

## Canada: Banff National Park & the Canadian Rockies

### Bike Vacation Only

If you're looking for a Canadian Rockies cycling adventure that takes you deep into unspoiled landscapes, this is the one you've been looking for! Pedal the legendary Bow Valley Parkway—a stunning wilderness corridor near the mountain enclave of Banff. Along the way, your local Canadian trip leaders introduce you to the turquoise shores of Lake Louise—a glacier-fed marvel. As your path winds towards Canmore, you'll delve deep into the Rocky Mountains wilderness—leaving the hustle-bustle far behind. Here, a guided hike near your charming Kananaskis lodge allow you to explore fragile alpine meadows—perhaps catching glimpses of bighorn sheep, Canadian moose, and bald eagles in the distance. Explore Barrier Lake—a crystal blue pool reflecting the distant image of Mount Baldy, then luxuriate in your hotel's Nordic spa, steam rooms, or sauna.

### 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.

**Tour Duration:** 6 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 11-35 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 2-6 hours

**Group size:** 14-20 max

### Climate Information

### **Average High/Low Temperature (°F)**

June 66°/42°, July 71°/45°, August 71°/44°, September 62°/37°

### **Average Rainfall (in.)**

June 2.7, July 2.7, August 2.4, September 1.5

## **DAY 1: Travel to Banff / Warm-up ride**

At 12:30 p.m., meet your VBT representative in the lobby of our Calgary 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. 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: Warm-up Banff – 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 stroll along the shores of this gorgeous lake.

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 a training on bear awareness and safety (bear spray is on hand, just in case). As you descend, you may want to pause at the various interpretive displays to learn 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. You may also go for a short hike at the popular Johnson Canyon. Later in the day, you'll visit the "Flames of Life," an area where controlled wildfires have been used to stimulate plant growth and support the area's natural habitats.

After a rewarding day, arrive back in Banff, the highest town in Canada. This afternoon offers you free time to visit one of the many attractions in town or you may prefer to relax back at your hotel. You may also wish to book a scenic float tour. Tonight, dinner is at your leisure in town. 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!

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 3: Cycle Lake Minnewanka and Tunnel Mountain / Optional afternoon activities

This morning head out on a 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! Before reaching the lake, you'll pass by Bankhead, a small coal mining ghost town that existed in the early 20th century. Return to Banff by way of Tunnel Mountain.

Today's lunch is on your own in Banff. This afternoon you have more free time to enjoy one of the many optional activities available in town including the Banff Gondola, Cave and Basin National Historic Site, or the Banff Hot Springs. Scenic horseback trail rides are another great way to experience the Canadian Rockies. Enjoy another dinner on your own tonight.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Lake Minnewanka & Tunnel Mountain — 33 km (21 miles) | Lake Minnewanka & Tunnel Mountain PLUS — 38 km (24 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, the ghost town of Bankhead and Two-Jack Lake. Those who would like to add a few miles can extend with an out-and-back to Johnson Lake. On your return cycle on the scenic Tunnel Mountain Drive. Once back in Banff the rest of the day is at your leisure.

Cumulative Distance Range: 33 — 38 km (21 — 24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## DAY 4: Indigenous Medicine Walk / Cycle the Legacy Trail / Travel to Kananaskis / Optional afternoon activities

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 castilleja will stimulate your senses. En route, stop to meet a local guide for an exploration of plant medicine from an Indigenous lens. Banff has been an important area for Canada's native people for thousands of years, with the Stoney Nakoda calling the region Mîni hrpa or "Mountain Where The Water Falls" after the nearby Cascade Mountain. As you walk below this towering peak, you'll learn about the native plants and their many uses – to both people and wildlife in the region.

Mount your bike and continue the Legacy Trail to Canmore. 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. Or, stop by Canmore Brewing's tasting room for a flight of the local artisanal beer.

Shuttle to your hotel for the next two nights, located in Kananaskis Village. This afternoon, you may join an optional guided hike to the nearby Troll Falls or set off on your own on a self-guided walk along the resort's rim trail. Or instead, 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: Banff to Canmore – 25 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: Troll Falls Trail (optional) – 5 km (3 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Depart downtown Banff 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. Stop at Cascade Ponds for a short, guided walk. This tour is easy with a slow pace and plenty of stops over flat terrain. After lunch on your own in Canmore, rejoin your group to shuttle 40 minutes to your hotel in Kananaskis village.

The optional guided hike to the scenic Trolls Falls is considered an easy-moderate out-and-back trail with

a 744-ft elevation gain/loss and takes about two hours to complete. Hiking poles will be available. The self-guided Rim Trail walk is 1.5 km (1 mile) on a flat paved trail that 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.

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

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 km (17 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## DAY 5: 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. Afterward, spin down the valley and admire the natural beauty of Kananaskis Valley. Pause for a picnic lunch prepared by your trip leaders.

This evening, 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 — 5 km (3 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 with most of the ride being on a scenic bike path.

Cumulative Distance Range: 18 – 50 km (11 – 31 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 6: Barrier Lake / Travel to Calgary / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends**

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. Shuttle to Calgary with a stop en route for lunch.

Your tour concludes at the Calgary Marriott Downtown Hotel at approximately 3:00 p.m. From here you may make connections for onward travel or continue your explorations independently.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Kananaskis to Barrier Lake – 16 km (10 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 .6-mile out and back to a ridge with views of the northern and southern mountains. Shuttle to our Calgary hotel with a stop en route for lunch.

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 km (10 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

### Banff Caribou Lodge (Days 1-3)

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 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.