Welcome to Banff, Canada’s first and most famous National Park. Its spectacular landscape of rugged mountains, broad valleys, glaciers, alpine meadows and turquoise lakes provides habitat for a variety of species including golden eagles, big horn sheep, black and grizzly bear, and numerousegative.

With more than 190 km of mountain bike trails and numerous road riding options, biking is an excellent way to explore this special place. Trails range from easy to difficult and the biking season typically extends from May to October. This guide will help you plan an enjoyable biking experience, while keeping the park’s natural environment as pristine as possible.

Mountain Biking in a National Park

Banff National Park supports the use of mountain bikes as a means of appreciating and enjoying the tremendous natural values preserved within the park. If your objective is freeriding or downhill, please consider areas such as Golden or Fernie, B.C. or Canada Olympic Park in Calgary, where these activities are both appropriate and encouraged.

Responsible Mountain Biking

Mountain biking in a national park comes with important responsibilities. Riders are encouraged to minimize impact and enjoy their ride while protecting the park’s natural resources.

- Avoid riding during extreme conditions; wet, cold, or windy.
- Share the trail — see inset, top right corner.
- Plan ahead.
- Never scare animals.
- Yield to horses.
- Be cautious—the road is narrow and service roads for 1.4 km. Watch closely on the right shoulder.
- Keep trails open by setting a good example of environmentally sound and socially responsible off-road cycling.

BANFF TOWNSITE AREA

All park maintained trails in the immediate vicinity of the Banff townsite are open for cycling except Tunnel Mountain Trail, Sulphur Mountain Trail (from the Upper Hot Springs to the Sunwapta), Cascade Canyon Trail, the Cave and Basin boardwalks, and most of the remodeled Banff and Bow Falls trails. The townsite trails are popular with other users including commercial horse operators. Use shared-use trails—expect to encounter horses and horseback riders. Enter control and be ready to stop at any time.

- The bike trails in Banff National Park are all shared-use trails—expect to encounter hikers and horseback riders. Enter control and be ready to stop at any time.
- When you approach a hiker, slow down and make eye contact known with a bell or a friendly greeting.
- Bicycles are fast and quiet, and can easily spook horses. When approaching encroaching horses, move to the side of the trail, stop and allow the horse party to pass. When passing from behind, slow down, let riders know of your presence before you get too close, and ask for instructions.

DIFFICULTY RATINGS

- Easy: 0-5 km one way, elevation gain 20 m, general.
- Moderate: 5-10 km one way, elevation gain 50 m, general.
- Difficult: 10-20 km one way, elevation gain 100 m, general.

BANF AREA TRAILS

Difficulty ratings are based on trail length, steepness, exposure, and crowdedness. TCH = Trans Canada Highway. Trails 45 and 411 are not shown on the map.

- Sundance
- Healey Creek
- Brewster Creek to Allenby Pass
- Spray River Loop
- Spray River and Goat Creek
- Rundle Riverside
- Cascade Fonds - Bankhead
- Lake Minnewanka
- Tunnel Mountain Drive
- Golf Course Drive
- Vermilion Lakes Drive
- Hwy 1A Fireside Picnic Area to Castle Jct.

Tunnel Mountain Drive

15 km loop, moderate
Starting Point: East end of Buffalo Street
This hilly ride takes you to a viewpoint overlooking Bow Falls and the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel. From here the road cuts up the side of Tunnel Mt. to join Tunnel Mt. Rd. It then continues westward, past campgrounds and viewpoints, before dropping down to Banff Avenue.

Golf Course Drive

15 km loop, easy
Starting Point: Bridge over the Spray River by Bow Falls
This route takes you past the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel golf course and around a loop at the lar end. This peaceful road offers interesting views of the Bow River and local peaks. Great for a family outing.

Vermilion Lakes Drive

5.7 km one way, easy
Starting Point: OH-9 Norquay Rd, just south of the TCH
The Vermilion Lakes are a series of three shallow lakes surrounded by meadows—a rich oasis for wildlife. The ride provides classic views of Banff’s signature peak, Mount Rundle. All three lakes have small docks where you can relax and enjoy the view.

Hwy 1A Fireside Picnic Area to Castle Jct.

27 km one way, moderate
Starting Point: TCH, 5.5 km west of the Norquay Overpass
The Bow Valley Parkway ride is a classic, winding through forests near the Bow River. Give yourself a day to explore as there are many bikes and viewpoints along the way. This is a busy road with moderate traffic—consider riding midweek when traffic is lighter. Combine with Lake Louise Trail #10 for a 35 km ride (one way).

Drives, biking guide, and map information for all trailheads in Banff National Park.

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Lake Louise Area Trails

Diameter ratings are based on trail length, elevation gain and remoteness.

**Great Divide**
4.5 km one way, elevation gain 650 m, difficult
Starting Point: Lake Louise Information Centre
This route (formerly the 1A Hwy) is closed to vehicles. Though paved, the surface is rough. It winds past the Great Divide at 7.5 km and continues to the Trans Canada Highway in Yoho. About 500 m west of the Divide, a challenging 1.3 km trail up along Ross Creek connects to the Ross Lake Trail (52). It allows an alternate return to the trailhead for mountain bikers.

**Moriae Lake Road**
1.5 km one way, elevation gain 50 m, easy
Starting Point: Lake Louise Information Centre
This narrow, mountain road has no shoulders, rough pavement, and heavy motorized traffic. It is too ride it and Lake Louise Drive early or late in the day when traffic volume is low. From the turnaround at the 3 km mark of Lake Louise Drive, Moraine Lake Road climbs to spectacular views of Consolation Valley and the Valley of the Ten Peaks. Mountain bikers can create a loop by combining with the challenging Moraine Lake Trail (64).

**Bow River Parkway**
8.5 km one way, elevation gain 45 m, easy
Starting Point: Lake Louise Information Centre
From Lake Louise to Castle Junction, the Bow River Parkway (1A) winds through montane forest near the Bow River. This is a busy road with narrow shoulders; consider a midweek ride when traffic is lighter. Numerous short bike, viewpoints and interpretive signs are accessible from the road. Combine with Banff Trail #17 for a 55 km ride (one way).

Lake Louise: Keep Bears Wild!
The Lake Louise area is a important wildlife habitat and is largely used by bear. When you come out on the trail, you influence how wildlife uses habitat and moves through the landscape. But with thoughtful consideration of how you use wilderness, you can help conserve bears. Paying attention to the following guidelines can help prevent encounters.

- **Bike “Bear Aware”**: When you bike, move slowly and don’t startle the bears. Bears are not aggressive. They are most likely to escape humans and to keep moving. In general, bears are not predators and they are not dangerous.

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Lake Louise Area Road Rides

**Great Divide**
4.5 km one way, elevation gain 650 m, difficult
Starting Point: Parking lot at 3.6 km mark of Lake Louise Drive
This route (formerly the 1A Hwy) is closed to vehicles. Though paved, the surface is rough. It winds past the Great Divide at 7.5 km and continues to the Trans Canada Highway in Yoho. About 500 m west of the Divide, a challenging 1.3 km trail up along Ross Creek connects to the Ross Lake Trail (52). It allows an alternate return to the trailhead for mountain bikers.

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Living with Wildlife in Banff and Lake Louise
One of Banff National Park’s greatest challenges is to protect wildlife populations while providing visitors with opportunities to enjoy a healthy mountain ecosystem. But with thoughtful consideration of how you use wilderness, you can help conserve bears. Paying attention to the following guidelines can help prevent encounters.

- Please respect all Warnings, Closures and Restricted Activity postings. These legal restrictions are used to help keep you safe and to give wildlife the space they need to survive in Canada’s oldest and most visited national park.
- **Bike Bear Aware**: Cyclists are particularly susceptible to sudden, dangerous bear encounters because of the speed and silence of their travel. Slow down, stay alert and scan ahead. Bear bells are not enough. Yell and let bears know you are coming, especially when biking through dense vegetation, near streams, or on windy days, or when approaching corners.
- **Watch for bears and signs of their presence such as tracks, droppings and diggings. Leave the area if you encounter a bear or see fresh signs, and report sightings to the Banff (403-762-1470) or Lake Louise Warden Office (403-522-1220).**
- If you choose to carry bear spray, keep it handy.
- If you come across a dead animal, leave the area immediately and report the carcass to the Warden Office.
- **Remember that park wildlife are wild!** Animals wll act aggressively if they feel threatened, so keep your distance. Stay at least 100 m. (10 bus lengths) away from bears and large carnivals, and 30 m. away from other wildlife. For more information, contact park information centres or the park web site.
- **Dogs may act as an intrusion to other trail users, and provoke confrontations with wildlife. Dogs must be kept on a leash at all times. This is unsafe for both the dog and the animal. Consider leaving your pet at home.**

Disposal Waste
- Pack out all garbage including diapers, tampons, food waste and toilet paper.
- If you need to relieve yourself, select a spot well away from trails and 100 m from water sources.
- Dig a hole 12 cm deep, down to the dark-coloured, biologically active soil layer. Fill the hole with soil and toilet paper or burn it if the fire hazard is not extreme.

For more information on low impact travel, contact: Leave No Trace www.LNT.org

Safety
- Be prepared for a breakdown or accident. Know how to repair your bike and carry the tools and parts to do so.
- Choose rides that match your abilities. Be conservative—start with easier, shorter trails. Park staff or bike shop employees can help you select a suitable route.
- Wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear.
- Bring extra food, water and clothing. Mountain weather changes quickly and it can rain any month of the year. Surface water may be contaminated with Giardia.
- Always tell others where you are going and when you’ll be back.
- Travel with others and keep your group together.

For More Information
- Banff Information Centre, 224 Banff Avenue Tel (403) 762-1500 Banfftrails@pc.gc.ca
- Lake Louise Information Centre, Samson Mall Tel (403) 522-0353 LL.info@pc.gc.ca
- Parks Canada – Calgary Service Centre Tel 1-800-676-7275
- Banff National Park Web Site www.pc.gc.ca/banff
- Banff National Park Trail Report Recorded Message: (403) 762-1105
- Environment Canada Weather Forecast Recorded Message: (403) 762-2088
- Friends of Banff Retail outlet for maps and guidebooks Tel (403) 762-9158 www.friendsofbanff.com

References
- **Mountains Bike! The Canadian Rockies**, Ward Cameron (2000)
- **Gem Trek recreational maps**

Get involved in mountain bike education and stewardship
- **Banff Mountain Bike Alliance**: bmvb@bvalpine.net
- **Calgary Mountain Bike Alliance**: Tel (403) 220-1868 or info@cmbak.org

Camping and Fishing
If you plan to stay overnight in a backcountry campground, shelter or hut, a Wildlife Pass is required. Anglers require a National Park Fishing Permit and knowledge of National Park Fishing Regulations.

In case of EMERGENCY, phone 911.