

Canada: Banff National Park & the Canadian Rockies

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Witness the staggering beauty of the wilderness up close on this dazzling reel through the Canadian Rockies. As you ride, you'll behold snow-capped peaks, pristine lakes, and spectacular icefields, keeping your eyes peeled for elk, deer, mountain goats, and bighorn sheep. You'll also explore off the bike, on hiking trails leading to roaring waterfalls and steep ravines. Our hand-picked lodgings and hearty meals, including a traditional barbecue, ensure your comfort throughout. As you experience the majesty of the Canadian wilderness with VBT, you'll see why this vacation surpasses all other Banff bicycle tours.

Cultural Highlights

Drink in the beauty of Maligne Lake, a turquoise jewel set in the Canadian Rockies.

Hike the trails of Maligne Canyon, marveling at sinkholes, streams, and caverns.

Listen to thundering Athabasca Falls as you hike to viewing platforms and picnic nearby.

Pass panorama after panorama of jaw-dropping alpine splendor as you cycle the Icefields Parkway.

Learn about Jasper National Park from a local naturalist.

Savor a traditional barbeque dinner.

View the spectacular Columbia Icefield and the emerald waters of Peyto Lake.

Spin downhill along the magnificent Bow Valley Parkway, a stunning wilderness corridor.

What to Expect

This tour offers options on easy 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. Many of these roads are either designated bike routes or have a wide shoulder. Our VBT van support shuttle is available throughout the trip.

Tour Duration: 7 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: Depart from home / Arrive in Edmonton

Depart from home for Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Upon arrival at the Edmonton International Airport (YEG), claim your luggage and clear customs. Make certain your VBT luggage tags are clearly visible so that our VBT representative can identify you. If your luggage is lost, file a claim with your airline's luggage service counter before leaving the customs area. VBT representatives are not allowed into the customs area.

After exiting customs, enter the arrival hall and look for your VBT representative, who will be holding a sign with your name and VBT logo. He or she will walk you to your arranged transfer, which will depart from the Arrivals level near Doors 9 and 10. The transfer to your centrally located hotel is a journey of approximately 30 minutes.

Please note: Your room may not be available until 3:00 p.m., in which case you may store your luggage with the Reception Desk.

The rest of the day is yours to explore Edmonton at leisure, using the VBT City Information as your guide. All meals are on your own today.

Our centrally located hotel lets you explore Edmonton, Alberta's lively capital, with ease. Simply step outside, and the city's cultural pleasures are a short walk away. In the summer, parks come alive with some of Canada's most colorful festivals. You might catch the nationally famous Fringe Festival, the Street Performers festival, and jazz and blues festivals. The city's science center houses the largest planetarium in the country. Take a break from exploring at BRU Coffee and Beer House on Jasper Street. At Louise McKinney Riverfront Park, you can pick up the city's beloved trail system and follow it throughout the city. Perhaps you'll explore the World Walk, a horticultural stroll that includes a serene and visually striking Chinese garden that celebrates Edmonton's Chinese community.

Please note: VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. If you fly in earlier than the scheduled program dates, transportation from the airport will be at your own expense.

Hotel: Matrix Hotel Edmonton

DAY 2: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Transfer to Jasper/ Warm-Up Ride

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast at your hotel, then meet your VBT representative and the rest of the group in the lobby at 9:00 a.m. for your transfer to Jasper (travel time is approximately 4 hours). A box lunch will be provided. 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. Check-in at your hotel is 4:00 p.m.

Once you arrive in Jasper, in the heart of 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 Pyramid Mountain, so named for its shape.

Back at the inn, raise a glass to your arrival in the splendid Canadian Rockies during a special welcome reception, followed by dinner.

Hotel: Sawridge Inn and Conference Centre

Alternate Hotel: The Crimson Jasper

Alternate Hotel: Tekarra Lodge

Alternate Hotel: Chateau Jasper Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Jasper Warm-Up: 17 km (11 miles)

What to Expect: Your warm-up spin gives you the opportunity to fit your bike, shift the gears, and practice riding. During a peaceful ride up to Pyramid Lake amid snow-topped mountains, you'll feel refreshed and renewed as the cool alpine breeze brushes your cheeks.

DAY 3: 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: Sawridge Inn and Conference Centre

Alternate Hotel: The Crimson Jasper

Alternate Hotel: Tekarra Lodge

Alternate Hotel: Chateau Jasper Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 47 – 52 km (29 – 32 miles)

Morning

Maligne Lake to Crimson Jasper with Shuttle: 47 km (29 miles)

Maligne Lake to Crimson Jasper Plus: 52 km (32 miles)

What to Expect: After shuttling to Maligne Lake, ride downhill to Medicine Lake. A picnic lunch alongside a river awaits farther down the road. Cycle to Maligne Canyon, where you may take a short hike. Backroad bike paths then lead to Beauvert Lake, where you can pause for tea in a breathtaking setting. Today's longer option follows the shoreline trail of Lake Beauvert and returns to Jasper.

DAY 4: Icefields Parkway / Athabasca Falls / Picnic Lunch / Sunwapta Falls

Awake to 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

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 57 km (15 – 35 miles)

Morning

Icefields Parkway to Sunwapta Falls: 33 km (21 miles)

Afternoon

Athabasca Falls to Sunwapta Rocky Mountain Lodge: 24 km (15 miles)

What to Expect: Shuttle to your starting point on the Icefields Parkway, a magnificent route through the heart of the Rockies. After a picnic lunch at Athabasca Falls, you may walk the trails to viewing platforms overlooking the cascade. Today's longer ride is a moderate route along the Icefields Parkway to the lodge. Later, you may walk a short distance to Sunwapta Falls.

DAY 5: Icefields Parkway Transfer/ Columbia Icefield and Peyto 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 Peyto Lake, colored by particles of glacial rock that flow into the lake each summer. There'll be time to follow the paved trail to a breathtaking lookout point over the lake, named for an early trapper in the Banff area.

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

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 32 km (21 miles)

Afternoon

Castle Mountain to Banff: 32 km (21 miles)

What to Expect: Spend a leisurely morning with our shuttle, stopping to take in the enormous Columbia

Icefield, the green-blue hues of Peyto Lake, and picturesque Lake Louise. This afternoon, ride mostly downhill along the Bow Valley Parkway.

DAY 6: 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 enjoy solitude and calm at the lodge’s Red Earth Spa. For spa appointments, call 1-800-563-8764; advance reservations are recommended (spa treatments are not included in the tour).

Tonight, gather at the hotel’s restaurant for a farewell dinner to celebrate your unforgettable alpine adventure.

Hotel: Banff Caribou Lodge and Spa

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today’s Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 – 100 km (11 – 62 miles)

Morning

Banff to Golf Loop: 19 km (11 miles)

Banff to Golf Loop Plus: 29 km (18 miles)

Afternoon

Lake Minnewanka Loop: 25 km (15 miles)

Legacy Trail to Canmore: 46 km (29 miles)

What to Expect: The morning ride takes you over mostly flat road to the Banff Golf Course, via the waters of Bow River, and you may opt to add the ride up to the summit of Tunnel Mountain and back to the inn. The afternoon ride takes you on the gently rolling route around Lake Minnewanka.

DAY 7: VBT Bicycle Vacation ends / Flight Home

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.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Banff Caribou Lodge (Days: 5,6)

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.

Matrix Hotel (Day: 1)

A sleek modern design and soothing ambiance combine to make the Matrix Hotel Edmonton a tranquil oasis in the heart of downtown, just a short stroll away from shops and restaurants. A décor inspired by nature is complemented by artwork in the hotel's public spaces, which include a dine-in lounge and fitness center. Enjoy impeccable service during your stay, as well as a complimentary evening wine tasting and WiFi. The hotel is air conditioned throughout.

Sunwapta Falls Rocky Mountain Lodge (Day: 4)

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 AHHA 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.