



# Winter Trails in the Banff Area

## Plan Ahead and Prepare

## Winter 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.

- Ask for advice at a Parks Canada visitor centre for help with trip planning.
- Visit [parks.canada.ca/banff-trails](http://parks.canada.ca/banff-trails) for up-to-date information on trail conditions, warnings and closures.
- When trails are icy, hiking poles and ice cleats can make winter hiking much more safe and enjoyable.
- Study descriptions and maps before heading out. Always choose a trail suitable for the least experienced member in your group.
- Tell somebody where you are going, when you will be back and who to call if you do not return.
- Expect that trail conditions and winter hazards may change throughout the day. Consult weather forecasts and be prepared for changing weather and emergencies.
- Winter hazards include avalanches, disorientation, thin ice, hypothermia and frostbite.
- From November to March, make sure your vehicle is winterized. Snow tires are mandatory on some roads. Visit [parks.canada.ca/banff-driving](http://parks.canada.ca/banff-driving) for winter driving safety information and [511.alberta.ca](http://511.alberta.ca) for road reports.

## 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 cougars and elk. To prevent unsafe situations for yourself, your dog, wildlife and other people, it is your responsibility to:

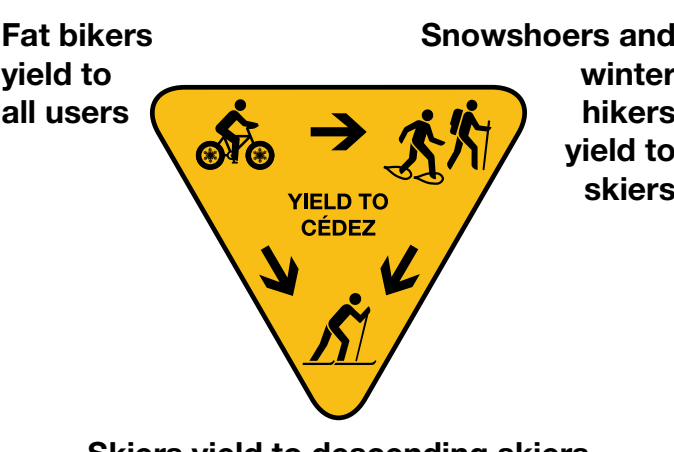
- Ensure your dog is on a leash and under physical control at all times.
- Pick up and dispose of your pet’s waste in a garbage bin.

Dogs are not allowed on some trails: read the trail descriptions or visit [parks.canada.ca/banff-trails](http://parks.canada.ca/banff-trails) for more information.

## Trail Etiquette

In Banff National Park, we share the trail:

- The track-set portion of the trail is for classic skiing only. The flat, groomed lane is for other users.
- Walk and fat bike only on hard-packed trails to prevent ruts. If your feet or tires sink deeper than 2.5 cm (1 inch), conditions are too soft.
- When climbing, please yield to descending skiers and fat bikers.
- If you fall, move off the track as quickly as possible.
- When taking a break, step to the side, leaving room for others to pass.
- Leave no trace. Pack out everything you pack in.



## Avalanche Risk

Avalanche season in the mountains extends from November to June, and even a short walk can take you into avalanche terrain. Trails in this guide with a known hazard are identified with an avalanche symbol. When travelling beyond marked trails, or past an avalanche danger sign, assume you are in avalanche country – your group should be prepared with the appropriate knowledge, skills and equipment.

Check the current avalanche forecast at [avalanche.ca](http://avalanche.ca) or a Parks Canada visitor centre. Visit [parks-mountainsafety.ca](http://parks-mountainsafety.ca) for more information on backcountry travel and how to stay safe in the mountains.

## Recommended Packing List

- Trail guide and map
  - Full water bottle or thermos
  - High-energy food
  - Bear spray
  - Hiking poles and ice cleats
  - First aid kit and repair kit
  - Lightweight emergency blanket, candle and lighter or waterproof matches
  - Headlamp or flashlight with spare batteries
  - Toque or winter hat and gloves
  - Sunscreen and sunglasses
  - Hand and toe warmers
  - Extra warm clothing in case of an emergency
  - Cell phone or satellite emergency communication device
  - Helmet when fat biking
- Visit [parks-mountainsafety.ca](http://parks-mountainsafety.ca) for additional information on winter packing.

## How to Use this Guide

Whether you want to explore the national park by foot, ski, snowshoe or fat bike, this guide lists the recommended trails for each activity.

Stop by the visitor centres or visit [parks.canada.ca/banff-trails](http://parks.canada.ca/banff-trails) for trail conditions and closures before heading out.

For all trails, be prepared as conditions can change quickly; easy and moderate trails can become difficult due to weather change, icy conditions or poor visibility.

- EASY**
  - Suitable for all visitors, including those with little or no trail experience.
  - Flat to gently rolling.
  - Little or no elevation gain or loss.
- MODERATE**
  - Suitable for most visitors who have some basic trail experience.
  - Gently rolling with short steep sections.
  - Moderate elevation gain or loss.

Trails are shared in the national park, which means you could see people fat biking while you are winter hiking, or people skiing while you are snowshoeing.

## E-Bikes

In Banff National Park, pedal assist electric bicycles are only allowed on roads or trails that are identified with the e-bike symbol in the trail descriptions. Visit [parks.canada.ca/banff-e-bike](http://parks.canada.ca/banff-e-bike) for more information.

## Roam Public Transit

Trails identified with a bus symbol indicate that the trailhead is accessible by public transit. Limited bike rack space available on buses. Skis and snowshoes are welcome inside buses. Visit the Roam Public Transit desk at the Banff Visitor Centre or visit [roamtransit.com](http://roamtransit.com) for fares, maps and schedules.



## Legend

- Winter hiking recommended
- Snowshoeing recommended
- Fat biking recommended
- Cross-country skiing recommended
- Pedal assist e-bikes allowed
- Dogs on leash at all times
- Dogs prohibited
- Bikes prohibited
- Avalanche hazard

## Recommended Cross-country Ski Trails

**1 Tunnel Mountain Winter Trails**  
8 km all loops  
No elevation gain  
Trailhead: Tunnel Mountain Trailer Court Campground entrance  
Route 2

**2 Spray River West Trail**  
5.6 km one way from Spray River West trailhead to Spray River bridge  
Elevation gain 105 m, elevation loss 70 m  
Trailhead: Spray River West trailhead, past the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel  
Route 2

**3 Healy Creek**  
5.5 km one way from Healy Creek/Brewster Creek trailhead to Sundance Canyon junction  
Elevation gain 95 m, elevation loss 100 m  
West Trailhead: Healy Creek/Brewster Creek trailhead on the Sunshine Village Access Road  
East Trailhead: Cave and Basin National Historic Site, start at Sundance Trail west of the building  
Route 2

**4a) 4b) Cascade Valley**  
4a) 6.3 km one way to Cascade River bridge  
Elevation gain 135 m, elevation loss 50 m  
4a + 4b) 15.1 km one way  
Elevation gain 250 m, elevation loss 85 m  
Trailhead: Lake Minnewanka Day-use Area parking lot

**5a) 5b) Castle Junction**  
5a) 3.9 km of trails  
Minimal elevation gain  
5b) 5 km one way  
Minimal elevation gain  
Starting point: Parking area on the HI Hostel road south of Castle Junction

**6 2 24 Goat Creek and Spray River**  
19 km one way  
Elevation gain 435 m, elevation loss 160 m  
Goat Creek trailhead: 8 km south of Canmore on Spray Lakes Road  
Spray River West trailhead: Parking area behind the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel

**7 Brewster Creek**  
11.1 km one way (2.6 km from trailhead to Brewster Creek junction, plus 8.5 km to Sundance Lodge)  
Elevation gain 315 m, elevation loss 150 m  
Trailhead: Healy Creek/Brewster Creek trailhead on the Sunshine Village Access Road

## Recommended Snowshoeing Trails

**8 Tunnel Mountain Drive**  
2 km one way  
Elevation gain 130 m, elevation loss 135 m  
Starting point: The closed gate at the intersection of Tunnel Mountain Drive and St. Julien Road

**9 Johnson Lake**  
2.8 km loop  
Minimal elevation gain  
Trailhead: Johnson Lake Day-use Area

**10 Surprise Corner to Hoodoos**  
4.8 km one way  
Elevation gain 115 m, elevation loss 90 m  
Trailhead: Surprise Corner, east end of Buffalo Street

**11 Upper Stoney**  
4.8 km loop  
Elevation gain 205 m  
Trailhead: Kiosk at the south end of Mount Norquay ski area parking lot

**12 24a Sulphur Mountain Westside**  
7.8 km one way  
Elevation gain 885 m  
Trailhead: Cave and Basin National Historic Site, start at Sundance Trail west of building

**13 Ink Pots via Moose Meadows**  
5.6 km one way  
Elevation gain 340 m, elevation loss 130 m  
Trailhead: Johnston Creek trailhead at the Moose Meadows parking lot

## Recommended Winter Walking Trails

Trails can be icy in the winter. Hiking poles and ice cleats are recommended when exploring. Cleats are designed to fit over shoes or boots and can be purchased at the Banff Visitor Centre, 224 Banff Avenue, and most outdoor stores in the town of Banff.

**19 Tunnel Mountain Summit**  
2.4 km one way  
Elevation gain 260 m  
Trailhead: Lower parking lot on St. Julien Road. Trailhead is a 15 minute/1 km walk from downtown Banff.

**14 Fenland Trail**  
2.1 km loop  
No elevation gain  
Trailhead: Fenland Trail parking lot, west of Mount Norquay Road. Trailhead is a 20 minute/1.5 km walk from downtown Banff.

**15 Marsh Loop**  
2.8 km loop  
Minimal elevation gain  
Trailhead: Cave and Basin National Historic Site parking lot

**16 Spray Connector**  
2 km one way  
Minimal elevation gain  
Starting point: Park at the Bow Falls Day-use Area, walk past the gate and across the bridge. Follow the Golf Course Road 350 m to the Spray River East trailhead kiosk on your right. Go past the kiosk, head southwest and take a left on the trail closest to the Spray River.

**17 Stewart Canyon**  
1.5 km one way  
Minimal elevation gain  
Trailhead: Lake Minnewanka Day-use Area, kiosk at the far end of picnic area

**18a) 18b) Johnston Canyon**  
19a) 1.2 km one way to the Lower Falls  
Elevation gain 50 m  
19a + 19b) 2.5 km one way to the Upper Falls  
Elevation gain 120 m  
Trailhead: Johnston Canyon Day-use Area

Travel in the depths of the canyon on wide trails and narrow bridges with railings that lead to the Lower Falls or to the spectacular 30 m high frozen Upper Falls. The trail is usually very icy – ice cleats are strongly recommended. Travel an additional 3.2 km beyond the Upper Falls to reach the Ink Pots.

**20 Sulphur Mountain**  
5.5 km to top of gondola, plus 0.5 km to Sanson Peak  
Elevation gain 655 m  
Trailhead: Banff Upper Hot Springs parking lot

**21 24a) 24b) Sundance Canyon**  
3.7 km one way, plus 2.1 km loop  
Elevation gain 155 m, elevation loss 60 m  
Trailhead: Cave and Basin National Historic Site, start at Sundance Trail west of building

Follow the Sundance Trail to this moderately difficult canyon loop. Bikes are not permitted past the bike racks. This trail can be icy - ice cleats are strongly recommended.

## Recommended Fat Biking Trails

The wide tires of a fat bike add extra surface area for a smooth ride over firm snow, but deep fresh snow or warm conditions are no fun and leave ruts in the trail. If your tires sink deeper than 2.5 cm (1 inch) then conditions are too soft – come back when it is colder. If trails are icy, studded tires are recommended to add grip to your ride.

**22a) 22b) Tunnel Mountain Winter Trails**  
23a) 3.4 km of trails  
No elevation gain  
23b) 2.5 km loop  
Minimal elevation gain  
Trailhead: Tunnel Mountain Trailer Court Campground entrance

**23 Spray River East Trail**  
5.7 km one way from Spray River East trailhead to Spray River bridge  
Elevation gain 135 m, elevation loss 80 m  
Trailhead: Park at the Bow Falls Day-use Area, walk past the gate and across the bridge. Follow the Golf Course Road 350 m to the Spray River East trailhead kiosk on your right. Go past the kiosk, head southwest and take a left on the east-most trail.



**24a) 24b) Sundance Trail**  
3.7 km one way  
Elevation gain 75 m, elevation loss 60 m  
Trailhead: Cave and Basin National Historic Site, trail starts west of building

3.3 km one way  
Elevation gain 65 m, elevation loss 50 m  
Starting point: East end of Banff Avenue at the junction with Banff Legacy Trail

**26 Tunnel Bench Loop**  
9.7 km loop  
Elevation gain 60 m  
Starting point: Hoodoos Viewpoint parking area

**27 17 Lake Minnewanka**  
7.8 km one way to Aylmer Pass junction  
Elevation gain 45 m, elevation loss 35 m  
Trailhead: Lake Minnewanka Day-use Area, kiosk at far end of picnic area

## More Information

- Banff Visitor Centres**  
224 Banff Avenue and 327 Railway Avenue  
403-762-1550 / [parks.canada.ca/banff](http://parks.canada.ca/banff)
- Trail Conditions Report**  
[parks.canada.ca/banff-trails](http://parks.canada.ca/banff-trails)
- Environment Canada Weather Forecast**  
403-762-2088 / [weather.gc.ca](http://weather.gc.ca)
- Alberta Transportation Road Report**  
511 (in Alberta) or 1-855-391-9743 / 511.alberta.ca
- Avalanche Bulletin**  
[parks-mountainsafety.ca](http://parks-mountainsafety.ca)
- Avalanche education and training**  
[avalanche.ca](http://avalanche.ca)
- Banff Dispatch**  
403-762-1470

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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For trails in the Lake Louise area, consult the Writer's Trails in Lake Louise Area brochure.




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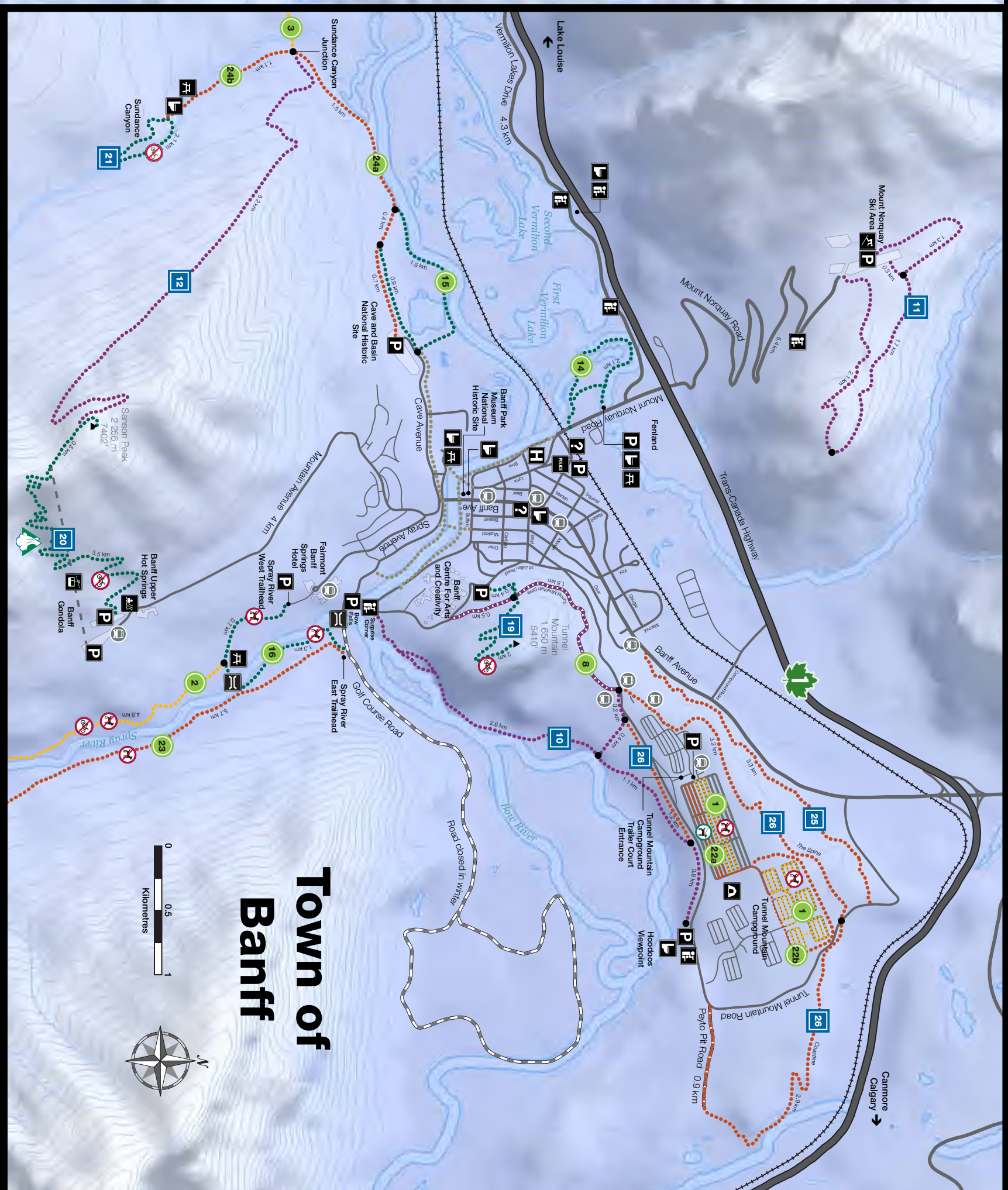
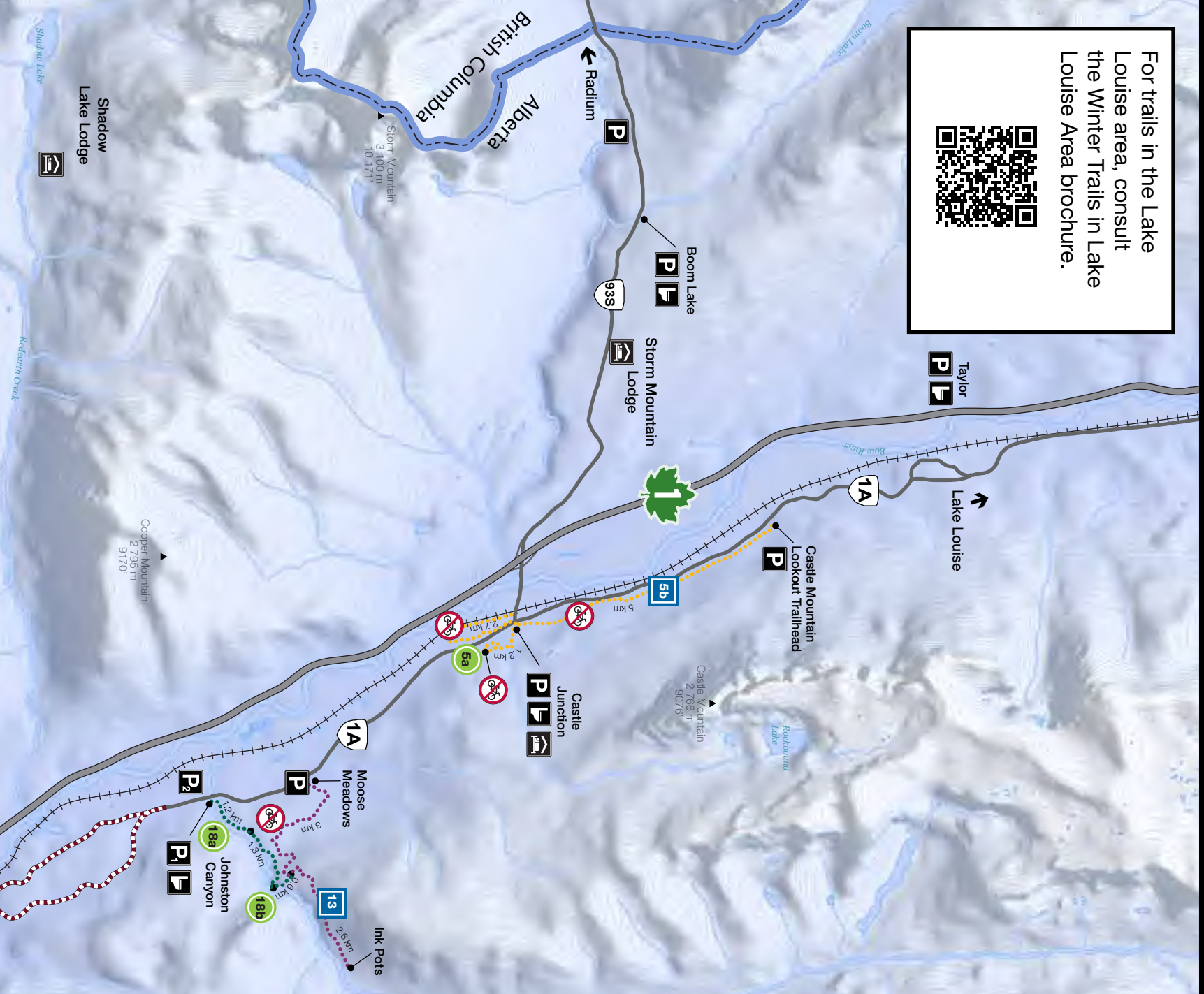


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Share the trail Parateque's le sentier



### LEGEND

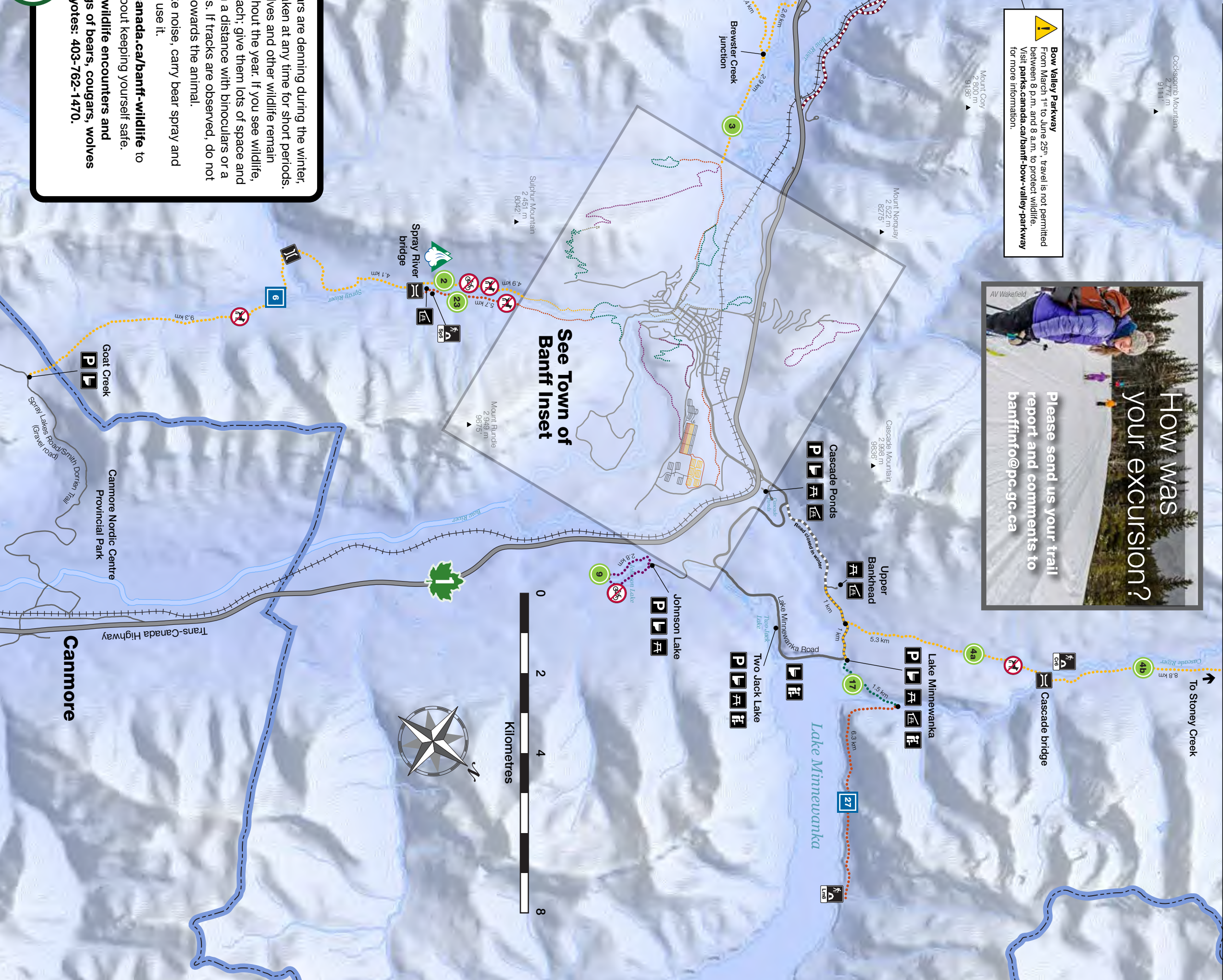
- Recommended for cross-country skiing
- Recommended for snowshoeing
- Recommended for winter hiking
- Recommended for fat biking
- Town of Banff trails
- Road
- Road closed to vehicles in winter parks.canada.ca/banff/closures
- Travel restriction
- Park boundary
- Avalanche hazard
- Visitor centre
- Toilet
- Police
- Hospital
- Parking
- Campground
- Backcountry campground
- Picnic area
- Viewpoint
- Bridge
- Picnic shelter
- Accommodation
- Gondola
- Ski area
- Hot springs
- Ream Public Transit stop
- No bikes
- No dogs
- See other side of map for information on trails where dogs are permitted

**Bow Valley Parkway**  
From March 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>, travel is not permitted between 8 a.m. and 8 a.m. to protect wildlife. Please see [banff-bow-valley-parkway.com](http://banff-bow-valley-parkway.com) for more information.



**How was your excursion?**  
Please send us your trail report and comments to [banffinfo@pc.gc.ca](mailto:banffinfo@pc.gc.ca)

### See Town of Banff Inset



**COME WITH THIS BROCHURE!** Please return to a park facility or store it with others.  
**HOW WAS YOUR TRIP?** Please send your comments to [banffinfo@pc.gc.ca](mailto:banffinfo@pc.gc.ca)