

**Day Hikes in the Banff Area**

Rushing rivers, snow-capped peaks, alpine meadows, and glacially carved cirques make the wilderness surrounding the town of Banff a hiker's paradise. Trails lace the Banff area, ranging from low-elevation strolls along boardwalks to more strenuous full-day outings that lead seasoned hikers to some of the best alpine passes the Rocky Mountains have to offer. Choose a trail and enjoy the wonders of Banff National Park.



**Ratings**

**EASY**

- Suitable for those with little or no trail experience.
- Flat to gently rolling with no obstacles.
- Little or no elevation gain or loss.

**MODERATE**

- Suitable for those with basic trail experience.
- Gently rolling with short, steep sections and infrequent obstacles.
- Moderate elevation gain or loss.

**DIFFICULT**

- Suitable only for those with trail experience.
- Long, steep sections with frequent obstacles.
- Major elevation gain or loss.

**Estimated time to complete these trails ranges depending on trail distances, fitness levels, weather and trail conditions.**

**1 Easy Trails**

**1 Fenland Trail**

2.1 km loop  
No elevation gain; 40 minute round trip  
Trailhead: Fenland Trail parking area, west of Mt. Norquay Road  
On foot: Trailhead is a 20 minute/1.5 km walk from downtown Banff

Learn about the local ecosystem on this self-guided interpretive trail through old-growth spruce. This short loop is a pleasant escape from the bustle of town.

**2 Marsh Loop**

2.8 km loop  
Minimal elevation gain; 1 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Cave and Basin National Historic Site  
On foot: Trailhead is a 30 minute/2 km walk from downtown Banff

**Roam Route 4**

This trail encircles a wetland filled from hot springs flowing out of the lower slopes of Sulphur Mountain. Due to heavy horse use, the Marsh Loop tends to be muddy after rain. For a family-friendly stroll, take the 1.1 km Lower Boardwalk over pristine marshland and bubbling thermal waters.

**3a 3b Sundance Canyon**

3a) 3.7 km one way  
Elevation gain 75 m, elevation loss 60 m  
2 hour round trip  
3a + 3b) 3.7 km one way plus 1.6 km moderate loop  
Elevation gain 155 m, elevation loss 60 m  
3 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Cave and Basin National Historic Site  
On foot: Trailhead is a 30 minute/2 km walk from downtown Banff

**Roam Route 4**

Follow the paved trail beyond the Cave and Basin National Historic Site. Within a few minutes, views open up to a mountain panorama across the Bow River. After a gentle yet steady climb away from the river, the paved section ends and a moderately difficult trail loops through a water-filled canyon.



**4a 4b Spray River East and West**

4a) 5.7 km one way from Spray River East trailhead (Golf Course Road) to Spray River bridge  
Elevation gain 135 m, elevation loss 80 m  
4b) 5.6 km one way from Spray River bridge to Spray River West trailhead  
Elevation gain 70 m, elevation loss 105 m  
3 to 4 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Spray River East trailhead on the Golf Course Road  
On foot: Trailhead is a 30 minute/2.2 km walk from downtown Banff

Often done as a loop, these two lengthy but relatively easy forested trails are popular with hikers, cyclists and horseback riders. They traverse rolling terrain along either side of the Spray River. A short interpretive walk around the Fairmont Banff Springs links the east and west trailheads via a small scenic bridge.

**5 Tunnel Campground Loop**

6.4 km loop  
Elevation gain 70 m; 1.5 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Start at the Hidden Ridge Resort Roam transit stop  
On foot: Trailhead is a 35 minute/2.5 km walk from downtown Banff

**Roam Route 2**

This lightly forested trail can be joined at any number of points from within the campground. There is no designated parking lot—walk or take Roam public transit from downtown to access this trail.

**6 Stewart Canyon**

1.5 km one way  
Minimal elevation gain; 1 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Lake Minnewanka Day-use Area

**Roam Route 6**

From the day-use area, this low elevation trail follows the Lake Minnewanka reservoir shoreline to a bridge spanning the walls of Stewart Canyon. **Lake Minnewanka reservoir is popular and the parking lot fills during the summer. Take Roam public transit from downtown Banff or visit pc.gc.ca/BanffNow for parking information.**

**7 Johnson Lake**

2.8 km loop  
Minimal elevation gain; 1 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Johnson Lake Day-use Area

**Roam Route 6**

This circuit around the lake crosses open slopes, passes some of Alberta's oldest Douglas fir trees, and detours around a shallow bay where waterfowl often rest. This hike offers views of Cascade Mountain and Mount Rundle.

**8 Sunshine Meadows**

10 km of trails  
Elevation gain 200 m  
4 to 5 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Sunshine Village, accessible by a fee-based gondola or shuttle service from the Sunshine Village parking lot from early July to end of September

**Sunshine Shuttle**

The most popular trail in this network crests the Continental Divide and descends to a viewpoint at Rock Isle Lake. From there, you can hike the slightly more challenging Grizzly-Larix Lakes Loop, continue on the Twin Cairns-Meadow Park trail or hike up to Standish viewpoint. Detailed trail maps are available through Sunshine Village.

**9a 9b 9c Johnston Canyon / Ink Pots**

9a) 1.2 km one way to the Lower Falls  
Elevation gain 50 m; 1 hour round trip  
9a + 9b) 2.5 km one way to the Upper Falls  
Elevation gain 120 m; 2 hour round trip  
9a + 9b + 9c) 5.7 km one way to the Ink Pots  
Elevation gain 330 m, elevation loss 140 m  
Trailhead: Johnston Canyon Day-use Area

**Roam Route 9**

Travel in the depths of the canyon on wide trails and narrow bridges with railings that lead to the Lower Falls and to the spectacular 30 metre-high Upper Falls. For a unique perspective, continue 265 m further to the viewpoint at the top of the upper falls. Beyond the falls, a trail continues up and over a forested ridge to a meadow where water bubbles from deep below the Earth's surface into shallow pools called the Ink Pots. **The Johnston Canyon area is popular and parking is limited. Take Roam public transit, book a tour bus from downtown Banff, or visit parkscanada.gc.ca/BanffNow for parking information.**

**Roam Route 9**

**10 Silverton Falls**

0.9 km one way  
Elevation gain 90 m; 40 minute round trip  
Trailhead: Rockbound Lake parking area

**Roam Route 8S to Castle Mountain Campground**

Branching off the Rockbound Lake Trail at 300 metres, this short hike ends at the base of a waterfall that cascades over a series of narrow ledges surrounded by forest.

**11 Boom Lake**

5.1 km one way  
Elevation gain 175 m; 3 to 4 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Boom Lake Day-use Area

This gradual and easy ascent leads hikers through a picturesque forest to a large alpine lake surrounded by snow-capped mountains. The lakeshore is a great picnic spot.

**Moderate Trails**

**12 Sulphur Mountain**

5.5 km to top of gondola, plus 0.5 km to Sanson Peak  
Elevation gain 655 m; 4 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Banff Upper Hot Springs parking area

**Roam Route 1**

Switchbacks on the slopes of Sulphur Mountain provide a steady uphill hike to a summit renowned for its expansive mountain views. At the top, enjoy the 0.5 km boardwalk along the ridge ending at Sanson Peak. Here, you will find the Sulphur Mountain Cosmic Ray Station National Historic Site and the 1903 weather observatory. From the boardwalk, return on the same trail to the parking lot. Alternatively, take an old fire road known as the Sulphur Mountain Westside Trail (5.4 km) to Sundance Trail, ending at the Cave and Basin National Historic Site (2.6 km). Please note that if you choose to go down to the westside trail, you will need to find your own transportation back to the Sulphur Mountain trailhead. **The Banff Upper Hot Springs is popular and the parking lot fills during the summer. Take Roam public transit from downtown Banff or visit pc.gc.ca/BanffNow for parking information.**

**13 Tunnel Mountain Summit**

2.4 km one way  
Elevation gain 260 m; 2 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Lower parking area on St. Julien Road  
On foot: Trailhead is a 15 minute/1 km walk from downtown Banff

**Roam Route 7**

Accessible from downtown Banff, this trail switchbacks to a low summit with sweeping views across the town, Bow Valley and Mount Rundle rising dramatically to the south.

**14 Surprise Corner to Hoodoos Viewpoint**

4.8 km one way  
Elevation gain 115 m; elevation loss 90 m  
3 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Surprise Corner, east end of Buffalo Street  
On foot: Trailhead is a 20 minute/1.6 km walk from downtown Banff

**Roam Route 7**

**15 Stoney Squaw**

2.1 km one way  
Elevation gain 190 m; 1.5 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Kiosk at the south end of Mount Norquay ski area parking lot

**Norquay Shuttle**

The summit of Stoney Squaw offers views of Cascade Mountain and the Bow Valley below. Along the way, the trail passes through a forest of trees covered in wispy lichen.

**16 Cascade Amphitheatre**

7.7 km one way  
Elevation gain 640 m, elevation loss 150 m  
6 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Kiosk at the south end of Mount Norquay ski area parking lot

**Norquay Shuttle**

Allow a full day to reach this hanging valley that is carpeted with wildflowers in July and August. From the amphitheatre, experienced scramblers with proper equipment can attempt the summit of Cascade Mountain. Get route finding information in the *Scrambler's Guide to Cascade Mountain* available at parkscanada.gc.ca/banff-brochures or a Parks Canada visitor centre.

**17 C-Level Cirque**

3.9 km one way  
Elevation gain 455 m; 3 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Upper Banhead Day-use Area

Hike past historic foundations and vents from the abandoned Banhead mining operation to a glacially carved cirque in the cool northern face of Cascade Mountain.

**18 Healy Pass**

8.8 km one way  
Elevation gain 655 m; 6 to 7 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Sunshine Village parking area behind the main gondola building

**Sunshine Shuttle**

This trail follows Healy Creek to its source amid open meadows above the treeline. Wildflowers bloom profusely from mid-July to late August, and scattered alpine larches turn a magnificent golden yellow in late September.

**19a 19b Bourgeau Lake / Harvey Pass**

19a) 7.5 km one way  
Elevation gain 725 m; 6 hour round trip  
19a + 19b) 9.7 km one way  
Elevation gain 1020 m; 6 to 7 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Bourgeau Lake parking area

A steady climb through lush forest and across mountain streams lead to Bourgeau Lake which is enclosed in a glacially carved amphitheatre. From the lake, a 2.2 km more difficult trail continues upward to Harvey Pass where exceptional views extend to snow-capped peaks along the Continental Divide. **Parking is limited at the Bourgeau Lake parking area. Try carpooling and plan to arrive early.**

**20 Rockbound Lake**

8.4 km one way  
Elevation gain 760 m; 6 to 7 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Rockbound Lake parking area

**Roam Route 8S to Castle Mountain Campground**

A long steady climb through a mixed forest leads behind the distinctive cliffs of Castle Mountain to open meadows and flower-fringed Tower Lake, 7.5 km from the trailhead. The trail then climbs a low cliff band and emerges in a glacial cirque filled by Rockbound Lake.

**21 Castle Lookout**

3.7 km one way  
Elevation gain 550 m; 3 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Castle Lookout parking area

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, numerous fire towers were erected around Banff National Park where spotters could detect flames from afar. This trail ends where a tower once stood. From here, enjoy the sweeping views of the Bow Valley.

**22a 22b 22c Vista Lake / Arnica Lake / Twin Lakes**

22a) 1.4 km one way  
Elevation loss 120 m; 1.5 hour round trip  
22a + 22b) 5 km one way  
Elevation gain 580 m, elevation loss 120 m  
5 hour round trip  
22a + 22b + 22c) 8 km one way  
Elevation gain 715 m, elevation loss 315 m  
6 to 7 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Vista Lake viewpoint on Highway 93 South, on the east side of the road. Parking is not indicated on the highway.

Lose elevation to Vista Lake before you gain it en route to Arnica Lake; the views and variety make this destination worth the ups and downs. Hike under a canopy of larch trees and through a mosaic of wildflowers while the Continental Divide guides you to Arnica and Twin lakes.

**23 Stanley Glacier**

4.2 km one way  
Elevation gain 365 m; 3 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Stanley Glacier parking area in Kootenay National Park

This popular trail climbs a regenerating forest of lodgepole pines, willows and wildflowers before it opens up to clear views of Stanley Glacier and small waterfalls.

**Difficult Trails**

**24a 24b 24c Aylmer Lookout / Aylmer Pass**

6 + 24a + 24b) 11.8 km one way  
Elevation gain 560 m; 7 to 8 hour round trip  
6 + 24a + 24c) 13.5 km one way  
Elevation gain 805 m; 8 to 9 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Lake Minnewanka Day-use Area

**Roam Route 6**

From the day-use area, follow the Lake Minnewanka reservoir shoreline for 7.8 km to the Aylmer Pass junction, then embark on a steady 2.3 km climb to a second junction. At this intersection, either follow signs and continue onto Aylmer Pass (3.4 km one way), or take an out-and-back trip to Aylmer Lookout (1.7 km one way). Aylmer Lookout Trail climbs to a decommissioned fire lookout with a front-row seat of Lake Minnewanka reservoir and the surrounding mountains. Aylmer Pass opens to wide meadows of wildflowers and views of the slate-grey Palliser Range. **Bear warnings, restrictions and closures are common throughout summer. Visit parkscanada.gc.ca/banfftrails to get current trail information. Lake Minnewanka reservoir is popular and the parking lot fills during the summer. Take Roam public transit from downtown Banff or visit parkscanada.gc.ca/BanffNow for parking information.**

**25 Cory Pass Loop**

13 km loop  
Elevation gain 915 m; 6 hour round trip  
Trailhead: Fireside Day-use Area

The unobstructed view of Mount Louis, an imposing limestone monolith, is worth the strenuous uphill trek to Cory Pass. Rather than returning via the same route, energetic hikers have the option of descending into the Gargoyle Valley before returning to the trailhead via Edith Pass. Route finding can be challenging beyond Cory Pass.

**Public Transit and Shuttle Services**

Trails identified with a bus symbol indicate that the trailhead is accessible by public transit and/or private shuttle service. Visit [parkscanada.gc.ca/banff-transit](http://parkscanada.gc.ca/banff-transit) or pick up a public transit brochure and find out more at a Parks Canada visitor centre.

**Public Transit**

**Wildlife and People**

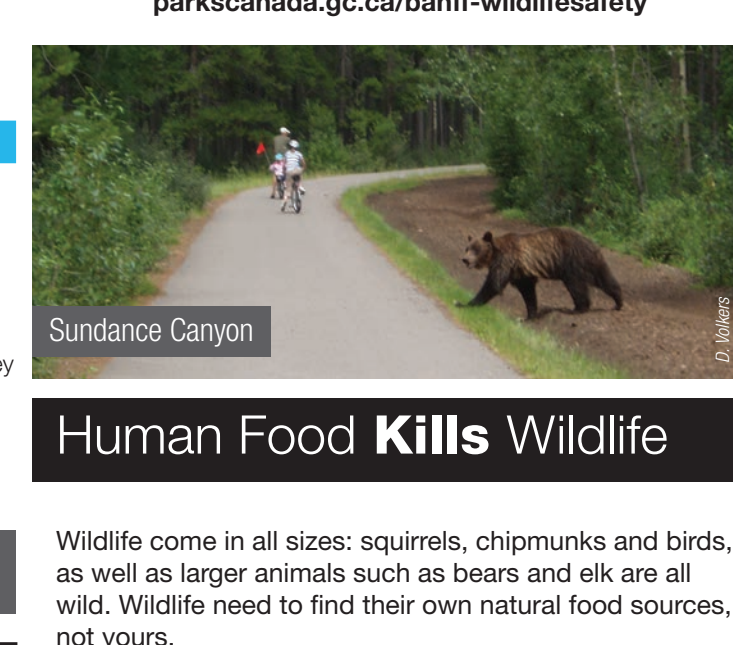
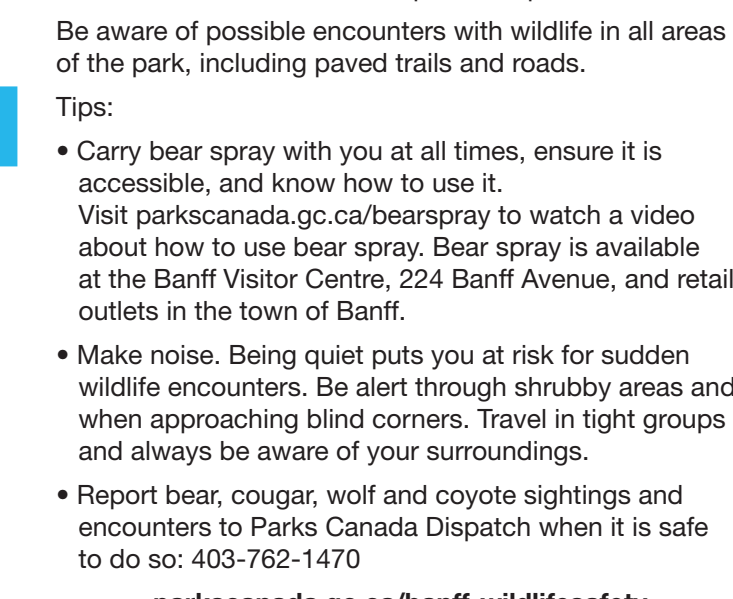
Banff National Park is home to wildlife including elk, wolves, cougars, grizzly bears and black bears. To successfully raise their young and sustain a healthy population, wildlife need access to as much quality habitat with as few human surprises as possible.

Be aware of possible encounters with wildlife in all areas of the park, including paved trails and roads.

Tips:

- Carry bear spray with you at all times, ensure it is accessible, and know how to use it. Visit [parkscanada.gc.ca/bearspray](http://parkscanada.gc.ca/bearspray) to watch a video about how to use bear spray. Bear spray is available at the Banff Visitor Centre, 224 Banff Avenue, and retail outlets in the town of Banff.
- Make noise. Being quiet puts you at risk for sudden wildlife encounters. Be alert through shrubby areas and when approaching blind corners. Travel in tight groups and always be aware of your surroundings.
- Report bear, cougar, wolf and coyote sightings and encounters to Parks Canada Dispatch when it is safe to do so: 403-762-1470

[parkscanada.gc.ca/banff-wildlifesafety](http://parkscanada.gc.ca/banff-wildlifesafety)



**Human Food Kills Wildlife**

Wildlife come in all sizes: squirrels, chipmunks and birds, as well as larger animals such as bears and elk are all wild. Wildlife need to find their own natural food sources, not yours.

- Do not feed any wildlife.
- Do not litter.
- Pack out what you pack in. Use the wildlife-proof garbage bins at the start of the trail to dispose of all unwanted food and garbage.

**Give Wildlife Space**

Approaching wildlife causes them to lose their natural fear of people. Help keep them wild by maintaining a distance of:

- 100 m/330'
- 30 m/100'

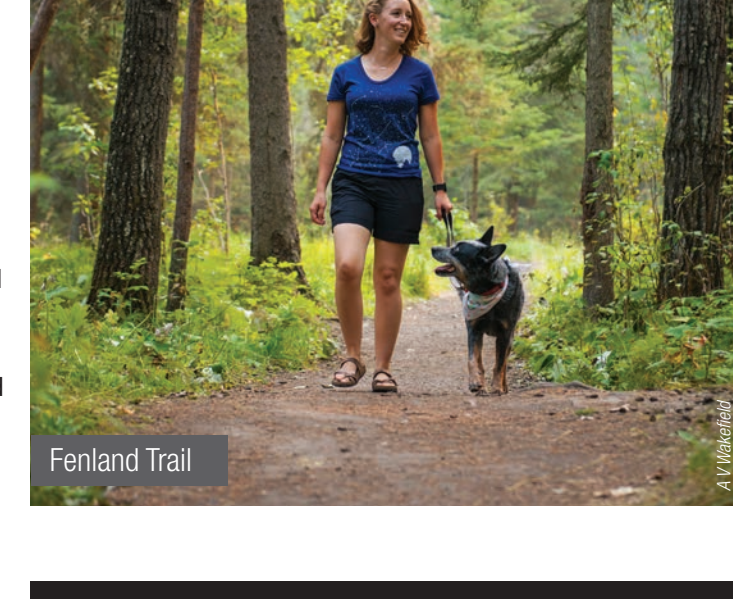
**Dogs**

Dogs cause stress for wildlife. Dogs, like wolves and coyotes, may be seen as a threat. Off-leash dogs can trigger aggressive behaviour from wildlife such as grizzly bears and elk. To prevent unsafe situations, it is your responsibility to:

- Ensure your dog is on a leash and under control at all times.
- Pick up and dispose of your pet's waste in a garbage bin.

Dogs are not allowed on some trails: [parkscanada.gc.ca/banfftrails](http://parkscanada.gc.ca/banfftrails)

Consider leaving your dog at home if you plan to camp, hike or go into the backcountry.



**Drones Disturb Wildlife**

Drones/UAVs are prohibited in all national parks as they disturb wildlife. Leave your drone at home or in your vehicle.

**Trail Etiquette**

Show courtesy to fellow trail users!

- Leave what you find—it is the law. Natural and cultural resources such as rocks, fossils, artifacts, horns, antlers, wildflowers and nests are protected by law and must be left undisturbed for others to discover and enjoy.
- Dispose of human waste at least 100 m from any water source. Bury solid human waste in a hole 15 cm deep. Pack out your toilet paper.
- To prevent damage to vegetation, stay on the trail and avoid shortcuts.
- These trails are used by a variety of outdoor enthusiasts. Be sure to yield to others.
- Leave no trace. Pack out everything you pack in.

**Recommended Packing List**

- Trail guide and map
- Full water bottle or thermos
- High energy food
- Bear spray
- Sunscreen and sunglasses
- First aid kit
- Headlamp or flashlight with spare batteries
- Hat and gloves
- Hiking poles
- Rain/wind jacket
- Extra warm clothing in case of an emergency
- Cell phone or satellite emergency communication device.

**Plan Ahead, Be Prepared**

**Safety**

Safety is your responsibility. There are always hazards associated with outdoor recreation. Even short trips from the town of Banff can have serious consequences. Minimize your risk by planning ahead.

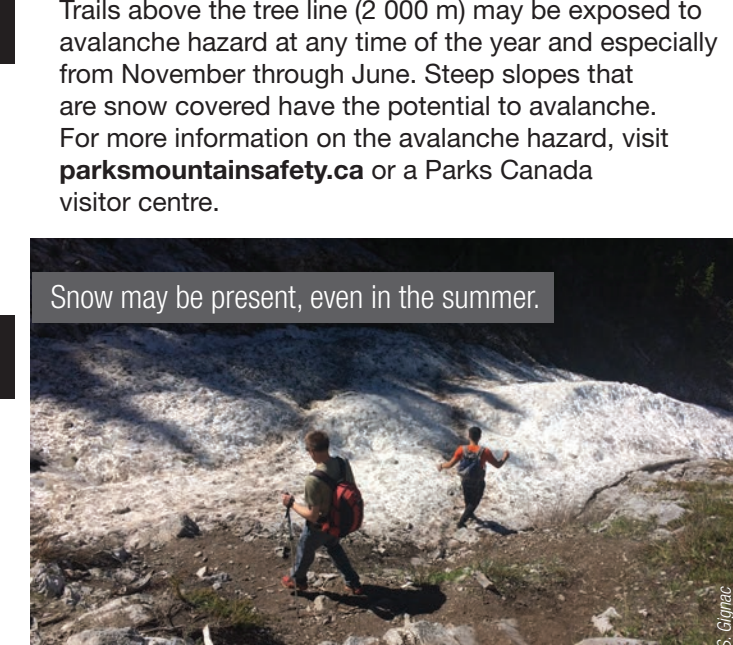
- Ask for advice at a Parks Canada visitor centre or visit [pc.gc.ca/banfftrails](http://pc.gc.ca/banfftrails) for current trail conditions, warnings, closures, weather and trail classifications.
- Be prepared for emergencies and changes in weather. Mountain weather changes quickly and it can snow any month of the year. Dress in layers, bring extra food and warm clothing.
- Study descriptions and maps before heading out. Always choose a trail suitable for the least experienced member in your group.
- Bring your own water. Surface water may be contaminated and unsafe for drinking.
- Carry a first aid kit and bear spray.
- Tell a reliable person where you are going, when you will be back, and who to call if you do not return: Banff Dispatch – 403-762-1470
- Ticks carrying Lyme disease may be present in the park. It is important to check yourself and your pet after hiking.
- Avoid wearing earbuds or headphones. Be alert at all times.

**Snowy Trails**

Snow can remain on some trails well into the summer. When trails are snow covered, route finding can be difficult and travel through deep snow or on hard snow and ice can be unsafe. Be prepared and visit [parkscanada.gc.ca/banfftrails](http://parkscanada.gc.ca/banfftrails) to check trail conditions before heading out:

**Seasonal Avalanche Risk**

Trails above the tree line (2 000 m) may be exposed to avalanche hazard at any time of the year and especially from November through June. Steep slopes that are snow covered have the potential to avalanche. For more information on the avalanche hazard, visit [parksmountainsafety.ca](http://parksmountainsafety.ca) or a Parks Canada visitor centre.



**More Information**

**Banff Visitor Centres:**  
224 Banff Avenue and 327 Railway Avenue  
403-762-1550 / [parkscanada.gc.ca/banff](http://parkscanada.gc.ca/banff)

**Trail Conditions Report:**  
[parkscanada.gc.ca/banfftrails](http://parkscanada.gc.ca/banfftrails)

**Mountain Safety:**  
[parksmountainsafety.ca](http://parksmountainsafety.ca)

**Environment Canada Weather Forecast:**  
403-762-2088  
[weather.gc.ca](http://weather.gc.ca)

Guidebooks and topographic maps are available at the Banff Visitor Centre, 224 Banff Avenue, and retail outlets in the town of Banff.

**In case of EMERGENCY, call 911 or satellite phone: 403-762-4506.**  
**Cell phone coverage is not reliable throughout the national park.**

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# Trail Guide

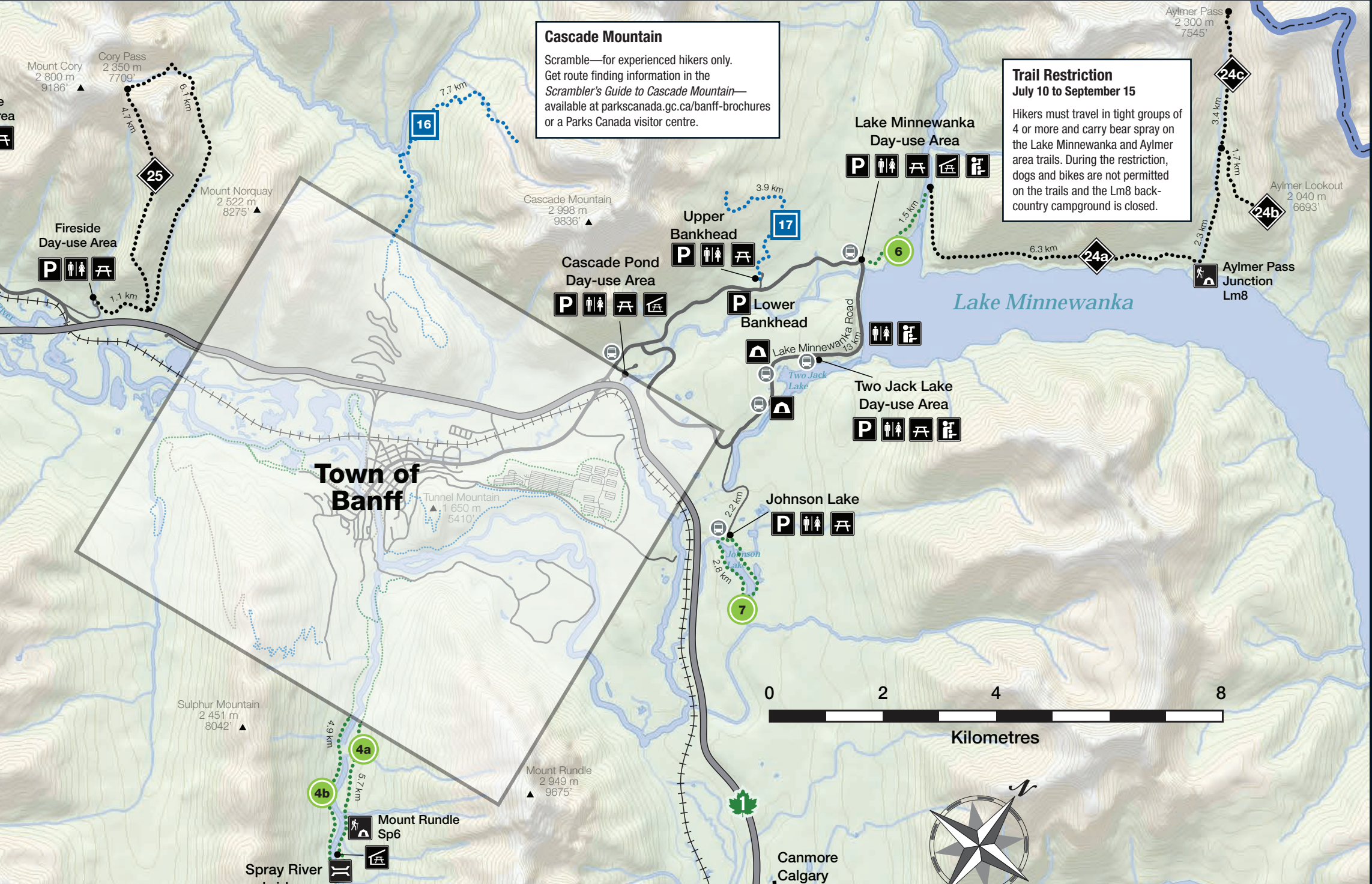
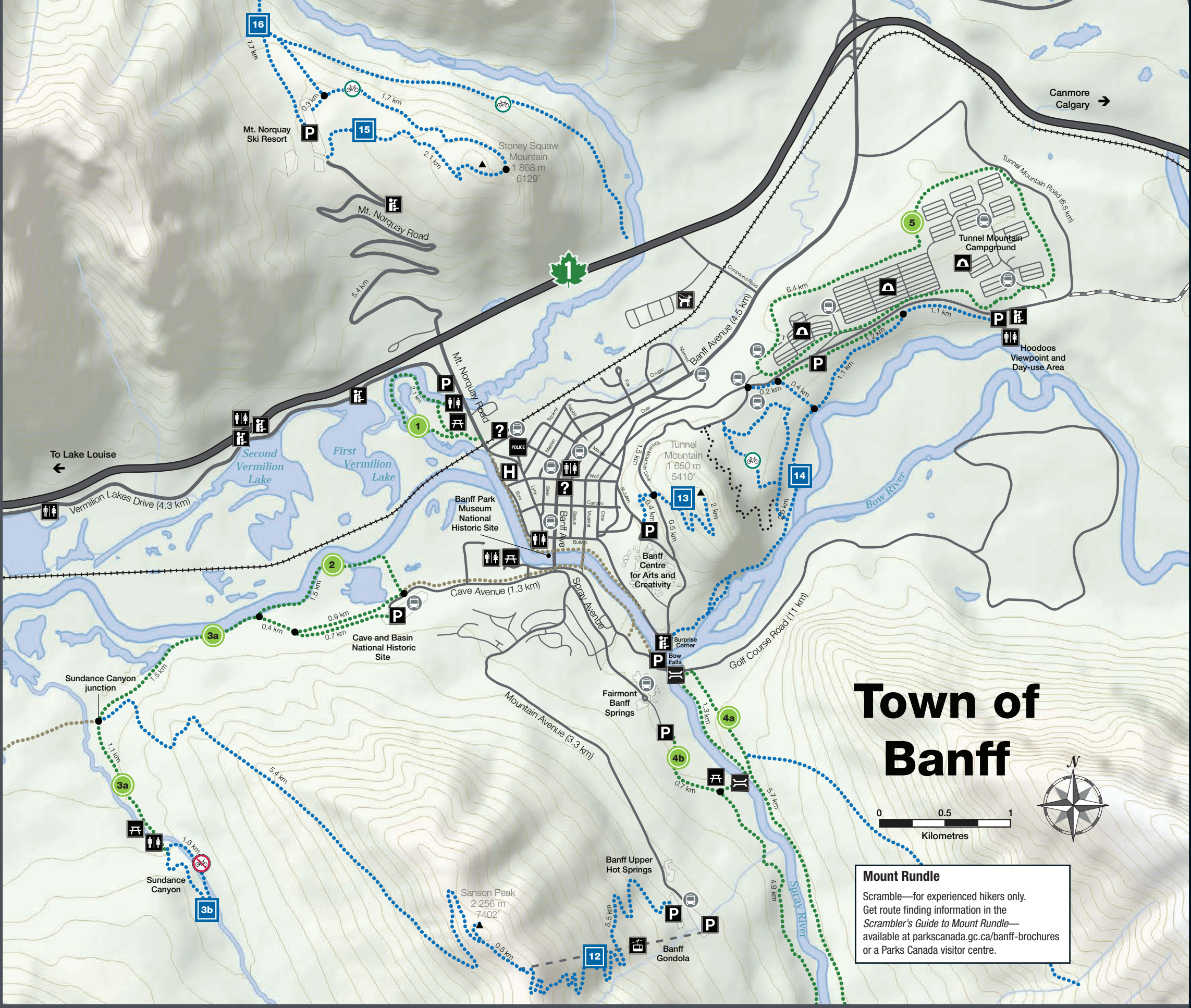
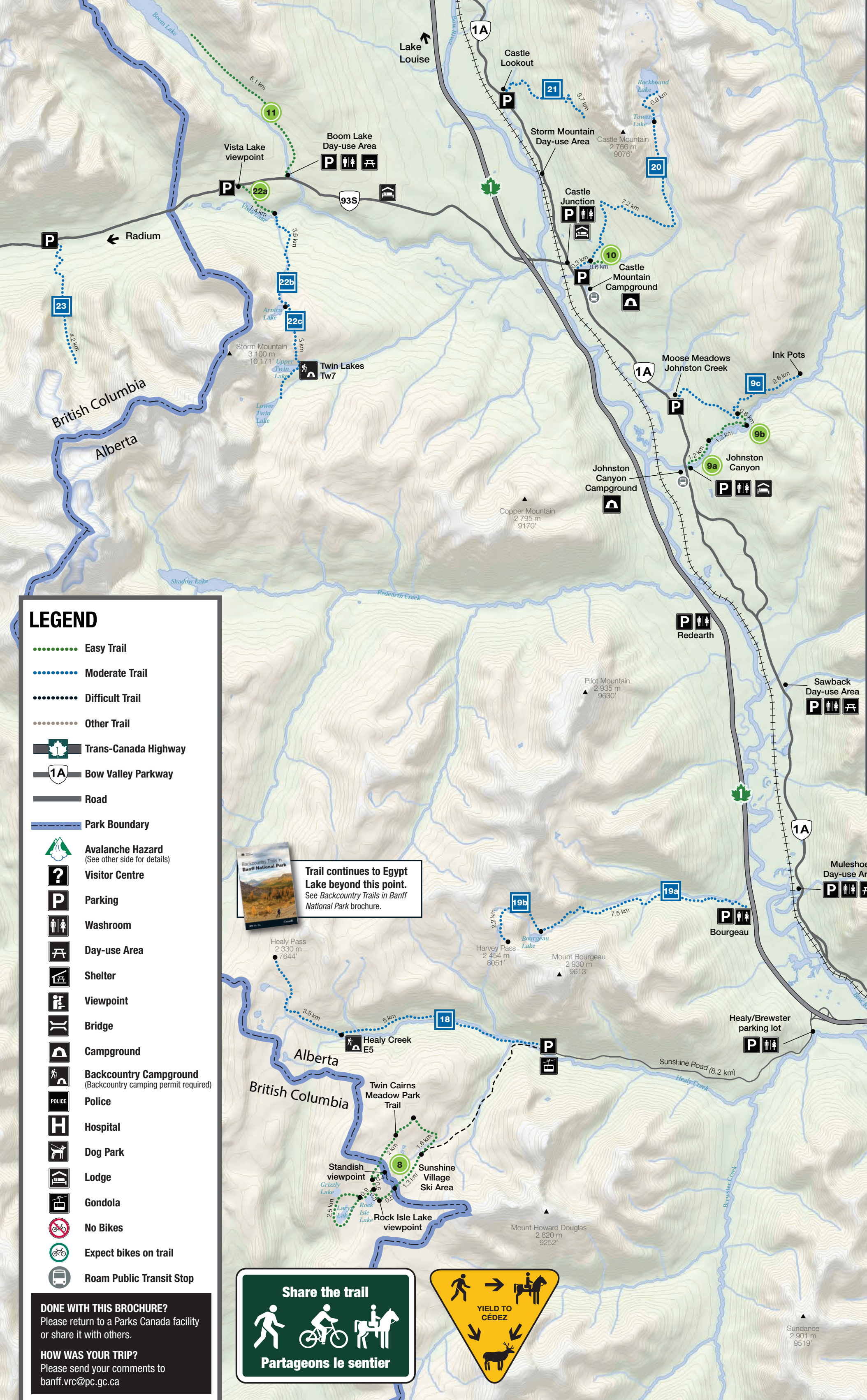
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13 km loop  
Elevation gain 915 m; 6 hour round trip

**LEGEND**

- ..... Easy Trail
- ..... Moderate Trail
- ..... Difficult Trail
- ..... Other Trail
- Trans-Canada Highway
- 1A Bow Valley Parkway
- Road
- Park Boundary
- Avalanche Hazard (See other side for details)
- Visitor Centre
- P Parking
- Washroom
- Day-use Area
- Shelter
- Viewpoint
- Bridge
- Campground
- Backcountry Campground (Backcountry camping permit required)
- Police
- Hospital
- Dog Park
- Lodge
- Gondola
- No Bikes
- Expect bikes on trail
- Roam Public Transit Stop

**DONE WITH THIS BROCHURE?**  
Please return to a Parks Canada facility or share it with others.

**HOW WAS YOUR TRIP?**  
Please send your comments to [banff.vrc@pc.gc.ca](mailto:banff.vrc@pc.gc.ca)



# Common Critters, Birds and Wildflowers

While exploring the park on foot, take a moment to smell, hear and look around you to discover nature at its best. Wonder what the difference is between a chipmunk and a ground squirrel? Wondering why the raven stays here year-round? Why is that pretty red flower called Indian Paintbrush? Challenge yourself to answer your curiosity by learning more about the living things – big and small – that call Banff National Park home. Find more information in books available at many stores in the town of Banff, online, through interpretive programs, and from local experts. Visit a Parks Canada visitor centre to learn more.



Photos: Parks Canada

# Banff Now

Real-time trailhead parking information:  
[pc.gc.ca/banffnow](http://pc.gc.ca/banffnow)

