

10 Best Things to Do in Banff: Canada's Top Winter Destination

Nestled in the heart of the Canadian Rockies, Banff is a premier [winter destination](#) that offers a perfect blend of adventure, natural beauty, and cozy charm. Whether you're an outdoor enthusiast looking for exhilarating activities or a traveler seeking serene landscapes, Banff has something for everyone. From skiing down powdery slopes to relaxing in natural hot springs, here are the 10 best things to do in Banff during the winter season.

1. Hit the Slopes at Banff's Ski Resorts

Banff is home to some of the best skiing in North America, with three major ski resorts: Mount Norquay, Sunshine Village, and Lake Louise Ski Resort. These resorts offer a wide range of slopes for all levels, from beginner to advanced. With stunning mountain views and well-groomed trails, skiing or snowboarding in Banff is a must for any winter sports enthusiast.

Highlights:

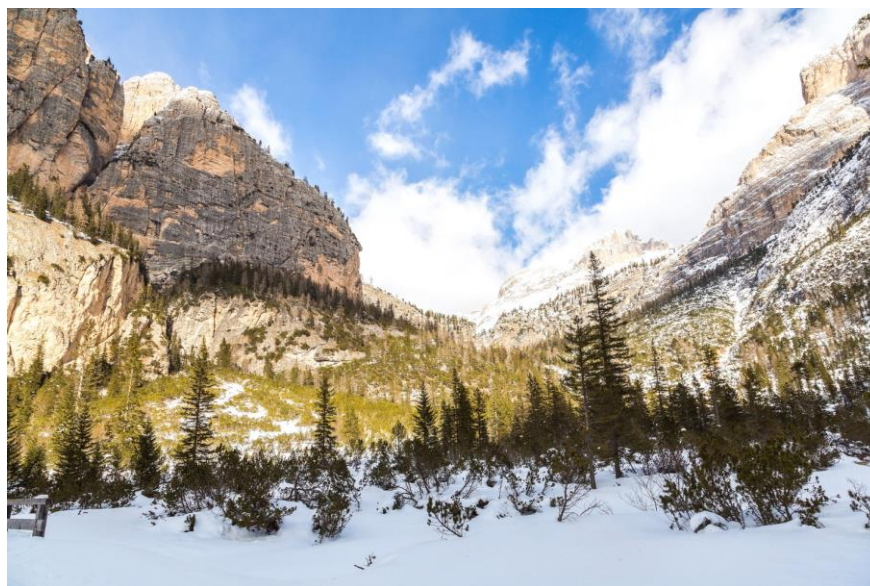
- Mount Norquay: Ideal for families and beginners with night skiing options.
- Sunshine Village: Known for its powdery snow and diverse terrain.
- Lake Louise Ski Resort: Offers scenic vistas and a variety of runs.

2. Ice Skating on Lake Louise

One of the most iconic winter activities in Banff is ice skating on Lake Louise. This crystal-clear lake, surrounded by snow-capped mountains, transforms into a winter wonderland during the colder months. The ice rink is groomed daily, and there's no better place to glide on skates while taking in the breathtaking scenery.

Highlights:

- Skate rentals available on-site.
- Enjoy a game of ice hockey or a peaceful skate at sunrise.
- Ice sculptures and light displays add to the festive atmosphere.



3. Explore Banff National Park on Snowshoes

For those who love exploring snow-covered landscapes, snowshoeing in Banff National Park is a great way to immerse yourself in nature. Trails of varying difficulty wind through dense forests, along frozen rivers, and past stunning alpine meadows. Snowshoeing is a peaceful and accessible activity for all fitness levels.

Highlights:

- Johnson Lake and Marsh Loop: Ideal for beginner snowshoers.
- Bow River and Lake Louise Shoreline: Great for scenic routes with mountain views.
- Guided snowshoe tours are available for those seeking expert insight.

4. Soak in Banff Upper Hot Springs

After a day of outdoor adventure, there's nothing better than soaking in the Banff Upper Hot Springs. Located on the slopes of Sulphur Mountain, these natural thermal pools provide a relaxing experience with a panoramic view of the surrounding mountains. The hot springs are a historic attraction, dating back to the 1880s, and offer a soothing respite from the chilly winter air.

Highlights:

- Open year-round, even in the coldest months.
- Relax in mineral-rich waters while enjoying a view of Mount Rundle.
- Bring a retro swimsuit for a nostalgic experience!



5. Take a Scenic Gondola Ride to Sulphur Mountain

For an unbeatable view of Banff's winter landscapes, hop on the Banff Gondola to the top of Sulphur Mountain. The eight-minute ride takes you to an elevation of 2,281 meters (7,486 feet), where you'll be treated to 360-degree views of the Canadian Rockies. At the summit, you can explore the observation deck, take a short hike, or dine at the summit restaurant.

Highlights:

- Panoramic views of Banff, the Bow Valley, and surrounding mountain ranges.
- Visit the interpretive center to learn more about the area's natural history.
- Warm up with a hot chocolate or enjoy a meal at Sky Bistro.

6. Experience a Horse-Drawn Sleigh Ride

For a classic winter experience, take a horse-drawn sleigh ride through the snow-covered meadows of Banff. This charming activity is perfect for families, couples, or anyone looking to enjoy the winter landscape in a more relaxed setting. Sleigh rides are available at both Lake Louise and Banff, offering scenic views of the mountains and forests.

Highlights:

- Cozy up under warm blankets as you ride through snowy terrain.
- Enjoy stunning views of Victoria Glacier at Lake Louise.
- Perfect for a romantic evening or a fun family outing.



7. Walk the Frozen Johnston Canyon

The Johnston Canyon Icewalk is a must-do winter hike in Banff. This easy, family-friendly trail takes you along steel walkways suspended over a frozen canyon, offering a unique view of the frozen waterfalls and ice formations. As you walk, you'll be surrounded by towering cliffs and icicles, creating an enchanting winter atmosphere.

Highlights:

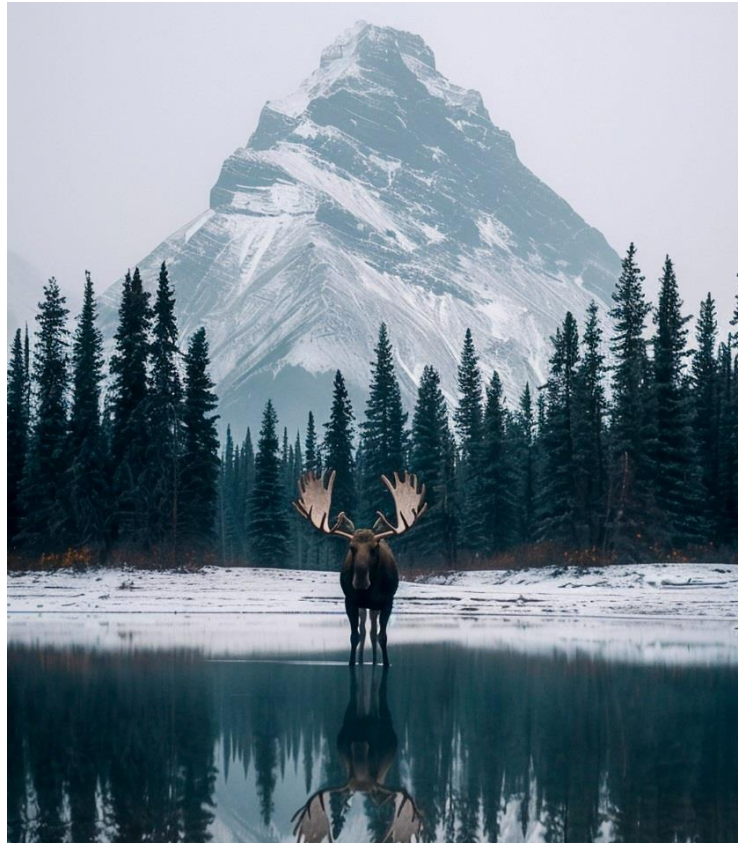
- See the impressive Lower and Upper Falls, both frozen in time.
- Night icewalk tours are available for a magical evening adventure.
- No special equipment is needed, but ice cleats are recommended for extra grip.

8. Try Ice Climbing on Frozen Waterfalls

For thrill-seekers, ice climbing in Banff offers a challenging and exhilarating way to experience the park's frozen landscapes. With world-class ice climbing routes, including the frozen waterfalls of Johnston Canyon and the Weeping Wall, Banff is a top destination for climbers. Whether you're a seasoned pro or a beginner, guided tours are available to help you navigate this extreme sport.

Highlights:

- Climb impressive ice formations with expert guides.
- Courses for all skill levels are offered.
- Gear and safety equipment are provided for guided climbs.



9. Spot Wildlife on a Winter Safari

Even in winter, Banff's wildlife is active and abundant. On a winter wildlife safari, you can spot animals such as elk, deer, wolves, and even the occasional moose. These guided tours take you to the best wildlife viewing areas in Banff National Park, offering a safe and educational experience to learn about the park's ecosystem.

Highlights:

- See Banff's winter wildlife in their natural habitat.
- Learn about the animals' survival strategies during the harsh winter months.
- Photography opportunities abound, so bring your camera!

10. Attend Banff's Winter Festivals

Banff comes alive in winter with festive events that celebrate the season. The Banff SnowDays Festival and the Ice Magic Festival at Lake Louise are two of the most popular events. SnowDays features snow sculptures, ice skating, and outdoor activities in downtown Banff, while Ice Magic showcases incredible ice sculptures created by artists from around the world.

Highlights:

- Admire massive snow and ice sculptures at Banff SnowDays.
- Watch artists carve intricate ice masterpieces at Ice Magic Festival.
- Enjoy family-friendly activities, live music, and food stalls.



Banff is undoubtedly one of the best winter destinations in the world, offering a wide array of activities for all types of travelers. Whether you're skiing down world-class slopes, exploring frozen canyons, or relaxing in natural hot springs, Banff's winter magic is sure to leave you in awe. With its stunning landscapes, vibrant winter festivals, and abundant wildlife, Banff is a must-visit for anyone seeking an unforgettable winter adventure in 2024. So, bundle up and get ready to experience the wonders of Canada's top winter destination!