



TRIP GLOBAL

4 Days in Banff: Lakes, Hikes & Mountain Views

Banff, Alberta, Canada · August · 4 days

Tailored for couples - includes romantic spots, intimate dining, and couple-friendly activities

Four days based in Banff, with the two big lakes first, then two days along the Icefields Parkway. Look forward to Moraine Lake on day one and standing on the Athabasca Glacier on day three.

Open the interactive trip: live map, photos and links

Before you go:

Get a Canada eSIM: data on landing

What this trip might cost, per person for 4 days, flights extra:

Budget \$350-440 · Mid-range \$530-730 · Comfort \$880

Opening hours, prices and transport change. Please double-check bookings and times before you go.

YOUR TRIP AT A GLANCE

1

DAY 1

Moraine Lake, Lake Louise and Banff Avenue

Banff · 4 nights

2

DAY 2

Peyto Lake, Crowfoot Glacier and Mistaya Canyon

3

DAY 3

Icefields Parkway to Athabasca Glacier

4

DAY 4

Bow Falls, Johnston Canyon and Banff Park Museum

?

AFTER THE LAST DAY

Before you go: Banff

Moraine Lake, Lake Louise and Banff Avenue

Arrival day: an easy start close to your stay

Sunrise 6:29 AM

Golden hour 8:20 PM

Sunset 9:06 PM

Your base for 4 nights: Banff

Head out to Moraine Lake and Lake Louise while the day is still early, then come back to town for a walk down Banff Avenue.

GO

11:30 AM · 2 hours

Calgary International Airport to Banff

Drive the Trans-Canada Highway west for 90 minutes (128 km). Scenic route through foothills. Arrive by noon, grab a coffee in town, then head straight to Moraine Lake.

- Rental car (includes all driving days) · 1.5 hours · \$50-80 per day car rental
- Shuttle service · 2 hours · \$60-90 per person

[Book a rental car](#)

[Book a transfer](#)

PREFER A GUIDE? · 1.5-2 HOURS

Sunrise hike to Lake Moraine viewpoint

Skip the crowded lakeside and hike to the rocky ridge above for the classic view as light hits the water.

[Book this tour](#)

1



2:00 PM · 1.5 hours

Moraine Lake

\$7 per person

Iconic turquoise glacial lake ringed by peaks. Arrive by 2 PM to secure a parking spot (lot fills fast in August). Walk the shoreline for 30 minutes and shoot photos from the lakeshore. A 15-minute drive from Banff townsite.

Insider tip: Park in the lot, not the overflow. Water is coldest and clearest mid-afternoon. Sunrise tomorrow is the must-do moment.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



3:45 PM · 1.5 hours

Lake Louise

\$7 per person

Equally stunning sibling to Moraine Lake, surrounded by the Victoria Glacier. Walk the Lakeshore Trail for 2 km on flat ground with constant views. A 15-minute drive from Moraine Lake via the Icefields Parkway.

Insider tip: The Chateau Lake Louise sits at the end of the trail. Evening light hits the glacier beautifully after 5 PM.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

3

5:45 PM · 2 hours

Book ahead

Banff Avenue

Free

The town's main drag lined with shops, galleries and restaurants. Walk the length of it as the sun dips, grab an early dinner, then wander back to your hotel. A 20-minute drive from Lake Louise back to Banff.

Insider tip: Dinner reservations book out in August. Try Coyotes for Southwestern food or Tooloulou's for casual burgers. Walk the street around 6:30 PM for the best evening light.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

If you land early (optional, close to your stay, before the plan above)

Bow River Path: Easy paved trail alongside the river through town, 3 km return. Start at the Bow River Bridge and walk upstream through trees and meadow.

Banff Upper Hot Springs: Soak in a thermal pool with mountain views. Open 10 AM in summer. A short drive from central Banff.

PREFER A GUIDE? · HALF DAY

Glacier-fed lake kayaking

Paddle turquoise water with glaciers as your backdrop, a memory that justifies the splurge.

Book this tour

Open Day 1 as a route in Google Maps

Where to stay in Banff

Stay in central Banff on Banff Avenue: walkable to shops and restaurants, and you're 15 minutes from both lakes. Book now for August.

Red Carpet Inn

Budget · Guesthouse · \$

No-frills, clean rooms, central Banff. Good value for August prices.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

HI-Banff Alpine Centre

Budget · Hostel · \$

Private rooms available. Social vibe, cheap, close to the Parkway entrance.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Banff Centre Mount Norquay

Budget · Guesthouse · \$

Budget-friendly, mountain views. No frills but comfortable, and you'll save for glacier activities.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Siding 29 Hostel

Budget · Hostel · \$

Private rooms available, friendly vibe, walking distance to shops and restaurants.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Banff Aspen Lodge

Mid-range · Hotel · \$\$

Mid-range comfort, downtown location, reliable for couples. Good restaurant on-site.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Tunnel Mountain Village One

Mid-range · Resort · \$\$

Cabin-style rooms outside town centre. Quieter base, full kitchen options available.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

[All stays in Banff](#)

[Holiday rentals](#)

Where to eat

Cafe Koi

Casual Canadian · Lunch · \$\$

Relaxed spot in Banff townsite. Order the Bison burger, eat on the patio, minimal wait.

[Google Maps >](#)

Sushi Ginza

Japanese · Dinner · \$\$

Central Banff. Fresh sashimi platters, sake selection. Booking essential in August.

[Google Maps >](#)

DAY 1: MORaine LAKE, LAKE LOUISE AND BANFF AVENUE (CONTINUED)

TOURS & DAY TRIPS FROM BANFF

2-3 HOURS

Athabasca Glacier walk on the Icefields Parkway

Walk on a river of ice with a guide who explains how fast it's retreating. Humbling and visceral.

Book now

2-3 HOURS

Banff hot springs soak

Relax in naturally heated pools surrounded by forest after days of hiking. The Upper Hot Springs are a short drive from town.

Book now

Peyto Lake, Crowfoot Glacier and Mistaya Canyon

Sunrise 6:29 AM

Golden hour 8:20 PM

Sunset 9:06 PM

Sleep in Banff · night 2 of 4

Drive the first stretch of the Icefields Parkway, stopping at Peyto Lake, the Crowfoot Glacier viewpoint and Mistaya Canyon, then finish at Surprise Corner in Banff.

GO

7:30 AM · 1.5 hours

Banff to Bow Summit via Icefields Parkway

Drive north on Highway 93, stopping at Bow Lake (15 min in) for turquoise water framed by peaks, then continue to Bow Summit viewpoint at the pass. About 40 km, 1.5 hours with stops.

- Self-drive · 1.5 hours · Fuel only (~CAD 8)
- Guided tour · Full day · \$150-200 per person

[Book a rental car](#)

1



9:15 AM · 45 minutes

Peyto Lake Viewpoint

Free

A short 10-minute walk from the road to one of the Parkway's most vivid turquoise lakes, ringed by forest and peaks. The colour shifts with the sun. On the Parkway, 5 minutes north of Bow Summit.

Insider tip: The viewpoint is best mid-morning; afternoon clouds roll in. Walk to the far railing for the classic angle.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



10:15 AM · 20 minutes

Crowfoot Glacier Viewpoint

Free

A 5-minute stop to see a glacier hanging on a mountainside above a jewel-blue glacial lake. The ice has retreated dramatically over decades, so the 'foot' shape is less obvious than old photos, but the view is still striking. A 10-minute drive north of Peyto Lake.

Insider tip: This is a car-park stop with no hiking required. Take the photo from the signed viewpoint, not the roadside.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

3



11:00 AM · 1 hour

Mistaya Canyon

Free

A steep, short gorge carved by meltwater through blue-grey limestone. Walk down 15 minutes to the narrow canyon floor and peer up at the layered rock walls. The air is cool and the sound echoes. A 20-minute drive north of Crowfoot.

Insider tip: Go midday when the canyon walls catch direct light. The walk down is steeper than it looks; solid shoes help.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

DAY 2: PEYTO LAKE, CROWFOOT GLACIER AND MISTAYA CANYON (CONTINUED)

GO

12:15 PM · 2 hours

Saskatchewan River Crossing to Banff

Stop at the crossing for a picnic lunch or snacks (small shop and basic cafe on-site), then drive back south on the Parkway, retracing your route to Banff. About 50 km, 1.5 hours with a lunch break.

4



4:00 PM · 45 minutes

Surprise Corner

Free

A viewpoint on the outskirts of Banff town with views over the Bow Valley, mountains, and the town below. Popular at sunset but worth a late-afternoon visit before golden hour. A 5-minute drive from central Banff.

Insider tip: Return here around 8:15 PM for golden hour and the best light on the valley. Arrive early to claim a spot.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

5

6:30 PM · 1.5 hours

Book ahead

The Maple Leaf Grill

\$18-32 per person · Open 11 AM-10 PM

Casual Canadian bistro with elk, bison, and trout; efficient service and a lively bar. North side of Banff Avenue, a 2-minute walk from the town centre. Book ahead in August.

Insider tip: Order the Alberta bison burger or the pan-seared trout. Reserve online or call ahead; walk-ins wait 30 minutes in high season.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

6



8:10 PM · 1 hour

Banff Avenue Evening Stroll

Free

Walk the main street as the light softens: shops, galleries, outfitters, and a relaxed mountain-town vibe. Leads north to the Banff Park Museum and the river beyond. Starts right from your dinner spot.

Insider tip: This is a gentle cool-down after dinner and driving. The light stays golden until 9:06 PM; no rush.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

[Open Day 2 as a route in Google Maps](#)

DAY 2: PEYTO LAKE, CROWFOOT GLACIER AND MISTAYA CANYON (CONTINUED)

Where to eat

Whitebark Cafe

Cafe · Breakfast · \$

Grab strong coffee and pastries before 6:30am departure. Quick, reliable, no fuss.

[Google Maps >](#)

The Crossing Resort Restaurant

Canadian · Lunch · \$\$

Midway up the Parkway at Sunwapta Pass. Order the bison burger, sit by the windows.

[Google Maps >](#)

Banff Avenue Eatery

Casual · Dinner · \$\$

Back in Banff by 8pm for golden hour light. Burgers and fish and chips, unpretentious.

[Google Maps >](#)

Icefields Parkway to Athabasca Glacier

Sunrise 6:29 AM

Golden hour 8:20 PM

Sunset 9:06 PM

Sleep in Banff · night 3 of 4

A long day up the parkway to Sunwapta Falls, the Athabasca Glacier and the Glacier Skywalk, with lunch at the Glacier View Inn.

1



7:00 AM · 2.5 hours

Icefields Parkway to Sunwapta Falls

Drive south from Banff toward Jasper, stopping at scenic pullouts: Mistaya Canyon, Peyto Lake viewpoint, and Sunwapta Falls. The turquoise lakes and canyon views are best in morning light before heat haze builds. A 90-minute drive with 20-minute stops at each.

Insider tip: Park at Peyto Lake viewpoint before 8 AM to beat tour buses; the water is brightest in early morning sun.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



10:00 AM · 2 hours

Athabasca Glacier

Free (viewpoint); Ice walk tour \$21-50

Walk onto the glacier itself on a guided icewalk or solo (the lower toe is accessible without booking). You'll see deep crevasses, meltwater streams, and the scale of glacial retreat marked by historical photos. 30 minutes from Sunwapta Falls.

Insider tip: Wear sturdy boots with grip; the ice is slippery even in summer. Solo walking is free but hire a guide if you want to go higher onto safe terrain.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

3



12:15 PM · 1 hour

Glacier Skywalk

\$18 per person · Open 9 AM-6 PM

A glass-floored walkway 280 metres above the Sunwapta Valley with views down to the glacier and peaks. Takes 45 minutes total; worth it for the perspective and photos. Adjacent to the Athabasca Glacier area.

Insider tip: Go early in your visit before afternoon crowds; pick the edge of the skywalk facing the glacier for the best photos.

[Book tickets](#)
[Open in Google Maps >](#)

DAY 3: ICEFIELDS PARKWAY TO ATHABASCA GLACIER (CONTINUED)

4

1:30 PM · 1.5 hours

Book ahead

Lunch at Glacier View Inn restaurant

\$21-36 per person · Open 11 AM-4 PM

Sit-down meal with views across the valley toward the Athabasca Glacier. Elk burger or salmon are solid choices. At the base of Glacier Skywalk, so no extra travel.

Insider tip: Book ahead in August; ask for a window table facing the glacier.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

5

3:15 PM · 1 hour

Bow Lake

Free

Drive back south toward Banff and stop at Bow Lake, a calm turquoise water surrounded by peaks. Short walk to the lakeshore for photos; the reflection is clearest in the afternoon. 45 minutes from Glacier View Inn.

Insider tip: Stand on the north shore near Bow Lake Lodge for the cleanest reflection of Mount Crowfoot in the water.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

6



6:30 PM · 1.5 hours

Vermilion Lakes viewpoint

Free

Return to Banff via the scenic loop past Vermilion Lakes. These three shallow lakes reflect Mount Rundle and are moose habitat. Stop at the main pullout for sunset photos. 20 minutes from Bow Lake.

Insider tip: Arrive by 8:15 PM for golden hour; scan the water edges for moose, especially in early morning or dusk.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

[Open Day 3 as a route in Google Maps](#)

Where to eat

The Overlander Cafe

Canadian comfort · Breakfast · \$

Early-opening spot in Banff town. Fuel up on eggs and toast before the drive south.

[Google Maps >](#)

Sunwapta Falls Restaurant

Canadian · Lunch · \$\$

Right on the Parkway near Sunwapta Falls. Bison burger, quick service, scenic patio views.

[Google Maps >](#)

Siding 22 Cafe

Cafe · Dinner · \$\$

Back in Banff. Casual vibe, local ingredients. Good for winding down after glacier touring.

[Google Maps >](#)

Bow Falls, Johnston Canyon and Banff Park Museum

Sunrise 6:29 AM

Golden hour 8:20 PM

Sunset 9:06 PM

Sleep in Banff · night 4 of 4

Walk to Bow Falls, hike the Johnston Canyon trail, then look through the Banff Park Museum and stop by the Banff Gondola base before you leave.

1

9:00 AM · 45 minutes

Bow Falls

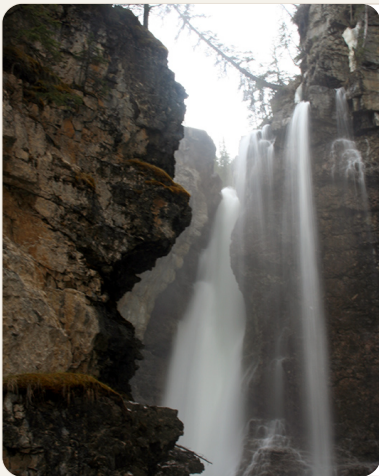
Free

Short, scenic viewpoint with the Bow River dropping through a narrow canyon. The falls are framed perfectly in late morning light. A 5-minute walk from Banff Avenue.

Insider tip: Stand on the bridge for the classic shot; the best angle is upstream-facing from the middle railing.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



10:30 AM · 3 hours

Johnston Canyon Trail

Free

An easy 5.5 km round-trip hike through a narrow canyon with two sets of waterfalls. The Lower Falls (2.7 km) are the payoff; turquoise pools and mist-filled narrows make it feel wilder than the crowds suggest. Drive 25 minutes west from Banff townsite to the trailhead.

Insider tip: Start early to beat the tour groups. The trail is busy by noon in August, but the first hour is nearly empty. Bring a light layer; the canyon stays cool and damp.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

3



2:30 PM · 1 hour

Banff Park Museum

\$4.50 per person · Open 1 PM-5 PM (seasonal hours; verify for August)

A small, quirky museum in a historic log building with taxidermied animals and local history. Worth 45 minutes if you want to stay in town after the hike, or skip if you're tired. On Banff Avenue, a 15-minute drive from Johnston Canyon.

Insider tip: The dioramas are dated but oddly charming; it's more about the building and vibe than the exhibits.

[Book tickets](#)

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

4

8:45 PM · 1.5 hours

Banff Gondola Base

\$23 per person · Open 9 AM-9:30 PM

Wind down your trip with evening light on the mountains and town below. The gondola closes at 9:30 PM in August. A 5-minute drive from Banff Avenue to the base station.

Insider tip: Skip the ride; just watch the sunset from the base parking lot. The alpine views aren't worth the cost at this hour, and the lot has free views.

[Book tickets](#)

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

[Open Day 4 as a route in Google Maps](#)

Where to eat

Magpie & Stump

Cafe · Breakfast · \$

Solid coffee and pastries before the hike. Grab a bacon roll to go.

[Google Maps >](#)

Tooloulou's Grill House

Steakhouse · Dinner · \$\$

Local favourite in Banff townsite. Alberta beef, no pretence. Book ahead.

[Google Maps >](#)

What should I know about driving in Canada?

Drive on the right

Kilometres; speed limits in km/h

Licence: A licence in English (or with an official translation) is usually all you need; an International Driving Permit is cheap and avoids questions at the rental desk. Most rental companies need you to be 21 or older and charge extra under 25.

- Speed limits strictly enforced: 90 km/h on highways, 50 km/h in towns. Use headlights at all times.
- Wildlife crossings are real: slow down at dawn and dusk, especially on the Icefields Parkway.
- Gravel shoulders on some mountain roads: stay in your lane and don't clip the edge.

[Book a rental car](#)

What time do I need to wake up for Moraine Lake sunrise?

3:30-4am. Sunrise is around 6:20am in August. The drive from Banff is 90 minutes, and the parking lot fills by 5:30am. Go the day before if you're not ready for that alarm.

Which easy hike should we do?

Bow Lake (3km loop, 45 minutes, flat) or Johnston Canyon Lower Falls (2.7km, 1.5 hours, gentle). Both are stunning and don't need mountaineering fitness. Avoid Cascade Amphitheatre and Sulphur Mountain unless you want a real leg workout.

Can you do the Icefields Parkway in one day?

Yes. It's 230km from Lake Louise to Jasper and takes 3.5-4 hours of driving. Stop at Peyto Lake, Bow Summit, and the Athabasca Glacier viewpoint. Do it as a day trip or overnight in Jasper and return the next day.

Do I need to book activities ahead?

Book the Athabasca Glacier tour (45-60 minutes, CAD 65-75) online a few days before. Hikes are first-come-first-served. Hotels fill up in August, so book lodging 2-3 weeks out.

What's the weather like in Banff in August?

Expect 15-22°C (59-72°F), with cool mornings and pleasant afternoons. Pack layers, a light rain jacket, and sunscreen. Nights dip near freezing at higher elevations.

What language do people speak in Banff?

Spoken here: English. French is official but rarely needed in Alberta.

Is Banff safe for visitors?

Wildlife encounters are rare but possible. Store food properly, make noise on trails, and keep 25 meters from elk or deer.

What's the emergency number in Canada?

Call 911 for police, ambulance or fire.

Do you tip in Canada?

Leave 15-18% at restaurants and bars. Tipping isn't expected at cafes or gas stations, though loose change is fine.

What do only locals know about Banff?

- Moraine Lake's parking fills by 8am in August. Arrive by 6:30am for sunrise, or skip it and hike Sentinel Pass (half day, fewer crowds, better reward).
- Fill your tank before the Icefields Parkway. No fuel for 230 kilometers, and prices spike at the Jasper end.
- Johnston Canyon is packed midday. Start early or late afternoon for a quieter walk through the narrow limestone slot.
- Pick up groceries in Banff village rather than Lake Louise. You'll save money and avoid the tourist markup.