty of the park. You may ride or shuttle back to your inn.

Tonight, dinner is on your own at one of Jasper's many fine eateries. You may find such pleasurable appetizers as Earl Grey smoked candied salmon, Newfie cod cakes, or P.E.I. mussels. Or sample such exquisite dishes as slow roasted prime rib, AAA Alberta beef, back ribs, deer tenderloin, wild boar chops, or rack of lamb. The choices in Jasper are endless. Your Trip Leaders will be happy to help you with recommendations and directions.

Hotel: The Crimson Jasper

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Daily Options: 29 or 32 miles (46.5 or 52km)

DAY 3: Icefields Parkway / Athabasca Falls / Picnic Lunch / Sunwapta Falls

Awake to the cool mountain air and head to the inn's restaurant for breakfast. After fueling up for the morning ride, depart Jasper to begin cycling the Icefields Parkway, one of the world's most beautiful roadways. This astonishing route traverses the heart of the unspoiled Rockies, passing panorama after panorama of jaw-dropping alpine splendor. As you ride, marvel at glacier-crowned summits, plummeting waterfalls, and azure lakes surrounded by spruce and fir forest. Your destination is Athabasca Falls, one of the park's most powerful waterfalls for the torrent of water that spills into its gorge. The Athabasca River carries the most water of any Rocky Mountain river, and the 75-foot falls present a spectacle of roaring water, spray, and mist. There'll be time here to hike along marked trails to viewing platforms and marvel at the deep canyon carved by the power of the mighty river. It's the ideal spot for a picnic, and so you will enjoy lunch here near the falls.

After this refreshing stop, continue cycling the Icefields Parkway amidst more views of snow-capped mountains. Later, arrive at the friendly and rustic Sunwapta Falls Rocky Mountain Lodge. Settle in to your cabin-style room and perhaps walk to Sunwapta Falls, just a seven-minute walk from the lodge.

Tonight, enjoy a talk about Jasper National Park from a naturalist, followed by a delicious traditional barbeque dinner. After sunset, the night sky puts on a show of infinite stars.

Hotel: Sunwapta Falls Rocky Mountain Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 20 or 35 miles (33 or 57 km)

DAY 4: Icefields Parkway Transfer/ Columbia Icefield and Bow Lake / Lake Louise / Bow Valley Parkway / Banff

After breakfast, enjoy a scenic shuttle along the Icefields Parkway to Lake Louise. En route, you will stop to view the spectacular Columbia Icefield. Formed during the Great Glaciation, this vast natural wonder straddles the Continental Divide along the border of British Columbia and Alberta and is the largest ice field in the North American Rockies. This is nature at one of her most extremes: the ice that comprises this 125-square-mile expanse between glacier-clad peaks is up to 1,200 feet deep and receives up to 23 feet of snow annually. From a viewing platform, you will see Mt. Athabasca, North Twin, Mt. Andromeda, and Mt. Kitchener. After time here, continue by shuttle into Banff National Park, pausing to witness the mesmerizing green-blue waters of Bow Lake, colored by particles of glacial rock that flow into the lake each summer. Sitting at an elevation of 1,920 meters (6,300 feet.), it is one of the largest lakes in Banff National Park. There'll be time to follow the paved trail to a breathtaking lookout point.

Later, arrive at Lake Louise, enjoying your box lunch along its iconic shores. This is one of the most famous lakes in the world, renowned for its magnificent setting. The glacier-fed waters were named for Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, the fourth daughter of Queen Victoria.

After lunch, shuttle a little further down the road and return to your bicycle saddle for an invigorating, mostly downhill ride along the magnificent Bow Valley Parkway. This stunning wilderness corridor is celebrated for its unwavering preservation of Banff's scenic heritage. As you descend, you may pause off the road at interpretive stops, perhaps learning more about sites like Morant's Curve or Castle Cliffs as you gaze upon them in the distance. Later, approach the Flames of Life, an area where prescribed burns have been used to stimulate plant growth and support natural habitats.

After a rewarding day, arrive in Banff, the highest town in Canada, and your lodge for the next two nights. Tonight, dinner is at your leisure in town. Your Trip Leaders will point out their local favorites.

Hotel: Banff Caribou Lodge and Spa

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Daily Options: 20 miles (32km)

DAY 5: Banff Golf Course loop ride/ Bow River & Falls / Tunnel Mountain / Lake Minnewanka

Today, you spend time in the scenic area in and around Banff, with several ride options available. Enjoy an easy, flat spin around the beautifully manicured Banff Golf Course. During this leisurely ride, you might spot majestic Wapiti, a species of elk, along the fairways. Later, continue with a reel along the Bow River to its pretty Falls. Take a spin to Tunnel Mountain, a small summit rising over the town of Banff. From the top, linger a while and admire views over the Bow and Spray River Valleys, Banff Springs Golf Course, and surrounding peaks.

This afternoon, continue to Lake Minnewanka, meaning "water of the spirits" in the First Nations Nakoda language. Surrounded by jagged peaks and hoodoo clusters, it is the longest lake in the Rockies.

Back in Banff, optional activities include a visit to the Cave and Basin National Historic Site, where natural thermal springs have a rich local history. Embark the Banff Gondola to the summit of Sulphur Mountain. Or pay a visit to Whyte Museum to learn about the cultural heritage of the Canadian Rockies. Your lodge offers complimentary bus passes to facilitate your visit. You might stay close by and find local souvenirs in town or find solitude and calm at the lodge's Red Earth Spa. For spa appointments call

1-800-563-8764; advanced reservations are recommended (spa treatments not included in the tour).

Tonight, gather at Juniper Bistro for a farewell dinner and celebrate your unforgettable alpine adventure.

Hotel: Banff Caribou Lodge and Spa

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Daily Options: 12 miles (19 km) or 18 miles (29 km) and/or 15 miles (25km)

DAY 6: VBT Bicycle Vacation ends / Depart for home or begin your Post-Trip Extension in Calgary

Enjoy a final breakfast at the Banff Caribou Lodge. Your transfer to the Calgary International Airport (YYC) departs from the Banff Caribou Lodge at 9:00 a.m. (Travel time is 1 hour, 30 minutes.) You will arrive at approximately 10:30 a.m. for your return flight. We recommend a flight out of Calgary no earlier than 12:00 p.m. (noon).

* Please note: If you extend your stay beyond the scheduled program dates, return transportation to the airport is at your own expense.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Banff Caribou Lodge (Days: 4,5)

Banff Caribou Lodge and Spa is located in the center of Banff, within walking distance of all the attractions in town. This mountain lodge features magnificent views of the mountains of Banff National Park. The Keg Steakhouse and Bar is the ideal place for a hearty meal after a day of cycling. The full-service Red Earth Spa features a steam room, 26-person jetted hot pool, and exercise room. As a guest, you will enjoy the use of a complimentary "Roam" bus pass, your ticket to several attractions outside of town. For spa appointments call 800.563.8764; advance reservations are recommended. The hotel is not air conditioned but does offer WiFi throughout.

The Crimson Jasper (Days: 1,2)

Nestled in the heart of town lies Jaspers newest hotel, The Crimson Jasper. This 99-room hotel

exemplifies the casual nature of park accommodations and true Canadian colors, awash in the hues of Jaspers sunsets, fall foliage, the Canadian flag and the uniform of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The inn features an indoor pool, hot tub and Peak fitness room. In the evening, enjoy a drink in the new C200 restaurant and lounge.

Sunwapta Falls Rocky Mountain Lodge (Day: 3)

Located on the Icefields Parkway, the Sunwapta Falls Rocky Mountain Lodge enjoys a splendid setting right on your bike route. The modest and rustic lodge offers simply furnished cabin-style rooms. The property has been awarded TripAdvisor's Certificate of Excellence for four years running and has received the annual AHLA Housekeeping Award for decades. The friendliness of the staff is sure to win you over, as is the tranquility: you won't find cell phone reception here, though free WiFi and satellite television are available. Once you're settled in, enjoy a seven-minute walk to the scenic Sunwapta Falls if you wish.