

3-Day Banff National Park Itinerary

A research-backed first-timer's route through Banff, Lake Louise, Moraine Lake, and a taste of the Icefields Parkway — the essentials, without the extra days.

QUICK FACTS BEFORE YOU GO

Best time to visit: Late June–mid September

Park pass required: Parks Canada Discovery Pass or daily admission

Moraine Lake shuttle: Personal vehicles not permitted — reserve months ahead

Gateway airport: Calgary (YYC), ~90 min drive to Banff

Altitude: Banff 4,537 ft · Lake Louise 5,680 ft

DAY 01

Arrive & Explore Banff

Banff Townsite — Don't Miss: Banff Gondola

1 Arrive Calgary (YYC)

Pick up your rental car and start the scenic 90-minute drive to Banff.

2 Check Into Your Hotel

Freshen up and relax before heading out to explore.

3 Banff Gondola

Ride to the summit of Sulphur Mountain, walk the boardwalk, and take in panoramic views.

BEST PHOTOS: GOLDEN HOUR

4 Dinner in Downtown Banff

Great restaurants, cozy patios, and mountain charm. Stroll Banff Avenue after dinner.

DON'T MISS

Book the Banff Gondola online before your trip to save time and avoid sellouts during summer evenings.

DAY 02

Lake Louise & Moraine Lake

The Best Day of the Trip

1 Lake Louise Lakeshore Trail

Easy, flat 2.5-mile round trip along the far end of the lake.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY

2 Canoe on Lake Louise (or Fairview Lookout)

Canoe rentals often have long lines by late morning — arrive early, or hike Fairview Lookout instead.

3 Shuttle to Moraine Lake

Departs from the Lake Louise Park & Ride, not the lake itself. Reserve as soon as reservations open.

DON'T MISS

4 Rockpile Trail

Short 0.5-mile round trip with the classic postcard view of Moraine Lake.

BEST PHOTOS: ROCKPILE SUMMIT

If you only have one day in Banff National Park, make it this one.

DAY 03

Icefields Parkway & Farewell

A taste of the world's most scenic drive, then home

1 Depart Banff on Icefields Parkway

One of the most scenic highway drives in North America — start early to beat the tour buses.

DON'T MISS: SCENIC DRIVE

2 Peyto Lake Viewpoint

A quick 0.4-mile walk to the iconic wolf-head-shaped turquoise lake.

BEST PHOTOS: MIDDAY LIGHT

3 Bow Lake Scenic Stop

Iconic glacier-fed lake with stunning mountain reflections — the last stop before turning back.

BEST PHOTOS: REFLECTIONS

4 Drive to Calgary Airport

Allow about 2.5 hours from Bow Lake, depending on traffic. Return your rental car. Safe travels!

DEPART

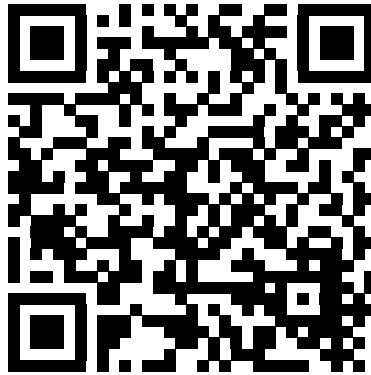
This shorter version skips the Columbia Icefield to keep Day 3 a manageable drive-and-fly day — save the full glacier tour for a future 5-day trip.

Planning Notes

- **Reserve early:** Moraine Lake shuttle, lodging, and rental car should be booked 6–9 months before summer travel.
- A Parks Canada Discovery Pass or daily admission is required — purchase online before you arrive.
- Personal vehicles are not permitted on Moraine Lake Road during shuttle season.
- Download offline maps before you go — cell service is limited throughout the mountains.
- Banff sits at 4,537 ft and Lake Louise at 5,680 ft — pace your first hike and stay hydrated.

Map This Route

Scan the QR code below to open the live, interactive Google My Map with every stop from all 3 days — color-coded by day, with driving directions built in.



SCAN WITH YOUR PHONE CAMERA

● Day 1 — Banff ● Day 2 — Lake Louise ● Day 3 — Icefields Pkwy

Tip: The Moraine Lake shuttle departs from the Lake Louise Park & Ride, not from the lake itself — look for that pin separately on Day 2. Cell service is limited throughout the park, so open this map and download it for offline use before you leave your hotel.

Where to Stay & What to Pack

Banff Townsite

The best single base for this itinerary — central, walkable, and close to most restaurants.

Lake Louise

Quieter, and minutes from the Park & Ride. Worth it if catching Moraine Lake sunrise is a priority.

Canmore

Just outside the park gates, 20–25 minutes away, and noticeably cheaper.

What to Pack

Layers for cool mountain mornings, broken-in hiking shoes, a rain jacket, and a backpack for your day on the Icefields Parkway. Full gear guide with 70+ picks on the website.

Banff National Park — *one of Canada's most iconic parks*

Turquoise glacier lakes, one of the world's most scenic drives, and
a mountain town home base — three days is enough for a first
taste of the best of it.

[STEALTHITINERARY.COM](https://stealthitinerary.com)

Steal the research. Keep the adventure.