

## Alberta: Banff National Park & the Canadian Rockies

### Bike Vacation + Air Package

Witness the spectacular beauty of the wilderness up close on this dazzling ride through the Canadian Rockies. As you ride, you'll revel in the views of rugged snow-capped peaks, crystal-clear lakes, and blossoming alpine meadows, keeping your eyes peeled for the elk, deer, mountain goats, and bighorn sheep which populate the area. Off the bike, you'll have time to explore hiking trails leading to dramatic ridges past roaring waterfalls. Our carefully selected lodgings with hearty meals, including a traditional barbecue, ensure that your time off the bike will be just as memorable your cycling. 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

- Learn about Banff National Park, part of a UNESCO World Heritage site and Canada's first

national park.

- Explore Banff, the highest town in Canada, by foot and by bike.
- View the spectacular Victoria Glacier and the emerald waters of Lake Louise.
- Spin downhill along the magnificent Bow Valley Parkway, a stunning wilderness corridor.
- Cycle the Legacy Trail, with towering Mount Rundle, Cascade Mountain, and the Three Sisters Mountains surrounding you.
- Pause for a beer or soda, locally made in the Bow Valley.
- Pass panorama after panorama of jaw-dropping alpine splendor as you cycle in Kananaskis Country.
- Experience a traditional barbeque lunch at Boundary Ranch.
- Hike the trails of Ptarmigan Cirque to an alpine meadow with epic views.
- Ride downhill from Highwood Pass, Canada's highest paved pass, for a picnic lunch.
- Enjoy an afternoon of optional rafting, hiking, or horse-back riding in Kananaskis Country.
- Gather by an outdoor fire pit for s'mores and star gazing.

## 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:** 11 - 53

**Average Cycling Time:** 01:00 - 03:45

## 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: Flight and Arrival

Arrive in Calgary

Upon arrival at the Calgary International Airport (YYC), claim your luggage and clear customs. Make certain your VBT luggage tags are clearly visible so our VBT representative can identify you. If your luggage is lost, file a claim at your airline's luggage service counter before leaving the customs area. VBT representatives are not allowed in the customs area.

After exiting customs and the baggage claim area, look for your VBT representative, who will be holding a sign with your name and VBT logo. The representative will walk you to your arranged transfer, which will depart from the Arrivals level. The transfer to your centrally located hotel is approximately 30 minutes.

Please note: For stays at the Hotel Clique Calgary Airport during the Calgary Stampede, transfer to your hotel is approximately 5 minutes.

If you are going to be late meeting our transfer representative for more than 15 minutes due to delayed or lost luggage, please contact Allianz Global Assistance and they will contact our transfer service. Our drivers are generally able to wait for up to 45 minutes from the time your flight lands, after which you would be responsible for your own transfer.

Please note: Your room may not be available until 3:00 p.m., but you may store your luggage with the reception desk.

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

Please note: For stays at the Hotel Clique Calgary Airport during the Calgary Stampede, transportation to downtown Calgary by taxi is at your expense.

Accommodation: Hotel Arts, Calgary

Alternate Accommodation: Hotel Clique Calgary Airport, Calgary

## **DAY 2: Transfer to Banff / 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 12:30 p.m. for your transfer to Banff (travel time is approximately 1 ½ hours). Plan to have lunch before the transfer. 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 Banff, in the heart of breathtaking Banff National Park, meet your trip leaders for a safety and bike-fitting session. Then, 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 a loop ride around the Banff golf course, past the pristine waters of the Bow River.

Later, shuttle from your hotel to a nearby restaurant and raise a toast to your arrival during a special welcome reception, followed by dinner.

Accommodation: Banff Caribou Lodge and Spa, Banff

Alternate Accommodation: Fox Hotel and Suites, Banff

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 km (11 miles)

*Afternoon*

Banff Warm-up: 19 km (11 miles)

What to Expect: Your warm-up spin gives you the opportunity to get used to the fit and gearing of your bike. During a scenic ride through town and to the quiet golf course, you'll feel refreshed and renewed as the cool alpine breezes brush your cheeks in the shadow of the snow-capped mountains. You may even encounter wapiti grazing on the plush grass.

### **DAY 3: Transfer to Lake Louise / Bow Valley Parkway / Banff**

After breakfast, enjoy a scenic shuttle to Lake Louise. This is one of the most famous lakes in the world, renowned for its magnificent mountain setting. The glacier-fed lake was named for Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, the fourth daughter of Queen Victoria. There will be time to walk the gorgeous paved trail to the end of the lake and back.

Next, shuttle a little further down the road and return to your bicycle for an invigorating, mostly downhill ride along the magnificent Bow Valley Parkway. This stunning wilderness corridor is celebrated for its preservation of Banff's scenic heritage. As you descend, you may want to pause at the various interpretive displays, perhaps learning more about sites like Morant's Curve (a must for railroad buffs) or Castle Cliffs. Pause for a hearty picnic lunch prepared by your trip leaders. Later, approach the Flames of Life, an area where prescribed burns have been used to stimulate plant growth and support natural habitats. Those looking for additional exercise may add a loop ride to Lake Minnewanka and Two Jack Lake.

After a rewarding day, arrive back in Banff, the highest town in Canada. Tonight, dinner is at your leisure in town. Your trip leaders will recommend their local favorites.

Accommodation: Banff Caribou Lodge and Spa, Banff

Alternate Accommodation: Fox Hotel and Suites, Banff

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 - 59 km (17 - 38 miles)

*Morning*

Lake Louise village to Castle Mountain: 27 km (17 miles)

*Afternoon*

Castle Mountain to Banff: 32 km (21 miles)

Lake Minnewanka Loop (optional): 25 km (15 miles)

What to Expect: Spend a leisurely morning with our shuttle as you head to picturesque Lake Louise. After walking along the shore, shuttle down to the village. Begin riding on the Bow Valley Parkway, one of the very best road bike routes in Canada and an important wildlife corridor. Pause for a picnic lunch near Castle Junction. This afternoon, ride mostly downhill along the Bow Valley Parkway, passing the beautiful Vermillion Lakes just before arriving in Banff. There will be a few hills but there is generally a tailwind in this direction. The parkway speed limit of 60 kph (37 mph) makes for safe and comfortable cycling, with several one-way sections. Watch out for bear jams! If you still have legs, you can continue cycling on an optional loop ride to Lake Minnewanka and Two Jack Lake.

## **DAY 4: Cycle the Legacy Trail / Canmore brewery / Bow Valley Trail / Transfer to Kananaskis**

After a leisurely breakfast, leave Banff by way of the Legacy Trail, a paved biking and walking route which opened in 2010 to commemorate the 125th anniversary of Banff National Park. The magnificent mountain views, wild roses, and Indian paintbrush will stimulate your senses. A former coal mining center, Canmore is now an enchanting town. Lunch on your own at one of the many eateries including Crazyweed or the Grizzly Paw Pub before perusing Rocky Mountain Soap Company's flagship store, Olde Time Candy Shoppe, or The Wild Life Distillery.

Rejoin your group for a tasting of the local artisanal beer. Then, continue cycling along the quiet Bow Valley Trail to Exshaw for a transfer to your hotel for the next three nights, Crosswaters Resort, located in Kananaskis Village. Dinner is at the hotel tonight.

Accommodation: Crosswaters Resort, Kananaskis Village

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 - 40 km (10 - 27 miles)

*Morning*

Banff to Canmore: 24 km (17 miles)

*Afternoon*

Canmore to Exshaw: 16 km (10 miles)

What to Expect: The Legacy Trail is a paved bike path that stretches from Banff to Canmore. The ride is mainly downhill with a few short, gentle hills. There is a picnic area with outhouses mid-way through the route. Stay to the right as the trail is open to pedestrians and horse-back riders. All dogs must be kept on leash. After lunch on your own in Canmore, enjoy an included beer tasting. Then, continue cycling to the hamlet of Exshaw on the Bow Valley Trail, a paved secondary road, past Gap Lake. You're likely to see some bighorn sheep and, at times, you may have to brake for livestock crossing the road. If time allows, you may opt to hike to Grotto Canyon, a 4 km (2.5 miles) out and back which is a favorite trail for the locals. Be forewarned that there are some slick sections getting over some rocks. From Exshaw, shuttle 30 minutes to your hotel in Kananaskis village.

## **DAY 5: Barrier Lake / Boundary Ranch barbeque / Optional afternoon activities**

This morning, cycle from the village to Barrier Lake, an aqua-hued reservoir created for hydroelectric power generation on the Kananaskis River. Mount Baldy looms over the lake and during World War II, prisoners in a nearby internment camp were occasionally permitted to make the ascent as long as they promised to return. Cycle back to Boundary Ranch and meet your group for a traditional barbecue lunch.

This afternoon, you may join optional activities such as a horseback trail ride from Boundary Ranch, a rafting adventure on the Kananaskis River, or a round of golf. Other options include relaxing at the Kananaskis Nordic Spa in one of their outdoor pools, steam rooms, sauna cabins, or salt-water float pool.

Tonight, dine at your leisure in the village. Stop by the fire pit for s'mores and star gazing.

Accommodation: Crosswaters Resort, Kananaskis Village

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 32 km (20 miles)

*Morning*

Hotel to Barrier Lake to Boundary Ranch: 32 km (20 miles)

Barrier Lake Interpretive Trail Hike (optional): 5 km (3 miles)

What to Expect: The ride to Barrier Lake is on a paved road with a wide shoulder and mountain vistas in every direction. It is an easy, leisurely ride. There is an option to hike the Barrier Lake Interpretive Trail, a 3-mile out and back to a ridge with views of the northern and southern mountains.

## **DAY 6: Transfer to Highwood Pass / Ptarmigan Cirque hike / Picnic lunch / Cycle down Kananaskis Valley / Farewell dinner**

After breakfast, shuttle to the Highwood Meadows day use area near the top of Highwood Pass, Canada's highest paved pass. Located in the high country wilderness of Peter Lougheed Provincial Park, the sharp hooves of bighorn sheep and mountain goats and the heavy pads of grizzlies have passed this way before you. The Ptarmigan Cirque Trail will take you through a sub-alpine forest at 7,545 feet in elevation, then to a fragile alpine meadow covered by snow for nine months of the year. The meadow is similar to the arctic tundra due to the buffeting winds, dryness, and temperature extremes. Relax and enjoy these epic views. Afterwards, spin down the valley and admire the natural beauty of Kananaskis Valley. Pause for a picnic lunch prepared by your trip leaders.

Return to your hotel to unwind or go on a hike on the Coal Mine trail from your hotel.

Later, gather for your farewell dinner at the hotel.

Accommodation: Crosswaters Resort, Kananaskis Village

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 46 km (29 miles)

*Morning*

Ptarmigan Cirque Trail Hike: 4 km (2.7 miles)

Highwood Pass to hotel: 46 km (29 miles)

*Afternoon*

Coal Mine Trail Hike (optional): 5 km (3 miles)

What to Expect: Shuttle to Highwood Pass and begin your hike on the Ptarmigan Cirque Trail. This loop trail features a waterfall and is rated moderate due to a short section of steep switchbacks in the

beginning. Aside from the switchbacks, the hike takes little effort and is popular with families.

After the hike, coast down through the valley, stopping along the way for a picnic lunch. Then continue cycling to your hotel.

The optional hike on the Coal Mine Trail is an out-and-back that offers scenic views and is good for all skill levels. It has a steady incline (800 ft. gain) on a wide trail through the forest and then narrows and opens up to great views. The coal mine operated from 1947 to 1952. The trail is primarily used for hiking, nature trips, and bird watching. Dogs are allowed but must be kept on leash.

## **DAY 7: Depart for home**

Enjoy a final breakfast at Crosswaters Resort. Your transfer to the Calgary International Airport (YYC) departs from the Crosswaters at 8:45 a.m. (travel time is a little over 1 ½ hours.) 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.

Included Meals: Breakfast