



TOUR DETAILS

Step into the breathtaking mountain landscape surrounding the Cave and Basin National Historic Site, where natural beauty, fascinating history, and the spirit of discovery come together. On this live, interactive journey, we'll explore the area that became the birthplace of Canada's national parks while taking in stunning scenery and uncovering stories that shaped the region. Along the way, we'll discover how this remarkable place helped inspire a movement to protect some of Canada's most treasured landscapes and learn about the people, history, and natural wonders that continue to make the area so memorable today.



★ MEET YOUR TOUR GUIDE: PATRICK



Based in the majestic Canadian Rockies, Patrick is a published author and an international tour guide who has led hundreds of tours to over 40 countries. At home in Banff, Patrick continues to bike, ski, climb and hike, and writes a blog on 2metours.com. With Irish roots, Patrick's humor shines through and he loves connecting with people around the world.

PRIVATE TOURS Patrick is available for private tours, virtually or in person. It's a special way to celebrate a birthday, anniversary, holiday, or special occasion -or to add to an upcoming trip. Please reach out to your Activity Professional, and Wowzitudewill be happy to connect you.

i WHAT TO EXPECT

Get ready for something special. We're traveling with no passport, no plane ticket and no luggage. And yet you'll experience all the sights, sounds and stories with just your laptop, favorite snack and amazing guide.

The tour will be live streamed by your guide directly. While on the tour you'll be able to see a full screen video of your guide and their surroundings, interact with them and other travelers.

BANFF, CANADA – MUSIC

🎵 MUSIC SELECTION

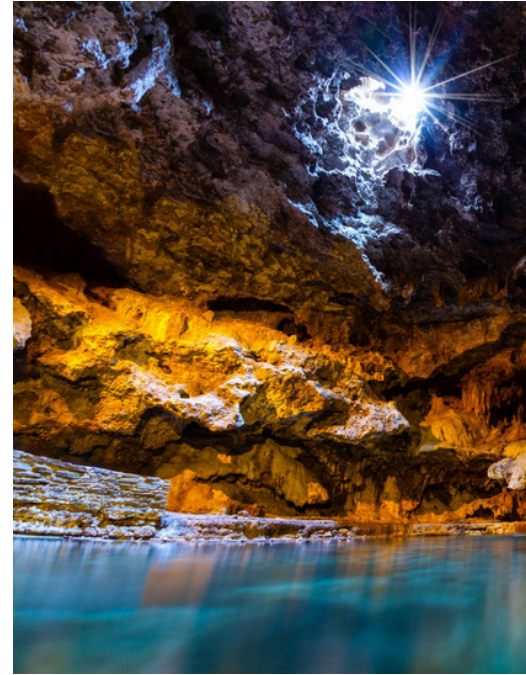
John Denver - Rocky Mountain High: <https://youtu.be/eOB4VdlkzO4?si=-TJ7tXbUZ8CbsF0o>

Anne Murray - Snowbird: https://youtu.be/pq9bHd58-LA?si=fgd9h_nLPzoqfexR

BANFF, CANADA – FUN FACTS

FUN FACTS

- 1. This is where Canada’s national parks story began:** The discovery of hot mineral springs near Cave and Basin in the 1880s eventually led to the creation of Canada’s first national park and helped inspire the national park system across the country.
- 2. The water stays warm all year long:** Even during cold Canadian winters, the mineral-rich spring water remains naturally warm as it rises from deep underground.
- 3. There is a tiny creature found almost nowhere else:** A rare little snail called the Banff Springs Snail lives in some of the hot spring waters and is one of Canada's most unique endangered animals.
- 4. The mountains around Banff were once covered by ancient seas:** Millions of years ago, this area sat beneath warm tropical oceans. Many of the mountains visitors see today formed from layers of ancient sea life and sediment.
- 5. People were drawn to these waters long before Banff existed:** Indigenous peoples knew and respected these natural springs for generations before modern tourism developed in the area, recognizing the importance of the landscape and its natural resources.



BANFF, CANADA – MAP





Rocky Mountain Rye Old Fashioned | Serves 1

Ingredients:

- 2 oz Canadian rye whiskey (Alberta Premium, Crown Royal, or Canadian Club)
- 1/2 tsp pure maple syrup
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- 1 dash orange bitters
- Ice (one large cube preferred)
- Orange peel and maraschino cherry for garnish

Instructions:

- Add rye whiskey, maple syrup, Angostura bitters, and orange bitters to a mixing glass
- Fill with ice and stir gently for 20 to 30 seconds until well chilled
- Strain into a rocks glass over one large ice cube
- Express an orange peel over the glass by twisting it skin-side down over the drink, then drop it in
- Garnish with a maraschino cherry and serve



Poutine (Canadian Classic) | Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs russet potatoes, peeled and cut into fries
- Vegetable oil for frying
- 2 cups fresh cheese curds (available at Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, and specialty cheese shops, or substitute mozzarella torn into chunks)
- Salt

For the gravy:

- 3 tbsp butter
- 3 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 2 cups beef broth
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- Salt and black pepper

Instructions:

- Make the gravy: melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat, whisk in flour and cook 2 minutes until golden, then gradually whisk in both broths until smooth
- Add Worcestershire sauce, garlic powder, salt, and pepper and simmer for 10 minutes until thick enough to coat a spoon, then keep warm over very low heat
- Pat the potato fries completely dry with paper towels
- Fry in batches in 375°F oil for 5 to 6 minutes until golden and crisp, drain on paper towels, and season immediately with salt
- Divide fries among four bowls or plates, scatter cheese curds generously over the fries
- Ladle hot gravy over the top and serve immediately so the curds begin to soften but do not melt completely



BANFF, CANADA - SNACKS

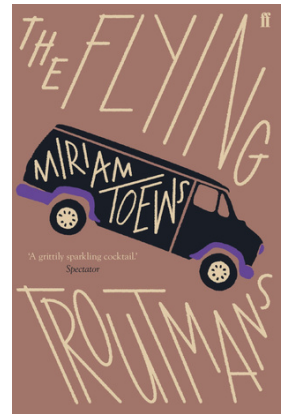


- **Hawkins Cheezies:** A classic Canadian snack produced in Ontario since 1949, Hawkins Cheezies are crunchy cornmeal cheese snacks known for their dense texture and sharp cheddar flavor. They're a nostalgic staple found in most Canadian convenience stores.
- **Mr. Big Chocolate Bar:** A long-running Canadian chocolate bar made by Nestlé Canada, Mr. Big features layers of wafer, caramel, peanuts, and chocolate coating. It's one of the more uniquely Canadian candy bars and widely sold in gas stations and supermarkets.
- **Bear Paws Cookies:** Made by Dare Foods in Ontario, Bear Paws are individually wrapped soft cookies aimed at lunchboxes and snacks on the go. Flavors include Chocolate Chip, Fudge Brownie, and Banana Bread, and they're commonly found in school snack aisles nationwide.

BANFF, CANADA - BOOKS

BOOK SELECTION

- **“The Fat Lady Sang” by Greg Hollingshead:** This novel follows the intertwined lives of two men connected by loss, identity, and the lingering effects of a tragic accident. While much of the story moves through urban and emotional landscapes rather than strictly geographic ones, it is rooted in Canadian settings and explores how place and memory shape human relationships.
- **“The Flying Troutmans” by Miriam Toews:** This novel follows a young woman who unexpectedly becomes responsible for her sister’s two children and sets off on a road trip across North America in search of their absent mother. While not fixed to a single city, it captures contemporary Canadian life and emotional geography through shifting landscapes and encounters.
- **“Unless” by Carol Shields:** This novel tells the story of a successful writer whose life is upended when her daughter suddenly drops out of university and begins panhandling on the streets of Toronto. Set in Canada and grounded in questions of privilege, language, and motherhood, it offers a sharp portrait of modern life and family unraveling.



BANFF, CANADA – MOVIES

MOVIE SELECTION

- **"The Revenant" (2015):** Although primarily set in the United States, many of the breathtaking wilderness scenes were filmed in and around Banff National Park. The movie's stunning landscapes, including snowy forests and rugged mountains, showcase the natural beauty of the Banff area.
- **"Brokeback Mountain" (2005):** This critically acclaimed film features several scenes shot in the Canadian Rockies, including locations within Banff National Park. The movie's picturesque mountain backdrops and pristine wilderness capture the essence of the region's stunning scenery.
- **"River of No Return" (1954):** Starring Marilyn Monroe and Robert Mitchum, this classic adventure film was shot on location in Banff and Jasper National Parks. The movie takes advantage of the area's dramatic landscapes, including the majestic Rocky Mountains and rushing rivers, providing a beautiful setting for its storyline.



BANFF, CANADA – SUSTAINABILITY



Parks Canada’s Conservation Mandate

- Dual Mandate of Protection and Enjoyment: Banff protects natural and cultural heritage while allowing visitors to experience it, guided by a 10-year “Lead Tourism for Good” plan focused on sustainability and community wellbeing.
- UNESCO World Heritage Site: Banff is part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks UNESCO site, recognized in 1984 for its geology, beauty, and biodiversity, with ongoing international oversight.
- Wildlife Corridor Protection: Over 20 wildlife crossings along the Trans-Canada Highway help animals safely move through the park, making Banff a global model for conservation infrastructure.

Sustainable Tourism Initiatives

- Lead Tourism for Good Vision: This strategy aims to reduce tourism impact, spread out visitors, support Indigenous reconciliation, and protect the ecosystem.
- Roam Transit Network: Electric and hybrid buses connect major sites, reducing traffic and making car-free travel possible.
- Park Pass Funding: Visitor passes directly support conservation, trail work, wildlife monitoring, and Indigenous programs.

Local Business Sustainability

- Fairmont Banff Springs Sustainability: The hotel holds a top Green Key rating, has cut food waste significantly, and participates in reuse and environmental programs.
- Banff and Jasper Collection EcoFund: A small visitor fee funds sustainability projects and research, including work on glacier retreat.
- Town of Banff Waste Reduction: The town leads waste reduction efforts, including reusable cup programs targeting single-use waste.

Indigenous Stewardship and Reconciliation

- Indigenous Advisory Circle: Indigenous leaders advise park management, with visible outcomes like multilingual welcome signage added in 2024.
- Cultural Use Agreements: Over 25 agreements allow traditional practices in the park, restoring Indigenous connections to the land.





Accessible Natural Sites and Trails

- Bow Riverside Trail: A wide, paved 4.9-mile trail along the Bow River with scenic views, fully accessible for wheelchairs and mobility aids.
- Fenland Trail: A flat, paved 2-kilometer loop through forest near Banff, ideal for an easy and accessible nature walk.
- Banff Legacy Trail: A 26-kilometer paved route between Banff and Canmore with consistent surfaces and mountain views.
- Lake Louise Shoreline Trail: A paved lakeside path with accessible parking, offering close-up views of Lake Louise.
- Moraine Lake Viewpoint: Accessible parking and a viewpoint provide views of the Valley of the Ten Peaks, though further trails are more difficult.
- Vermilion Lakes Drive: A 4-kilometer paved road with accessible viewpoints and minimal walking required.

Accessible Attractions

- Cave and Basin National Historic Site: Fully accessible with wheelchair-friendly paths, assistive devices, and guided support.
- Banff Park Museum: Wheelchair accessible with ramps, plus assistive hearing and captioned content.
- Banff Gondola: Wheelchair accessible with staff support and accessible summit viewpoints.
- Upper Hot Springs Pool: Accessible pool with warm mineral water popular for relaxation and mobility relief.
- Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies: Fully accessible with ramps, restrooms, and assistive devices.

Transport and Planning

- Roam Transit Buses: Accessible low-floor buses connect Banff, Lake Louise, and major attractions.
- Accessible Parking: Available at campgrounds, picnic areas, and major sites throughout the park.
- Visitor Centres: Fully accessible and staffed with up-to-date accessibility information and resources.
- William Watson Lodge: Located in nearby Kananaskis, offering accessible cabins, campsites, and trails.

Sensory and Cognitive Accessibility

- Audio Guides: Visitor centres provide audio resources describing Banff's natural and cultural features.
- Sensory Considerations: Quieter months like May to June and September to October offer a less crowded experience with fewer sensory challenges.



BANFF, CANADA – DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Nature and Human Connection

- Many people say that standing in front of a mountain, a glacier, or a vast wilderness for the first time changes something in them permanently. Has nature ever made you feel that way, either overwhelmed by its scale or deeply at peace? What was that moment, and where were you?
- Banff's lakes are some of the most photographed places on earth, yet many people who visit them say that no photograph ever does them justice. Is there a place you have been where you felt that the real experience could never be captured in a picture?

History and Difficult Truths

- Canada's national park system, one of the most celebrated conservation achievements in history, was built in part by displacing the Indigenous peoples who had managed the land for thousands of years. How do we hold both the genuine beauty and value of what was created and the injustice of how it was created at the same time?
- Banff National Park was created almost entirely for commercial reasons, to attract tourists to the new Canadian Pacific Railway, not out of any deep love of wilderness. Does knowing that change how you think about it? Does it matter why something good was created, as long as it exists?

Wildlife and the Natural World

- Banff is home to grizzly bears, wolves, cougars, and dozens of other large wildlife species that have been disappearing from much of North America. What do you think is lost when a species disappears from a landscape? Is there something we lose as human beings when the wild animals around us are gone?
- Parks Canada has built over 20 wildlife overpasses and underpasses so that animals can safely cross the Trans-Canada Highway through Banff. Have you ever seen or heard about an effort to protect wildlife that surprised or moved you?

Food and Culture

- The Caesar cocktail, Canada's national drink, was invented in Calgary, just east of Banff, in 1969. Every country and region seems to have a drink that says something particular about who they are. What drink or food do you think best represents where you come from?
- Bannock, the fry bread that has been part of Indigenous food culture across Canada for centuries, is one of the most direct edible connections to the original stewards of this land. Is there a food in your own life that carries that kind of cultural meaning, a recipe or dish that connects you to a particular people, place, or time?

Personal Reflections

- If you could spend one morning in Banff National Park with no other visitors around, just you and the landscape, where would you go and what would you want to see?
- The glaciers that give Banff's lakes their extraordinary color are retreating, and many scientists say the smallest of them may be gone within this century. Is there a place or thing from your own life that you watched change or disappear over time? How does it feel to witness something you love slowly become something different?

BANFF, CANADA – MYTHS & FACTS

- **Myth:** Banff National Park has always protected the Indigenous peoples and cultures of the region.
 - **Fact:** When Banff National Park was established in 1885, it came with an explicit policy of excluding Indigenous peoples from the park and prohibiting their traditional hunting, gathering, and ceremony. The Stoney Nakoda, Blackfoot, Tsuut'ina, and other nations who had managed this landscape for over ten thousand years were displaced from land central to their spiritual and cultural life. Parks Canada has spent the last fifty years working to acknowledge and reverse this historical injustice through cultural use agreements, the Indigenous Advisory Circle, and ongoing reconciliation initiatives.
- **Myth:** The stunning blue and green colors of Banff's lakes come from algae or minerals dissolved in the water.
 - **Fact:** The extraordinary colors of Lake Louise, Moraine Lake, and other Banff lakes are caused by glacial rock flour: microscopic particles of rock ground to powder by glaciers over thousands of years and carried into the lakes by meltwater. This incredibly fine sediment stays suspended in the water and scatters sunlight so that blue and green wavelengths are reflected back to our eyes while other wavelengths are absorbed. The lakes actually change color through the seasons as glacial melt increases and the concentration of rock flour shifts.
- **Myth:** Banff National Park was created because of Canada's love for wilderness conservation.
 - **Fact:** Banff National Park was created almost entirely for commercial reasons. The Canadian Pacific Railway needed passengers to justify the enormous cost of building the transcontinental line, and the discovery of hot springs near the railway route offered a ready-made tourist attraction. The government reserved the land not out of ecological concern but to prevent private developers from monopolizing the springs before the railway could profit from them. Canada's love of wilderness conservation grew out of the park system rather than inspiring it.
- **Myth:** Banff's glaciers are a permanent feature of the landscape.
 - **Fact:** Banff's glaciers are retreating at an accelerating rate due to climate change. The Columbia Icefield, the largest icefield in the Rockies and the source of Banff's glacial meltwater lakes, has lost significant mass in recent decades, and scientists project that many of the park's smaller glaciers will disappear entirely within this century. The turquoise lakes that define Banff's iconic scenery depend on this glacial meltwater, and their future is directly tied to the health of the glaciers above them.
- **Myth:** Banff is purely a summer destination.
 - **Fact:** Banff is a compelling destination in every season. Winter brings world-class skiing at Sunshine Village, Lake Louise, and Mount Norquay, as well as ice skating on the frozen lake in front of the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, a scene considered one of the most magical winter experiences in Canada. Spring brings wildflowers and the first bear sightings of the year, while autumn turns the larch forests of the high alpine a brilliant gold. Many visitors consider September and October, when the crowds have thinned and the light is extraordinary, the most beautiful time to be in the park.
- **Myth:** The wildlife in Banff National Park is tame or safe to approach.
 - **Fact:** Banff's wildlife is entirely wild and can be dangerous. Grizzly bears, black bears, wolves, elk, moose, and cougars all inhabit the park, and elk and moose in particular are responsible for more injuries to park visitors than bears. The park's wildlife management team issues regular advisories, and all visitors are expected to maintain safe distances from wildlife, carry bear spray on hikes, and never feed, approach, or attempt to photograph animals from close range. The park's wildlife corridor system is designed to keep animals wild and free-ranging, and that means they can appear anywhere.

24 HOURS IN BANFF, CANADA



- 7:30 AM – Start the Morning with Mountain Views
 - Begin the day with a relaxed breakfast and take in Banff’s fresh mountain air and surrounding peaks as the town slowly comes to life.
- 9:00 AM – Stroll Through Downtown Banff
 - Spend time wandering through the heart of town, exploring local shops, scenic streets, public art, and beautiful mountain viewpoints.
- 10:30 AM – Visit the Cave and Basin National Historic Site
 - Head to the Cave and Basin area to discover the place that helped inspire Canada’s national parks system. Walk the surrounding pathways, enjoy the natural scenery, and learn about the history and significance of this remarkable site.
- 12:30 PM – Lunch with Mountain Scenery
 - Pause for lunch and enjoy the atmosphere of Banff with views of the surrounding landscape.
- 2:00 PM – Scenic Nature Walk or River Exploration
 - Spend the afternoon along riverside paths or gentle walking trails where you can admire forests, mountains, and the peaceful natural setting.
- 4:00 PM – Relax and Enjoy the Mountain Atmosphere
 - Take time for a slower pace with scenic overlooks, wildlife spotting opportunities, or simply sitting and enjoying the views.
- 6:00 PM – Dinner in Banff
 - Enjoy dinner while experiencing the cozy mountain town atmosphere as the evening begins.
- 7:30 PM – Sunset Mountain Views
 - Find a scenic spot to watch the changing light across the mountains. Sunset in Banff often creates beautiful golden colors on the surrounding peaks.
- 9:00 PM – Evening Walk Under the Stars
 - End the day with a peaceful evening stroll. With the mountains surrounding the town and less city light, the night sky can feel especially dramatic.
- 7:30 AM (Next Morning) – Coffee and One Last View
 - Start the next morning slowly and take in one final mountain view before heading home or continuing your adventure.

BANFF, CANADA – MOUNTAIN SURVIVAL & SAFETY BASICS



Mountain Survival & Safety Basics

In the wild landscapes surrounding Banff, nature is beautiful, but it is never casual. The towering peaks, turquoise lakes, and pine forests that appear serene in postcards can become unpredictable within minutes. For hikers, climbers, skiers, and campers, every journey into the Rockies begins with preparation.

The Weather Can Turn Without Warning

A warm blue-sky morning can suddenly collapse into sleet, fog, or snow by afternoon, even in summer. Experienced hikers pack extra layers, waterproof gear, and emergency supplies even for short outings. Rangers often remind visitors that people rarely get into trouble because they planned badly. They get into trouble because they assumed nothing would go wrong.

The Thin Air of the Rockies

Banff’s high elevation surprises many visitors. Travelers unused to altitude may feel dizzy, short of breath, or unusually tired after modest activity. Veteran adventurers know the mountains punish overconfidence quickly, making pacing and hydration essential.

Avalanche Country

In winter, Banff becomes one of the world’s great snow-covered wildernesses, but avalanches remain a constant risk. Backcountry skiers carry emergency beacons, probes, and shovels, while experts monitor snow conditions daily. Entire highways are sometimes closed while crews deliberately trigger controlled avalanches before nature can do it first.

Living Among Wildlife

Banff is a real wilderness shared with elk, wolves, black bears, grizzlies, and moose. Campers never store food inside tents because even toothpaste or sunscreen can attract animals. Visitors are often stunned to see traffic stopped not by construction, but by an elk wandering calmly through town.

Hiking Preparedness

Rocky Mountain trails can become steep, isolated, and exhausting far faster than many expect. Search-and-rescue teams regularly assist hikers who underestimated terrain or weather. Experienced hikers follow a strict “turnaround time,” meaning they head back no matter how close the summit may seem.

Silence in the Wilderness

Many adventurers remember not just the danger, but the silence. Deep in the valleys around Banff, there are moments where the forests fall completely still, leaving only the sound of wind and distant rivers beneath mountains older than human history.

