

ACTIVITIES GUIDE – BANFF AREA

Biking

Biking is a great way to enjoy Banff National Park, and rental bikes are available at several stores within the Town of Banff - Backtrax Bike Rentals (403-762-8177), Mountain Magic (403-762-2829), The Ski Stop (403-760-1650), Banff Adventures Unlimited (403-762-4554), Banff Springs Ski & Mountain Sports (403-762-5333).

A list of local road & mountain bike rides from the [Parks Canada Website](#) is attached. There are several local tour operators who provide guided bicycle tours. Retailers such as The Ski Stop provide a range of services for riders, including a bicycle valet service and a 'shuttle & ride' service.

Swimming

Public swimming pools in Banff include:

- The Banff Centre's Sally Borden Building, with an indoor 25 m pool, whirlpool, and wading pool; open M-F 6 AM-10 PM, Sa & Su 7 AM-10 PM. \$4.50/adult.
- The Banff Upper Hot Springs; and
- The waterslide at the Douglas Fir Resort on Tunnel Mountain Road.

In addition, there are some local swimming spots where you can relax or play in the water when it warms up at the height of summer.

Cascade Ponds

The Cascade Ponds site is a local favourite, especially for family-and-friends barbeques on summer evenings and weekends. The Cascade Ponds swimming area includes:

The shallow water and expansive surrounding grassy areas make this a great area for families with young children to spend time.

Johnson Lake

This lake is larger and deeper than Cascade Ponds. The Johnson Lake recreation area includes:

The extensive sandy beach area and shallow wading area makes this another favourite spot for family outings. It is often crowded on hot summer days in July and August.

Canoeing

In the Town of Banff, canoes can be rented at Blue Canoe, at the north end of Bow Avenue (also accessible from Wolf Street). From the canoe docks, paddlers who put in directly may choose to explore up a gentle leg of the Bow River or have the option to follow 40 Mile Creek into the Vermilion Lakes. Both routes offer splendid wildlife viewing.

Experienced canoeists may wish to paddle any of three different legs of the Bow River:

- Lake Louise to Castle Junction
- Castle Junction to Banff
- Bow Falls to Canmore

To read about these, please visit [Parks Canada's Web site](#).

Canoes are also available to rent at Moraine Lake Lodge and at the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise. Hourly rentals allow visitors to paddle up and down these lakes, enjoying majestic views from a unique vantage.

Kayaking

The lakes surrounding the Town of Banff are inviting to kayakers because of their serene settings and use by wildlife. The best kayaking spots include:

- Lake Minnewanka
- Vermilion Lakes
- Johnson Lake
- Two Jack Lake
- The Bow River between Castle Junction and the Banff townsite

For experienced whitewater kayakers, some local routes include:

- Bow River (Banff Springs Golf Course to Canmore) - Class I-II
- Upper Bow River - Class III-V
- Pipestone (at Lake Louise) - Class IV
- Red Earth Creek - Class V+

Banff Adventures Unlimited offers half-day guided tours in inflatable kayaks, including a scenic "calm water" trip down the Bow River, with instruction in basic kayaking techniques and safety.

Whitewater Rafting

Several local operators provide different types of whitewater experiences, including:

- Banff Ski Hub (403-762-4754)
- Blast Adventures (403-609-2009)
- Canadian Rockies Rafting Company (403-678-6535)
- Hydra River Guides (403-762-4554)
- Kootenay River Runners (250 347-9210)
- Rocky Mountain Raft Tours (403) 762-3632
- Wet 'N' Wild Adventures Ltd. (250 344-6546)
- Wild Water Adventures

Float Tours

Some of the most popular float tours in the area are:

- **Bow River Eco-Float** (3 hours), offered by Canadian Rockies Rafting. A leisurely river float with excellent wildlife viewing. A short nature stop allows viewing of wildflowers and other flora. Twilight tours can offer unique alpine lighting and increased beaver activity. Experienced river guides provide interpretive information along the way.
- **Hoodoos Float Tour** (1 hour), offered by Rocky-Peak Holidays: This float launches beside Bow Falls and lands beneath the north face of Mount Rundle. It includes an interpretive presentation by the rafting guide. Bus pick-up is available from The Banff Park Lodge 15 minutes prior to tour departure or the Banff Springs Hotel 5 minutes prior to departure. Otherwise, meet at the launch site.
- **Rundle Float Tour** (2 hour) offered by Rocky-Peak Holidays: This float launches from the base of Mount Rundle's towering North Face, and covers a section of the Bow River where wildlife, waterfowl, and wildflowers are abundant. At the end of the float, a 15-minute walk returns the group to the bus. Hotel pick-up and drop-off included.

Boat Tours

Explore the largest lake in Banff National Park by boat

Lake Minnewanka Boat Tours (403-762-4425) offers several interpretive boat tours each day. The 1.5 hour cruise is designed to explore the magnificent Lake Minnewanka and its surrounding area, rich with history, native folklore, and geologically-significant sites. The highlight of the tour is exploring the Devil's Gap; a glacial path carved through Lake Minnewanka from the foothills of the Rockies.

Lake Minnewanka lies 15 minutes from the Banff townsite by car. The site provides ample free parking for vehicles and coaches. Lake Minnewanka can also be reached via bicycle (approximately 15 kilometres from the Town of Banff) and by bus, with Brewster Tours.

Fishing

Although the best fishing actually lies outside the National Park, the upper Bow River, running directly through Banff National Park, is known worldwide among anglers for opportunities to catch brown trout (up to 10 lbs/4 kg), Rocky Mountain whitefish (to 5 lbs/2.2 kg), and the occasional cutthroat, brook, and bull trout.

Lake Minnewanka, the largest lake in Banff National Park, located just minutes from the Banff townsite, is another well-known destination among lake trout anglers.

Several local guides and outfitters are available to lead angling trips, including Banff Fishing Unlimited, Alpine Anglers and Lake Minnewanka Boat Tours.

A National Park Fishing Permit is required. Angling season runs April through October. Further information about angling in Banff National Park is available at the [Parks Canada Web site](#).

Fly Fishing

The fly fishing season begins in May and runs through to October. Dry fly fishing peaks in July, August, and September. Fly fishing guides include Tightline Adventures, Hawgwild Flyfishing Guides, Banff Adventures Unlimited, Alpine Anglers, Upper Bow Fly Fishing Company, and Banff Flyfishing.

Horseback Riding

Horseback riding is an integral part of Banff's heritage, and remains one of the most popular activities in the area. There are several types of horseback experiences to choose from, including:

- Local rides (1 - 3 hours): Spray River, Sundance Loop, Bow River, and Mount Rundle rides, among others
- Overnight excursions with lodge accommodations (2 - 6 days)
- Overnight tent excursions (2 - 6 days)
- Adventure expeditions (6 days) into isolated sections of Banff National Park

Tour operators who offer guided horseback tours include:

- Banff Adventures Unlimited (403-762-4554)
- Banff Ski Hub (403-762-4754)
- Banff Sundance Lodge (800) 661-8352
- Brewster Kananaskis Guest Ranch
- Brewster Lake Louise Stables (403) 762-5454
- Timberline Tours

Warner Guiding & Outfitting - Holiday On Horseback

Indoor Climbing

The Sally Borden Recreational Facility at The Banff Centre (403-762-6450) includes a world-class climbing gym. The gym is available for a drop-in fee of \$9.50 for adults or \$4.00 for youth, which includes use of the rest of the fitness facilities. Climbing equipment rentals cost extra.

The climbing gym is open daily:

- Mon/Wed/Fri. - 2 - 11 p.m.
- Sat-Sun - 2 - 10 p.m.
- Tues/Thurs - 12 - 11 p.m.

Climbing instruction is available for all ages

Massage/Fitness Center

The Sally Borden Recreational Facility at The Banff Centre (403-762-6450) offers professional massage therapy for \$45.00 – ½ hour, \$72.00 – hour. For additional info <http://www.banffcentre.ca/sbb/health/massage.asp>