

Biking Trails in the Banff Area



Welcome to Banff National Park, Canada's first and most famous national park. With more than 500 km of cycling trails, 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 and safe biking experience, while keeping the park's natural environment as pristine as possible.

Banff National Park encourages the use of bikes for the appreciation and enjoyment of the park's spectacular landscape of rugged mountains, broad valleys, glaciers, alpine meadows, and wildlife species.

If your objective is freeriding or downhill, please consider areas such as Golden or Fernie, BC or Canada Olympic Park in Calgary, where these activities are both appropriate and encouraged.



16 Lake Minnewanka Trail

Featured Ride

21 Banff Legacy Trail

26 km one way
Trailheads: Valleyview, Cascade Ponds, Vermilion Lakes and Fireside day-use areas, east end of Banff Avenue
The Banff Legacy Trail offers all kinds of outdoor enthusiasts – from cyclists, runners to roller skiers - 26 km of paved trails and roadways with breathtaking views, rest stops and picnic areas. The trail spans the Bow Valley Parkway to the Banff East Gate including a best route through the Town of Banff. This three-season trail opens in the spring and closes in the fall based on weather. An absolute must.



21 Banff Legacy Trail

Easy

Banff Road Rides

19 Golf Course Drive

10.9 km loop
Trailhead: Bow Falls parking area
Cross the bridge over the Spray River at the end of the parking area, and you're off. Perfect for a family outing, this road winds gently along the golf course before it loops back. This is a peaceful road with lovely views over the Bow River and surrounding peaks. Watch for one section that is quite rough. You will pass the kiosk for the Rundle Riverside (15) trail near the far end of the loop.

20 Vermilion Lakes Drive

4.3 km one way
Starting Point: Fenland day-use area, paved trail to Vermilion Lakes Drive
Vermilion Lakes are a series of three shallow lakes surrounded by marshland – a rich oasis for wildlife. The ride along this narrow road provides classic views of Banff's signature peak, Mount Rundle. There are benches, bike racks and small docks where you can relax with a snack and enjoy the view. Connector: Banff Legacy Trail (21) to the Bow Valley Parkway (24).



13 Stock

Moderate

22 Lake Minnewanka Road

13.1 km loop
Starting Points: Cascade Ponds and Lake Minnewanka day-use area or the Banff Legacy Trail (21)
Lake Minnewanka Road is popular with cyclists and offers a pleasant ride through varied terrain, with panoramic views and many attractions including Cascade Ponds, Bankhead, Lake Minnewanka and Two Jack Lake. This narrow road can be busy, so ride with caution and be on the lookout for bighorn sheep on the slopes above Two Jack Lake. Connector: Banff Legacy Trail (21).

23 Tunnel Mountain Drive/Road

10.7 km loop
Starting Point: Central Park parking area, west end of Buffalo Street
Start by heading east on Buffalo Street, rising gently past "Surprise Corner" with its extraordinary view over Bow Falls and the world famous Fairmont Banff Springs. Continue climbing and bending around its lower slopes to join the Tunnel Mountain Road. Turn right (east) and pass campgrounds for incredible viewpoints before you drop back down to the Banff Legacy Trail (21). Go left into town, or right towards Lake Minnewanka. Elk and deer are common along this narrow roadway.

24 Bow Valley Parkway (to Lake Louise)

48.9 km one way
Starting Points: Trans-Canada Highway, 5.5 km west of the Mt. Norquay overpass and Banff Legacy Trail
The Bow Valley Parkway (Hwy 1A) ride is a classic, gently rising and falling as it meanders through the Bow Valley to Castle Junction, and beyond to Lake Louise. This narrow road ride is often done from Banff, return, for a solid 97.8 km round trip. Whatever your route, wildlife sightings are common, so keep a look out! Connector: Banff Legacy Trail (21), Vermilion Lakes Drive (20).

Banff Mountain Biking Trails



24 Bow Valley Parkway

Banff Lake Louise Tourism

6 Brewster Creek

8.5 km one way
Starting Points: Cave and Basin National Historic Site or Sunshine Road
Ride the Sundance trail (1) and/or the Healy Creek trail (2) until you get to the Brewster Creek Junction where the trail begins. This trail is a double track that climbs steadily up the Brewster Creek valley to the Sundance Lodge (service for guests only). The ride to the lodge is not suitable for beginners. Brewster Creek is used by commercial horse traffic and is not recommended in wet conditions.

7 Spray River and Goat Creek

18.7 km one way
Trailhead: Fairmont Banff Springs
This popular, rolling double track follows the Spray River for 10 km before reaching the easy-to-miss turn that veers off on the left just past the base of a short downhill section. Fork left, then head down over the bridge. From there it rises gradually along the lower slopes of Mount Rundle, ending at the Smith-Dorrien Road parking area above Canmore. Alternatively, arrange for a shuttle and ride the trail in reverse for a long, gentle cruise to Banff. Connectors: Canmore Nordic Center (take the Banff Trail) with the Rundle Riverside Trail (15) and the Golf Course Drive (19). Note: Due to the clay content of the Goat Creek trail, it is not recommended in wet conditions.

8 Cascade

14.6 km one way
Trailhead: Upper Bankhead parking area
This former fire road is a gravel double track that opens with a sustained climb. It travels into the wilds of the Cascade Valley, through prime bear habitat. Cycling ends at the remote Stony Creek primitive campground.

9 Lower Stony Squaw

4.9 km one way
Trailhead: Mt. Norquay Ski Area parking area
This is a great trail for intermediate riders to work on their technical skills. Ride past the day lodge and down the ski area service road for 1.4 km. Watch closely on the right for a sign indicating the entrance. The steep sidehill nature of the trail features many rough and rocky sections, and drops continuously to the highway. Watch for bears and horses on this fast, technical descent. Be sure to close the fence gate.

10 Redearth (see inset map)

20 km return
Trailhead: Redearth Creek parking area
This former fire road provides bike access to some very scenic backcountry hiking near the Great Divide. Bring a lock, as you must leave your bike at the end of the road. Popular hiking destinations include Shadow Lake Lodge, Shadow Lake, and Egypt Lake.

11 Surprise Corner to Hoodoos

4.3 km one way
Trailheads: Hoodoos or Surprise Corner parking area
Can be enjoyed in both directions but best ridden north to south. This trail offers an exhilarating experience with some steep climbing and descending. The route has spectacular views of Mount Rundle, a short section along a braid of the Bow River, and a short hike-a-bike section at a set of stairs.

12 Water Tower

3.8 km one way
Trailhead(s): Cascade Ponds or Johnson Lake day-use area
This trail begins at the northeast corner of Cascade Ponds, crosses a small creek, and climbs up an almost impossible-to-ride-up set of steps (prepare for significant hike-a-bike). The remainder of the trail to the water tower is a sweet singletrack that dips and turns its way along the edge of the escarpment above the Trans-Canada Highway. Views of the Bow Valley and its iconic mountains, Rundle and Cascade, are spectacular. From the water tower, it's worth your while to continue along a short section of gravel road leading to Johnson Lake. This trail is easily ridden as an out and back from either end.

Difficult

25 Sunshine Road

8.2 km one way
Trailhead: Sunshine Ski Area Road, 7 km west of Banff on the Trans-Canada Highway
The Sunshine Road begins its steady rise almost immediately, and offers a few steep ramps along the way to its termination at the ski area parking at the base of the Sunshine gondola. Vehicular traffic is moderate in the summer months, but be aware as the road is narrow throughout its length. Watch for wildlife along this twisty mountain road.



20 Vermilion Lakes Drive

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Bears And People

The Canadian Rocky Mountain national parks are an important part of the remaining grizzly and black bear habitat in North America. Even in protected areas, bears are challenged to avoid people. Think of what it would be like to be a bear travelling through the mountain national parks in midsummer – trying to bypass towns, campgrounds, highways, railways, and busy trails – and still find enough food to survive.

To successfully raise cubs and sustain a healthy population, bears need access to as much quality habitat as possible over a short period of time, with few human surprises.

Before you hit the trail, think about the time of year, what the bears are doing and give them the space they need to survive.

Tips:

- Carry bear spray with you at all times, ensure it is at hand, and know how to use it.
- Slow down and make noise. Your speed and quietness puts you at risk for sudden bear encounters. Slow down through shrubby areas and when approaching blind corners. Travel in groups, be alert and always look ahead.
- Report bear sightings and encounters to Parks Canada staff at 403-762-1470, when it is safe to do so.

pc.gc.ca/banff-bears

Recommended Rides

Are you looking for an enhanced biking experience? These trails offer stunning mountain scenery, water, flora, fauna, some history and the challenging ride!

Scenic Routes

One of the most spectacular scenic, must-do mountain rides is **Surprise Corner to Hoodoos (11)**. This moderate trail, close to town and across from Tunnel Mountain campground, has some sustained climbing and descending, passes through an open meadow and meanders along riverside pathways. The trail features astonishing views of iconic Mount Rundle, the Bow and the Spray Valley, and over Bow Falls to the renowned Fairmont Banff Springs. Bring a camera and pack a lunch. Don't forget to pack out the leftovers.

River Rides

If your ultimate ride includes reflecting by a lake or river, **Vermilion Lakes Drive (20)** or the **Spray River West and East (3)** trail should be on your list. Several docks along the paved Vermilion Lakes Drive provide an opportunity to sightsee, photograph, or take a lunch break. If it is a family ride you are looking for, Spray River West and East trail has the perfect picnic site near the Spray bridge.



13 Tunnel Bench Loop

Banff Lake Louise Tourism/P. Zizka

Flora And Fauna Viewing

Lake Minnewanka Road (22) will give you an insight into a wide variety of flora and fauna in the Banff area. If you are hoping to see the larger species of bighorn sheep, deer, or elk, this road is your best bet. This looped road offers a pleasant ride through varied terrain and a chance to stop at the area's popular sightseeing locations of Bankhead, Two Jack Lake, Minnewanka Day-use Area, and Cascade Ponds.

Taking In The Sites

If you are interested in adding a popular historic site to your outing, visit the Banff Park Museum National Historic Site which is on your way to the **Sundance (1)** trail. An easy ride from downtown Banff, you can also include a stroll through the Marsh Loop, a unique marsh habitat next to the Bow River, offering good birding opportunities and excellent views of Mt. Norquay and Mt. Bourgeau, or continue your ride along the Sundance trail. Stop at the viewpoints to admire the incredible views of the mountains or continue to a picnic area. From here you can lock up your bike and go on a short hike up to Sundance Canyon!

Technical Adventure

Now, it is time for your adventure ride! Both **Lake Minnewanka (16)** and **Upper Stony Squaw (17)** trails are for experienced riders. Lake Minnewanka trail is best ridden early spring or late fall. A seasonal trail restriction during the summer protects both the rider and wildlife during the summer berry season. Upper Stony Squaw, accessed from the Mt. Norquay ski area is probably the most difficult technical puzzle to master. But then again, that is why you are here—to challenge yourself!

Plan Ahead and Prepare

Rules of the Trail

Be a mountain park steward, ride with care!
Riding non-designated or closed trails, building new trails, or riding off-trail displaces wildlife and destroys soil and vegetation. These activities are also illegal and violators may be charged under the *National Park Regulations*.

- **Be bear aware.** Cyclists are particularly susceptible to sudden, dangerous bear encounters because of the speed and silence of their travel. Be alert, make noise, slow down, carry bear spray, and look ahead.
- **Ride designated trails.** It is your responsibility to know where you can and cannot legally ride.
- **Avoid riding during extreme conditions.** Wet, muddy or very dry trails are more likely to be damaged.
- **Help preserve the quality of our trails.** Ride, don't slide—avoid skidding your tires by hard braking. Ride over obstacles, not around them. If obstacles are above your skill level, walk your bike.
- **Ride within your limits.** Inattention for even a moment could put yourself and others at risk.
- **Leave no trace.** Be sure to pack out what you pack in. Leave natural and cultural objects undisturbed for others to discover.
- **For the safety of wildlife, your pet and yourself,** keep your dog under control and on a leash at all times.
- **Yield appropriately.** Let your fellow trail users know you are coming. Make each pass a safe and courteous one. Cyclists travelling downhill should yield to ones headed uphill.

D. Volkiers

Share the Trail

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

Safety

- You are responsible for your own safety. Be prepared for a breakdown or accident. Know how to repair your bike and carry the necessary tools and parts.
- 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. Surface water may be contaminated and unsafe for drinking. Mountain weather changes quickly and it can snow any month of the year.
- Always tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return.
- Travel with others and keep your group together.
- Avoid wearing earbuds. Be alert at all times.
- Ask for advice at the Banff Visitor Centre about trail conditions, descriptions, and weather.

More Information

Banff Visitor Centre:
403-762-1550, 224 Banff Avenue
banff.trails-sentiers@pc.gc.ca

Banff National Park website:
pc.gc.ca/banff

Trail Conditions Report:
pc.gc.ca/banfftrails

Weather:
weatheroffice.gc.ca

For Banff area maps and guidebooks, visit a local retail biking outlet.

For more information on biking in the park visit:
Bow Valley Mountain Bike Alliance
bmba.org



In case of EMERGENCY, call 911 or satellite phone: 403-762-4506. Cell phones are not always reliable in the backcountry.

Ratings

- Easy
- Moderate
- ◆ Difficult

Banff Mountain Biking Trails

- 1 Sundance**
3.9 km one way, elevation gain 67 m, elevation loss 6 m
- 2 Healy Creek**
5.5 km one way, elevation gain 66 m, elevation loss 67 m
- 3 Spray River West and East**
11.3 km round trip; 65 m elevation gain
- 4 Cascade Ponds - Bankhead**
2.4 km one way, elevation gain 50 m, elevation loss 20 m
- 5 Tunnel Campground Loop**
6.4 km loop, elevation gain 140 m, elevation loss 160 m
- 6 Brewster Creek**
8.5 km one way, elevation gain 358 m, elevation loss 358 m
- 7 Spray River and Goat Creek (Banff to Canmore)**
18.7 km one way, elevation gain 435 m, elevation loss 176 m
- 8 Cascade**
14.6 km one way, elevation gain 650 m, elevation loss 490 m
- 9 Lower Stoney Squaw**
4.9 km one way, elevation gain 35 m, elevation loss 253 m
- 10 Redearth (see inset map)**
20 km return, elevation gain 395 m, elevation loss 395 m
- 11 Surprise Corner to Hoodoos**
4.3 km one way, elevation gain 82 m, elevation loss 112 m
- 12 Water Tower Trail**
3.8 km one way, elevation gain 190 m, elevation loss 170 m
- 13 Tunnel Bench Loop**
9.7 km loop, elevation gain 124 m, elevation loss 123 m
- 14 Tunnel Technical Trails**
14a) and 14b) 2.5 km one way, elevation gain 100 m, elevation loss 100 m
14c) 3.8 km one way, elevation gain 152 m, elevation loss 92 m
- 15 Rundle Riverside**
13.9 km one way, elevation gain 119 m, elevation loss 176 m
- 16 Lake Minnewanka**
24.9 km one way, elevation gain 429 m, elevation loss 427 m
- 17 Upper Stoney Squaw Loop**
4.5 km loop, elevation gain 275 m, elevation loss 284 m
- 18 The Toe**
7.9 km loop, elevation gain 100 m, elevation loss 143 m

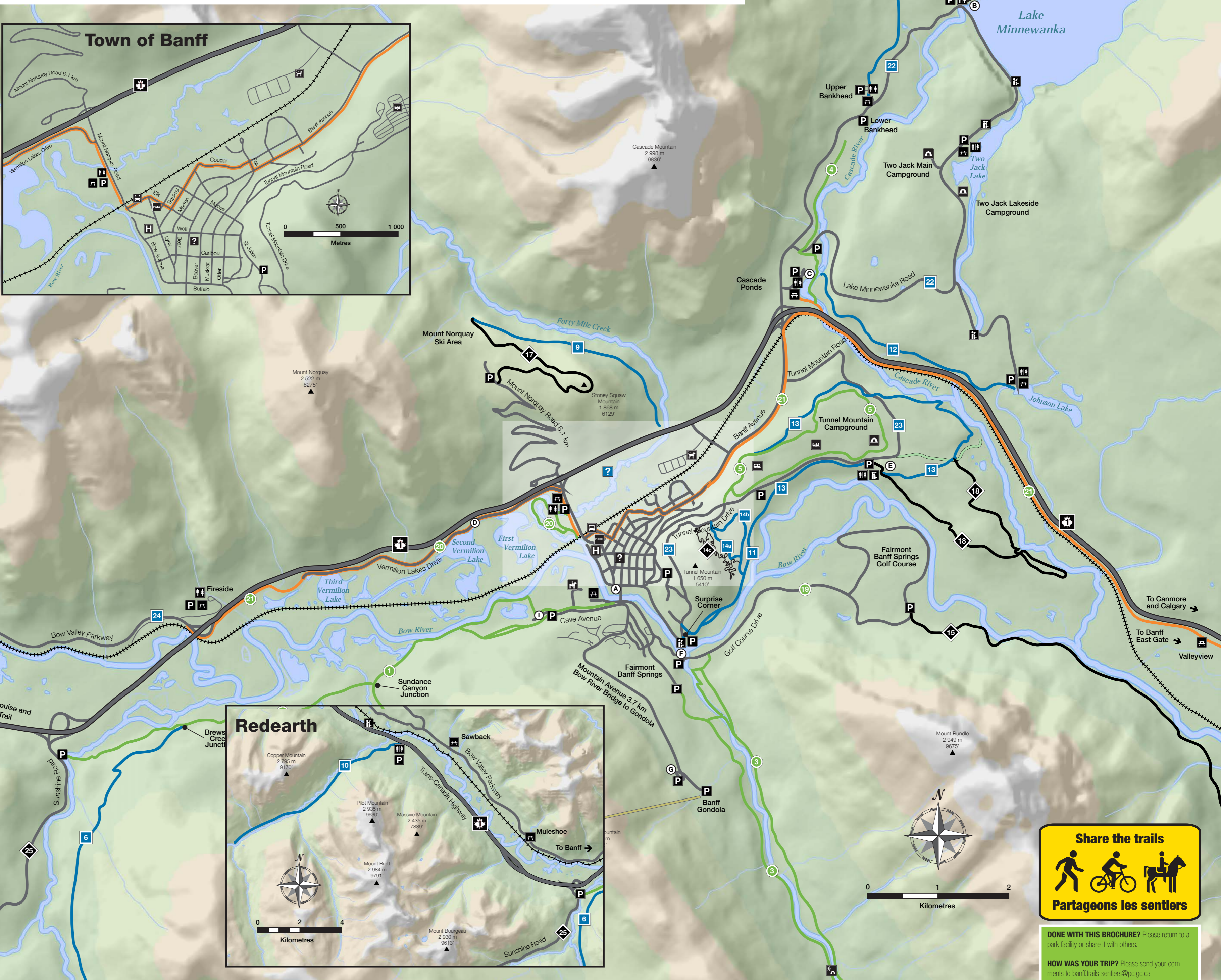
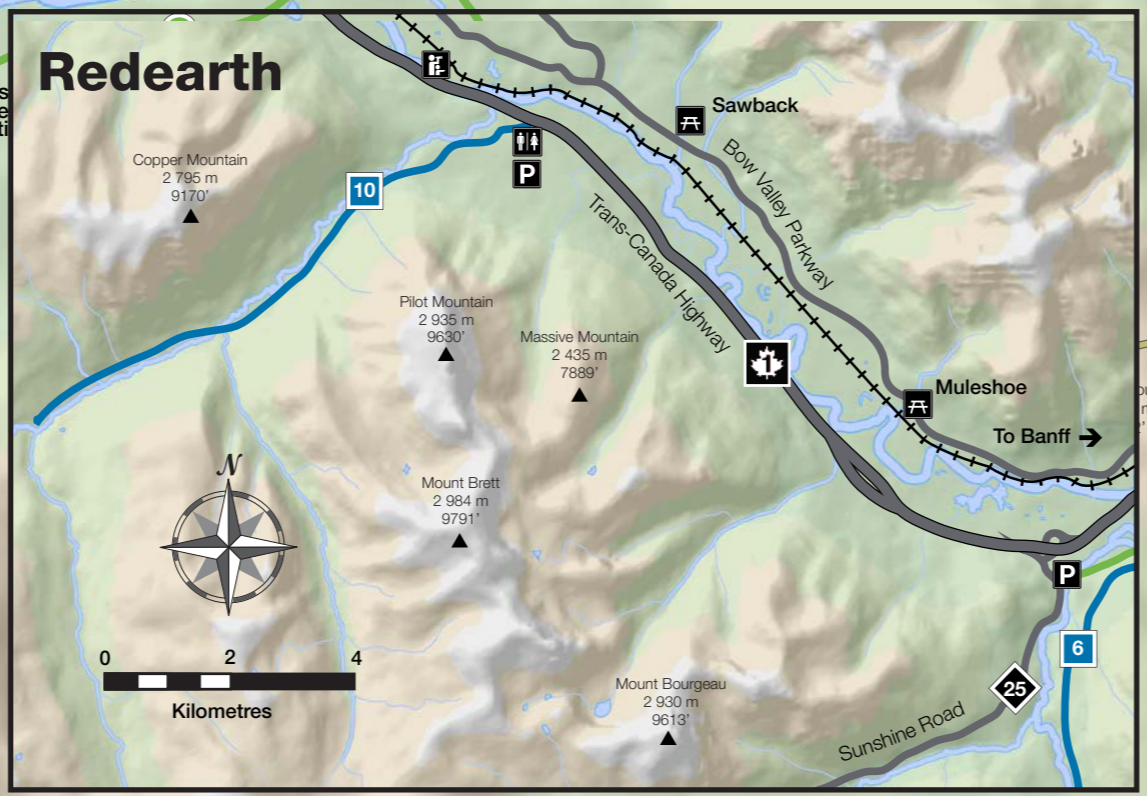
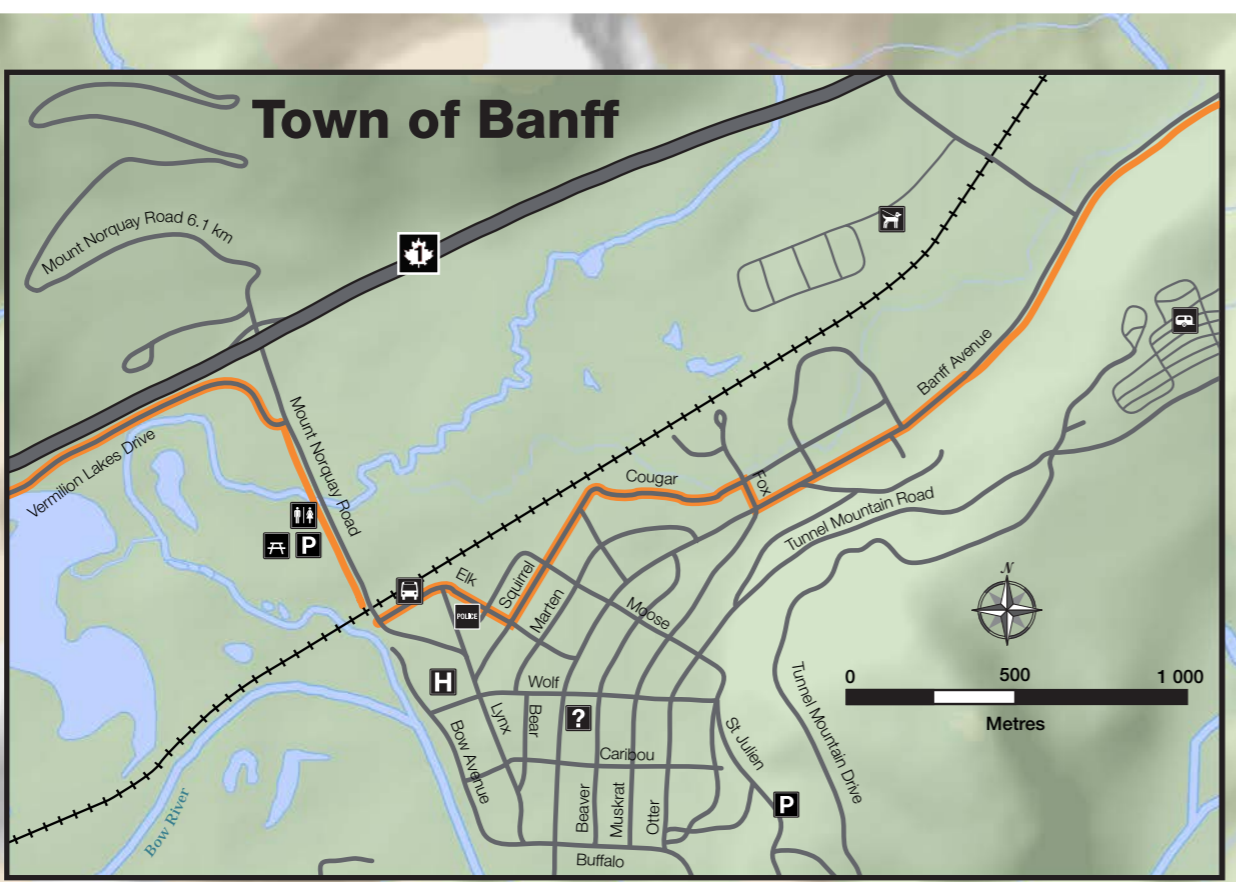
Banff Road Rides

- 19 Golf Course Drive**
10.9 km loop, elevation gain 380 m, elevation loss 380 m
- 20 Vermilion Lakes Drive**
4.3 km one way, elevation gain 180 m, elevation loss 170 m
- 21 Banff Legacy Trail (Bow Valley Parkway to East Gate)**
26 km one way, elevation gain 380 m, elevation loss 530 m
- 22 Lake Minnewanka Road**
13.1 km loop, elevation gain 540 m, elevation loss 540 m
- 23 Tunnel Mountain Drive / Road**
10.7 km loop, elevation gain 410 m, elevation loss 390 m
- 24 Bow Valley Parkway (Hwy 1A to Lake Louise)**
48.9 km one way, elevation gain 1 430 m, elevation loss 1 250 m
- 25 Sunshine Road**
8.2 km one way, elevation gain 660 m, elevation loss 370 m

Elevations are calculated as the total amount of elevation gained and the total amount of elevation lost (all the ups and downs) over the entire distance of an out-and-back trail or a loop. For connector trails, trails which can be combined in several ways to form a loop, such as Healy Creek, the elevations are based on one-way. Elevations provided by Peter Opsral.

Legend

- Legacy Trail
- Legacy Trail route through town
- Trans-Canada Highway
- Bow Valley Parkway
- Road
- ? Banff Visitor Centre
- ♿ Washrooms
- POLICE Police
- P Parking
- A Campground
- ⚠ Backcountry campground (wilderness permit required)
- ☂ Day-use area
- 👁 Viewpoint
- H Hospital
- A Banff Park Museum NHS
- B Lake Minnewanka
- C Cascade Ponds
- D Vermilion Lakes
- E Hoodoos Lookout
- F Bow Falls
- G Upper Hot Springs
- I Cave and Basin NHS



July 10 to Sept 15
The Lake Minnewanka trail is closed, shortly after Stewart Canyon bridge, to cycling to ensure visitor safety and allow bears to feed on berries, a critical food source. Dogs are not permitted on the trail during this period.



DONE WITH THIS BROCHURE? Please return to a park facility or share it with others.
HOW WAS YOUR TRIP? Please send your comments to banff.trails-sentiers@pc.gc.ca