

## Canada: Banff National Park & the Canadian Rockies

### Bike Vacation Only

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.
- 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.
- Pass panorama after panorama of jaw-dropping alpine splendor as you cycle in Kananaskis Country.
- Hike the trails of Ptarmigan Cirque to an alpine meadow with epic views.

### 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 support vehicle is available throughout the trip.

**Average Daily Mileage:** 11 - 53 miles

**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: Travel to Banff / Warm-up ride

At 12:30 p.m., meet your VBT representative in the lobby of your Calgary hotel, either Hotel Arts (119 – 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta T2R 0G8 Canada, telephone 800.661.9378) or Hotel Clique Calgary Airport (24 Aero Crescent NE,

Calgary, Alberta T2E 7Y5 Canada, telephone 855.435.4783). Please refer to the Hotel Itinerary page in your Final Travel Document for your Calgary hotel contact information. Plan to have lunch before the journey. 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. Travel to Banff at 12:30 p.m. promptly (travel time is approximately 1.5 hours). Check-in at your hotel is 4:00 p.m.

If your arrival at the Calgary hotel is scheduled for later than 12:30 p.m., or if you are delayed, you must travel to the Banff hotel at your own expense. Brewster Banff Airport Express provides daily shuttle service between Calgary International Airport (or select downtown Calgary hotels) and Banff (\$72 CAD per person; approximately two hours travel time). Reservations are required. Call 866.606.6700 or visit [banffjaspercollection.com/brewster-express](http://banffjaspercollection.com/brewster-express).

Banff Airporter offers door to door service between Calgary International Airport and Banff (\$69 CAD per person and approximately two hours travel time). Reservations are required. Call 888.449.2901 or visit [banffairporter.com](http://banffairporter.com).

Please contact your Banff hotel to advise them of any travel delays or changes and the staff will pass your message on to your VBT trip leaders. Please refer to the Hotel Itinerary in this Final Travel Document for details on your Banff hotel.

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.

### Today's Ride Choices

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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 km (11 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

## **DAY 2: Travel 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.

## Today's Ride Choices

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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 – 84 km (17 – 53 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 3: Cycle the Legacy Trail / Canmore brewery / Bow Valley Trail / Travel 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 125<sup>th</sup> 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 transportation to your hotel for the next three nights, Crosswaters Resort, located in Kananaskis Village. Dinner is at the hotel tonight.

## Today's Ride Choices

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.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 4: 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 hike from your lodge, 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.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Hotel to Barrier Lake to Boundary Ranch — 32 km (20 miles) | Barrier Lake Interpretive Trail Hike (optional) — 5 km (3 miles)

Afternoon Boundary Ranch to Crosswaters — 7 km (4 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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 39 km (24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 5: Travel 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.

Today's Ride Choices

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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 46 km (29 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 6: Departure**

Enjoy a final included breakfast at Crosswaters Resort. Your complimentary transportation to the Calgary International Airport (YYC) departs from the Crosswaters at 8:30 a.m. (travel time is a little over 1.5 hours.) You will arrive at approximately 10:00 a.m. for your departure flight. We recommend a flight out of Calgary no earlier than 12:00 p.m.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **Accommodations**

May vary depending on departure date.

### **Banff Caribou Lodge (Days: 1,2)**

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.

### **Crosswaters Resort (Days: 3,4,5)**

Crosswaters Resort is located in the picturesque Kananaskis Valley framed by glacier-fed creeks and

ponds, the cascading Kananaskis River, and offering glimpses of majestic wildlife. Bright, polished spacious rooms provide all the modern amenities needed. The resort partners with the Pomeroy Kananaskis Mountain Lodge, so guests can choose from five unique food and beverage outlets with inspired farm-to-table options, and take advantage of the Kananaskis Nordic Spa on a first-come first-served basis (fees apply). For massage services please call 403.591.6800 or email [reservations@knordicspa.com](mailto:reservations@knordicspa.com). The hotel is air conditioned and offers WiFi throughout.