



Icefields Parkway Inn-to-Inn

Getting Started

Welcome to the Icefields Parkway Inn-to-Inn cycle tour. This trip has been designed to help you to get the most enjoyment out of your visit to the Canadian Rockies. The adventure begins right now. A time of anticipation and excitement, planning and preparing for your trip is one of the most important and enjoyable expedition elements. For many cyclists this is the best cycle tour in the world. This is not a trip to be hurried or rushed, as you will want time to savor and absorb one of the most memorable rides of your life. To fully enjoy the experience, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the information provided and read about any special topics of interest. We want to be with you every step of the way, so please call if you have any questions or concerns.

Trip Description

The spectacular scenery found in the national parks of the Canadian Rockies is unprecedented in North America. *Rocky Mountain Cycle Tours* offers you the opportunity to travel this high country on one of the greatest mountain roadways of the world - The Icefields Parkway. Stretching an impressive 200 miles (300 km) between the historic towns of Jasper and Banff, the Icefields Parkway traverses beneath some of the most majestic mountains of the world. Flanked by dozens of massive glaciers that plummet to the roadsides, it follows three major river systems and passes by exquisite scenery studded with turquoise lakes and brilliant wild flowers. Along the route, two mountain passes - Sunwapta and Bow - take you up to elevations in excess of 7,000 feet (2,100 metres) for breathtaking views of the Columbia Icefield. The Columbia Icefield is the largest conglomeration of glaciers in the Canadian Rockies whose melting waters feed rivers that eventually drain into the Pacific, Arctic and Atlantic Oceans. From the elegant to the formidable, the mountain peaks of the Canadian Rockies are nothing less than spectacular and deserve the United Nations' "World Heritage Site" designation bestowed upon them. So let our guides take you on a mountain cycle tour in the style and luxury of an inn-to-inn experience you won't forget.

Cycling

We only take 12 guests on our scheduled departures. Small groups allow us maximum flexibility and the ability to support almost all levels of cyclists. For the most part you can ride entirely at your own pace. No matter if you are in for a leisurely ride or if you want to hammer, we can make the trip right for you. And please remember the mileage given in the itinerary below is the distance to get you from one lodge to the next. The means you can ride less and board the van or you can extend your rides significantly. There are some amazing side trips and climbs to be had that challenge even very experienced road riders and increase the mileage significantly. Some of these optional rides include the 8 mile/1800ft climb to Mt. Edith Cavell, the climb to Bow Summit and Peyto lookout, the old divide road into Lake Louise and the 9 Mile climb to Moraine Lake in the Valley of the Ten Peaks.

Professional Guide Services

Our guides are as impressive as the scenery. All of our leaders are passionate about their work and are delighted to pass on their skills. University and college graduates with strong backgrounds in

natural history, geology and anthropology, they are knowledgeable in the local region and its folklore. Part chef, part naturalist, trained in wilderness first aid and professionally certified, our guides are eager to please and will ensure you have a memorable experience.

Equipment

A support van ensures comfort and safety throughout your trip. On board are snacks and refreshments, first aid, your baggage, and a driver who is never far away, ready to offer a lift, congratulations or words of encouragement. Our trailer is equipped with on board kitchen where we prepare delicious lunches and a variety of refreshments.

We utilize top quality 27-speed '*Rocky Mountain Bicycles*'. These hybrid bikes (cross between touring and mountain bike) are built in Canada and have a great reputation for performance, comfort and durability. These bikes are some of the lightest hybrid bikes on the market and perform exceptionally well. A carbon fork helps to bring the weight down and adds comfort by it's vibration dampening qualities.

They are equipped with water bottle, a waterproof front handlebar bag, and toe clips or bare pedals. Helmets are available free of charge. And, of course, mechanical support is always provided by our qualified guides.

Accommodations

Evenings will be spent in the warmth and security of a selection of the area's most charming and luxurious hotels, lodges and cabins. In each case, the properties have been selected because they reflect the tranquillity and beauty of the region, they are ideally situated and they have the intimacy of the resident proprietor we have befriended.

Climate

The winters in the Canadian Rockies are long. But summers, although short are spectacular and are blessed with glorious bursts of heat. A typical day in the summer averages in the high 70's (25C) while evenings cool off to the high 50's (15C). Higher elevations may see frost in any summer month. Rain showers can occur at any time but they are generally short and infrequent. In fact, by the time clouds have arrived to the lee side of the Rockies, their moisture has been spread over the Coastal Mountains and the west side of the Great Divide. Thus, riding along the east side of the Divide, we get the advantage of drier air masses.

Geology

The Canadian Rockies are sedimentary rock loaded with coal deposits. Many small mining towns appeared here in the early settlement of the area. Mining is no longer allowed in any national park. As we enter the parks system from Calgary, the mountains are grey and imposing. They consist of mainly limestone front ranges, a 30-mile (50-km) wide stretch where the mountains vary from 6,000' to 10,000' (1,800 to 3,100 metres) above sea level.

When the mountains were formed by great pressure being exerted on Canada's west coast, the rocks compressed and slid up and over one another. Nowhere is the force involved better illustrated than in the western ranges where the strata swirls in patterns better suited to a cake mix than solid rock. The western ranges form the eastern wall of the Rocky Mountain Trench, a valley in British Columbia that separates the Rockies from the Columbia Mountains. The Columbias are older than the Rockies but still sedimentary and largely composed of the same types of rock. The shapes you see today in the Rockies have been sculpted by the iceage with its total glaciation and insueing weather. Scientists estimate that with current erosion they have 56 million years left before they become prairies again.

Wildlife

Many people come to the mountains to see the abundant wildlife. In Banff and Lake Louise areas, **elk** are the dominant species. Re-introduced to the area in 1917, they thrived and are numbered in the thousands.

Walking or hiking around a marsh or up in the sub-alpine you may catch a glimpse of a **moose**. More common and nowhere near as shy are the **bighorn sheep**. The males with their spectacular curved horns are the photographers' favourite. Ever popular, the bighorns, with their brazen ways, will block your way with indifference if they choose.

Last but definitely not least of the cloven hoofed crew are the **mountain goats**. These graceful animals with long white hair and short black horns are somewhat elusive and spend most of their time in alpine pastures. Specially designed pincer like hoofs allow them to cling to the tiniest rock outcrop and laugh in the face of danger as they rarely find their way into the jaws of cougars or bears.

The **black and grizzly bears** seen in the parks are often on the side of the roads munching on berries. The occasional bear of superior intelligence has been seen lurking in the bushes, waiting for fishermen to land a tasty one, whence it will amble nonchalantly into the open to claim the fish for it's own.

Columbian ground **squirrels**, golden mantled ground squirrels and **chipmunks** abound. More impressively the **marmots** sun themselves on rocks while its counterpart, the pika scurries around in search of food.

A relief to many is that there is little reptilian life with the exception of the odd garter snake. In contrast, the skies hold a myriad of mostly migratory birds. More than 200 species are present but you will especially see golden and bald **eagles**, **magpies**, whiskey jacks, Clark's Nutcracker and in the evenings great horned, great grey or saw whet **owls**.

Vegetation

Between Calgary and the foothills are the grassy prairies so perfect for grazing cattle. The foothills are a mixture of woods and meadows. In the mountains, vegetation is divided into three zones, montane, sub-alpine and alpine.

Starting at the valley bottom and stretching up to almost 6,000 feet (1,800 metres) above sea level is the montane zone. Here there are some grassy meadows with shrubs and berry bushes in abundance. Most of the trees are lodgepole pines interspersed with white spruce. Here and there are stands of trembling aspen known to the natives as "squaws tongues".

Next comes the sub-alpine zone where the living gets harder. As your elevation increases, temperature decreases. When hiking up this high you will see sub-alpine firs and Engelmann spruce as well as shrubby undergrowth.

Lastly and finally there is alpine vegetation. Called meadows, these are not the grassy kind but consist of low growing shrubs and twisted stunted tress known as krummholz.

Many types of wildflowers grow in each of these zones. Indian paintbrush and fireweed are usually seen along the sides of the road throughout the growing season.

Ecological Sentiment

Rocky Mountain Cycle Tours is a licensed commercial operator for these national parks. Although Banff and Jasper are town sites, the parks are still a true wilderness, as only 3 % of the encompassed 7,800 square miles (20,000 square km) are utilized by man. We are committed to the preservation of Western Canada's wilderness habitat. Our excursions are designed to promote an understanding of the delicate ecosystems that make our provinces unique, while preserving their fundamental integrity.

We believe the survival of the natural environment and the wildlife it supports depends on establishing responsible economic viability beyond resource harvesting. In our clients' enjoyment of the natural endowment, we hope to contribute to this emerging view of the natural world.

Personal Preparation

Cycling is the most effective way to train for a bicycle tour. The neck and shoulders as well as the seat can be a bit uncomfortable for the first few days of riding if you have not done some conditioning prior to arrival. A program of gradual training in a variety of aerobic sports like walking, swimming, running and cycling will ensure good conditioning. Most importantly, a spirit of adventure is essential.

Participants should build up to 2-3 rides weekly of at least 25 miles (40km) each ride. It is important to have done some 40-mile (60km) day rides before your tour. You will need to know how it feels to be in the saddle for a good part of the day. It may be a good idea to practice hill climbing and shifting your gears. Banff's elevation is 4,600 feet (1,383 metres) and the highest elevation reached on this Rockies trip is 7,000 feet (2,100 metres). Some folks notice a slight difference in their breathing at this elevation, but acclimatize quickly to the change. We start our trips in Jasper at a lower elevation, which allows for better acclimatization compared to riding the other direction.

Over the period of the trip, you will refine your technique and begin to feel like a seasoned cyclist. If you are already an accomplished cyclist, the delight of the breathtaking scenery and returning each night to a beautiful Inn is something you do not want to miss.

Safety and Responsibility

Cycling, like everything else, is a very safe and enjoyable sport if done properly and professionally. Safety is our utmost concern. Our trips are escorted by professional local guides and accompanied by a support vehicle in case of any emergencies. However, it is important that each trip participant realizes that there are some inherent risks in cycling, as there are in many outdoor activities. Individuals must be responsible for their own actions and accountable for their own decisions. To acknowledge this assumption of risk, each tour member is required to read, understand and sign a liability release form. We will provide you with all the information you require in order to make your decision about joining us or taking part in any specific activity. We will support any decision made by participants to opt out of any activity that they are concerned about or feel is beyond their capabilities.

Prices

Prices as per our website. Special group or family prices are available. Please inquire.

Services Included

- 5 night accommodation in good hotels and legendary mountainside lodges.
- All meals (5 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 3 dinners, refreshments)
 - except for two dinners.
- Professional guide services
- Support vehicle and luggage transport while on tour
- Shuttle transportation from Banff to Jasper
- All National Park fees and permits

Departure Dates *(Trips start and finish in Banff, Alberta)*

Departure dates as per our website in July and August. We run scheduled departures of this trip only during these months as outside of that time frame chances for nice warm weather are less than optimal.

Jasper-Banff Icefields Parkway Itinerary

Day One (Sunday)

After meeting in the morning at the Banff train station at 10:00 a.m., we shuttle to the historic town of Jasper. The van ride is absolutely spectacular and today you will get to enjoy the scenery without having to sweat ☺. In Jasper we size up the bikes and take a short spin to beautiful Pyramid Lake before getting together for an orientation and dinner.

Overnight Jasper Inn

Day Two

After a delicious breakfast we start cycling south on the Icefields Parkway. Taking a secluded valley road and an optional climb we check out stunning Mt Edith Cavell and the Iceberg Lake. After lunch at a beautiful lake we continue to Athabasca Falls. Back on the Icefields Parkway we make our way to the cosy cabins at Sunwapta Falls Resort – our home for the night. A short walk to the falls will feel great after dinner. Today we will have covered 37 miles (60 km) and two optional short walks. Optional 16 mile climb and descent to Mt Edith Cavell.

Overnight Sunwapta Falls Resort

Day Three

Today is a relatively short biking day as we have a morning climb to Sunwapta Pass and the spectacular Columbia Icefields. After lunch we arrive at the Icefields Chalet overlooking the glacier. An afternoon walk takes us right to the glacier or a longer walk (weather permitting) to a stunning viewpoint for a birds eye view over the Icefields.

Distance: 32 miles (52 km) on the bike plus optional hike or walk to Icefield or Parker Ridge.

Overnight Columbia Icefield Chalet

Day Four

After a good night's sleep, it's onto the bikes again. Today's ride starts with a short warm-up climb across Sunwapta Pass followed by a 10 mile long exhilarating descent as we follow the Saskatchewan River. Climbing out of the river valley, we will reach the highest point on the Parkway at Bow Summit (7000 feet). A side trip to Peyto Lake viewpoint is a must. From here continue downhill to historic Num-Ti-Jah Lodge on the shores of spectacular Bow Lake. Dinner in the amazing dining room caps off an amazing day. Distance: 30, 40 or 55 miles (50 / 65 or 90 km).

Overnight Num-Ti-Jah Lodge on the shores of Bow Lake.

Day Five

After another of many delightful breakfasts, we will enjoy the amazingly scenic descent along the Bow River to Lake Louise. In the afternoon there is time to hike to the Lake Agnes Tea House, ride to Moraine Lake or even take an optional half-day whitewater rafting trip on the Kicking Horse River. We will have a final great dinner together in one of the best restaurants in the Rockies.

Distance: 25 mi (40 km); optional hike to Tea House and Plain of the Six Glaciers (3 hours) or rafting or canoeing or relaxing.

Overnight Lake Louise Mountaineer Lodge, Lake Louise Inn or Paradise Lodge

Day Six (Friday)

Our last day's ride takes us along the beautiful Bow Valley Parkway toward Banff (distance 40 miles / 65 kilometres). Wildlife sightings of elk, bear and bighorn sheep are quite frequently on this road and beautiful views of the turquoise Bow River and majestic Castle Mountain offer a great backdrop to today's ride. We will celebrate the finish of our tour just outside of Banff before riding into town. After saying our goodbyes you will be dropped off at the train/bus station or at a hotel of your choice no later than 3:00 p.m.

How to Get to Banff

Calgary is accessible by a number of Canadian and international airlines with same day service from anywhere in North America and many places in the world. We would be pleased to assist you or your local travel agent if you have any questions about flights. Transportation from Calgary airport to Banff is available almost hourly by bus, train, shuttle and taxi. A very convenient option is the Banff Airporter shuttle service for \$70 CAD one way / round trip \$140 CAD which leaves at least 10 times daily (Tel. 1-888-449-2901, www.banffairporter.com).

Accommodations in Banff

If you require accommodations in Banff before or after your Icefields Parkway trip, we would be delighted to recommend or book a hotel for you.