

# Road Rides in the Banff Area



**Banff National Park** is Canada's first and most famous national park. The variety of paved roads and trails in the Banff area make biking an excellent way to explore this special place. Routes range from easy to difficult and the biking season typically extends from April to October.

Experiencing Banff National Park from the saddle of a bike is a fun, healthy, environmentally friendly way to enjoy these spectacular landscapes. This guide will help you plan an enjoyable and safe biking experience.

## Wildlife and People



Banff National Park is home to wildlife, including elk, wolves, cougars, and the remaining grizzly and black bear populations in North America. 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, even on roads and paved trails.**

### Tips:

- Always carry bear spray, ensure it is accessible, and know how to use it before heading out. To watch a video about how to use bear spray, visit:

[parks.canada.ca/bearspray](https://parks.canada.ca/bearspray)

- Slow down and make noise. Your speed and quietness puts you at risk for sudden wildlife encounters. Slow down through shrubby areas and when approaching blind corners. Travel in groups, be alert and always look ahead.

- Report bear, cougar, wolf and coyote sightings and encounters to Parks Canada staff at 403-762-1470, when it is safe to do so.

[parks.canada.ca/banff-wildlife](https://parks.canada.ca/banff-wildlife)

## Recommended Rides

Are you looking for a “bucket list” biking experience? These routes offer mountain scenery, flowing curves, and all the challenges you're looking for.

### 5 Lakeside Cruising

If your ultimate ride includes reflecting by a lake or river, **Vermilion Lakes Drive (5)** should be on your list. Several docks and benches along this flat paved road provide opportunities to sightsee, take photographs or have a lunch break.

### 6 Flora and Fauna

**Lake Minnewanka Road (6)** rolls along through the area's rich montane habitat. The mix of forest and open grassland is home to bighorn sheep, deer, elk and bears. This 13.1 km loop offers a pleasant ride through varied terrain and a chance to stop at the area's popular sightseeing locations of Bankhead, Two Jack Lake, Lake Minnewanka and Cascade Ponds.

### 8 The Original Highway

One of the most breathtaking road rides in the area, the **Bow Valley Parkway (8)** offers something for everyone. This classic ride on the original road through Banff National Park gently rises and falls as it meanders past open meadows, dense forests, and soaring mountains. Most often started in Banff, riders can choose one of the many picnic areas located along the parkway as a final destination or choose to embark on full day trip to Lake Louise making for a 115 km day back to Banff. Please ride in single file as this road can be busy with vehicular traffic and be aware of your surroundings as you travel through this bustling wildlife corridor.

### 5 Vermilion Lakes Drive



## Family Friendly Rides

These routes are great for beginners, children, and riders seeking a gentle adventure. Mostly paved, these easy rides have minimal elevation changes and offer spectacular views. E-bikes (pedal-electric power-assisted bicycles) are permitted on these three trails. Bring a picnic or snack and enjoy one of the rest stops along these rides. Always remember to pack out everything you bring in.

### 1 Sundance Trail

**3.7 km one way**  
**Starting Point: Cave and Basin National Historic Site**

This paved trail is perfect for families with kids and bike trailers as it winds along the Bow River and climbs gently to the Sundance Canyon picnic area where you can explore a lovely creek-side hiking trail. To experience the canyon, bring a bike lock.

### 2 Tunnel Campground Loop

**6.4 km loop**  
**Starting Point: Tunnel Mountain Campground**

Perfect for beginners and children, this simple trail forms a large loop around Tunnel Mountain Campground. Wider tires are best for this loose gravel trail and there are many places to stop and rest. Be sure to watch out for strolling campers, elk, deer and coyotes.

### 3 Banff Legacy Trail

**29 km one way**  
**Starting Points: Valleyview, Cascade Ponds, Vermilion Lakes and Fireside day-use areas or east end of Banff Avenue**

The Banff Legacy Trail offers cyclists, runners, roller skiers and other outdoor enthusiasts 29 km of paved trails and roadways with breathtaking views, rest stops and picnic areas. The trail connects the Bow Valley Parkway with the town of Banff, Cascade Ponds, the Banff East Gate and the town of Canmore. This three-season trail is typically snow-free and rideable from April to October. An absolute must.

### 9 Norquay Road



## Easy Rides

### 4 Golf Course Road

**10.9 km loop**  
**Starting Point: Bow Falls parking area**

Cross the bridge over the Spray River at the end of the parking area, and you're off. Perfect for a family outing, this road winds gently along the golf course before it loops back. This is a peaceful road with lovely views over the Bow River and surrounding peaks. While close to town, be alert – wildlife also enjoy this area.

### 5 Vermilion Lakes Drive

**4.3 km one way**  
**Starting Point: Fenland Day-use Area, paved trail to Vermilion Lakes Drive**

Vermilion Lakes are a series of three shallow lakes surrounded by marshland – a rich oasis for wildlife. The ride along this narrow road provides classic views of Banff's signature peak, Mount Rundle. There are benches, bike racks and small docks where you can relax with a snack and enjoy the view. Connector: Banff Legacy Trail (3) to the Bow Valley Parkway (8).

## Moderate Rides

### 6 Lake Minnewanka Road

**13.1 km loop**  
**Starting Points: Cascade Ponds and Lake Minnewanka Day-use Area or the Banff Legacy Trail (3)**

Lake Minnewanka Road is popular with cyclists and offers a pleasant ride through varied terrain, with panoramic views and many attractions including Cascade Ponds, Bankhead, Lake Minnewanka and Two Jack Lake. This narrow road can be busy, so ride with caution and be on the lookout for bighorn sheep on the slopes above Two Jack Lake. Connector: Banff Legacy Trail (3).

### 7 Tunnel Mountain Drive/Road

**10.7 km loop**  
**Starting Point: Central Park parking area, West end of Buffalo Street**

Start by heading east on Buffalo Street, rising gently past *Surprise Corner* with its extraordinary view over Bow Falls and the world famous Fairmont Banff Springs. Continue climbing and bending around its lower slopes to join the Tunnel Mountain Road. Turn right (East) and pass the campgrounds for incredible viewpoints before you drop back down to the Banff Legacy Trail (3). Go left into town, or right towards Lake Minnewanka. Elk and deer are common along this narrow roadway.

### 8 Bow Valley Parkway

**57.5 km one way (Banff to Lake Louise)**  
**Starting Points: From downtown Banff, access the trail via Vermilion Lakes Drive (5) and the Banff Legacy Trail (3) or begin at Fireside (49 km one way).**

The Bow Valley Parkway (Hwy 1A) ride is a classic, gently rising and falling as it meanders through the Bow Valley to Castle Junction, and beyond to Lake Louise. On your trip, stop and enjoy the many picnic areas and rest stops along the way. From Banff, ride this narrow road to Johnston Canyon (50 km return), Castle Junction (65 km return), Baker Creek (90 km return) or Lake Louise (115 km return). Whatever your route, wildlife sightings are common, so keep a look out and be prepared. In the spring and fall, the eastern section of the Bow Valley Parkway has limited vehicle traffic. Visit [parks.canada.ca/Banff-cycling-BVP](https://parks.canada.ca/Banff-cycling-BVP) for more information.

## Difficult Rides

### 9 Mount Norquay Road

**6.1 km one way**  
**Starting Point: Mount Norquay Road, on the North side of the Trans-Canada Highway**

This challenging climb up the mountain rewards riders with a spectacular panoramic view of the town of Banff and surrounding Bow Valley. The Norquay Green Spot Viewpoint opens onto a grassy slope – a great place to stop for a picnic lunch or for photos. From the viewpoint, the road continues up to the Mount Norquay ski area. Watch out for Bighorn Sheep on or near the road and the sharp turns, especially on the way down.

### 10 Mountain Avenue

**3.4 km one way**  
**Starting Point: Mountain Avenue, on the South side of the Banff Avenue Bridge**

This route is a gradual, but continuous climb ending at the Banff Upper Hot Springs. Gains in elevation from the valley bottom provide riders with exceptional views of the Bow Valley and the rugged profile of Mount Rundle. Mountain Avenue offers ample width for riders, however, vehicular traffic is heavier during the summer.

### 11 Sunshine Village Access Road

**8.2 km one way**  
**Starting Point: Sunshine Village access road, 7 km West of Banff on the Trans-Canada Highway**

The Sunshine Village access road begins its steady rise almost immediately, and offers a few steep ramps along the way to its termination at the ski area parking at the base of the Sunshine gondola. Vehicular traffic is moderate in the summer months, but be aware as the road is narrow and twisty throughout its length. Watch for wildlife.

## Plan Ahead and Prepare

### Rules of the Road

**Always ride on the right**, pass others on their left. If you are riding on a road with a sidewalk, stay on the road.

**Obey all traffic rules** when riding on roads. At intersections, use hand signals to let drivers know which direction you will be travelling.

**On highways**, ride as close as possible to the right-hand edge or curb. For your safety, it is recommended that you ride single file.

**Stay within the posted speed limits.**

**Road closures, speed limits and traffic controls apply to bicyclists too.** The Bow Valley Parkway (8) Mandatory Seasonal Travel Restriction applies to all travel, including bicyclists. From March 1st to June 25th, travel is not permitted between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. on the 17-kilometre section of the parkway from Johnston Canyon Campground to the Fireside Picnic Area. This is to ensure the area remains a high-quality home for wildlife.

**Be visible when riding at dawn, dusk, or night.** Always have a white front light and red rear and side reflectors, and consider wearing reflective clothing.

**Be bear aware.** Cyclists are particularly susceptible to sudden, dangerous bear encounters because of the speed and silence of their travel. Be alert, make noise, slow down, carry bear spray, and look ahead.

**Leave no trace.** Be sure to pack out what you pack in – this includes all food and garbage. Leave natural and cultural objects undisturbed for others to discover.

**Do the right thing – protect wildlife.** Littering, feeding animals or harassing wildlife is illegal and violators may be charged under the *Canada National Parks Act*.

**E-bikes** (pedal-electric power-assisted bicycles) are only permitted on select trails in Banff National Park. Visit [parks.canada.ca/banff-e-bike](https://parks.canada.ca/banff-e-bike) for more information.

### Share the Roads and Pathways

- The bike trails in Banff National Park are all shared-use trails—expect to encounter hikers, vehicles and horseback riders. Ride in control and be ready to stop at any time.
- If you are passing other bikers, walkers or runners, please be courteous. Use your voice or use a bell to let them know you will be passing on their left so they have a chance to move over.

### Safety

You are responsible for your own safety. Be prepared for a breakdown or accident. Know how to repair your bike and carry the necessary tools and parts.

- Select a trip which best suits your group's abilities, experience, interests, equipment and the time you have available. Be conservative—start with easier, shorter routes. Park Canada staff or bike shop employees can help you select a suitable route.

- Wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear.

- Bring extra food, water and clothing. Surface water may be contaminated and unsafe for drinking. Mountain weather changes quickly and it can snow any month of the year.

- Always tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return.

- Travel with others and keep your group together.

- Avoid wearing earbuds. Be alert at all times.

- Ask for advice at a Parks Canada visitor centre about route conditions, descriptions and weather.

## More Information

### Banff Visitor Centres:

224 Banff Avenue and 327 Railway Avenue  
403-762-1550  
[parks.canada.ca/banff](https://parks.canada.ca/banff)

### Trail Conditions Report:

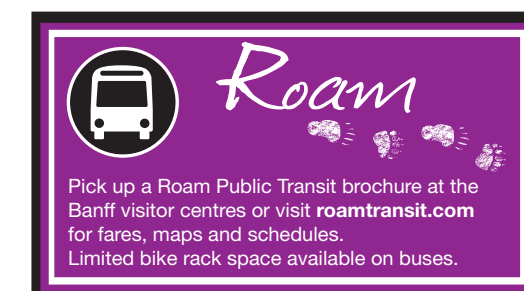
[parks.canada.ca/banfftrails](https://parks.canada.ca/banfftrails)

### Environment Canada Weather Forecast:

[weather.gc.ca](https://weather.gc.ca)

For bike rentals, Banff area maps and guidebooks, visit a local retail biking outlet.

### Take Roam public transit with your bike.



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

# Family Friendly Rides

- 1 Sundance Trail**  
3.7 km one way  
Elevation gain 75 m, elevation loss 60 m
- 2 Tunnel Campground Loop**  
6.4 km loop  
Elevation gain 70 m
- 3 Banff Legacy Trail (Banff to Canmore)**  
29 km one way  
Elevation gain 24 m, elevation loss 113 m

# Easy Rides

- 4 Golf Course Road**  
10.9 km loop  
Elevation gain 68 m, elevation loss 68 m
- 5 Vermilion Lakes Drive**  
4.3 km one way  
Mostly flat

# Moderate Rides

- 6 Lake Minnewanka Road**  
13.1 km loop  
Elevation gain 160 m, elevation loss 160 m
- 7 Tunnel Mountain Drive/Road**  
10.7 km loop  
Elevation gain 180 m, elevation loss 180 m
- 8 Bow Valley Parkway (Banff to Lake Louise)**  
57.5 km one way  
Elevation gain 340 m, elevation loss 177 m

# Difficult Rides

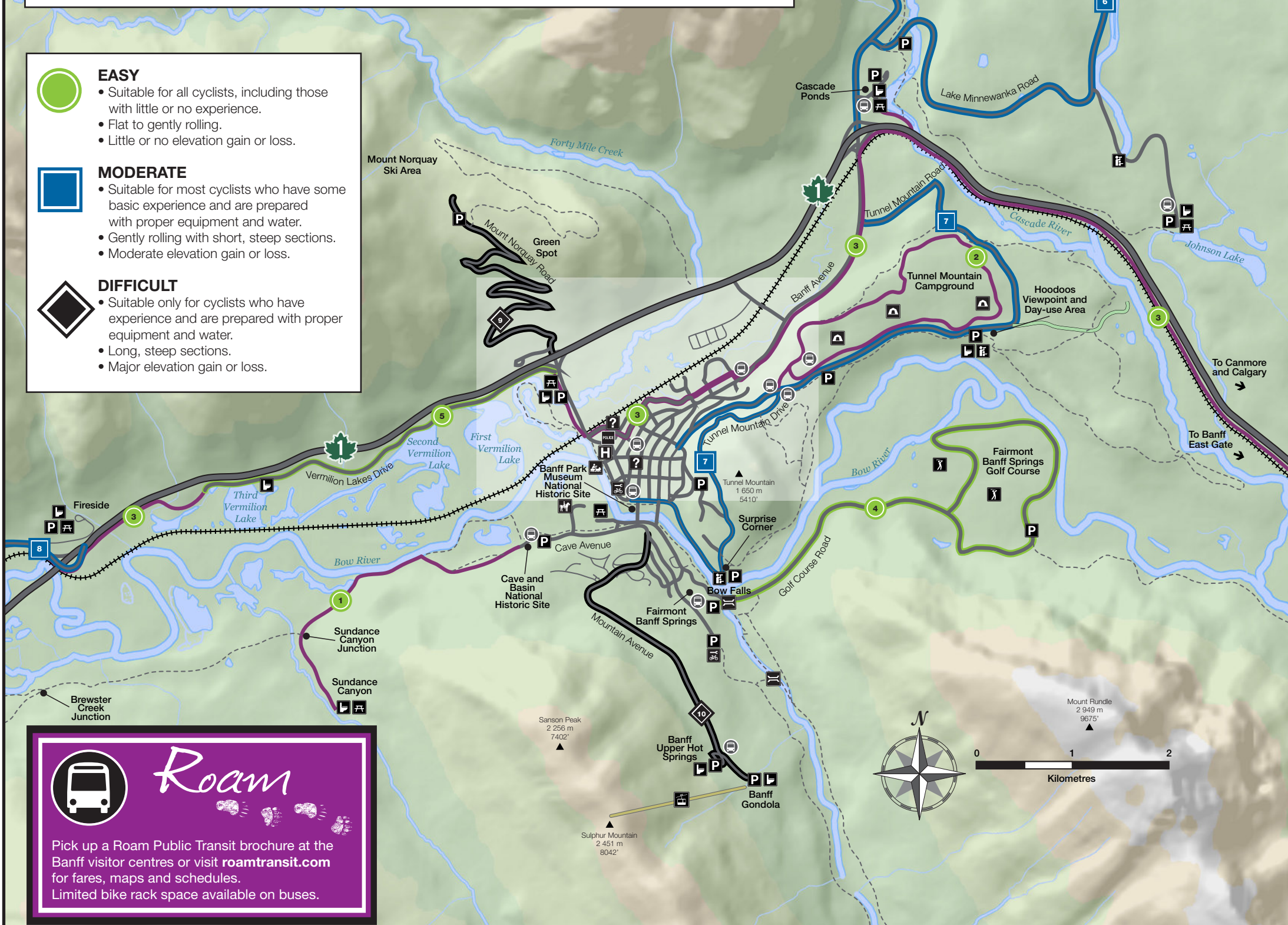
- 9 Mount Norquay Road**  
6.1 km one way  
Elevation gain 327 m, elevation loss 12 m
- 10 Mountain Avenue**  
3.4 km one way  
Elevation gain 214 m, elevation loss 32 m
- 11 Sunshine Village Access Road (Trans-Canada Highway to Sunshine Village parking lot)**  
8.2 km one way  
Elevation gain 271 m, no elevation loss

All elevations are an approximate to give riders an idea of what to expect on each route. Elevations are calculated as the total amount of elevation gained and the total amount of elevation lost (all the ups and downs) over the entire distance of an out-and-back trail or a loop.

# LEGEND

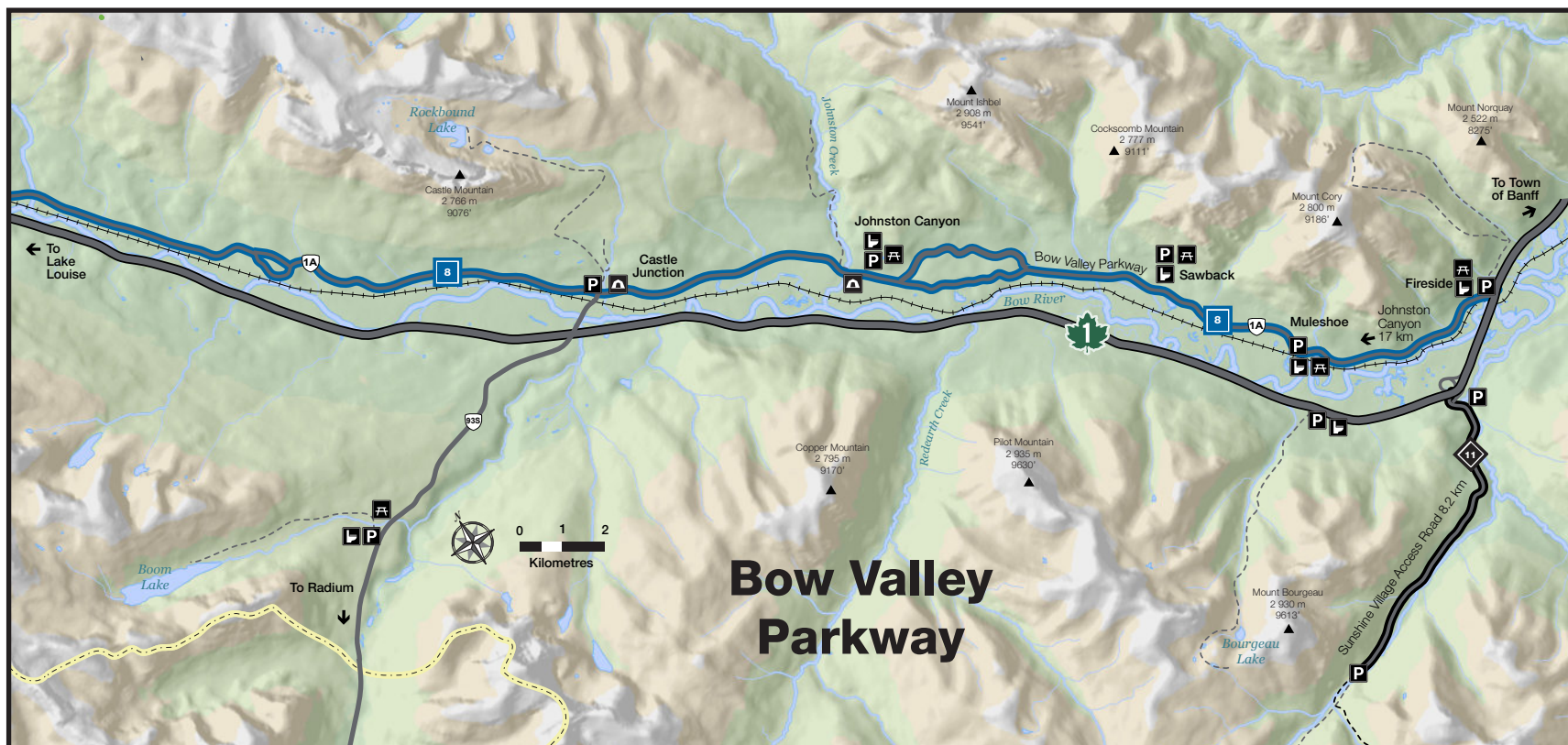
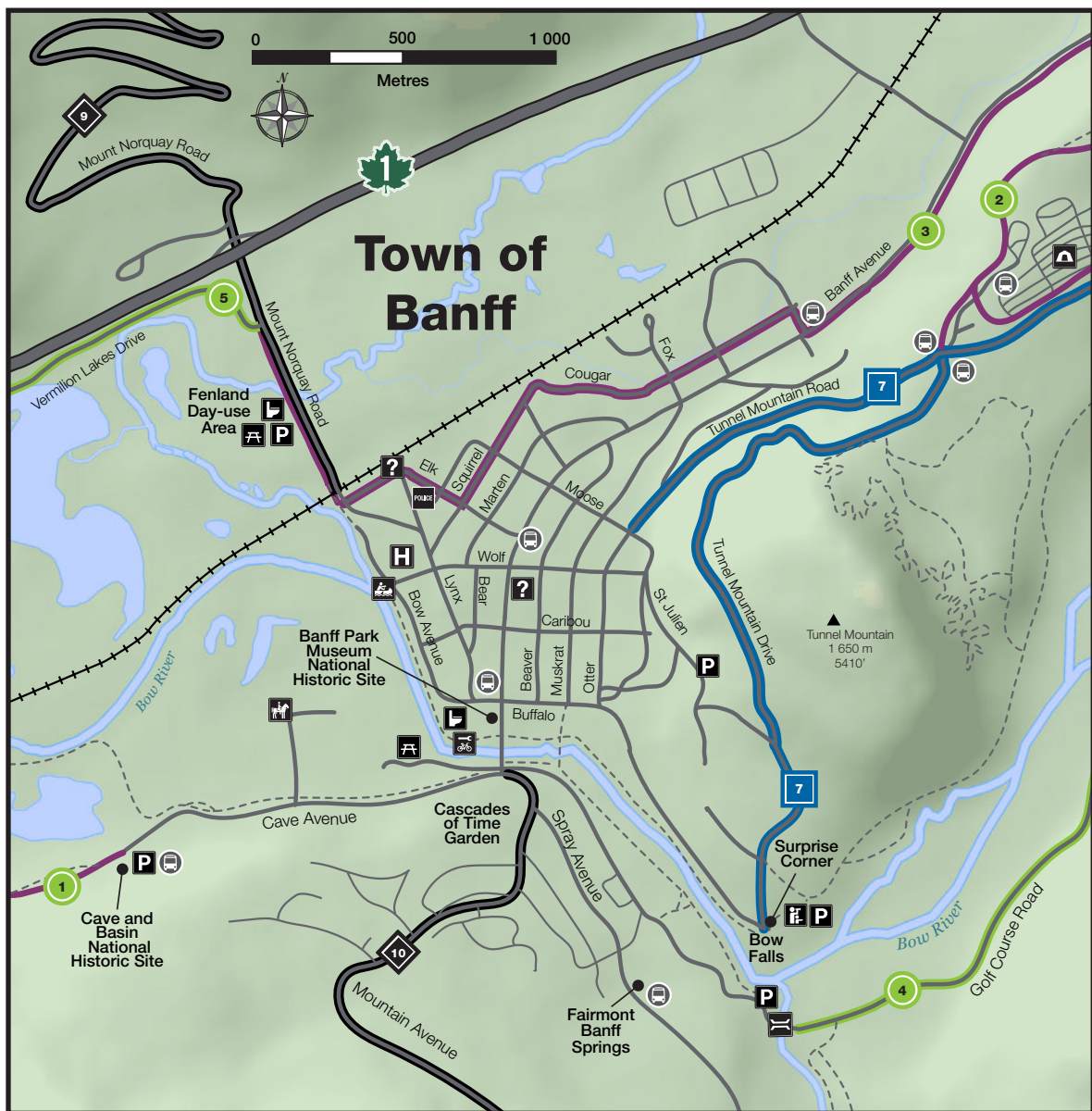
- █ Family Friendly Rides
- █ Easy Rides
- █ Moderate Rides
- █ Difficult Rides
- Trans-Canada Highway
- Bow Valley Parkway
- Road
- Mountain Biking Trails
- Visitor Centre
- Toilet
- Police
- Hospital
- Parking
- Campground
- Day-use Area
- Viewpoint
- Bike Repair Station
- Bridge
- Golf Course
- Gondola
- Canoe Docks
- Stables
- Public Transit Stop

- EASY**
  - Suitable for all cyclists, including those with little or no experience.
  - Flat to gently rolling.
  - Little or no elevation gain or loss.
- MODERATE**
  - Suitable for most cyclists who have some basic experience and are prepared with proper equipment and water.
  - Gently rolling with short, steep sections.
  - Moderate elevation gain or loss.
- DIFFICULT**
  - Suitable only for cyclists who have experience and are prepared with proper equipment and water.
  - Long, steep sections.
  - Major elevation gain or loss.



Roam

Pick up a Roam Public Transit brochure at the Banff visitor centres or visit [roamtransit.com](http://roamtransit.com) for fares, maps and schedules. Limited bike rack space available on buses.



Share the trail

Partageons le sentier

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

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

**Looking to ramp up your adventure?**  
Pick up the Mountain Biking Trails Guide at a Parks Canada visitor centre or view online at [parks.canada.ca/banff-brochures](http://parks.canada.ca/banff-brochures)