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Banff Two Ways

Whether you seek culture or outdoor pursuits, Banff will deliver

AUGUST 29, 2015 - BY PAM FIEBER

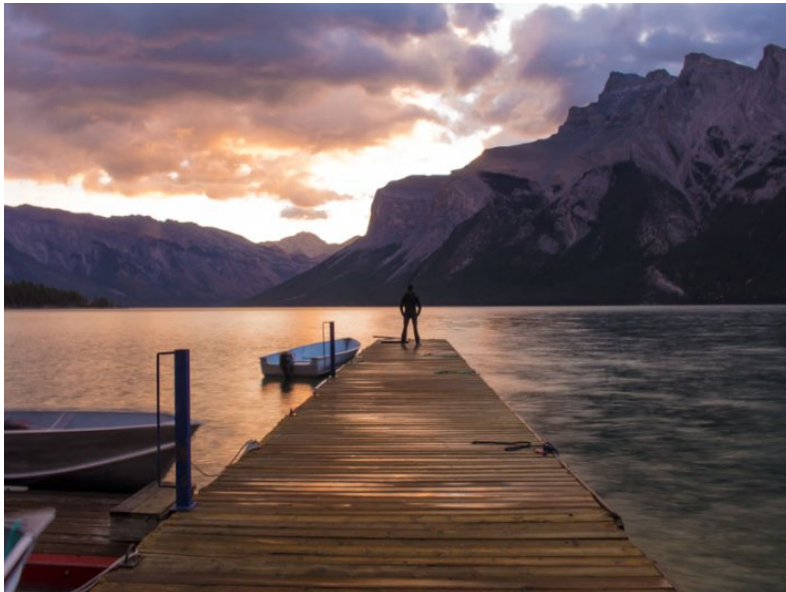


Photo by Corey Myke

There's something about the mountain air that brings out an energetic spirit, and anyone who has visited Banff National Park has likely felt it—some will yearn to paint the mountains, others to climb them. Either way, you can feel the unique mountain culture energy that comes with Banff's thriving arts scene and spectacular outdoor adventure opportunities.

Culture Vulture

In Banff, you can sip house-distilled vodka after a day of strolling through art galleries, and follow it up with an evening at the ballet.

Visit [The Banff Centre](#), which is internationally renowned for its programs and workshops for writers, artists and musicians. Soak up the creative atmosphere and enjoy a meal at the [Three Ravens Restaurant & Wine Bar](#) on campus. The restaurant boasts spectacular views and elegant food (try the Alberta bison striploin with charred shallot-merlot glaze) and is a popular hangout with locals. Also at the centre, don't miss the Music for a Summer Evening series, Friday nights at 7:30 throughout the summer, or

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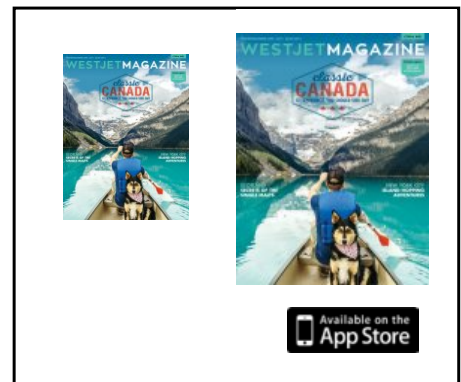
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Jazz Club, pay-what-you-can performances where you can listen to aspiring jazz musicians jam with more experienced players on select evenings throughout August.

Something new to see is the [Park Distillery](#) on Banff Ave. It opened in June and serves up gin, vodka, mountain schnapps and bitters on the site of the former Giorgio's Trattoria restaurant. Take a distillery tour for a behind-the-scenes appreciation of the distilling craft. Then stroll through downtown Banff, where you can check out a variety of [public art installations](#), from the paintings on the exterior wall of Banff Town Hall to the one that always makes the kids stop and play—a bronze sculpture depicting a historic mountain campsite at the corner of Banff Ave. and Elk Street.

Outdoor Enthusiast

If you're pining to play in those glorious mountains, you're in luck. Banff has no shortage of outdoor pursuits.

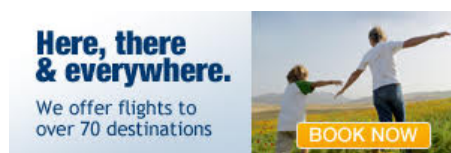
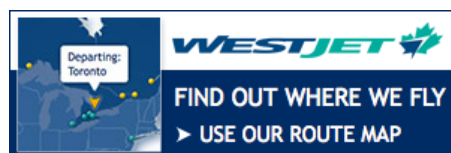
You don't have to have carabeners hanging off your belt to summit Mount Norquay; you can do an assisted climb on the [Via Ferrata](#). Climbers get strapped into a safety harness and head up the mountain on a system of cables, fixed anchors and ladders. There are three different routes to choose from; the newest and most challenging is the six-hour Mountaineer Route, which includes a traverse of an alpine ridge and a three-wire suspension bridge over a chasm. Your reward? An alpine picnic lunch at the summit.

If you'd rather explore deep beneath a mountain than on top of it, head to the [Cave & Basin National Historic Site](#), a series of underground caves and hot springs located at the foot of Sulphur Mountain. Like the Via Ferrata, all you need is a sense of adventure and some sensible shoes.

A pleasant afternoon can also be spent on the [Banff Legacy Trail](#) between the towns of Canmore and Banff—this is beautiful in summer and breathtaking in fall as the leaves begin to put on a show.

If you like the water, rent a canoe or kayak and cruise the placid waters of Lake Minnewanka, ending with a picnic by the lake and a stroll around the abandoned mining town of Bankhead. Or, get the adrenaline going with a guided rafting trip on the Bow River.

Getting there: [WestJet flies to Calgary](#) 115 times a day from 28 Canadian, 10 U.S. and three international cities.



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