



# Banff National Park

## Includes ➔

Day Hikes.....	50
Overnight Hikes.....	68
Cycling.....	72
Driving.....	76
Other Activities.....	77
Sights.....	86
Tours.....	97
Sleeping.....	98
Eating.....	107
Drinking & Entertainment.....	110
Shopping.....	110

## Best Hikes

- ➔ Healy Pass (p59)
- ➔ Plain of Six Glaciers (p60)
- ➔ Larch Valley (p62)
- ➔ Cory Pass Loop (p57)

## Best Places to Dip an Oar

- ➔ Lake Louise (p60)
- ➔ Bow River (p80)
- ➔ Vermilion Lakes (p90)
- ➔ Johnson Lake (p54)

## Why Go?

In the hit parade of top sights in Canada, Banff justifiably ranks as many people's number one. As much a piece of Canadian history as a natural wonder, the nation's oldest national park, founded in 1885, is what Canada is all about: a feral, but largely accessible, wilderness that attempts to cater for everyone – and by and large succeeds – from bus-tour seniors to hard-core cyclists. Indeed, one of the great beauties of Banff is its juxtaposition of the untamed and the civilized. Grizzly bears roam within growling distance of diners chinking cocktails at the romantic Banff Springs Hotel, while knackered hikers fresh from summit attempts queue up for ice cream with golfers clutching nine-irons. Striking a clever balance between yin and yang, Banff is a park with two distinct personalities. Popcorn in Banff Ave or cold soup at a backcountry campground in the middle of nowhere? Take your pick – or have both.

## Road Distance (KM)

Canmore	25			
Field (Yoho)	85	110		
Lake Louise	55	80	25	
Saskatchewan Crossing	135	160	100	80
Banff				
Canmore				
Field (Yoho)				
Lake Louise				

Note: Distances are approximate

## Entrances

There are four main road entrances into Banff National Park. All are open year-round, weather permitting. The main East Gate is on Trans-Canada Hwy 1, 7km (4.3 miles) west of Canmore, and has manned tollbooths where you can purchase park passes (they all accept cash, cards and check). If you already have a pass, you can use the right-hand lane to avoid queuing at the tollbooths. The other park entrances are on Trans-Canada Hwy 1 eastbound from Yoho National Park; Hwy 93 eastbound from Kootenay National Park; and Hwy 93 southbound from the Icefields Pkwy. If you're driving, remember to hang your pass from your rearview mirror so that park staff know you've already paid.

### DON'T MISS

A major lure of the Lake Louise area is its two hike-in teahouses built in the first half of the 20th century by some of the park's early pioneers. Moderate but well-trodden trails to each establishment help hikers get away from the intense clamor of the lakeside and into a calmer, more serendipitous realm.

The Lake Agnes Teahouse (p63) sits 3.5km up a steep-ish trail in a hanging valley beside a beautiful lake. It was built in 1901 by the Canadian Pacific Railway and has been serving tea and other snacks (including scones) since 1905. The Plain of Six Glaciers Teahouse (p61) is within viewing distance of the Victoria Glacier (behold the thunderous avalanches) at the head of Lake Louise. It was constructed by Swiss guides in 1927 and has been in the tea business since 1959. The 5.5km trail to reach it is slightly gentler than the Lake Agnes trek.

Both teahouses sit at 2100m above sea level. Neither has electricity nor road access; supplies are brought in by foot, horse or helicopter.

## When You Arrive

- ➔ Buy your park pass from the tollbooths at Banff's East Gate or from a park visitor center. Daily passes cost C\$9.80/4.90/8.30/19.60 per adult/child/senior/family.
- ➔ Check the latest trail reports at the Banff Information Centre or online at [www.pc.gc.ca/apps/tcond/cond\\_e.asp?opark=100092](http://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/tcond/cond_e.asp?opark=100092).
- ➔ Most campgrounds operate on a first-come, first-served system: arrive early at your chosen site (ideally by 11am) for the best chance of securing a pitch.

## PLANNING TIPS

Accommodations in Banff and Lake Louise are expensive and scarce in summer, so book early. To cut costs, avoid peak months or stay outside the park.

## Fast Facts

- ➔ **Area** 6641 sq km (2564 sq miles)
- ➔ **Highest elevation** 3612m (11,850ft)
- ➔ **Lowest elevation** 1310m (4297ft)

## Reservations

Accommodations bookings are handled by the Banff Tourism Bureau (p112). For advance reservations at Tunnel Mountain, Two Jack, Johnston Canyon and Lake Louise campgrounds, contact the Parks Canada campground reservation service (p99). For back-country campground reservations and wilderness passes, contact the Banff Visitor Centre (p112).

## Resources

- ➔ **Parks Canada** ([www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/banff/index.aspx](http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/banff/index.aspx))
- ➔ **Banff & Lake Louise Tourism** ([www.banfflakelouise.com](http://www.banfflakelouise.com))
- ➔ **Banff Town website** ([www.banff.ca](http://www.banff.ca))