

## Where to Stay, Camp & Eat in Banff National Park

Once you've decided to come to Banff National Park, the next step is to decide where you want to stay. The earlier you do this, the better your chances are of getting the kind of accommodations you want, whether it's a resort, a hotel, a cabin, a campsite, or an economical hostel. Most of the hotels in the park are located right in or very close to Banff Townsite. They are extremely busy during the summer season, from mid-June to early September. The rest of the hotels are located in the village of Lake Louise. There are very few lodging possibilities elsewhere in the park. If you're going to base your visit in the Town of Banff, try to spend at least one night of your trip away from the townsite; head to one of the excellent lodges in Lake Louise.

Campgrounds in Banff also fill up fast. At last, Parks Canada introduced a new campground reservation system in 2006. But as campsites are very popular, it's a good idea to reserve early at [www.pccamping.ca](http://www.pccamping.ca) or by calling ☎ 877/737-3783.

### 1 Lodging in Banff National Park

Hotel rooms in Banff aren't cheap. And despite the long strip of hotels, lodges, and the like that line Banff Avenue, there are remarkably few vacancies in summer. So book ahead. For help selecting a hotel and making a reservation, contact the **Banff/Lake Louise Tourism Bureau** (224 Banff Ave., P.O. Box 1298, Banff, AB T1L 1B3; ☎ 403/762-8421; [www.banfflakelouise.com](http://www.banfflakelouise.com)). Part of the **Banff Information Centre**, they have an up-to-the-minute list of hotel vacancies in the park. You might also try **Banff Central Reservations** (☎ 877/542-2633 or 403/277-7669; [www.banffreservations.com](http://www.banffreservations.com)). They work with 75 area hotels and are knowledgeable enough to help you make the best choice. A C\$50 (US\$42) deposit is required. **Banff Accommodation Reservations** (☎ 877/226-3348 or 403/762-0260; [www.banffinfo.com](http://www.banffinfo.com)) offers a similar service.

## IN & AROUND BANFF TOWNSITE EXPENSIVE

**Buffalo Mountain Lodge** ⚡ This is a mountain lodge in the truest sense. Perched on Tunnel Mountain just outside Banff Townsite, it's a first-class lodge designed to perfection, with peeled log frames, fieldstone fireplaces, log furniture, and an overall subdued decor that's straight out of an L.L. Bean catalog, right down to the stuffed animal heads mounted on the walls. The gorgeous stainless steel outdoor hot tub is reportedly the largest in Canada. The first buildings were built in the 1980s, with new wings added on since. The guest rooms in these newer wings have wood-burning fireplaces and private balconies. Guest room nos. 900 through 1100 are the farthest removed from Tunnel Mountain and, therefore, the most private. They look out onto a peaceful forest. My favorite guest rooms are nos. 1100 through 1200, also on the west side of the property. They have great views of **Mount Rundle** and the **Bow Valley**. Request an upper-level guest room with a climbing stone fireplace and high, open ceilings with wooden beams.

The decor in the guest rooms is cozy and woodsy; beds are dressed with feather duvets over plaid flannel sheets. The bathrooms are wonderful; amidst dark green tiles, many have heated slate floors, claw-foot tubs, and open glass stand-up showers. All of the guest rooms now have fireplaces. This hotel is an excellent choice, particularly if you want to be away from the bustle of Banff Avenue but still close enough to walk into town.

700 Tunnel Mountain Rd., Banff, AB T1L 1B3. ☎ 800/661-1367 or 403/410-7417. Fax 403/410-7406. [www.cmr.com](http://www.cmr.com). 108 units. May–Oct C\$255–C\$355 (US\$214–US\$298); Nov–Apr C\$139–C\$255 (US\$117–US\$214). Extra person C\$25 (US\$21). Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; lounge; Jacuzzi; activities desk; ski storage; babysitting; laundry service, Internet services. *In room:* TV/VCR, dataport, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron.

**Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel** The Titanic of the Canadian Rockies, this is one of the most famous buildings in Canada. It's because of this spectacular and legendary hotel that Banff came to exist in the first place. Built in 1883, the "Springs" certainly stands out, not just because it looks like a baronial Scottish castle in the mountains, but also because of the steady stream of tourist traffic heading to the hotel. Wandering through the halls, you'll likely bump into shutter-happy tourists who have no intention of actually staying at the hotel—they're just dropping in for a rushed tour and a photo op. And just like you, they find it easy to get lost here. If

you *are* a guest at the hotel it makes for quite a bit of distraction, and can keep you from really relaxing. (The hotel has moved the bus tour drop-off out of the main lobby to make the area more friendly to real guests.)

But, undeniably, the Springs is a sight to behold. The turrets, green roof, and thick stone walls are unique enough, but what really impresses is the hotel's public space: grand halls and lounge areas, stairwells and sitting areas, each with a unique (though sometimes bizarre) design and function. The **Rundle Room**, formerly the hotel's lobby, is now a sunny and very stately guest parlor. **Heritage Hall** is full of antiques and historical photographs, while the 15th-century Gothic-styled **Mount Stephen Hall** hosts private gatherings in a shrouded hall shared with statues of medieval knights.

The guest rooms here have long had a reputation for being quite stuffy and cramped, and uncomfortably warm in summer. All the rooms in the main building have been renovated in the last few years to address this problem, and the guest rooms are now brighter, cooler (thanks to air-conditioning), and cleaner, although they are essentially the same size. Even though they *feel* bigger, this still isn't a place to come after a great hike or ski to stretch out. Guest rooms are tastefully designed, with antique furniture and photos of the hotel's early days. Bathrooms are small but very clean. Besides the basic Fairmont rooms, there are a slew of suites (ask for one in the **Tudor House** for more privacy). Junior suites have a separate sitting room (which is so perfectly decorated, you won't want to do anything else but sit in there). The mammoth Presidential Suite has a panoramic view of the Bow Valley.

What is phenomenal about the Springs is what lies *outside* the guest rooms: incredible amenities, including the decadent **Willow Stream Spa**, a bowling center, horse stables, and seven restaurants. Enhancements seem to never stop, with the old adage, "If you can't get bigger, get better" directing plans. If you love history and grand elegance, this is the spot for you. There's really no competition for the kind of experience the Banff Springs offers its guests, many of whom save their whole lives to stay for one night, hoping to mingle with regularly visiting VIPs.

I don't think the Springs is overrated, but I do think it's over-the-top. The best way to shave some dollars is via the hotel's many packages, from bed-and-breakfast to skiing. It's worth the price to stay here if you want a big hotel with all the amenities you could ever dream of, but spending more for a deluxe room or suite should be

left to those with overflowing coffers. If you're here to visit the park, save your money and stay elsewhere.

405 Spray Ave., Banff, AB T1L 1J4. ☎ 800/257-7544 or 403/762-2211. Fax 403/762-5755. [www.fairmont.com](http://www.fairmont.com). 770 units. Rates vary dramatically based on desired views, dates, and availability. May–June starting at C\$389 (US\$327); June–Oct starting at C\$529 (US\$444); Oct–Apr starting at C\$309 (US\$260). Meal, ski, and spa packages available. Children 18 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking C\$26 (US\$22) per day. **Amenities:** 7 restaurants; 3 lounges; pub; indoor and outdoor heated pools; golf course on property; 5 outdoor tennis courts; spa; activities desk; ski desk; ski storage; riding stables; 5-pin bowling; concierge; business center; salon; 24-hr. room service; parking; babysitting; laundry service. *In room:* TV w/movies and video games, minibar, Internet, hair dryer, iron.

**Rimrock Resort** With a view any hotel owner would kill for, the Rimrock, perched on the edge of **Sulphur Mountain**, has tastefully integrated its stunning natural setting with a very fine lodging experience. Though it can't claim the historical appeal of the Fairmont Banff Springs, this is one very classy resort nevertheless. What it *can* claim over the Springs is peace and quiet—high on most vacationers' lists. It's also smaller than the Springs, and much more manageable. A giant marble fireplace, cherry oak walls, leather chairs, and big windows offering views you can't get even in the penthouses of other local hotels grace the lobby. Soothing jazz music piped in through tastefully concealed speakers rounds out the atmosphere. The latest renovations, completed in 2001, have cleaned up the lobby-level restaurant and lounge. Use of many parts of the newly refurbished spa is included, and they've also added some new shops. In the winter, there's an outdoor ice rink with a fire pit. Hot chocolate and cider are served.

The guest rooms are airy and a good size. They have a clean and crisp feel to them, with new linens and more king-size beds. All are decorated in the same deep colors and run at a base price; you just pay more for a better view. Request a guest room on the east wing for the choicest views. Suites with panoramic mountain views are also available. Bathrooms have cream-colored walls and large tubs. Worth mentioning is their turndown service, which features hand-made chocolates by renowned chocolatier and Banff local Bernard Callebaut.

The Rimrock has luxury, harmony, and natural beauty all rolled into one. With a whiff of an old boys' club, it's a good choice for families who aren't on a tight budget, and for those looking for some inspiring (but pampered) time with nature. The view is outstanding

and the atmosphere is very classy, but still welcoming. The Rimrock offers a complimentary shuttle to downtown Banff.

Mountain Ave., P.O. Box 1110, Banff, AB T1L 1J2. ☎ 800/661-1587 or 403/762-3356. Fax 403/762-4132. [www.rimrockresort.com](http://www.rimrockresort.com). 346 units. June 1–Oct 16 C\$400–C\$550(US\$336–US\$462); Oct 7–Dec 22 C\$255–C\$345(US\$214–US\$290); Dec 23–Jan 1 C\$345–C\$470 (US\$290–US\$395); Jan 2–May 30 C\$255–C\$345 (US\$214–US\$290). Extra person C\$25 (US\$21). Suites start at C\$450 (US\$378) and go up to C\$1,200 (US\$1,008). Children 18 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; lounge; cafe; large indoor saltwater pool; 2 squash courts; health club and spa; 24-hr. room service; parking. *In room:* A/C, TV w/movies, dataport, minibar, coffemaker, hair dryer, iron.

## MODERATE

**Brewster's Mountain Lodge** You could almost miss the entrance of this quiet and peaceful Western-style hotel, right in the middle of the busy Banff shopping area. Owned and operated by the Brewster family, who essentially started the tourism industry in Banff more than 100 years ago, this lodge was built in the mid-1990s in a Western ranch style, with guest rooms laid out around a horseshoe-shaped hall. Each guest room is unique, although a common theme of expansiveness and simplicity runs through them all. Standard guest rooms are spacious and subtly under-decorated with pine furniture. A deep cranberry-colored carpet makes a style statement in all the guest rooms. The bathrooms are a bit small and dark, but clean. Four new rooms on the ground floor that front Bear Street are particularly large. Families will like the two-story loft suites. The new lobby-side Mediterranean-inspired restaurant Café Soleil is more sophisticated and upscale than the lodge itself, and has received much attention from foodies in Banff. Brewster's is a good choice for active people who want to be close to the action. Pay an extra C\$10 or C\$15 to get a room with a view, most of which have balconies overlooking Bear or Caribou streets. Guest rooms on the top floor have higher ceilings and bigger windows.

208 Caribou St., Banff, AB T1L 1C1. ☎ 888/762-2900 or 403/762-2900. Fax 403/762-3953. [www.brewstermountainlodge.com](http://www.brewstermountainlodge.com). 77 units. June 23–Sept 30 C\$199–C\$239 (US\$167–US\$201) standard room; C\$219 (US\$184) and up junior suite; C\$369 (US\$310) and up Brewster suite. Oct 1–Dec 23 C\$109–C\$149 (US\$92–US\$125) standard room; C\$129 (US\$108) and up junior suite; C\$279 (US\$234) and up Brewster suite. Dec 24–Jan 2 C\$159–C\$199 (US\$134–US\$167) standard room; C\$179 (US\$150) and up junior suite; C\$329 (US\$276) and up Brewster suite. Jan 3–Feb 9 C\$119–C\$159 (US\$100–US\$134) standard room; C\$139 (US\$117) and up junior suite; C\$289 (US\$243) and up Brewster suite. Feb 10–June 22 C\$129–C\$189 (US\$108–US\$159) standard room; C\$148 (US\$124) and up junior suite; C\$289 (US\$243) and up Brewster suite. AE, DISC, MC, V. Heated underground parking C\$5

(US\$4.20) per night. **Amenities:** Restaurant; lounge; exercise room; Jacuzzi; sauna; laundry; library; ski storage. *In room:* TV, iron.

**Buffaloberry Bed and Breakfast** *(finds)* Staying at the newest little inn in town gives you a taste of what it's like to live in Banff. Combining modern technology with a classic design, the unpretentious owners have reflected their own personal style and love of the outdoors in a building nestled in one of downtown Banff's more quiet areas. It may be the best sleep in town, thanks to soundproof rooms, blackout curtains, solid-core doors, and luxurious natural linens. Bathrooms are spacious. The Olds Room is my favorite, thanks to lovely local furniture and nice views. Each room has its own heat control. Breakfasts include homemade pastries and friendly service, and make a great time to get tips from the owners to plan your day. Opened in March 2005, the buzz on the Buffaloberry is good and the vibe is comfortable and relaxing.

417 Marten St., Box 5443, Banff, AB T1L 1G5. ☎ 403/762-3750. Fax 403/762-3752. www.buffaloberry.com. 4 units. May 20–Sept 30 and Christmas to New Year's C\$295 (US\$248); Oct 1–May 19 C\$200 (US\$168). MC, V. No children under 10 allowed. **Amenities:** Library; games room; patio. *In room:* TV.

**Caribou Lodge** This cozy lodge is a good choice if you want to relax and stretch out after a day of exploring the mountains. It's comfortable and priced to fit squarely in the upper mid-range, with log furniture and a rustic mountain design. As it's located on Banff Avenue, a few minutes from the center of town, those planning an active vacation will want to stay here. It's particularly good for visitors and families on ski holidays. Canadian owned and operated, the lodge was built in 1993, with a wide-open ski-chalet feel. Your first impression is of the lobby's huge stone fireplace and slate-tiled floor. The guest rooms for the most part continue this expansive feel, though the bathrooms are a bit dark. The deluxe suites, all with fireplaces, are the largest and most comfortable. The lodge offers a complimentary shuttle service that will take you anywhere in town, as well as to the ski resorts in winter.

521 Banff Ave., Banff, AB T1L 1A4. ☎ 800/563-8764 or 403/762-5887. Fax 403/762-5918. www.bestofbanff.com. 200 units, 7 suites. June 10–Oct 9 C\$219 (US\$184) standard room; C\$234 (US\$197) superior room; C\$300 (US\$252) deluxe suite; C\$350 (US\$294) deluxe suite with Jacuzzi. Oct 10–Dec 19 C\$129 (US\$108) standard room; C\$144 (US\$121) superior room; C\$300 (US\$252) deluxe suite; C\$350 (US\$294) deluxe suite with Jacuzzi. Dec 20–Jan 3 C\$185 (US\$155) standard room; C\$200 (US\$168) superior room; C\$300 (US\$252) deluxe suite; C\$350 (US\$294) deluxe suite with Jacuzzi. Jan 3–Feb 10 C\$129 (US\$108) standard room; C\$144 (US\$121) superior room; C\$300 (US\$252) deluxe suite; C\$350 (US\$294) deluxe suite with Jacuzzi. Feb 11–June 9 C\$159 (US\$134) standard room; C\$174

(US\$146) superior room; C\$300 (US\$252) deluxe suite; C\$350 (US\$294) deluxe suite with Jacuzzi. Extra person C\$15 (US\$13). Children 16 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DISC, MC, V. Free underground parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; exercise room; 3 Jacuzzis; ski desk; laundry service. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer, irons in suites.

**Ptarmigan Inn** *(Value)* With quite reasonable rates, enough class to make it special, and an excellent location (just a block from the heart of town), this inn is a good mid-range choice. Built in the 1980s, the inn was recently renovated and now has a more casual and modern style. Only a few of the guest rooms actually front onto the busy main drag of Banff Avenue, so most are very quiet. The quietest of all are the 19 rooms that overlook the atrium. They're also the least expensive, since they have no view of the mountains (or of anything at all, really, except some empty chairs and the neighboring room's curtains). If you're willing to do without a view from your hotel room (remember that you'll be surrounded by the mountains the minute you step outside), and can squish into somewhat cramped bathrooms, you'll be able to save some money on this hotel.

The guest rooms are cozy, with down comforters and pine furniture. Families will enjoy the double rooms with the bathroom in the middle, separating the two sleeping areas. Premium guest rooms have better views, larger bathrooms, and a sitting area.

337 Banff Ave., Banff, AB T1L 1B7. ☎ 800/661-8310 or 403/762-2207. Fax 403/760-8287. www.bestofbanff.com. 134 units. June 10–Oct 9 C\$219 (US\$184) standard room; C\$234 (US\$197) superior room; C\$279 (US\$234) premium room. Oct 10–Dec 19 C\$129 (US\$108) standard room; C\$144 (US\$121) superior room; C\$199 (US\$167) premium room. Dec 20–Jan 3 C\$185 (US\$155) standard room; C\$200 (US\$168) superior room; C\$249 (US\$209) premium room. Jan 3–Feb 10 C\$129 (US\$108) standard room; C\$144 (US\$121) superior room; C\$249 (US\$209) premium room. Feb 11–June 9 C\$159 (US\$134) standard room; C\$174 (US\$146) superior room; C\$199 (US\$167) premium room. Extra person C\$15 (US\$13). Children 16 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DISC, MC, V. Free underground parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; lounge; spa; Jacuzzi; sauna; bike and ski storage; meeting facilities; limited room service; massage; laundry service. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer, irons in premium rooms.

**Storm Mountain Lodge** Halfway, or 20 minutes, from both Banff and Lake Louise, this collection of rustic cabins, originally built in the 1920s and carefully restored by new owners, is situated with gorgeous views of its namesake peak and nearby Castle Mountain. The heritage rooms offer an elegant style, and the forested property means plenty of privacy. It's quiet and charming. The restaurant mixes healthy is worth the drive on its own, and the breakfasts are delightful. Big bathtubs, crackling fireplaces, comfy

## **Hostelling: Is it for You?**

If you are looking for a social, economical way to experience the less-populated areas of Banff and Jasper national parks, think about booking a bunk at one of the dozen hostels in the area. The nonprofit organization **Hostelling International** runs them all.

Hostels are particularly popular with groups and with younger people, but are open to travelers of all ages. They generally have dormitory-style guest rooms with anywhere from 10 to 30 bunk beds to a room. Some dormitories are male or female only, while others are co-ed. All hostels in the area have at least one well-equipped communal kitchen. The Banff and Lake Louise International Hostels also have good and affordable restaurants on-site. Some have family rooms. Bring food from town and a sleeping bag, and be prepared to give up some privacy. Hostels, however, are loads of fun. You'll likely meet new hiking partners, not to mention nab one of the cheapest beds in the Canadian Rockies!

Annual memberships to **Hostelling International** cost C\$35 (US\$29) for adults. Membership is free for children under age 18. Get a membership at any of the hostels or online at [www.hihostels.ca](http://www.hihostels.ca).

For more information on hostels in Banff National Park, call ☎ **403/762-4122**. For hostels in Jasper National Park, call ☎ **780/852-3215**. You can also log on to [www.hihostels.ca/Alberta](http://www.hihostels.ca/Alberta).

**Alpine Club of Canada** also runs a number of very rustic backcountry hostels (all are at least 4 hr. hiking from the nearest road). You don't have to be a member to stay, but you do need a reservation. ACC memberships cost C\$21 (US\$18) for adults and C\$11 (US\$9.25) for children under age 17. Call the ACC at ☎ **403/678-3200** or visit them online at [www.alpineclubofcanada.ca](http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca).

beds—it's your own Rocky Mountain getaway. With great chances for wildlife watching and hiking right outside your door, this is a lovely way to blend activity with relaxation.

On Hwy. 93 just west of Castle Junction. Box 3249, Banff, AB T1L 1C8. ☎ **403/762-4155**. Fax 403/762-4151. [www.stormmountainlodge.com](http://www.stormmountainlodge.com). 14 units. June



11–Oct 10 C\$199 (US\$167) double; C\$189 (US\$159) log cabin with kitchenette; C\$189 (US\$159) pine cabin with kitchenette. Dec 9–June 10 C\$169 (US\$142) double; C\$199 (US\$167) log cabin with kitchenette; C\$159 (US\$134) log cabin with kitchenette. C\$20 (US\$17) extra person. Children under 8 stay free. **Amenities:** Restaurant; concierge; hiking and cross-country ski trails. *In room:* Coffee, iron, hair dryer, no phones.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Banff International Hostel** This well-known establishment is beloved by travelers and backpackers around the world. It's a fun place to stay, and is very reasonably priced. The atmosphere here is casual yet full of energy, as so many of the guests are keen outdoor types. There's a new pub downstairs. A good option for younger travelers and active families.

801 Hidden Ridge Way, Banff, AB T1L 1B3. At Tunnel Mountain Dr. ☎ 403/762-4123. Fax 403/762-3441. [www.hihostels.ca/alberta/hostels/banff.html](http://www.hihostels.ca/alberta/hostels/banff.html). 52 units, which accommodate between 2 and 6 people. 220 beds total. C\$29 (US\$24) per person for Hostelling International members; C\$33 (US\$27) per person for nonmembers. Private rooms for 2 from C\$83 (US\$70) for Hostelling International members; C\$91 (US\$76) for nonmembers. Children 6–17 stay half-price with parents. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; coin-op washers and dryers; Internet. *In room:* No phone.

## IN LAKE LOUISE

**Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise** ★★ The Chateau Lake Louise is a public landmark that continues to be selected among the best hotels in North America. Standing all by itself, right on the shore of Lake Louise, the Chateau is an elegant, Bavarian-style hotel, not in the least bit stuffy like its sister the Banff Springs.


Originally built in the 1890s, the hotel has seen many renovations. It's difficult to spot what is new and what is old, though—it all blends together in a style that can only be characterized as “Canadian Rockies meets the Swiss Alps.” It reminds me of that childhood story, *Heidi*. Swiss elements are everywhere: from alpine flowers adorning the hotel walls to photographs of the Swiss guides who were the first employees of the hotel. There's even a man in lederhosen playing an alphorn who greets you as you step outside the hotel toward the lake.

The guest rooms, while quite modest in size, are nevertheless very elegant, warm, and comfortable, with pine and oak furniture, walls done in soft tones, and luxurious feather duvets. Each guest room has a different heritage photo of a local pioneer and a botany sketch—unique touches. Having said this, there is a large variety in size and decor, depending on which of the three wings you stay in.

The guest rooms in the **Painter Wing** are generally the oldest and most unique. Those in the middle wing have the best views of the lake, and are my favorite. The Fairmont rooms, scattered throughout the three wings, are the standard doubles. All bathrooms are well appointed, and have marble-finished vanities. Guests shouldn't miss the heritage tours of the Chateau, held daily at 4pm. There are more stories tucked into the corners of this hotel than you'd ever spot on your own. Hotel staff, many of whom come here annually from every corner of Canada to work for the summer while attending university, are ripe with stories of their own. In 2005, C\$12 million in renovations were completed with major upgrades in 106 rooms, including the new Fairmont Floor, which offers top-notch concierge services and pampering. There's also the new Temple Wing, with a huge increase in meeting space, another restaurant, and more rooms.

There is a wealth of activities at the hotel, and it's an excellent base for day hikes, canoe outings, biking, and horseback riding, not to mention downhill and cross-country skiing in the winter (see "Winter Sports & Activities" in chapter 4). Don't miss outings with the Chateau's own heritage guides. It's a lovely place in winter, complete with an outdoor skating rink and ice sculptures. An added bonus: fewer people trudging through to sneak a peek at the Chateau. A fabled and magical hotel, this is my choice for best splurge in Banff National Park.

111 Lake Louise Dr., Lake Louise, AB T0L 1E0. ☎ **800/441-1414** or 403/522-3511. Fax 403/522-3834. [www.fairmont.com](http://www.fairmont.com). 550 units. Rates vary dramatically based on desired views, dates, and availability. C\$229 (US\$192) and way up for standard room; C\$379 (US\$318) and way up for deluxe standard room; C\$479 (US\$402) and way up for junior suite with mountain view; C\$579 (US\$486) and way up for junior suite with lake view. Suites C\$679 (US\$570) and way up. Children 18 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DISC, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants; 2 lounges; small indoor heated pool; spa; bike, ski, and canoe rentals; activities desk; business center; salon; 24-hr. room service. *In room:* TV, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron.

**Lake Louise Hostel and Canadian Alpine Centre**  Perhaps the best hostel I've come across, this is a wonderful gathering place, not to mention the only reasonably priced lodging alternative in Lake Louise. Great for people on a budget, or outdoor enthusiasts hoping to mingle with like-minded travelers, this is a first-rate hostel full of spirit and charm. Guest rooms range from small dormitories with two bunk beds to larger guest rooms that sleep up to six. Simple communal bathrooms and showers are down the hall.

Village Rd., P.O. Box 115, Lake Louise, AB T0L 1E0. ☎ **403/522-2201**. Fax 403/522-2253. [www.hostellingintl.ca/alberta](http://www.hostellingintl.ca/alberta). 45 units, 150 beds total. C\$24 (US\$20) for

Hostelling International members; C\$28 (US\$23) for nonmembers. Private rooms from C\$75 (US\$63) for members; C\$83 (US\$70) for nonmembers. Ski packages available. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, lounge; coin-op washers and dryers, Internet access. *In room:* No phone.

**Num-Ti-Jah Lodge** ★ *(Finds)* This rustic and secluded lodge on the shores of **Bow Lake** sports the most scenic location of any lodging in Banff National Park. Built in 1937 by trapper and guide Jimmy Simpson, the building is pretty much as it was then, with every detail preserved. (Simpson, who left England and came to Canada at age 19, became a legendary, eccentric, and much-admired Banff pioneer.)

There's nothing overly fancy here, just simple comforts, an incredible view, and the pleasure of being a half-hour's drive from the next-closest lodge. The stairs creak as you climb them and the walls are thin; guest rooms are furnished in a modest style and the light flickers a bit when you switch it on. The guest rooms with the most character, best views, and, interestingly, the least expensive rate, are located on the top floor. So what's the catch? Well, there are four private rooms here, but one shared bathroom. Hence, the cheaper rate. Other guest rooms are similarly decorated, with similarly lovely views, albeit out of smaller windows. Bathrooms in all guest rooms are clean, though quite basic and small, with stand-up showers. All-inclusive packages take away any worrying about meals. The restaurant serves simple but hearty food at a reasonable price, and the setting is full of rustic mountain ambience. A world-class location for ski touring, Num-Ti-Jah is at its best in winter. Drawing an outdoor-loving crowd of people who aren't necessarily looking for luxury amenities, guests here prefer a lodge with heaps of character and history. It's one of the few secluded lodges in Banff National Park even though it's located right off the Icefields Parkway. For that benefit alone, it gets my vote.

P.O. Box 39, Lake Louise, AB T0L 1E0. 40km (25 miles) north of Lake Louise on the Icefields Pkwy. Hwy. 93. ☎ 403/522-2167. Fax 403/522-2425. www.num-ti-jah.com. 25 units. June 15–Sept 17 C\$195 (US\$164) 2 singles with shared bathroom; C\$230 (US\$193) queen with mountain view; C\$260 (US\$218) double with lake view. Sept 18–Oct 9, Dec 3–Dec 20, and Jan 2–June 16 C\$110 (US\$92) 2 singles with shared bathroom; C\$150 (US\$126) queen with mountain view; C\$160 (US\$134) double with lake view. Dec 21–Jan 1 C\$125 (US\$105) 2 singles with shared bathroom; C\$175 (US\$143) queen with mountain view; C\$190 (US\$160) double with lake view. Dec 1–19 and Jan 2–June 14 C\$130 (US\$109) 2 singles with shared bathroom; C\$195 (US\$164) queen with mountain view; C\$205 (US\$172) double with lake view. Extra person C\$15 (US\$13). Children 17 and under C\$15 (US\$13). AE, MC, V. Closed 2nd Mon in Oct (Canadian Thanksgiving) to Dec 3. **Amenities:** Restaurant; lounge; sauna; cross-country ski and snowshoe rentals; outdoor skating rink in winter; horseback riding tours. *In room:* No phone.

**Post Hotel** ★★ A quintessential mountain inn, the Post Hotel combines beautiful guest rooms and excellent service in a location imbued with a peaceful, relaxing atmosphere. Tucked quietly along the banks of the Pipestone River in the heart of the Lake Louise village, this hotel is the only real alternative to the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise in terms of quality and class. Then again, it's really in a category of its own: an exquisite mountain inn. A member of the prestigious Relais & Chateau organization of global fine inns, the Post Hotel is a subtler blend of Swiss and Canadian mountain styles than what you'll find at the Chateau Lake Louise. Built in the 1940s as a backcountry lodge, the hotel was bought in the 1970s by Swiss brothers George and Andre Schwartz, who renovated and expanded it in the 1980s. With its rustic pine and timber construction and dramatic red roof, it's elegant and modern at the same time. Guest rooms are simple but luxurious, with wood-burning fieldstone fireplaces, balconies, down quilts, and heated slate floors in the bathrooms. A new fitness room and spa is perhaps the best in Lake Louise, and the old owners' cabin has been renovated into a new cabin that accommodates a larger group. Tea is served every afternoon in the lobby. There's quite an adult feel to this hotel. Guests stay quiet and keep to themselves. For that reason, I'm not so sure it would be a great match for young children. Older kids will probably do just fine, however. There are two riverside log cabins that sleep a family of four.

200 Pipestone, P.O. Box 69, Lake Louise, AB T0L 1E0. ☎ 800/661-1586 or 403/522-3989. Fax 403/522-3966. [www.posthotel.com](http://www.posthotel.com). 92 units, 5 cabins. May 20–June 16 C\$225 (US\$189) and up double room. June 17–Aug 28 C\$305 (US\$256) and up double room. Aug 29–Sept 25 C\$245 (US\$206) and up double room. Sept 26–Oct 15 C\$205 (US\$172) and up double room. Nov 25–Dec 21, Jan 5–Feb 9, and Apr 2–May 19 C\$195 (US\$164) and up double room. Dec 22–Jan 4 and Feb 10–Apr 1 C\$255 (US\$214) and up double room. Riverside cabins C\$250–C\$2,500 (US\$210–US\$2,100). Children 18 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, MC, V. Closed for renovations every Oct–Nov. **Amenities:** Dining room; piano lounge; pub; small heated indoor pool; exercise room; spa; Jacuzzi; steam room; limited room service; library; cigar room. *In room:* TV/VCR, hair dryer, iron, safe.

## 2 Frontcountry Camping in Banff National Park

Whether it's hooking up the electricity and plumbing in your RV, opening up your tent-trailer, or just pitching your tent, the accessibility and ease of drive-in (frontcountry) campgrounds will make you a happy camper. There is a wide variety of campgrounds in Banff National Park, and you can now reserve a spot online at

## **Regular vs. Self-Registering Campgrounds**

There are now three kinds of registration methods for frontcountry campgrounds in Banff and Jasper national parks.

In 2005 and 2006, Parks Canada introduced a new reservation system that allows campers to reserve a site in advance via a website ([www.pccamping.ca](http://www.pccamping.ca)) or via telephone ☎ **877/737-3783**. There is a C\$11 (US\$9.25) fee to make a reservation, but it can provide peace of mind after a long day's drive or hike. You cannot select a specific site within a campground.

The second method is the regular registration method, which applies to campsites that are set aside for first-come, first-served campers who prefer not to reserve ahead of time. You register with a Parks Canada attendant at the campground when you first arrive (there's usually a building staffed 24 hr. a day).

The third method is to self-register, and it applies to many of the more remote campgrounds in both parks. Unlike the more accessible campgrounds, there's no building at the entrance to these campgrounds. It's sort of a "self-serve" approach. You simply drive in to the campground and find an empty campsite. There's a small kiosk near the entrance, which will take your money (it doesn't accept credit or debit cards, and it doesn't give change). Put your money in one of the envelopes provided and drop it in the slot, remembering to tear off the end of the envelope and mark the date that you're staying until on it. Take it back to your campsite and fasten it to the sign with your site's number on it. A Parks Canada staff member making daily rounds will pick it up first thing in the morning.

[www.pccamping.ca](http://www.pccamping.ca) or via telephone at ☎ **877/737-3783**. There are very few last-minute spots available; you must plan ahead, especially if you want to be near the Town of Banff. Refer to the table later in this section for a quick comparison of Banff campgrounds and the amenities they offer.

***A note on campground rates:*** Rates quoted are per site, and are applicable for single occupancy up to six people. Therefore, a family of four will pay the same rate as a couple, or a person traveling

alone. If you're in an RV, I suggest you stick to the campgrounds that have hookup facilities, although RVs are welcome to park for the night at many of the outlying campgrounds that do not have hookups. Prices will continue to rise annually to meet Banff National Park plans to upgrade most facilities, including washrooms, showers, and general campground maintenance.

## BANFF TOWNSITE AREA

**Castle Mountain Campground** This is a small, remote campground located on the Bow Valley Parkway (Hwy. 1A). It's quite rustic, with very few amenities at the campground itself, but the shop at **Castle Mountain Village** is just a short walk away. It's also very scenic, and a good base for exploring the trails below the fabled walls of Castle Mountain. A good family campground.

31km (19 miles) west of Banff Townsite on the Bow Valley Pkwy. Hwy. 1A. 43 sites. No RV hookups. C\$19 (US\$16). Open May 20–Sept 9.

**Johnston Canyon Campground** This is a tranquil campground nestled in a pleasant forest less than 20 minutes from Banff Townsite. The nicest of the sites back onto **Johnston Creek**.

26km (16 miles) west of Banff Townsite on the Bow Valley Pkwy. Hwy. 1A. 132 sites. No RV hookups. C\$24 (US\$20). Open June 3–Sept 9.

**Tunnel Mountain Village Campground** This is Banff's biggest campground, and it's also the closest one to the townsite, within walking distance of Banff Avenue. It's scenically located on the ridge of Tunnel Mountain and is quite spacious for a campground, with more than 1,000 sites. It's divided into three sections: a mixed tent and RV camp 2.5km (1½ miles) east of town; an RV mecca 4km (2½ miles) east of town; and a trailer- and tenter-friendly section to the east of the RV area. RVers will love this place; tenters wanting to walk to Banff Avenue will like it, too. But anyone looking for the peace and quiet of the mountains should head elsewhere.

4km (2½ miles) east of Banff Townsite on Tunnel Mountain Rd. Tunnel Mountain Village I: 618 sites. No RV hookups. C\$24 (US\$20). Open May 6–Oct 3. Tunnel Mountain Village II: 188 sites. Electrical hookups only. C\$28 (US\$24). Open year-round. Tunnel Mountain Trailer Court: 321 sites. Full hookups. C\$33 (US\$28). Open May 6–Oct 3.

**Two Jack Campground** The main area here is just off the road in a densely wooded forest 13km (8 miles) northeast of Banff Townsite, on the Minnewanka Loop. It's quite private, although there are no great views. The small lakeshore area at **Lakeside** is very popular and is the most scenic and peaceful campground near the Town of Banff.

13km (8 miles) from Banff Townsite on Minnewanka Loop Rd. Two Jack Main: 380 sites. RV-friendly but no RV hookups. C\$19 (US\$16). Open May 20–Sept 5. Two Jack Lakeside: 74 sites. No RV hookups. C\$24 (US\$20). Open May 20–Sept 1.

## LAKE LOUISE AREA

**Lake Louise Campground** This campground is not actually on the shore of Lake Louise. It's downhill from the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, away from the lake. The tent and the trailer areas are separated. The tent area is in the trees near the river. The trailer area is more open and closer to the highway and railway line. It's a 10-minute walk to Lake Louise village. Less hectic and congested than the Tunnel Mountain campgrounds near the Town of Banff, this is a great campground for relaxing.

58km (36 miles) northwest of Banff Townsite on the Trans-Canada Hwy. 1. Exit at Lake Louise and turn left after passing under the railway bridge onto Fairview Rd. Lake Louise Tent: 210 sites. No RV hookups. C\$24 (US\$20). Open May 10–Sept. 30. Lake Louise Trailer: 189 sites. Electrical hookup only. C\$28 (US\$24). Open year-round.

**Protection Mountain Campground** This scenic campground is nicely situated between Banff and Lake Louise, making it an excellent base for exploring all corners of Banff National Park. It's rustic with few amenities, though. A good choice for tenters and trailers but not ideal if you're traveling by RV.

41km (25 miles) west of Banff Townsite on the Bow Valley Pkwy. Hwy. 1A. 10km (6 miles) west of Castle Junction. 89 sites. No RV hookups. C\$19 (US\$16). Open June 24–Sept 6.

## NORTH OF LAKE LOUISE

**Mosquito Creek Campground** Twenty-four kilometers (15 miles) north of Lake Louise on the Icefields Parkway, this campground has two distinct areas: one a gravelly field, the other a wooded space. Stick to the field if you can. With no showers, sinks, or flush toilets, prepare to rough it out here.

24km (15 miles) north of Lake Louise on the Icefields Pkwy. Hwy. 93. 32 sites. No RV hookups. C\$14 (US\$12). Open year-round.

**Waterfowl Lake Campground** *(Finds)* This lovely campground, 58km (36 miles) north of Lake Louise, is right by a stream and the large Waterfowl Lake. It's my favorite in the park because of the scenery and peacefulness. There is an open area on the lakeshore for relaxing or playing games, plus amazing views of the surrounding mountains and glaciers. This is a wonderful spot to do some canoeing and exploring.

58km (36 miles) north of Lake Louise on the Icefields Pkwy. Hwy. 93. 116 sites. No RV hookups. C\$19 (US\$16). Open June 24–Sept 12.

## Banff National Park Frontcountry Campgrounds

Campground	Total Sites	RV Hookups	Dump Station	Flush Toilets	Drinking Water	Showers	Firepits/ Grills	Laundry	Public Phones	Self-register	Fees	Open
<b>Banff Townsite Area</b>												
Castle Mountain Campground	43	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	C\$19 (US\$16)	May 20–Sept 9
Johnston Canyon Campground	132	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	C\$24 (US\$20)	June 3–Sept 19
Tunnel Mountain Village I	618	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	C\$24 (US\$20)	May 6–Oct 10
Tunnel Mountain Village II	188	189 (electrical hookups only)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	C\$28 (US\$24)	Year-round
Tunnel Mountain Trailer Court	321	322	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	C\$33 (US\$28)	May 6–Oct 10
Two Jack Main Campground	380	No (but RV-friendly)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	C\$19 (US\$16)	May 20–Sept 5
Two Jack Lakeside Campground	74	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	C\$24 (US\$20)	May 20–Sept 1
<b>Lake Louise Area</b>												
Lake Louise Trailer Campground	189 (30 in winter)	189 (electrical hookups only)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	C\$28 (US\$24)	Year-round
Lake Louise Tent Campground	210	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	C\$24 (US\$20)	May 10–Sept 30
Protection Mountain Campground	89	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	C\$19 (US\$16)	June 24–Sept 6
<b>North of Lake Louise</b>												
Mosquito Creek Campground	32	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	C\$14 (US\$12)	Year-round
Rampart Creek Campground	50	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	C\$14 (US\$12)	June 24–Sept 6
Waterfowl Lakes Campground	116	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	C\$19 (US\$16)	June 24–Sept 12

For reservations see [www.pcamping.ca](http://www.pcamping.ca) or ☎ 877/RESERVE. Campsites available on a first-come, first-served basis.



### 3 Backcountry Camping & Lodging in Banff National Park

Spending a night in Banff's backcountry makes for a particularly special experience. For those with a keen interest in roughing it, choose a backcountry hike from "Exploring the Backcountry" in chapter 4, and refer to the information below on booking a campsite. There are also a handful of backcountry lodges and rustic backcountry hostels to choose from.

#### BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING

Backcountry camping in Banff National Park is permitted in designated campsites. You must reserve your campsite before you hit the trail. Of the 53 designated backcountry campsites, some are only an hour or two from a trail head, while others are as much as a full day's hike (20km/12.4 miles) into the wilderness. You can access a handful of backcountry campsites from the Town of Banff via the **Spray Valley Trail**. If you drive half an hour from town, you can access other backcountry sites, like Egypt Lake, Shadow Lake, and Fish Lakes. For others, it's a 2-hour drive northwest of the townsite along the **Icefields Parkway** (Hwy. 93). There are even campsites along the shores of **Lake Minnewanka**, northeast of the townsite, which are accessible only by canoe. Some campsites are legendary among hikers all over the world and get booked up as soon as Banff National Park turns on its **backcountry reservation line** on May 1 (☎ 403/762-1550). A backcountry campsite costs C\$6 (US\$5.05) per person per night and there is a C\$10 (US\$8.40) reservation fee. You can not reserve backcountry sites online.

#### BACKCOUNTRY HOSTELS

**Hostelling International (HI)** runs a small group of backcountry hostels in Banff National Park. All are highway accessible. Although quite rustic, each of them is a special place full of visitors relishing their time in the mountains. They're a good choice for larger groups or if you're looking for hiking and backpacking companions. Hostels are also a great place for learning, since fellow guests are often very keen on sharing their knowledge about the mountains and leaving the hustle and bustle of the Town of Banff behind them. Reservations are recommended, particularly in the summer months. Each has a shared kitchen and most have only outdoor plumbing (that means no showers or bathtubs!). You can make a reservation (recommended) by calling Hostelling International, at ☎ 403/670-7580,

or by logging on to [www.hihostels.ca/Alberta](http://www.hihostels.ca/Alberta). None of the hostels listed below have direct phones.

Open year-round, the **Castle Mountain Shelter**, on the Bow Valley Parkway (Hwy. 1A) 1.5km (1 mile) east of the Trans-Canada Highway (Hwy. 1) and Highway 93 junction, is in a scenic area with several hiking and cross-country ski trails nearby. It's also well situated for downhill skiing, since it's within 20 minutes of all three area ski resorts: Mount Norquay, Sunshine Village, and Lake Louise. Rates are C\$21 (US\$18) per person per night for Hostelling International members, C\$25 (US\$21) per person per night for nonmembers. Just 26km (16 miles) north of Lake Louise on the Icefields Parkway 93 is the **Mosquito Creek Hostel**, also run by Hostelling International. This one is a group of peaceful, rustic cabins; a sauna and fireplace are on hand to keep you toasty warm in winter. Rates are C\$21 (US\$18) per person per night for HI members, C\$25 (US\$21) per person per night for nonmembers. There are private rooms available.

There are two more Hostelling International hostels in the northern reaches of Banff National Park. The **Rampart Creek Hostel**, 95km (59 miles) north of Lake Louise, also on the Icefields Parkway 93, is popular with rock and ice climbers. Many cyclists heading from Lake Louise to Jasper also stop here for the night. Rates are C\$21 (US\$18) per person per night for HI members and C\$25 (US\$21) per person per night for nonmembers.

## BACKCOUNTRY HUTS

It's a distinct challenge to get to one of the eight **Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) huts** in Banff National Park, but that's surely part of the appeal. When you do make it, you are deeply rewarded and will enjoy a wonderful, peaceful overnight high in the mountains. Strategically located in some of the most spectacular mountain settings, the huts are often used by hikers on long traverses, by mountaineers as a base for a summit push, or by ACC members on a course. Almost all are a good full-day hike or ski into the backcountry. **Bow Hut**, the easiest one to access, is 6 hours from the trail head at Bow Lake, on the Icefields Parkway. Some of the "huts" are cabins, others look more like shacks. Most have no electricity or running water, so it's best to prepare for a stay at one of them in much the same way you would prepare for a camping trip. If you aren't a member of the ACC, rates range from C\$18 to C\$30 (US\$15–US\$25) per person per night. Rates for members are substantially lower. For more information on backcountry huts, or on

an ACC membership, contact the **Alpine Club of Canada** at ☎ 403/678-3200 or at [www.alpineclubofcanada.ca](http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca).

## BACKCOUNTRY LODGES

There are three privately run backcountry lodges in Banff National Park. All are rustic but remarkably pricey considering the amenities they offer. Most don't have electricity, telephones, or running water. But the atmosphere is rejuvenating and the peace is, well, unparalleled. **Brewster's Shadow Lake Lodge** (☎ 866/762-0114; [www.shadowlakelodge.com](http://www.shadowlakelodge.com)), on the shore of Shadow Lake in the **Egypt Lakes area**, is open during the summer for hikers and mountain bikers and in winter for cross-country skiers. Its log cabins are heated, its beds cozy with feather down comforters. There are new heated washrooms with running water, showers and solar-powered lighting—this is backcountry luxury! Built in 1928, it's a true retreat, great for groups of friends or for romantic getaways. Rates are C\$185 (US\$155) per person per night based on double occupancy, C\$200 (US\$168) per person per night single occupancy, and C\$155 (US\$130) per extra person in each cabin, with reduced rates for additional nights. Children's rates available (but not published). Meals are included.

Built nearly a century ago as one of Canada's first ski resorts, **Skoki Lodge** (☎ 800/258-7669; [www.skokilodge.com](http://www.skokilodge.com)) now welcomes only cross-country skiers and hikers. Located in a gorgeous valley behind the **Lake Louise ski area**, it's an 11km (6.8-mile) hike in to reach the rustic lodge, with awesome landscape and colorful wildflowers filling up the view. Amenities include a glorious wood-fired sauna and gourmet meals served buffet-style. Candles and kerosene lamps light up the lodge at night, making for an eerily beautiful scene. Rooms range from private cabins to lodge rooms. Rates start at C\$159 (US\$134) per person. There is a 2-night minimum stay.

Open in summer for horseback tours and in winter for cross-country skiers, **Sundance Lodge** (☎ 800/661-8352; [www.xcski.sundance.com](http://www.xcski.sundance.com)) is a heritage building deep in the woods, but only a 16km (10-mile) ski from the Town of Banff. It's a great choice for families looking for a true wilderness experience, albeit one with hot showers and fresh-cooked meals. Rates are C\$121 (US\$102) per person for the first night, with lower rates for additional nights (there are no special children's' rates, but children are welcome). During summer, the lodge operates with **Holiday on Horseback** (☎ 800/661-8352; [www.horseback.com](http://www.horseback.com)), offering multi-day expeditions leaving Banff regularly. A 2-day pack trip to the lodge costs

C\$389 (US\$327) during May, June, September, and October; C\$442 (US\$371) during July and August.

## 4 Where to Eat in Banff National Park

There are some outstanding restaurants in Banff, many of which are also very expensive. Don't be afraid to branch out of your hotel to roam the streets of town looking for what you want. You'll love the fresh, creative, and well-prepared food, but it will take up a large chunk of your budget. To avoid spending a fortune on food, try keeping your lunches light—pick up sandwich fixings at the grocery store and have a picnic. Also, note that all restaurants in Banff National Park are now smoke-free.

### IN BANFF TOWNSITE

**Bow Valley Grill** CANADIAN With fine and fresh seasonal cuisine and views of the Fairholme Mountain Range from inside the swanky Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel, this isn't so much an over-the-top splurge as it is a memorable dining experience. The open-concept design keeps this restaurant from feeling too formal—you can keep an eye on the chefs at the grill. Specializing in rotisserie-grilled meats, there are fabulous market-style dinner buffets in the winter and an ambitious à la carte menu from May through November. During summer the restaurant offers tours of the hotel to diners who indulge in a huge lunch buffet. Fish lovers will enjoy the Bow River trout, pan-fried with lemon, herb butter, and new potatoes. The Alberta AAA prime rib is slowly roasted in its natural juices and served with a trusty baked potato. The progressive wine menu is presented in an easy-to-select fashion, well categorized and with full descriptions. Sunday buffets will let you sample a little of everything. The dessert buffet is to die for. If you're on a tighter budget or just looking for a romantic evening, pay C\$10 (US\$8.40) and get unlimited access to the dozen cakes, pies, cookies, squares, and fresh fruit.

In the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel. 405 Spray Ave. ☎ 403/762-6860. Reservations recommended June–Aug daily and on weekends during the rest of the year. Breakfast buffet C\$25 (US\$21); lunch buffet C\$28 (US\$24); main courses C\$28–C\$39 (US\$24–US\$33). AE, DISC, DC, MC, V. Daily breakfast 6:30am–11am; lunch 11am–2pm; dinner 5:30–9:30pm.

**Cilantro Mountain Café** CALIFORNIAN This cozy café is excellent for casual summer dining. The California-style cuisine includes salads, pasta, chicken, and seafood. Pizzas from the applewood-fired oven are the best item on the menu, with deep crusts

and creative ingredients. The rustic decor includes peeled logs and wood paneling. If the weather is agreeable, sit outside and sip a sangria.

In the Buffalo Mountain Lodge, 700 Tunnel Mountain Rd. ☎ 403/760-4488. Reservations recommended on weekends. Main courses C\$14–C\$28 (US\$12–US\$24). AE, MC, V. June 11–Sept 1 daily 11:30am–11pm; Dec 19–Jun 5 Wed–Sun 5–10pm. Closed Sept 18–Dec 18.

**Coyotes Deli and Grill** SOUTHWESTERN A local favorite, a reservation may come in handy since this place is almost always busy. With a fresh, healthy menu, it's a happening place where Santa Fe meets the Canadian Rockies. The atmosphere is fun and relaxed, made more so by the open kitchen. Expect lots of corn and chile peppers on the menu. For breakfast try the French toast stuffed with cream cheese and fresh fruit, topped with maple syrup. For lunch, the sweet potato and corn chowder is a good choice, as is the blue-corn-crust chicken. Corn-crust pizza is a specialty: the barbecue chicken pizza is delicious. New World wines are featured. Servers know their menu well and are comfortable making recommendations to suit your tastes.

206 Caribou St. (west of Banff Ave.). ☎ 403/762-3963. Reservations recommended June–Aug daily and on weekends during the rest of the year. Breakfast C\$7–C\$12 (US\$5.90–US\$10); lunch items C\$8–C\$15 (US\$6.70–US\$13); main dinner courses C\$16–C\$28 (US\$13–US\$24). AE, MC, V. Daily 7:30am–11pm.

**Earl's** *(Kids)* CANADIAN A chain of hip restaurants in Western Canada, Earl's fits into Banff perfectly. The heart of the menu is the "global skillet," a selection of ingredients from around the world creatively prepared to please everyone. The huge menu is fresh and the service is attentive, although the atmosphere sometimes feels a bit too hectic for my liking. The Caesar salad may be the best in town. Pizzas, from a classic margherita to a five-cheese sausage pizza, are very good. If you want a taste of the East, order the Hunan Kung Pao noodles or the Thai green chicken curry. Earl's also brews its own beers. Give the Albino Rhino a try.

229 Banff Ave. Corner Wolf St., upstairs. ☎ 403/762-4414. No reservations. Main courses C\$9–C\$31 (US\$7.55–US\$26). AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–1am.

**Maple Leaf Grille and Spirits** ★ CANADIAN This stylish restaurant has a charm reminiscent of Canada's early days. You are greeted by a giant birchbark canoe mounted over the expansive staircase leading to the second-floor dining area. The food is fresh and regional, tying together tastes from coast to coast in a smart and

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**Tips** **Wanted: A Cheap Lunch & a Coffee Break**

Even in pricey Banff, a filling yet reasonably priced lunch can be had. Try the **Cascade Mall Food Court** (317 Banff Ave.). You'll find a dozen different counters serving everything from sushi and pizza to tacos. You can buy lunch for under five dollars!

Banff has no shortage of coffeehouses. Head to **Evelyn's Coffee House** ★ (201 Banff Ave.; ☎ 403/762-0332) for the best java in town. If it's crowded, sneak around to **Evelyn's Too** (229 Bear St.; ☎ 403/762-0330). **Jump Start** (206 Buffalo St.; ☎ 403/762-0332), near the post office, is great for lattes, sundaes, and filling lunches.

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sophisticated way. For a starter, try the Canadian brie salad on vine-ripened tomatoes. For dinner, Canadian classics include arctic char, elk, venison, and lake duck. The classic lamb burger is deliciously sweet. Try the grilled Atlantic salmon and Pacific prawns, served with homemade butternut squash ravioli and topped with a light chive beurre blanc. The chicken breast is roasted in an oven-dried cherry tomato butter sauce and served with wild rice and a medley of fresh vegetables. The wine and dessert menus are also noteworthy. Although casual in atmosphere, the food is decidedly upscale. This is the place to eat on Banff Avenue if you want to see the best Canada has to offer.

137 Banff Ave. ☎ 403/760-7680. Reservations recommended June–Aug daily and on weekends during the rest of the year. Main courses C\$17–C\$40 (US\$14–US\$34). AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 10am–2am.

**Melissa's Restaurant and Bar** *(Kids)* **STEAKHOUSE** Melissa's (or "Mis-steak," as the cheeky steakhouse is often referred to) has been in business since 1928, making it a true local landmark and a great choice for all ages. The food is simple and fresh. Of course, the highlights of the menu are the steaks, including T-bone, rib-eye, filets, strips, ham steak, and AAA sirloins. You choose the cut and the sauce (from a selection of peppercorn, mushroom, hollandaise, or béarnaise). Your steak is accompanied by a salad and fries, baked potatoes, or rice and served with a slice of Melissa's own multigrain bread and the vegetable of the day. There's also Melissa's Canadian mountain stew to warm you up on a chilly day, deep dish pizzas,

and handmade gourmet burgers, not to mention one of the best breakfast menus in town. There's a kids menu and a heated patio. Bring your appetite.

218 Lynx St. Across from the Banff Park Lodge. ☎ **403/762-5511**. Breakfast C\$6–C\$9 (US\$5.05–US\$7.55); main courses C\$9–C\$25 (US\$7.55–US\$21). DC, MC, V. Daily 7:30am–10pm.

**Saltlik STEAKHOUSE** The steakhouse concept isn't new to Banff, but the Saltlik is different: they put the AAA Black Angus beef as a single item, and ask diners to select their favorites from a selection of veggies and salad. The steak—fast-cooked in a 1,200°F (650°C) infrared oven—is truly delicious. Other options, like the flame rotisserie chicken and grilled tuna, are also excellent. I've heard the calamari described as “spectacular.” With a boast worthy wine cellar and a swanky atmosphere, this is an upscale choice that manages to remain informal. Downstairs, there's a lounge that features live jazz and a huge fireplace.

221 Bear St. ☎ **403/762-2467**. Reservations accepted for groups of 8 or more. Main courses C\$17–C\$32 (US\$14–US\$27). AE, MC, V. Daily noon–1 am.

**Sukiyaki House JAPANESE** Of the handful of sushi restaurants in Banff, this is the best: a fun, traditional Japanese atmosphere that can accommodate larger groups. The sushi is fresh and well-prepared, the atmosphere is relaxing and tasteful, and the prices are reasonable, given the attentive and professional service. Find a partner and order the Love Boat—a wooden board filled with a wide variety of sushi, including sashimi and maki, plus vegetable tempura. It comes with miso soup and rice. If you're not too keen on raw fish, try the salmon teriyaki.

211 Banff Ave. 2nd floor Park Ave. Mall. ☎ **403/762-2002**. Reservations recommended for parties of 5 or more and on weekends. Main courses C\$8–C\$26 (US\$6.70–US\$22). AE, MC, V. Daily noon–10pm.

**Typhoon ASIAN** Like a tropical island amid a sea of ranches, Typhoon is what every other place in Banff isn't—creative, vibrant, and multi-ethnic. The menu is pan-Asian, with everything from curry to sushi, and features lots of cilantro, peanuts, ginger, curry, coconut, and chile. For lunch, try the dreamy Naanwich. For dinner, the daily curries are outstanding. Drop by in the evening for a martini, a selection from the varied appetizer menu, and the funky atmosphere. To really get away from it all, reserve the private room in the back corner.

## For the Sweet Tooth

Banff has some excellent chocolate and candy shops. For the best truffles in Canada, made using a four-generations-old Belgian technique, visit **Chocolaterie Bernard Callebaut** (127 Banff Ave. and 111 Banff Ave.; ☎ 403/762-4106). **The Fudgery** (215 Banff Ave.; ☎ 403/762-3003) makes candy while you watch and often has a bowl by the cashier with free samples.

211 Caribou St. ☎ 403/762-2000. Reservations recommended for parties of 5 or more and on weekends. Entrees C\$16–C\$22 (US\$13–US\$18). AE, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–11pm.

**Waldhaus** *Kids Finds* GERMAN For a really fun and social evening, take a trip to Bavaria in this restaurant tucked below the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel. The fondue is excellent—try the Bauern fondue, Käse fondue (the sauce contains cheese and brandy), or the Filet fondue, with top-grade sirloin. Gulasch süppe (soup) and Jager schnitzel round out the German dishes. This is a great destination for groups and families, since everyone participates in dipping the bread or meat into the fondue pot.

In the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel. 405 Spray Ave. ☎ 403/760-6389. Reservations required. Main courses C\$23–C\$34 (US\$19–US\$29). AE, MC, V. Daily 6–9pm.

## IN LAKE LOUISE

**Bill Peyto's Café** ★ *Value Kids* Located inside the Lake Louise Hostel and Alpine Centre, the food here is healthy, creative, and very reasonably priced for most budgets. The timber-framed room with stone fireplace makes for a relaxed, friendly atmosphere. Service is fast. Try the bison burgers, the chicken pesto burger, or the chili.

In the Lake Louise Hostel and Alpine Centre. 203 Village Rd. ☎ 403/522-2200. Breakfast C\$4–C\$9 (US\$3.35–US\$7.55); lunch and dinner main courses C\$9–C\$15 (US\$7.55–US\$13). MC, V. Daily 7am–9pm.

**Laggan's Mountain Bakery and Deli** DELI/BAKERY A mainstay in Lake Louise for nearly a century, this is the spot to stop for takeout coffee or to load up on sandwiches and treats before hitting the hiking trail. It's a deli, so you order over the counter and then take a seat if you want to stay, or take your order to go. The quiches and the tofu vegetarian rolls are affordable and delicious. Sandwiches are made on Laggan's homemade breads (try the seed



bread, it's delicious). There's often a lineup out the door here, but you can beat the crowds if you enter via the alternate door on the left side and skip to the often-missed second cashier.

101 Lake Louise Dr. In Samson Mall. ☎ 403/522-2017. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner items C\$4–C\$7 (US\$3.35–US\$5.90). No credit cards. Summer daily 6:30am–9pm; winter daily 6am–7pm.

**The Station Restaurant at Lake Louise** *(Kids)* CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN Built in 1909, The Station is the oldest building in Lake Louise. No longer a functioning railway station, today the restaurant has glowing fires and fine food to draw visitors in. Families will be happy to see a wide selection of hamburgers and pizzas. For the grownups, there are seared shrimps and scallops served in a mild Indonesian orange cream sauce and AAA Alberta Angus beef tenderloin medallions. In the summer, the vintage railway cars are often open for dining, and barbecues are held in The Station garden. If you're driving out to Lake Louise from Banff Townsite, consider stopping here for lunch. Although memories of its past evoke a time of formal elegance, The Station today is casual and intimate, well-matched to its surroundings.

200 Sentinel Rd. 1st right past Samson Mall off the Trans-Canada Hwy. 1. ☎ 403/522-2600. Reservations recommended June–Aug daily and on weekends during the rest of the year. Lunch items C\$7–C\$11 (US\$5.90–US\$9.25); main dinner courses C\$25–C\$32 (US\$21–US\$27). AE, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–9pm.

**Walliser Stube** ★ FONDUE Come and dine at the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise and you'll discover that Swiss food doesn't merely consist of potatoes, cheese, and creams. This restaurant features lighter versions of traditional Alpine dishes. The fondues include bourguignon (beef in canola oil), Swiss cheese (baguette in a mix of Emmental Gruyere cheese, white wine, and kirsch liquor), and Bacchus (veal medallions in a white-wine broth). The service is impeccable, and the atmosphere, with the views of Lake Louise out the window, very indulgent and romantic. A true treat.

In the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise. 111 Lake Louise Dr. ☎ 403/522-3511. Reservations recommended June–Aug daily and on weekends during the rest of the year. Main courses C\$27–C\$50 (US\$23–US\$42). AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Daily 6–10pm.

## 5 Banff After Dark

Banff's nightlife is as legendary as its mineral springs or cowboy pioneers. Most hotels have lounges and bars where skiers gather in winter for the famous "après-ski" experience—which consists of sharing

stories about your adventures on the snowy slopes and smiling because you're out of your ski boots! Try to schedule at least one night to peruse the local bar scene. For a town the size of Banff, it's hip and diverse. There is regular live music and a variety of beers and spirits on tap. Banff at night is a great place for people-watching, too.

**Wild Bill's Legendary Saloon** (201 Banff Ave., upstairs; ☎ 403/762-0333) is the local cowboy hangout. What can I say? Head here if you want to drink beer and do some line dancing. Besides virtual golf and pool, **The Banff Rose and Crown** (202 Banff Ave., upstairs; ☎ 403/762-2121) has a spacious rooftop patio and a long list of beers on tap. There is often live music. The locals you meet at **Tommy's Neighbourhood Pub** ♡ (120 Banff Ave.; ☎ 403/762-8888) are happy to share stories of what it's like to live in such a storied town. This is a friendly place where you can actually have a conversation without yelling. **Saint James's Gate** ♡ (205 Wolf St.; ☎ 403/762-9355) will take you away to the Emerald Isle and make selecting a draught just about the toughest challenge in Banff—there are 33 beers on tap, as well as 50 single-malt scotches and 10 Irish whiskeys. Live music is almost always Celtic, and a blast! For later-night dancing, head to the funky techno atmosphere of the **Aurora Nightclub** (110 Banff Ave., downstairs; ☎ 403/760-5300) around midnight. There's a cigar room and a martini bar. Or, join the young crowd in the basement at **Hoodoo Lounge** (137 Banff Ave.; ☎ 403/760-8636) for top-20 dance tunes.