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## Banff National Park

### Banff Area Trails

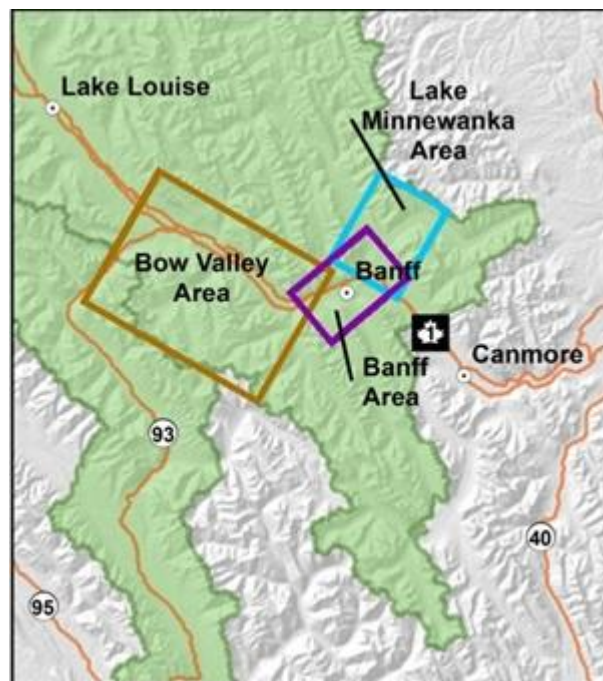
#### BANFF, LAKE MINNEWANKA AND BOW VALLEY AREAS

The front ranges of the Canadian Rockies are sandwiched between foothills and the continental divide. Here, mountains have thrust themselves sideways leaving overhanging precipices on one side and gentle slopes on the other; some peaks are so folded and compressed it's as though they've been squeezed like an accordion into an overstuffed closet. The valleys here are home to an assortment of wildlife – elk, deer, sheep, black bears and grizzly bears. Areas around the town of Banff offer a variety of shorter hikes as well as challenging trails that will reward the seasoned hiker.

***During a very brief period when the autumn colours of the larch tree display their brilliant yellow needles, new and experienced hikers seek out [trails that offer larch viewing opportunities](#). Experience trails from moderate to difficult through thick forests to subalpine meadows. [Try one; you'll likely want to try two.](#)***

[Easy Trails](#) | [Moderate Trails](#) | [Difficult Trails](#)

[Printable brochure](#)



Detailed Maps:

[Banff Area](#) | [Lake Minnewanka Area](#) | [Bow Valley Area](#)

## EASY TRAILS

### 1) Johnson Lake

3 km loop; no elevation gain; 1 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** Johnson Lake picnic area.

Circle this lake which is nestled amongst some of the oldest Douglas fir trees in Alberta and experience the richest ecoregion in our park – the montane zone. Take in unique views of Mount Rundle and

Cascade Mountain.

## 2) Fenland Trail

2.1 km loop; no elevation gain; 1 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** Fenland Trail parking lot.

Travel under a canopy of old-growth spruce trees on this peaceful interpretive trail.

## 3) Bow River / Hoodoos

4.2 km one way; 60 m elevation gain; 3 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** Surprise Corner parking lot on Buffalo Street.

Though it is close to the Banff townsite, you will feel like you are far away as you explore this forest and meadow trail. Keep an eye out for elk and birds of prey as you climb from the river's edge to the Hoodoos viewpoint.

## 4) Spray River Loop

11.4 km round trip; 65 m elevation gain; 3 - 4 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** Spray River loop parking lot behind the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel.

This forested loop is popular with cyclists and horse users and offers rolling terrain on a tributary of the Bow River. To complete the loop, cross the bridge at km 7 and come back down to the Golf Course Road.

## 5) Sundance Canyon

4.3 km to end of pavement, plus 1.2 km loop through canyon; 145 m elevation gain; 3 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** Cave and Basin parking lot.

Take a peaceful stroll through the woods on this mostly paved trail before you reach an inviting creek and canyon.

## 12) Silverton Falls

1.0 km one way; 60 m elevation gain; 1 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** Rockbound Lake parking lot, 0.2 km east of Castle Junction on the Bow Valley Parkway (Highway 1A).

Often overshadowed by Johnston Canyon, this short exploratory hike is a local secret and takes you right up to a series of elegant waterfalls.

## 13a) Johnston Canyon Lower Falls

Lower Falls - 1.2 km one way; 30 m elevation gain; 1 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** 22 km west of Banff on the Bow Valley Parkway (1A Highway).

Banff National Park's most popular hiking destination takes you into the depths of a canyon along catwalks and amongst spectacular waterfalls. See the impressive lower falls and walk through a tunnel to get an even closer look at the powerful effects of water. An early morning start may help you avoid the crowds.

## 13b) Johnston Canyon Upper Falls

Upper Falls - 2.4 km one way (from parking lot); 120 m elevation gain; 2 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** 22 km west of Banff on the Bow Valley Parkway (Highway 1A).

On the complete Johnston Canyon trip you will see even more waterfalls, the most impressive of which is the 30 m high Upper Falls.

## 20) Stewart Canyon

1.5 km to junction east of bridge; no elevation gain, 1 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** The Lake Minnewanka parking lot is located 5.5 km off the Trans-Canada Highway on the Lake Minnewanka road.

Hike along Lake Minnewanka before turning left along an unusual smooth-walled canyon of the Cascade River – the main source of Banff National Park's largest lake.

## MODERATE TRAILS

### 6) C-Level Cirque

4.2 km one way; 455 m elevation gain; 3 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** The Upper Bankhead day-use area is 3.5 km from the Trans-Canada Highway on the Lake Minnewanka road.

Hike back in time as you walk past old coal mine shafts before reaching a dramatic basin on Cascade Mountain.

### 7) Tunnel Mountain

2.4 km one way; 260 m elevation gain; 2 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** Located on St. Julien Road near The Banff Centre.

Climb to the summit of a mountain in the heart of the Banff townsite! Although less daunting than the surrounding peaks, Tunnel Mountain still provides breathtaking views of the Bow Valley via a series of well-graded switchbacks. This trail can be icy in spring and fall.

### 8) Upper Hot Springs

1.1 km one way; 170 m elevation gain; 1 hour one way

**Trailhead:** Spray River Loop parking lot behind the Banff Springs.

Climb through a spacious lodgepole pine forest on your way for a soak at the Banff Upper Hot Springs, a ride on the Banff Gondola or for further hiking up Sulphur Mountain.

### 9) Sulphur Mountain

5.5 km to top of gondola, plus 0.5 km to Sanson Peak; 655 m elevation gain; 3 - 4 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** Banff Upper Hot Springs parking lot at the end of Mountain Avenue.

The switchbacks on the slopes of Sulphur Mountain provide a steady grade for the hike to a summit renowned for its breathtaking mountain views. Take a 1 km side trip on the boardwalk trail that departs from the Observation Deck and you will find more great views, remnants of the Cosmic Ray Station, and the Sanson Peak Weather Observatory.

### 10) Stoney Squaw Mountain

2.1 km one way; 190 m elevation gain; 2 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** Mount Norquay ski area parking lot.

Hike through a dense forest of pine and spruce for a unique view of Cascade Mountain and the peaks of

the Fairholme Range. This trail is also popular with mountain bikers.

## 11) Cascade Amphitheatre

7.7 km one way; 640 m elevation gain; 6 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** Mt. Norquay ski area parking lot.

Beyond the downhill ski runs of Mount Norquay you will hike across a magically forested valley before entering a massive natural amphitheatre.

## 14) Ink Pots

5.4 km one way (from parking lot), 215 m elevation gain; 4 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** 22km west of Banff on the Bow Valley Parkway (Highway 1A).

After experiencing the waterfalls along the Johnston Canyon trail, continue beyond its Upper Falls to reach a set of brilliantly coloured pools.

## 15) Healy Pass

9.0 km one way; 655 m elevation gain, 6 - 7 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** Sunshine Village parking lot, 9 km from the Trans-Canada highway.

From the far end of the Sunshine Village parking lot you will follow Healy Creek as it leads towards the continental divide. This classic hike provides expansive views, vast alpine meadows and larch trees.

## 16) Bourgeau Lake

7.2 km one way; 725 m elevation gain; 6 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** South side of the Trans-Canada Highway, 13 km west of the Mt. Norquay Interchange.

Rise through the dark mossy forests of the Bow Valley to a rock-rimmed alpine lake. The cliff face of Mt. Bourgeau provides a dramatic backdrop, making it a picture-perfect spot for lunch.

## 17) Rockbound Lake

7.7 km to Tower Lake, 8.4 km to Rockbound Lake; 760 m elevation gain; 6 - 7 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** Rockbound Lake parking lot, 0.2 km east of Castle Junction on the Bow Valley Parkway (Highway 1A).

A long, steady climb through the woods takes you to Castle Mountain's "other side" where you will be treated to a pair of beautiful lakes you will not soon forget.

## DIFFICULT TRAILS

### 18) Harvey Pass

9.5 km one way; 1035 m elevation gain; 7 - 8 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** South side of the Trans-Canada Highway, 13 km west of the Mt. Norquay Interchange.

The hike begins with a climb to Bourgeau Lake and continues beyond it along a steep route that follows a faint, unmarked trail to the pass. Alpine views across the Lost Horse ridges and the continental divide are spectacular.

### 19) Cory Pass Loop

12.3 km loop; 915 m elevation gain; 6 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** The Fireside Picnic Area at the eastern end of the Bow Valley Parkway.

This is the most strenuous day hike in the Banff area, but the views of the limestone monolith of Mount Louis are worth the effort. Complete the loop by hiking around Mount Edith and descending the Edith Pass trail. This trail is best done in mid-season when the snow is gone. There is no water along the trail and route finding can be challenging.

## Lake Minnewanka Area

**Bear Warnings, Closures and other hiker restrictions commonly occur in the Lake Minnewanka area. Obtain** up-to-date information.

### 21A) Aylmer Lookout

11.8 km one way; 560 m elevation gain; 7 - 8 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** The Lake Minnewanka parking lot is located 5.5 km off the Trans-Canada Highway on the Lake Minnewanka road.

Less strenuous than Aylmer Pass, this trail follows the shores of Lake Minnewanka on the same approach as the Aylmer Pass trail. The trail offers a panoramic view from the site of an old fire lookout and is one of the first high elevation trails to be snow free in the early summer.



### 21B) Aylmer Pass

13.0 km one way; 810 m elevation gain; 8 - 9 hour round trip

**Trailhead:** The Lake Minnewanka parking lot is located 5.5 km off the Trans-Canada Highway on the Lake Minnewanka road.

Hike above the blue water of Lake Minnewanka before climbing high into the front ranges of the Rockies to a stunning 2285 m alpine pass. It is possible to mountain bike the first 8 km of this trail.

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