



Best of the West Rocky Mountain Lakes Tour Inn-to-Inn

Getting Started

Welcome to the Rocky Mountain Lakes Inn-to-Inn cycle tour. This trip offers the best Western Canada has to offer in a cycling tour. 2 Provinces (British Columbia and Alberta), 5 National Parks (Banff, Yoho, Glacier, Mt.Revelstoke, Kootenay), vast mountain lakes, remote wilderness areas, soothing Hot Springs and beautifully restored mining towns are the award winning ingredients for this cycling tour which seem to have it all.

Trip Description

Cycling through the British Columbia Mountain Lakes Region is an awe-filled adventure of discovery and wonder. For six glorious days participants will cruise past spectacular alpine vistas, through quaint mountain towns, and beside meadows of Rocky Mountain wildflowers. Crystal clear alpine lakes nestled in secluded valleys beckon cyclists to cool off in their invigorating waters while at day's end, natural hot springs soothe your tired muscles.

After a visit to famous Lake Louise we cycle across the Continental Divide and enjoy the long downhill into Yoho National Park. After lunch at the Natural Bridge we load our bikes into the trailer and board the van. Leaving Yoho National Park via Highway 1 west promises an exciting shuttle into the Rocky Mountain Trench and on to Glacier National Park. With an area of 1,350 square kilometres the park is set in the Columbia Mountains. Roger's Pass, named for Colonel A.B. Rogers, is the only route through the central Columbias and in winter months is renowned for its avalanches. Heavy winter snowfalls here keep 14% of the landscape permanently covered with snow and ice. The views in summer are exceptional.

The highway draws us westward towards the city of Revelstoke with its historic downtown area, and Mount Revelstoke National Park. The area south of here, through the Columbias and Rocky Mountain Trench is famous for its ghost towns, museums, lakes and hot springs. A hot soak feels terrific at the end of a day's ride.

The countryside is full of sweet smelling meadows surrounded by rolling hills. It is hard to imagine that the beauty will keep getting better and better, but it does. In Kaslo on the shore of Kootenay Lake lies one of the paddle steamers that used to ply the lake in the days prior to the railroad. Further south are the Cody Caves and the caves of Ainsworth Hot springs, a soakers' delight. At Balfour a ferry takes us across Kootenay Lake to Kootenay Bay. The summer climate in the Kootenay Valley is much warmer than the alpine climate of Banff and provides cyclists a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the Kootenay's storybook charm and natural splendor.

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 25k/16mi climb to Meadows in the Sky, the road to Sandon Ghost town and the 30k/19 mi ride along Kootenay Lake after Ainsworth Hot Springs.

Professional Guide Services

All of our leaders are passionate about their work and are delighted to pass on their skills. University graduates with strong backgrounds in natural history, biology, geology, and anthropology, they are knowledgeable in the local region and its folklore. 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 hotels, lodges and bed & breakfasts. 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 summers in the Kootenays are sensational. Much warmer than our Banff-Jasper trips, day time temperatures average in the high 80's, yet the evenings cool off for great sleeping. At higher elevations you will have slightly lower averages and rain showers can occur in any month but they are generally short and infrequent. Warm summer suns bring out more than 600 species of wildflowers.

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**, **maggies**, 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 trees known as krummholz.

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

Further west, the vegetation and climate in the Rocky Mountain Trench and Columbia Mountains is vastly different. Warmer temperatures and higher rainfall results in dark, lush-green undergrowth and over 600 species of wildflowers. The forests have a far greater variety of trees including, hemlock, red cedar and Douglas maple.

Ecological Sentiment

Rocky Mountain Cycle Tours is a licensed operator for these parks and surrounding areas. 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

No previous experience is required. Your guides will teach you the basics and give you an orientation to safe cycling practices on the first day. 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 and deliciously prepared meals is something you do not want to miss.

Regular exercise before any outdoor experience is recommended and will add to your enjoyment. Most importantly, however, a spirit of adventure is essential.

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.

Registration

Due to the nature of our trips and small group size, space on our programs can be limited. To avoid disappointment, we encourage participants to book as early as possible. In order to confirm your space on any of these trips, we only require a \$500 CAD deposit. Upon receipt of deposit, we will send you pre-departure information, equipment list, medical questionnaire and liability release. The latter two should be returned to our office with the balance due 60 days prior to departure.

Trip Prices

Trip prices are as per our website. Please inquire for group or family rates.

Services Included

- 5 nights accommodation in beautiful lodges and B&B's.
- Most meals (5 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 3 dinners, refreshments), Professional guide services.
- Support vehicle and luggage transport.
- Ferries and transfers.
- All National Park fees and permits.

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

Departure dates are as per our website. Customized trip departures can be arranged for groups and families of 8 or more participants.

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 CAN one way / round trip \$140 CAN which leaves at least 8 times daily (Tel. 1-888-449-2901, www.banffairporter.com).

Accommodations in Banff

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

Rocky Mountain Lakes Itinerary

Day One (Sunday)

After meeting in Banff at 9:00 a.m. at the Banff train station, the group is shuttled to beautiful Lake Louise. From here we cycle westwards across the Great Divide into British Columbia. After an exhilarating ride down Kicking Horse Pass we shuttle through Glacier National Park to our beautiful lodge overlooking the Revelstoke valley. Distance: 32 miles (51km).

Overnight: Coast Hillcrest Resort Hotel, Revelstoke (Tel.: 250-837-3322)

Day Two

In the morning we cycle down the spectacular Columbia River valley and enjoy a sumptuous lunch at Shelter Bay before crossing the Upper Arrow Lake by ferry. Our destination is the luxurious cabins at Halcyon (natural) Hot Springs – the perfect location for finishing a great day of cycling. In the lakeside pools you are treated to an unforgettable soak under the stars. Distance: 45 miles (69 km).

Overnight: Halcyon Hot Springs Resort, Nakusp (Tel.: 1-888-689-4699)

Day Three

Today we cycle out of the Arrow Lake basin and ride over a pass (7 mile/11km moderate climb) up to Three Island Lake. We have lunch next to the lake and then cruise downhill for 10 miles to Slocan Lake and historic New Denver. We'll spend the afternoon swimming and relaxing at our lakeside guesthouse. Another wonderful dinner will be a fitting finish to a fantastic day. Distance: 50 miles (90km).

Overnight: Sweet Dreams Guesthouse or Dome Quixote, New Denver (Tel.: 250-358-2415)

Day Four

After a good night's sleep and a delicious breakfast, it's on to the bikes again. Departing Slocan Lake we cycle across the Selkirk Mountains on the moderate grades of an abandoned railway. The second half of the climb twists and winds its way up to lunch at Fish Lake. After lunch and a swim we enjoy an amazing 17 mi / 27 k downhill to the historic town of Kaslo on the shores of beautiful Kootenay Lake. We stay overnight at the beautifully restored Kaslo hotel overlooking Kootenay Lake.

An optional evening visit to Ainsworth Hot Springs tops off the day.

Distance: 31 miles (50 km). Overnight: Kaslo Hotel

Day Five

Today's ride features a short walk to a waterfall, stunning vistas across Kootenay Lake a ferry ride, an artisan village with weavers, glassblowers, potters, blacksmiths etc. The highlight of the day will be the stay at historic Wedgwood Manor. This lodge was built in 1910 for an heir of the Wedgwood China company and guests enjoy discovering its rich history. 40 mi / 60k

Overnight: Kokanee Springs Resort or Wedgwood Manor Country Inn, Crawford Bay (Tel.: 250-227-9233)

Day Six (Friday)

A glorious morning ride takes us along the shores of Kootenay Lake, dotted with many little resorts and secluded coves. You will enjoy the light traffic and spectacular mountain scenery on today's ride toward Creston before returning to Banff by van at approximately 7:00p.m. Distance: 30 miles (48km).