

2005 MOUNTAIN BIKING AND CYCLING GUIDE Banff National Park



Welcome to Banff, Canada's first and most famous National Park. Its spectacular landscape of rugged mountains, broad valleys, glaciers, alpine meadows and turquoise lakes provides habitat for a variety of species including golden eagles, bighorn sheep, black and grizzly bear, and cutthroat trout.

With more than 190 km of mountain bike trails and numerous road riding options, 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 biking experience, while keeping the park's natural environment as pristine as possible.



Mountain Biking in a National Park

Banff National Park supports the use of mountain bikes as a means of appreciating and enjoying the tremendous natural values preserved within the park. If your objective is freeriding or downhill, please consider areas such as Golden or Fernie, B.C. or Canada Olympic Park in Calgary, where these activities are both appropriate and encouraged.

Responsible Mountain Biking

Mountain biking in a national park comes with stewardship responsibilities. 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. Good stewardship of the park and respect for other users will help ensure that mountain biking continues to be a permitted activity within Banff N.P.

- Share the trail – see inset, top right corner.
- Mountain biking is allowed only on designated bike 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.



Keep trails open by setting a good example of environmentally sound and socially responsible off-road cycling.

Rules of the trail

- Ride on open trails only.
- Control your bicycle!
- Never scare animals.
- Leave no trace.
- Always yield trail.
- Plan ahead.

BANFF TOWNSITE AREA

All park maintained trails in the immediate vicinity of the Banff townsite are open for cycling except Tunnel Mountain Trail, Sulphur Mountain Trail (from the Upper Hot Springs to the Summit), Sundance Canyon loop, the Cave and Basin boardwalks, and marked sections of the Bow River and Bow Falls trails. The townsite trails are popular with other users including commercial horse groups—please ride respectfully.

Banff Area Trails

Difficulty ratings are based on trail length, steepness, elevation gain and remoteness. TCH = Trans Canada Highway
Trails #3 and #11 are not shown on the map.

1 Sundance
3.7 km one way, elevation gain 30 m, easy
Trailhead: Cave and Basin National Historic Site
Perfect for kids and tot trailers, this paved trail winds along the Bow River and climbs gently to the Sundance Canyon picnic area and hiking trail. You are likely to encounter hikers and horseback riders on this busy route. Connects with the Healy Creek Trail (#2).

2 Healy Creek
4.8 km one way, elevation gain 20 m, easy
Trailhead: Branches off Sundance Trail (#1)
This gravel and dirt doubletrack winds and dips through the forest and comes out on Sunshine Road near the TCH. You can retrace your route, or return by the TCH. If you choose to ride back to Banff on the highway, please be careful on this busy road. Connects with the Brewster Creek Trail (#3).

3 Brewster Creek to Allenby Pass (not on map)
36.8 km one way, elevation gain 1000 m, difficult
Ride the Sundance Trail (#1), then the Healy Creek fire road (#2) until you get to the Brewster Creek Trail. This trail, a former road, climbs gradually up Brewster Creek valley to Sundance Lodge (service for guests only). The ride to the lodge is appropriate for intermediate riders and is a 29 km return trip. Beyond the lodge is a rugged, muddy singletrack suitable for advanced riders with wilderness travel skills. The route continues up the valley, then climbs steeply to Allenby Pass. There is no cycling beyond the pass. Please watch for horse users. NOTE: beginning this ride from the Healy Creek Trailhead on the Sunshine Road reduces the trip by 7.2 km.

4 Spray River Loop
12.5 km, elevation gain 200 m, easy
Trailhead: Begins at the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel and ends at the golf course (or vice versa)
A pleasant roll through the woods, this trail follows former roads on both sides of the Spray River. The good views, rushing river and deluxe picnic spot at the furthest point are highlights of the ride. Suitable for kids and tot-trailers. Yield to horses.

5 Spray River and Goat Creek
19 km one way, elevation gain 360 m, moderate
Trailhead: Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel
This popular double-track follows an old fire road for 10 km to the junction with Goat Creek (turn left). It then ascends gently along Goat Creek below Mount Rundle to a parking lot on the Smith-Dorrien Road above Canmore. Most riders arrange a vehicle shuttle and reverse the trip for a gentle downhill cruise. Combine with Rundle Riverside (#6) and the Golf Course Drive (#15) for a challenging 48 km loop.

6 Rundle Riverside
14 km one way, elevation gain 180 m, difficult
Trailhead: Banff Golf Course Road (kiosk at far end)
Intermediate and advanced riders may enjoy this rocky, roller-coaster of a trail linking Banff and Canmore. This singletrack trail offers 8 km of rough, root riding before joining a gravel doubletrack for a fast 6 km to the Canmore Nordic Centre. More challenging than most riders expect.

7A Cascade Ponds - Bankhead
2.5 km one way, elevation gain 100 m, easy
Trailhead: Cascade Ponds Day Use Area, Lake Minnewanka Road
From the ponds, ride north along the creek and follow the trail past the picnic tables. The trail crosses the Minnewanka Road and follows the old Canadian Pacific railgrade to the ghost town of Bankhead.

7B Cascade Ponds - Watertower
4.2 km one way, elevation gain 120 m, moderate
Trailhead: Cascade Ponds Day Use Area, Lake Minnewanka Road
The trail begins at the northeast corner of the ponds, crosses a small creek, leads into the trees and climbs up an almost "impossible to ride up" set of steps. The remainder of the trail to the watertower is a sweet single-track that snakes along the edge of the escarpment above the TCH. From the water tower a short section of gravel road leads to Johnson Lake.

8 Lake Minnewanka
30 km one way, elevation gain 75 m, difficult
Trailhead: Lake Minnewanka Picnic Area (far end)
This rough, and exposed sidehill singletrack, leads east to the park boundary at Devil's Gap. Day trip destinations include the Aylmer Pass hiking trail junction (16 km return) and the warden patrol cabin (32 km return). This trail is popular with hikers and can be quite congested for the first 4 km. Early start recommended in May – June

9 Cascade
14 km one way, elevation gain 180 m, moderate
Trailhead: Upper Bankhead Parking Lot
Formerly a fire road, this gravel trail leads into the wild Cascade valley and runs through prime bear habitat. The cycling trail ends at Stoney Creek primitive campground—buy a Wilderness Pass and try backcountry bicycle camping.

10A Upper Stoney Squaw Loop
2 km one way, elevation gain 150 m, difficult
Trailhead: Mt. Norquay Ski Area Parking Lot
This narrow, technically difficult, root-infested little trail climbs, sometimes steeply, to the summit of Stoney Squaw Mt. From the summit, continue north and descend a rocky trail to the old ski runs above the lodge. Many riders link this trail with Lower Stoney Squaw (#10B). NOTE: Upper and Lower Stoney Squaw are the only legal bike trails in the Mt Norquay area.

10B Lower Stoney Squaw
5.2 km one way, elevation loss 170 m, moderate
Trailhead: Mt. Norquay Ski Area Parking Lot
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 trail. The trail features rough and rocky sections and drops almost continuously to the highway. Combine with Mt. Norquay Rd. (#12) for a challenging 15 km loop from Banff. Please watch for bears and horse users on this fast, downhill ride.

11 Redearth (not on map)
12 km one way, elevation gain 320 m, moderate
Trailhead: TCH, 20 km west of Banff
This trail, once a 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 (stop for tea), Shadow Lake and Egypt Lake.

12 Mt. Norquay Road
7.5 km one way, difficult
Starting Point: Norquay Overpass on the TCH
This steep road climbs steadily up the mountain to the Mt. Norquay ski area. A lookout near the top provides a great view of the town of Banff in the valley below. NOTE: all trails leading off this road are closed to biking.

13 Lake Minnewanka Road
24 km loop, moderate
Starting Point: Minnewanka overpass on the TCH
You will pass many attractions on this route including the Cascade Ponds, Bankhead, Lake Minnewanka, Two Jack Lake, and Johnson Lake. Be cautious—the road is narrow and can be quite busy during the summer.

14 Tunnel Mountain Drive
15 km loop, moderate
Starting Point: East end of Buffalo Street
This hilly ride takes you to a viewpoint overlooking Bow Falls and the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel. From here the road cuts up the side of Tunnel Mt. to join Tunnel Mt. Road. It then continues westward, past campgrounds and viewpoints, before dropping down to Banff Avenue.

15 Golf Course Drive
15 km loop, easy
Starting Point: Bridge over the Spray River by Bow Falls
The route takes you past the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel golf course and around a loop road at the far end. This peaceful road offers excellent views of the Bow River and local peaks. Great for a family outing.

16 Vermilion Lakes Drive
5.7 km one way, easy
Starting Point: Off Mt. Norquay Rd, just south of the TCH
The Vermilion Lakes are a series of three shallow lakes surrounded by marshland—a rich oasis for wildlife. The ride provides classic views of Banff's signature peak, Mount Rundle. All three lakes have small docks where you can relax and enjoy the view.

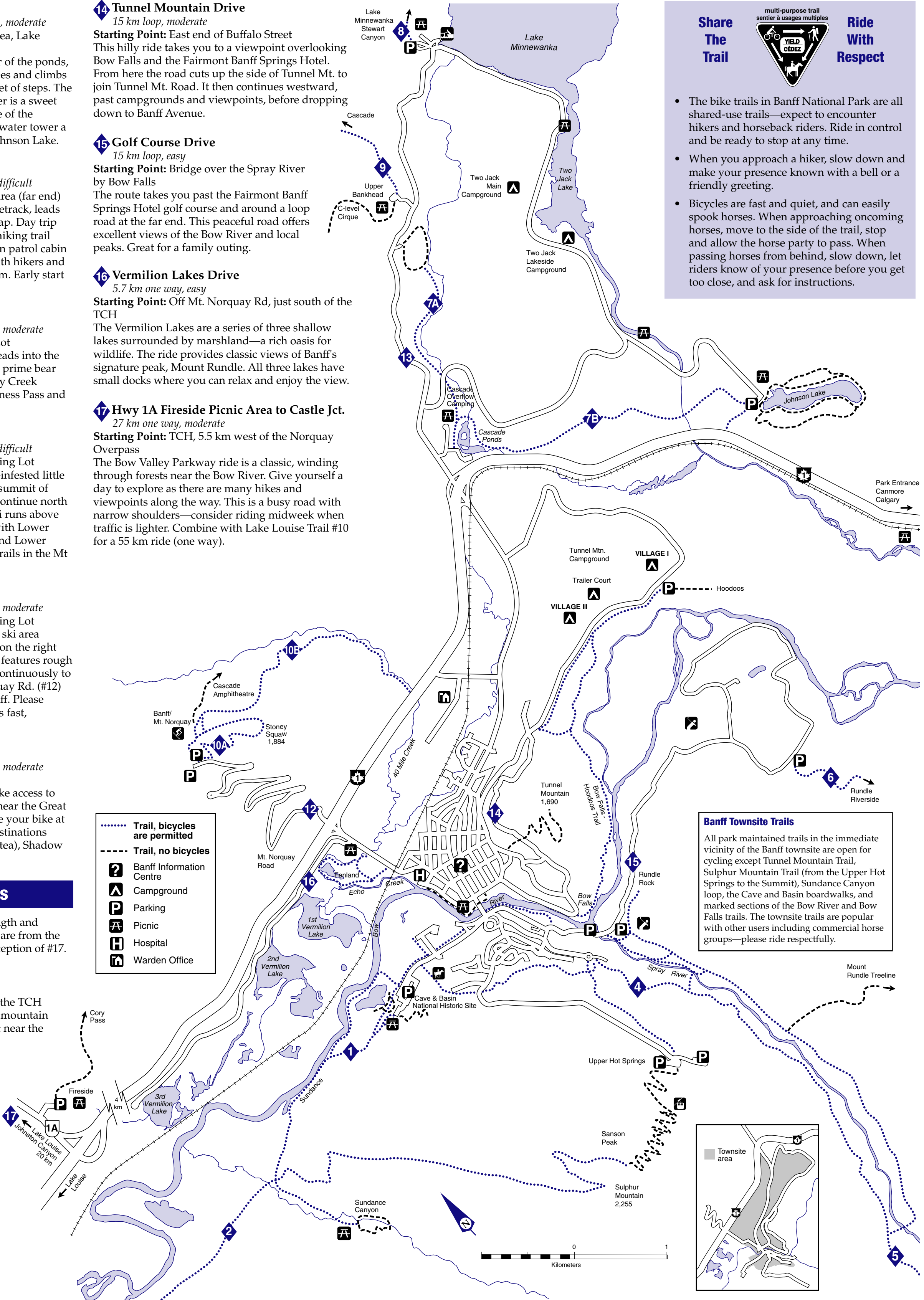
17 Hwy 1A Fireside Picnic Area to Castle Jct.
27 km one way, moderate
Starting Point: TCH, 5.5 km west of the Norquay Overpass
The Bow Valley Parkway ride is a classic, winding through forests near the Bow River. Give yourself a day to explore as there are many hikes and viewpoints along the way. This is a busy road with narrow shoulders—consider riding midweek when traffic is lighter. Combine with Lake Louise Trail #10 for a 55 km ride (one way).

Banff Road Rides

Difficulty ratings are based on ride length and elevation gain. All road ride distances are from the Banff Information Centre, with the exception of #17.

18 Mt. Norquay Road
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Share The Trail

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Ride With Respect

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- The bike trails in Banff National Park are all shared-use trails—expect to encounter hikers 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 with a bell or a friendly greeting.
- 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.