

Canada: 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, 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.
- Observe wildlife from the saddle—including elk, deer, bighorn sheep, bald eagles and even black and grizzly bears.
- 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

ARRIVAL DAY: Fly to and arrive in Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Your vacation is about to begin! Enjoy your flight and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

Start off your first day in Calgary right by having a VBT representative greet you at the airport. A complimentary car service will whisk you to your centrally located hotel. From here, you are perfectly positioned to explore this charming city at your leisure.

DAY 1: Travel 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 promptly at 12:30 p.m. for your transportation to Banff (travel time is approximately 1.5 hours). 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 (check-in at your hotel is 4:00 p.m.).

Once you arrive, in the heart of breathtaking Banff National Park, meet your trip leaders at 2:30 p.m. 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. Be ready to see wildlife along the route – including moose, elk, deer, and fox.

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: Breakfast, 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 ride along the magnificent Bow Valley Parkway. This stunning wilderness corridor is celebrated for its preservation of Banff's scenic heritage. This route is popular with local wildlife, and you may see elk, deer, bald eagles, bear, and fox along the way. Before you depart, your trip leaders will provide you with bear spray, and a training on bear awareness and safety. 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 or stop for a short hike at the popular Johnson Canyon. 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.

After a rewarding day, arrive back in Banff, the highest town in Canada. This afternoon you have time to enjoy one of the many optional activities available in town. Tonight, dinner is at your leisure. Your trip leaders will recommend their local favorites.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Lake Louise to Storm Mountain — 23 km (14 miles)

Afternoon: Storm Mountain to Banff — 34 km (21 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!

Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 23 — 57 km (14 — 35 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3: Cycle the Lake Minnewanka and Legacy Trail / Canmore brewery / Travel to Kananaskis

After a leisurely breakfast, leave Banff by cycling on a loop ride to Lake Minnewanka and Two Jack Lake. Be sure to stop and read about the history of the lake and keep your eyes out for scuba divers! Continuing along the loop, you'll pass by Bankhead, a small coal mining ghost town that existed in the early 20th century. Continue your ride 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 mountain town. Lunch on your own at one of the many eateries including Crazyweed Kitchen or the Grizzly Paw Pub before perusing Rocky Mountain Soap Company's flagship store, Stonewater's for gifts and home goods or Art Country Canada Rocky Mountain Gallery.

Rejoin your group for a tasting of the local artisanal beer. From here, shuttle to your hotel for the next three nights, Pomeroy Kananaskis Mountain Lodge, located in Kananaskis Village. Dinner is at the hotel tonight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Lake Minnewanka Loop — 25 km (15 miles) | Banff to Canmore — 24 km (17 miles)

What to Expect:

Start the morning ride by cruising through Banff to the outskirts of town towards the loop ride at Lake

Minnewanka. Along the way you'll pass Cascade Ponds, Two-Jack Lake and the ghost town of Bankhead. On your return, cross under the Trans Canada Highway towards the Legacy Trail, 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 midway through the route. Stay to the right as the trail is open to pedestrians and horseback riders. All dogs must be kept on leash. After lunch on your own in Canmore, rejoin your group and enjoy an included beer tasting at the Canmore Brewing Company. From Canmore, shuttle 40 minutes to your hotel in Kananaskis village.

Cumulative Distance Range: 18 – 38 km (11 – 24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: Barrier Lake / Optional afternoon activities

This morning, cycle from the village of Kananaskis 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 towards Kananaskis and meet your group for lunch.

This afternoon, you may join an optional guided walk around the property. Or, shoot a round of golf at the Kananaskis Golf course. Other options include relaxing at the Kananaskis Nordic Spa in one of their outdoor pools, steam rooms, or sauna cabins.

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 Kananaskis Golf – 33 km (21 miles) | Barrier Lake Interpretive Trail Hike (optional) – 1 km (.6 miles)

Afternoon: Kananaskis Country Golf Course – 7 km (5 miles) | Troll Falls Trail PLUS – 4 km (2.5 miles) | Rim Trail walk (optional) – 1.5 km (1 mile)

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 but please note that at times there can be heavy traffic on this road. There is an

option to hike the Barrier Lake Interpretive Trail, a .6-mile out-and-back to a ridge with views of the northern and southern mountains. Retrace your way from Barrier Lake to Kananaskis Golf Course for lunch. After lunch, cycle back to Pomeroy Kananaskis Mountain Lodge and partake in an optional activity in the area. A short optional detour on the way back to the lodge allows for an easy 2 mile out-and-back self-guided hike to the scenic Troll Falls.

The optional guided walk is on a flat paved trail than circles around the property and includes five scenic viewpoints. Keep an eye out for wildlife, bears can often be seen from the viewpoints that overlook the golf course and river down below. Dogs are allowed but must be kept on leash.

Cumulative Distance Range: 41 km (26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5: Travel to Highwood Pass / Ptarmigan Cirque hike / Cycle down Kananaskis Valley

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. Later, gather for your farewell dinner at the hotel, toasting to your adventures in the Canadian wilderness.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Ptarmigan Cirque Trail Hike — 4 km (2.7 miles) | Highwood Meadows to Opal Day Use Area — 32 km (20 miles)

Afternoon: Opal Day Use Area to Kananaskis — 18 km (11 miles)

What to Expect:

Shuttle to Highwood Pass and begin your hike on the Ptarmigan Cirque Trail. Please note that depending on the group size, the group may need to be broken into two smaller groups with slightly different start times. This lollipop trail features a waterfall and is rated moderate due to a short section of steep switchbacks in the beginning and has a total 670 ft. elevation gain/loss. Aside from the switchbacks, the hike takes little effort and is popular with families. Hiking poles will be available for your use. Note: this trail may be closed early in the season due to snow.

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

Cumulative Distance Range: 46 km (29 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DEPARTURE DAY: Travel to Calgary / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

After breakfast, travel to Calgary International Airport based on your flight departure time.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Hotel Arts (Day: 1)

Hotel Arts exudes a contemporary atmosphere in the heart of Calgary. This fine hotel is located in the up-and-coming Victoria Park neighborhood, home to a wave of exciting new developments, including a mile-long stretch of restaurants and bars. Four blocks north, explore historic Stephen Avenue, lined with chic bistros, cocktail bars, and the city's most fashionable boutiques and shopping. During your stay, sample the hotel's raw bar or enjoy dinner on the outdoor poolside patio. If you'd like to explore the city by bicycle, the property offers complimentary use of Brooklyn Cruiser bikes. The hotel is air conditioned and free WiFi is available throughout.

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.

Pomeroy Kananaskis Mountain Lodge (Days: 3,4,5)

Surrounded by 360 degrees of stunning mountain views, the Pomeroy Kananaskis Mountain Lodge offers the luxuries of an authentic and comfortable retreat. The newly renovated rooms offer serenity surrounded by the natural beauty of Kananaskis country, providing a feeling of well-being and relaxation. Guests can choose from five unique food and beverage outlets with inspired farm-to-table options, and take advantage of the Kananaskis Nordic Spa. The hotel is air conditioned and offers WiFi throughout.