

Walk the Canadian Rockies: Banff & Yoho National Parks

Walking Vacation Only

Welcome to a living picture postcard on the Continental Divide! Scan for wildlife and breathe in bracing mountain air as you embark on ridge walks or ascend to mountaintops by chairlift and gondola. Let your eye sweep over rugged peaks skirted by fragrant forests, fields of wildflowers, farmland, small towns, untamed rivers and soaring waterfalls. You'll also dine at one of Canada's top restaurants and learn about the cultural heritage of the Canadian Rockies on a trip that will surely be a high point among all your travels.

Cultural Highlights

Gaze upon the glassy waters of Lake Minnewanka

Enjoy a bird's eye view of vibrant wildflowers in a gondola over Sunshine Meadows (alternate hike on early season departures)

Revel in the untouched beauty of Yoho National Park

Take part in all Banff National Park has to offer with its varied sceneries and breathtaking views

Savor a box lunch amongst the stunning backdrop of the Plain of Six Glaciers trail

Engage in farm-to-table dining experiences with traditional, fine cuisine

Stretch out by the warm fireplace with your group members at the end of each fulfilling day

Spot local wildlife and sweeping landscapes in what is sure to make a jawdropping photograph

Learn the history of Banff with a guided walking tour

What to Expect

This tour features a combination of hard-packed trails and easy terrain, mixed with moderate hills and uneven footpaths. On rainy days the footpaths and trails can be wet and muddy. Our VBT van is available at specific meeting points for those who would like assistance. Both morning and afternoon walking options are available most days. Ideal for enthusiastic beginners and experienced walkers. Several of the walks require a transfer from the hotel to the start of the walk. Our Trip Leaders often use this time in the van for a morning route review so you can enjoy a more leisurely morning at breakfast.

Tour Duration: 6 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 2 - 6

Average Cycling Time: 01:15 - 04:00

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 Walking Vacation begins / Transfer to Banff / Warm-Up Walk

VBT-Walking-Vacation-only guests: Your tour begins at 12:30 p.m. in the lobby of your Calgary hotel, either at Hotel Arts in Calgary (119 – 12th Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta T2R 0G8 Canada, telephone +403-266-4611), or Ramada Plaza Calgary Downtown hotel (708, 8th Avenue SW, Calgary, AB T2P 1H2, telephone +403-263-7600), where you will meet your VBT Trip Leaders and the rest of the group. Your VBT Trip Leaders will be at the hotel starting at 12:00 p.m., available to answer any questions before the start of the tour. They will be holding a VBT sign and easy to recognize. Please plan to have or buy some lunch before you leave. Please come dressed for walking (with your day pack, water bottle, and your luggage), as there will be no place to change into hiking clothes before beginning the warm-up walk. Your transfer time to Banff is two hours.

If your arrival at the Calgary hotel is scheduled for later than 12:30 p.m. or if you are delayed, you must travel at your own expense to our Banff hotel (Banff Caribou Lodge and Spa, 521 Banff Avenue, Banff, Alberta, Canada, telephone +403.762.5887). Banff Airporter (www.banffairporter.com) and Brewster Banff Airport Express (www.brewster.ca/transportation/brewster-banff-airport-express) offer shuttles between the Calgary International Airport and Banff. Costs are approximately \$65 CAD per person one-way. Please contact Banff Caribou Lodge and Spa to advise of any travel delays or changes, and the staff will pass your message on to your VBT Trip Leaders. Please note that if you miss VBT's transfer from Calgary, you will miss the warm-up walk in Banff. Once you arrive in Banff, check into your room. Meet your Trip Leaders as soon as they return from the warm-up walk with the rest of the group (around 5:00 p.m.).

Once you arrive in Banff with your Trip Leaders, they will conduct a safety and walking pole fitting session, followed by a warm-up walk at Lake Minnewanka. The longest lake in the Rockies, its name translates into "water of the spirits" in the First Nations Nakoda language. As you follow its pathways along the glassy-surfaced lake, marvel at your first up-close views of Banff National Park, a stunning canvas of spruce and fir trees and rugged peaks skirted by pine-green forest.

Tonight, enjoy a welcome reception followed by dinner in Banff.

Hotel: Banff Caribou Lodge and Spa

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

Daily Options: 3 miles (4.8 km)

DAY 2: Banff National Park / Sunshine Village

After a hearty breakfast, shuttle 20 minutes to Sunshine Village, a ski resort that straddles the Continental Divide and the border between Alberta and British Columbia. Here, you will ascend the summit by gondola and chairlift, admiring sweeping views. At the top, take time to marvel at Banff's magnificent Sunshine Meadows, a vast natural garden set in an enormous valley surrounded by breathtaking peaks. Admire its riot of colorful wildflowers, rolling green slopes and glistening lakes. During your visit to the summit, learn about the vegetation and ecosystem from your Trip Leaders of this fascinating world above the tree line. You will have an opportunity to hike one of the ridgeline trails, a thrilling preview of more magnificent landscapes to follow throughout your walking vacation. Enjoy a picnic lunch prepared by your Trip Leaders on top of the world, with stunning views of the pyramidal Mount Assiniboine. Nicknamed the "Matterhorn of the Rockies" for its resemblance to the Swiss peak, it is the highest mountain in the southern range of the Canadian Rockies.

Please note: For all guests on our June departures, we will hike to Stanley Glacier instead of Sunshine Meadows as the gondola and shuttle bus service to Sunshine Meadows do not operate in June. Located in Kootenay National Park, this easy half-day outing runs from the Vermillion River to a rockbound hanging valley containing Stanley Glacier. The hike is very rewarding in the early summer when wildflowers blanket the trailside and numerous waterfalls and avalanches tumble off Stanley Peak's northeast face.

Return to Banff for an historical walking tour and enjoy free time to browse the shops or to visit the Whyte Museum to learn about the cultural heritage of the Canadian Rockies. Tonight, your Trip Leaders will provide recommendations for dinner on your own.

Hotel: Banff Caribou Lodge and Spa

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Daily Options: 3-6 miles (5-10 km) and 2 miles (3 km) (Banff walking tour)

Daily Option in June - Stanley Glacier 5.2 miles (8.4 km) round trip; and 2 miles (3 km) (Banff walking tour)

DAY 3: Lake Louise / Plain of Six Glaciers

Awake to the cool mountain air and another full breakfast. After, shuttle to Lake Louise, sure to nourish your body and soul amidst majestic natural beauty. 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.

Begin your walk on the Plain of Six Glaciers trail, one of the most scenic hikes in the Canadian Rockies. With each footfall, you head deeper into a landscape of glaciated mountains and rugged scree fields, passing white rivers flowing with glacial dust that empty into Lake Louise and lend it its magical aura. The trail offers expansive views of the impressive mountains surrounding Lake Louise, including Mount Lefroy and Mount Victoria. You will also have sweeping view of Victoria Glacier. After your steady hike up, enjoy a trail (box) lunch near the historic Plain of Six Glaciers Teahouse. This charming stopover was built by Swiss guides for the Canadian Pacific Railway to serve mountaineers continuing to surrounding mountains. Today it offers a rustic setting and a welcome respite for national park hikers. You may opt to treat yourself to a sweet dessert and tea before heading back down, where you may add a hike to a nearby talus slope (built up from rocky debris that has sloughed off from mountainsides) for breathtaking vistas.

Alternately, take a shorter walk on the Lake Louise Lakeshore, a broad flat trail with ever-changing views of great peaks. Afterwards, opt for a paddle in a rental canoe on the turquoise waters or enjoy tea at the chateau.

After your dream day at iconic Lake Louise, you will shuttle to Golden, British Columbia's "Kicking Horse Country," crossing the great Continental Divide en route. Your home for the next two nights is the Palliser Lodge. Tonight, you will gather for dinner at the 3-Diamond Cedar House Restaurant, named one of the "Top 50 Places to Eat in Canada" for over ten consecutive years by the National Restaurant Guide. It will be a meal well deserved

Hotel: Palliser Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 2.4 miles (3.8 km) or 6.8 miles (10 km)

DAY 4: Hike Kicking Horse Mountain Ridge / Golden

Golden lies at a breathtaking confluence of natural wonders, making it a hiker's paradise. Nestled in the Rocky Mountain Trench, it spreads out where the Columbia and Kicking Horse rivers meet. Three

different mountain ranges surround the town and five National Parks are visible from the heights of the summit of Kicking Horse Resort.

After breakfast, you will walk from our lodge to the Golden Eagle Express Gondola for a swift ride to the summit of Kicking Horse (elevation 7,700 ft. / 2,347 m). Enjoy endless sweeping views as you begin a walk along the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) Ridge, following Terminator Ridge over some loose rock and well-traveled rocky trails. Terminator Ridge reaches out onto a massive promontory that parallels the path of the gondola. The beauty of much of today's ridge walk is the 360-degree view it affords, giving you a full appreciation for the untouched beauty of Canada's wilderness. Everywhere you look, the vast valley stretches to the imposing wall of the Canadian Rockies and the Columbia River slices a path past forest, farmland and small towns.

When you pause to rest, you may ponder the idea that five National Parks are visible from these spectacular heights: Glacier, Yoho, Banff, Kootenay, and even Jasper. After a rewarding walk, enjoy your trail (box) lunch.

After lunch, continue your ridge walk in the opposite direction. Later, head down for an optional trip to the town of Golden to explore its afternoon farmer's market, shop or enjoy a flight of tasters at the Whitetooth Brewing Company.

Tonight, your Trip Leaders will provide recommendations for dinner on your own in the town of Golden and they will provide shuttles.

Hotel: Palliser Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Daily Options: 2 miles (3 km) and/or 1 mile (1.7 km)

DAY 5: Yoho National Park / Wapta Falls / Kananaskis

This morning, you shuttle to Yoho National Park. This splendid preserved wilderness on the western slopes of the Continental Divide was named for the First Nations Cree word for "awe" and "wonder." You'll quickly come to experience its magnificence for yourself as you arrive at Wapta Falls, a soaring waterfall with an impressive 30-m (98-foot) drop on the Kicking Horse River and Yoho's largest waterfall by volume.

Afterward, transfer to Emerald Lake, the largest of Yoho's 61 lakes and ponds. Tumbling creeks, bracing

mountains and clean air make it a paradise for hikers and you will have the chance for a leisurely walk here before a picnic lunch.

After lunch, transfer to Mount Engadine Lodge in pristine Spray Valley Provincial Park. This hidden gem is surrounded by untouched wilderness in Kananaskis Country. Stretch your legs on the Rummel Lake trail to the Spray Lake reservoir viewpoint or settle in at the lodge and enjoy afternoon high tea.

Tonight, you will dine at the lodge. During our special farewell dinner, savor its locally sourced food served family-style and wines from British Columbia.

Hotel: Mount Engadine Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 2.8miles (4.6 km) easy and 2-4 miles (4-6 km) easy

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

VBT-Walking-Vacation-only guests: Enjoy an early breakfast at the Mount Engadine and bid farewell to your hosts. Then shuttle to the Calgary International Airport (YYC) at 8:15 a.m. (2 hour, 10 minutes' travel time); you'll arrive at by 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: 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.

Mount Engadine Lodge (Day: 5)

An intimate backcountry mountain lodge set in a beautiful alpine meadow at 6,200 feet in the heart of Kananaskis Country, complete with sauna and wrap-around deck overlooking the stunning Moose Meadow. Range of lodging options include lodge rooms, cabins, and glamping tents with full ensuite bathrooms, gas fireplace, and private deck. The Mount Engadine Lodge is the proud recipient of the coveted ALTO award through Travel Alberta for the category of Sustainable Tourism.

Palliser Lodge (Days: 3,4)

Your home base for exploring the areas vast national parks, the Palliser Lodge sits in a tranquil setting. A 10-minute stroll from Kicking Horse Resort village, all rooms enjoy views of the surrounding mountains or the ski slopes and offer a balcony. An outdoor hot tub awaits at the end of the day. Your spacious room offers all the amenities you will need after an active day.