

4 Day Banff National Park Itinerary

by [Aly Smalls](#)

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Where to Stay

Mentioned in video:

[Canalta Lodge](#): best quality & value match, hot tubs & sauna

[Moose Hotel](#): mountain lodge vibes, walkable to downtown, rooftop hot tubs

[Elk & Avenue](#): well priced for being 2 minute walk to DT, pet-friendly rooms

[Peaks Hotel](#): right behind Bear Street, newly renovated

[Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel](#): the famous 'Banff Castle' (luxury option)

Other options:

[Hidden Ridge Resort](#): a little dated, good choice for groups, and A+ outdoor hot tub with views

[The Dorothy Motel](#): the best budget option by far, clean, 15-20 minute walk to DT

[Storm Mountain Lodge](#): Stay in cozy log cabins! Halfway between Banff and Lake Louise

[9 Best Cheap Places to Stay in Banff \(that are actually nice\)](#) - my blog post

Day 1: Explore Charming Banff

Sunrise (or morning hike) on Tunnel Mountain

- 4.5kms round trip, about 1.5 hours
- If you're short on time, start at the Upper Parking Lot. You'll still be able to complete 80% of the hike

Sightseeing in Downtown Banff

- Fuel up on a velvety latte or ice cream and stroll the adorable mountain town!
- Banff Ave (pedestrian only in the summer)
- Bear Street (pedestrian only year-round)
- Cascades of Time Gardens
- Cave & Basin National Historic Site
- [Banff Castle Food Tour](#)
- [Guide Along Banff Townsite Tour](#)
- [Open Top Tour](#): see all the sites in a vintage-inspired vehicle!

Bow Falls Trail & Viewpoint

- 1.2 kms one way

- Trailhead is at the end of the pedestrian bridge that crosses Bow River
- Mostly flat but there are some wooden stairs to climb. It includes local art (paintings and sculptures) along the trail.

Banff Gondola

- Panoramic views from the summit of Sulphur Mountain
- Lovely for sunset, there's a restaurant with sky high views
- [Book Gondola tickets](#) in advance (especially in summer)

Day 2: Famous Emerald Lakes

Moraine Lake

- Most beautiful lake in Canada
- Ideally visit at sunrise, early morning or end of day
- Must take a shuttle, no private vehicles allowed
- I recommend [Moraine Lake Bus Company](#)
- [Parks Canada](#) shuttles are cheaper, typically sells out and lineups are insane
- Hikes:
 - Rockpile trail
 - Consolation Lakes
 - Larch Valley

*if you don't have a car, [you can book this small group tour](#) that includes pickup in Banff (they will take you to Moraine Lake, Lake Louise and more lakes if there is time)

Lake Louise

- Book a shuttle or tour in advance or use public transit to access the lake as parking is extremely limited
- [Direct to Lake Louise' shuttle service](#) (if you just want to visit LL and not Moraine Lake)
- Hikes:
 - Lakeshore Loop
 - Lake Agnes Tea House
 - Big Beehive & Little Beehive
 - Plain of the Six Glaciers
 - Fairview Lookout.

Day 3: Classic Banff Views & Wildlife

Johnston Canyon

- Easy hikes, can do Lower and then continue to Upper if you choose

- Lower Falls Trail (most popular): 1.2kms one way, 1 hour round trip
- Upper Falls Trail: 2.5kms one way, 2 hours round trip

Banff Hot Springs

Wildlife Viewing

- Self-drive the Bow Valley Parkway, or
- [Take a guided wildlife tour](#) (evening)

Additional options:

- Mt. Norquay - either the sightseeing chairlift or [Via Ferrata](#)
- [Lake Minnewanka cruise](#): postcard worthy boat tour!

Optional side-trip - Radium Hot Springs:

- Drive to Radium Hot Springs (1.5 hours) and enjoy the quaint, Swiss-themed mountain village with beautiful hot springs.
- Read more here: <https://likewhereyouregoing.com/radium-hot-springs/>
- Watch the video here: <https://youtu.be/TkH7DBQYoKY?si=Vu-MxGqW1DmshSWU>

Day 4: Icefields Parkway

Drive the Scenic Icefields Parkway

Recommended stops:

- Bow Lake
- Peyto Lake
- [Columbia Icefield Tour with Glacier Skywalk](#)
- [Watch my full Parkway video](#) to get an idea about what to see & do
- If you don't have a car, you can [book this tour to experience the Parkway](#)

*make sure you have a full tank of gas!

Optional: continue on to Jasper National Park

- Spend [1 or 2 nights in Jasper](#)
- Could also spend 1 night at [Glacier View Lodge](#)
- [Top 14 Things to Do in Jasper National Park](#) (blog)
- [3 Day Jasper Itinerary](#) (blog)

Additional Tips

- You could **stay in Canmore** - some hotel prices are a little cheaper (20 minutes to Banff)

- **If you don't want to drive**, there are public buses to take you into Banff (from Canmore)
- There are also tours that will pick you up in Canmore if you want to see places like Moraine Lake, Lake Louise and the Icefields Parkway:
 - [Lake Louise and the Icefields Parkway Full-Day Tour](#) (Canmore pickup)
- **Pack layers!** Summer weather can vary from 12C to 30C, so it's best to pack and wear clothes that can be layered.
 - For example, it could be hot walking through downtown Banff, but freezing at the top of the Gondola!
- Credit cards are accepted everywhere, and Canada has a tipping culture (typically 15%)
- A park pass is required to be in Banff National Park (you just pay at the park gate on the highway).