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## **Calgary to Whistler 15 day Cycle Tour 31st Aug - 14th September 2020**

### **Brief summary of tour:**

**Arrival Day: Sunday 30th August:** Especially if arriving from an overseas destination, we recommend arriving a day early. We'll be available to pick you up and get you to the hotel.

**Day 1, Monday 31st August:** Arrive in Calgary, assemble bikes, Welcome dinner in town.

**Day 2, Tuesday 1st September:** Drive 1.5 hrs to Kananaskis, ride 80 km over the highwood pass to Kananaskis Hotel.

**Day 3, Wednesday 2nd:** Ride 80km to Banff via Canmore.

**Day 4, Thursday 3rd:** Rest day or ride around banff (golf course loop, tunnel mtn loop, Minnewanka Loop, Mt Norquay).

**Day 5, Friday 4th:** Ride 60km to Lake Louise via Bow Valley Parkway

**Day 6, Saturday 5th:** Ride 85km to The Crossing Resort

**Day 7, Sunday 6th:** Ride 100km to Sunwapta Falls

**Day 8, Monday 7th:** Ride 50km to Jasper.

**Day 9, Tuesday 8th:** Rest day, or Optional rides to Malign Lake, Mt Edith Cavel or Marmot Basin.

**Day 10, Wednesday 9th:** Ride 130km from Jasper to Valemount, drive 1hr to Blue River.

**Day 11, Thursday 10th:** Drive to Vancouver (6 - 7 hrs)

**Day 12, Friday 11th:** Ride to Capilano suspension bridge park (included) via Stanley Park and, register for Fondo and visit bike expo.

**Day 13, Saturday 12th:** Whistler Gran Fondo (55, 126, 152km).

**Day 14, Sunday 13th:** Rest day in Whistler, optional rides in town / Mountain Biking / Golf, Farewell dinner at Golf Club

**Day 15, Monday 14th:** Departure day, shuttles to Vancouver available leaving hotel 10am at the latest.



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### **WELCOME**

You'll see for yourself an incredible landscape that has been created and sculpted over millions of years. The amazing views you'll see and the mountains that you'll be riding are the result of what was once an ancient ocean floor. Before being thrust up into the air from forces to the west and sculpted by several ice ages. Glaciers carved out huge valleys. Melt water from these glaciers have been carving out a unique and ever-changing landscape ever since.

Culturally, first nations people have been living in the Rockies area for almost 11,000 years. Although since the 1800's modern day pioneers, railway builders, fur traders and explorers have turned it into what we see and experience today. Two of Canada's largest national parks and protected areas for tourism, nature and wildlife.

We will have 15 days of soaking up the famous Canadian hospitality, riding our bikes through amazing scenery and enjoying fantastic maple syrup-soaked pancakes.

Depending on the size of the group we use one, two or three small vehicles so can cater for all abilities, for example - we can easily drop more leisurely riders up the road so that they don't need to try and keep up with the fast cyclists. We will always have a vehicle at the front, as well as at the back. The 3rd vehicle which will accommodate any non riders that might decide to join us.

Cheers, Ben

### **Arrival Day, Calgary: Sunday 30th August 2020:**

Welcome to Calgary and the province of Alberta. Once you've cleared Customs and Immigration you will be met by Mountain Madness Tours and transferred to your hotel. Which is perfectly located in central Calgary. Calgary, a cosmopolitan Alberta City is situated at the confluence of the Bow River and the Elbow River in the south of the province, in an area of foothills and prairie, about 80 km east of the front ranges of the Canadian Rockies. With a population of over a million people it is the largest city in Alberta.

There are no official duties today although we may get started fitting some of the hire bikes.

It's great to finally have you here. Welcome to Canada.

**Meals Included:** none

**Accommodation:** The Westin Calgary (Note: Tonights accomodation is an optional extra)



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### Day 1, Monday 31st August: First day of the tour

For those who arrive today we will meet you at the airport as per yesterday.

The agenda for the day is simple. Late this morning (11am) we help you put bikes together and make sure that the rentals fit properly. We'll then pop out for a short ride around the city just to make sure everything is working. (you and the bike) The idea being that tomorrow we can rock n roll on our bikes without too much mucking around.

Today's ride is 20km long and hugs Bow River the entire way.

Everything is big in Canada. Even Bow River is 587 km long. The Bow begins in the Rocky Mountains and winds through the Alberta foothills onto the prairies, where it meets the Oldman River, the two then forming the South Saskatchewan River. These waters ultimately flow through the Nelson River into Hudson Bay.

Tonight, we'll have our first team dinner together. We'll then introduce everyone and run through the plan for the next 15 days.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Dinner

**Accommodation:** The Westin Calgary

### Day 2, Tuesday 1st September: Highwood Pass

After breakfast we pack the vehicles and head off towards the Canadian Rockies. Yes, things are about to become lumpy. Our home for tonight is the Pomeroy Lodge at Kananaskis. The lodge sits 1500m above sea level. A stunning hotel that you won't forget.

This area has 4,000 square kilometres of National Parks. Our goal is Highwood Pass. Canada's highest paved road which tops out at 2200m above sea level. This pass is completely closed from 01 November through to the end of March.

The impressive peaks of Kananaskis were formed some 200 million years ago by the pressure of shifting tectonic plates. The rock is mainly limestone, created from layers of fossilized sea creatures. Limestone is very soft and 12,000 years ago during the last ice age glaciers carved the limestone into the spectacular mountains we see today. Marine fossils are still abundant in the Canmore & Kananaskis area including ancient coral reefs, oyster beds and shark teeth.

One of the great explorers of the Canadian Rockies, Captain John Palliser, chose the name Kananaskis more than 150 years ago on his expedition through the area. Kananaskis is derived from the name "Kin-e-a-kis," a warrior who survived an axe blow to the head spurred by a fight to win the attention of a woman.

We'll find a nice place to park the vans 30km away from the summit of Highwood pass. We'll then ride to the top and then down the other side to our hotel. It's an amazing descent. All up we're looking at 80km however there's certainly no pressure on all of you to do that. The vans will be around you at all times so you can pretty much hop in when you've had enough. There's also the option of a few extra km's for those wanting the three figures.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

**Accommodation:** Pomeroy Kananaskis Mountain Lodge



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### Day 3, Wednesday 2nd: Kananaskis to Banff

After breakfast we leave our Kananaskis Hotel and head towards the tourist resort town of Banff. Other than Whistler this is the biggest town we'll stay in.

The first 10km leaving Kananaskis is on a bike trail. We then make our way to Canmore, which is our lunch stop. Canmore's fortunes and character were transformed when the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympic Games selected the town to host the cross-country and biathlon events. Canmore and its brand new Nordic Centre drew not just TV cameras but also tourists, property developers and young families looking to purchase homes. Since the Olympics, Canmore has more than tripled its population and is now a vibrant mountain lifestyle community and a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

After lunch we ride the new Legacy trail, a traffic free bike path which runs right into Banff. You are completely surrounded by mountains. One of the most recognizable and photographed chain of mountains in the area is the iconic Three Sisters. They were originally called the Three Nuns after a heavy snowfall left them resembling nuns in white veils.

Banff is one of the top tourist towns in Canada. Believe me – there's plenty to do and the vans will be available to run you around the place. It's a great idea to head up the gondola which gives you a 360 degree view of Banff.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Banff Ptarmigan Inn

### Day 4, Thursday 3rd: Exploring Banff

Today is what we refer to as loop day. There are three loops on offer - you choose. 1,2 or all 3. They're all spectacular. We start with the golf course loop and finish with the lakes loop.

There's also a chance to ride up Mount Norquay which is Banff's local ski field. It's a 6km climb at about 6%. If you ride all three loops and also Norquay then your total mileage will be about 60km and 900m of climbing. Nothing too scary.

This afternoon we advise you check out the town. It's ideal for those who have promised presents for the grandkids as it has great shopping. If the weather is nice then we'll run you up to the gondola which gives you a 360 degree view of Banff. There will also be shuttles to the hot pools.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Banff Ptarmigan Inn

### Day 5, Friday 4th: Lake Louise

Again, we ride hotel to hotel. Along a tourist road which is used in the Banff Gran Fondo, called the Bow Valley Parkway. It's 50km of pure bliss and very little traffic.

Upon arrival into Lake Louise we'll check in then provide shuttles to nearby Lake Louise and Moraine Lake.

Tonight we dine at the train station. It's actually a gorgeous old restaurant these days so I doubt it will be just a standard railway pie. The next three days offer some challenging cycling. Tomorrow we start on the Icefields Parkway. It's possibly the best 250km you'll bike in your lifetime.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mountaineer Lodge, Lake Louise



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### **Day 6, Saturday 5th: Icefields Parkway to Saskatchewan River Crossing**

It's our first day of three on the Icefields Parkway (Highway 93 North) which joins the hamlet of Lake Louise in Banff National Park with the Town of Jasper in Jasper National Park. The total distance is just shy of 250km.

The Icefields Parkway parallels the Continental Divide through some of the most wild and remote portions of Banff and Jasper national parks. It is a veritable feast of glaciated peaks, turquoise lakes, waterfalls and the spectacular Athabasca Glacier - part of the Columbia Icefield.

Just before the main climb of the day tops out we'll pause for lunch on the shore of Bow Lake. You'll have a cracking view of Bow Glacier and Bow Falls which is the start of the Bow River which you rode your bike beside in Calgary on day 1 of the tour! A bit more climbing remains to the absolute highlight of the day, Bow Pass (2129 m above sea level) which looks out across Peyto Lake.

After an exhilarating downhill some gentle rolling hills will take you past Snowbird Glacier which is sliding down Mt Patterson. You'll then enjoy some relatively flat stretches as you pass Waterfowl Lake and Mt Cephren. One last downhill stretch will see you pass under the shadow of Mt Murchison and across the North Saskatchewan River. From here the hotel is just a couple of km's away.

Located in Banff National Park in the heart of the famous Canadian Rockies, The Crossing Resort nestles at the base of towering Mt. Wilson. Surrounded by stunning mountain vistas and glaciers. The Crossing Resort boasts a spectacular alpine location unmatched anywhere in North America.

Dinner tonight is up to you. There's a restaurant with an all you can eat buffet or a pub where you can cook your own BBQ.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Lunch

**Accommodation:** The Crossing Resort



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### Day 7, Sunday 6th: Columbia Icefields and Sunwapta Falls

Another day in the Rockies, another day in Paradise. Everywhere you look are snow covered peaks. We'll cycle past the Columbia Icefields towards Jasper.

For the first 30km you'll be riding next to a series of huge mountains that tower above you, culminating with the Weeping Wall, a sheer 300m high cliff face covered with a series of waterfalls at the base of 3200m high Cirrus Mountain.

Today is actually the most challenging of the whole trip and includes a 16km climb to Sunwapta Pass. We will certainly have the support vans close by. The good news is that it's all downhill on the way home. (kind of)

Sunwapta Pass which sits at just over 2000m marks the watershed divide between the Athabasca River to the north and the North Saskatchewan system to the south. Waters flowing north from this summit eventually reach the Arctic Ocean via the Mackenzie River. It also marks the boundary between Jasper and Banff National Parks.

The Columbia Icefield is the largest in the Rocky Mountains and feeds Athabasca Glacier which once upon a time reached the main road. Astride the Continental Divide along the border of British Columbia and Alberta. The ice field lies partly in the north-western tip of Banff National Park and partly in the southern end of Jasper National Park.

After lunch we'll have one more short sharp hill to climb up to the Brewsters skywalk then it's mostly downhill or flat as you cruise by the Endless Chain Ridge which runs like a knife edge towering 1600m above the Icefields parkway to Sunwapta Falls resort.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Dinner

**Accommodation:** Sunwapta Falls Resort

### Day 8, Monday 7th: Jasper

Our ride to Jasper is about 50kms, so we'll have a relaxed morning and we'd recommend walking down to Sunwapta Falls for a look.

Lunch is at the impressive Athabasca Falls. Powerful and noisy, Athabasca Falls is not the tallest waterfall in the Rockies but tremendous amounts of water plough through the channel and over the falls. Thousands of years of water action from the Athabasca River has worn down the rock creating smooth walls and pots along the path. You will feel the mist of your face and feel the forces of nature at work.

Jasper, an alpine town in western Alberta, is the commercial centre of Jasper National Park The largest national park in the Canadian Rockies, spanning 10,878 km<sup>2</sup> It is located in the province of Alberta, north of Banff National Park and west of Edmonton. The park includes the glaciers of the Columbia Icefield, hot springs, glacier fed lakes, forests, waterfalls, rivers, mountains and abundant wildlife.

Jasper was largely ignored for almost three decades after the pioneering railroad engineers decided to build the trans-continental railway through Kicking Horse Pass and the Bow Valley through Banff rather than over the Yellow head Pass up to Edmonton. In 1903 a second railway line was built through Jasper reinvigorating the town and in 1930 it became a National Park.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

**Accommodation:** Beckers Chalets



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### Day 9, Tuesday 8th: Rest day in Jasper

Today, the majority will target Maligne Lake. Thousands of tourists descend upon Maligne every day. Although only a handful will travel via bike. One can't help but smile as you're riding along taking in the stunning scenery around you.

The 80 km return is manageable however it does include 1200m of climbing. For those looking for a shorter ride you can simply ride one way and we'll shuttle you there or back.

Another option is a van shuttle to the base of nearby Mt. Edith Cavell. An impressive 3300-metre peak, Mt. Edith Cavell is named after a British nurse executed during World War I for her part in helping Allied prisoners escape occupied Brussels. An earlier name, "La Montagne de la Grande Traverse", was given to the peak by French-Canadian voyageurs using nearby Athabasca Pass as a fur trade route. A narrow 14 km road brings visitors close to the mountain's awesome north face, an area famous for interesting moraines, the Cavell Meadows, alpine flowers and spectacular views of Angel Glacier.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Beckers Chalets

### Day 10, Wednesday 9th: Blue River

It's our last day in the Rockies. All good things sadly, must come to an end. We'll have a choice of three rides, ranging from 60km to 127km. Some will be wanting to take it easy given that we have the fondo on Saturday. Others will simply ride as far as they can. You won't have the opportunity to do so next week.

The first inhabitants of the Robson Valley called Mt Robson "Yuh- hai-has-kun," or "The Mountain of the Spiral Road," for its layered appearance. Early explorers — prospectors, fur traders and railroaders — were also awed by the sight of Mount Robson's colossal, snow-capped peak. As it comes to rest at 3,954 m, the highest peak in the Canadian Rocky chain — sometimes in the clear blue sky, and sometimes in the clouds — there is not a soul who passes through this valley without giving reverence to this pinnacle. But what is more impressive than one mountain in this vast range is the parkland that it shelters and the environmental significance it plays in the history of British Columbia and Canada.

Mount Robson Provincial Park is the second oldest park in the province and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1990. At the heart of this protected area are the headwaters and the first 100 km of the largest salmon producing river in the world. The Fraser River begins as an icy trickle here in the park before flowing 1,378 km to the Pacific Ocean. The Mt Robson Visitors centre is where we'll catch up with the van. (with snacks & drinks)

Our destination is Blue River — population 260. Mike Wiegele's luxury heli ski resort will be yours to enjoy for the night. After heading to Canada from his native Austria at the age of 21, Wiegele worked his way up a personal ladder that included jobs as a carpenter, ski instructor, race coach responsible for the development of three Canadian World Cup winners, mountain guide and lodge builder. Wiegele has been inducted into the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame. It wouldn't be unusual for you to see him in the bar tonight.

Blue River is legendary for its powder in the winter. Come summer it's equally well known for its wildlife and it would be unusual for us not to see Yogi.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

**Accommodation:** Mike Wiegele's Heli Ski Resort



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### Day 11, Thursday 10th: Van transfer to Vancouver

An early start this morning as we travel to Vancouver. Our longest commute of the trip. By no means is a boring drive as the scenery heading up the valley is pretty special. We travel alongside the North Thompson River for most of the day. It's about a 6-hour journey.

Today is the only actual non-riding day on the trip. So, kick back and relax. There will be plenty of coffee stops.

Set amid a backdrop of snow-flecked mountains, dripping rain forest, and sandy beaches, Vancouver is, as the tourist brochures say, "Spectacular by nature." Steadily earning accolades as one of the world's most livable cities, Vancouver has it all: superb restaurants, world-class shopping, recreation to boggle the mind, and remarkable cultural diversity. With the West Coast's busiest port, the fairest weather in Canada, and an open-door policy to anyone from someplace else, the city is no stranger to growth.

As the ships slide in and out of port, so do the visitors, coming to ski and hike, enjoy the arts, eat fresh seafood, and soak up the surrounding beauty. With 2.6 million residents in the metro area, Vancouver is the third largest city in Canada.

The city's soul is outside the center, in the surrounding oceanscapes, parks, mountains, beaches, glaciers, and sky. Pair this magnificent natural environment with the astonishing churn of global money that enters the city, and you have a funky, glitzy, outdoorsy, high-tech, prim, hippie, glass-covered kind of city.

Our hotel for the next couple of nights is perfectly placed literally right at the entrance to Stanley Park.

Late this afternoon the team will clean and tune all the bikes. It's then off to a velo café for dinner which is pretty much a cycling museum that serves food and beer. A nice way to end the day. Goodnight

**Meals Included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

**Accommodation:** The Westin Bayshore Vancouver

### Day 12, Friday 11th: Vancouver

Today is all about active rest. Tomorrow is a big day.

So, after a leisurely breakfast we target the fantastic cycle paths around Stanley Park with a side trip across the Lions Gate Bridge to North Vancouver. Here we'll visit the Capilano Suspension Bridge Park where you'll cross over the chasm of the Capilano River to towering evergreens, cedar-scented rainforest air and Treetops Adventure. There are 7 suspended footbridges offering views 110 feet above the forest floor to explore. A cliff walk follows a granite precipice along Capilano River with a labyrinth-like series of narrow cantilevered bridges, stairs and platforms.

This afternoon it's all about preparing for tomorrow's adventure as we head to the Vancouver Convention Centre to visit the cycle expo and to register / pick up our rider packs for the Sea to Sky Fondo. Opposite the convention centre is the suburb of Gastown. A popular place for cafes, restaurants, art, craft beer and grunge shopping. Well worth a look on the way back.

Dinner is included tonight as we run through logistics of getting you and your luggage to Whistler. We'd suggest an early night as you'll be getting up at 4 something tomorrow. Yes, 4 as in 4am

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Dinner

**Accommodation:** The Westin Bayshore Vancouver



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### Day 13, Saturday 12th: Sea to Sky Gran Fondo

Quite probably - the best GranFondo you will ever do. Everything is first class. The scenery, roads, safety and where else can you have waffles and maple syrup at a rest stop. Did I mention that the Lion Gate Bridge and motorway are closed all the way up to Whistler. Just for us. Boom.

Here's the rough plan which will be confirmed at dinner last night.

**4.45 am** : Luggage into vans for riders entered in the short 55km and the long 152km fondo.

**5.00 am** : buffet breakfast opens for all.

**5.15 am** : 152km riders depart for start line. (ride starts at 6.05am) This is also the time that the 55km riders depart in the van for Whistler.

**5.45 am** : Everyone else (122km and any non riders) loads luggage into the 2nd trailer, van.

**6.15 am** : Regular fondo riders leave hotel for start time of 7am

**6.30 am** : 2nd van (non riders) and trailer leaves hotel for Whistler.

OK.... Enough of the stats. Today is awesome. In my opinion the best Fondo you'll ever do.

Before you is an epic route with challenging climbs and thrilling descents. All you have to do is concentrate on the beauty around you. You're feeling fit and you're lined up for a huge ride with thousands of your fellow cyclists. It's not a race, so there's no pressure. You can ride whatever pace you want. You can even stop for a waffle along the way - they're provided.

Starting in Stanley Park join 5000 + riders on your own dedicated car free lane all the way through town, onto the sea to sky highway to Whistler. The most popular distance is 122 km with an elevation gain of 1700m. A shorter distance of 55 km (Whistler to Whistler out and back) and a longer distance of 152km (includes 800m extra elevation gain up to the summit of Cypress as a side trip on your way to Whistler) are also available as options for this event.

If there are any non riders in the crew, Whistler we must go. And we must leave early to avoid road closures. Our plan is to give you an orientation of Whistler by vehicle. Show you where our hotel (please note that check-in isn't until later on this afternoon) is in relation to the fondo finish. It's about a 10min walk. When you are ready - please join us at the finish line in time for some sweaty cyclists to arrive.

Cyclists - after you roll into Whistler, park your bike and find your land legs, make your way to the Mountain Madness Tours tent. In the Plaza there will be food and refreshments, the awards ceremony, live entertainment, and beer garden. Amen. Welcome to the number 1 ski resort in North America although at this time of the year it's lycra, not snow that dominates.

Dinner will be on your own tonight. There are hundreds of restaurants to choose from.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Lunch

**Accommodation:** The Listel Hotel Whistler



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### **Day 14, Sunday 13th: Whistler at Leisure**

The Whistler resort area, north of Vancouver in British Columbia, exists because of skiing. With more than 8,000 acres over 2 mountains, Whistler and Blackcomb, it's the largest skiable area in North America. That distinction – and its roughly 12m of yearly snowfall – helped it earn co-hosting duties at the 2010 Winter Olympics. Its hub is a compact, chalet-style pedestrian village.

Thanks to yesterday's exploits - some of you will feel like a day off the bike. In which case there's plenty to choose from. In fact, every Sunday Blackcomb village (10min walk) holds their traditional Farmers Market. 90 stalls showcasing lots of yummy stuff.

I'd recommend catching village gondola up Blackcomb Mountain. And then a 2nd gondola called the Peak to Peak. Which stretches a record breaking 3km between Blackcomb and Whistler mountain and takes you 436m above the valley floor. It's an absolute must. You should see black bears on the way up and the restaurant at the top wins awards year after year. The view back down the valley has to be seen to be believed.

The other option is going for a spot of mountain biking.

Those who want to ride on the road can do so – we'll head out on a leisurely 30km Whistler sightseeing ride around all the bike paths.

Tonight, we celebrate our last dinner together which is actually at the golf course. It's been an amazing two weeks.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Dinner

**Accommodation:** The Listel Hotel Whistler

### **Day 15, Monday 14th: Last day of the tour**

Feel free to stay on for a day or two. Why not – there's certainly plenty to do.

For others – it's time to say goodbye. Thank you.

Whistler to Vancouver is about 90 mins. Vancouver Airport is an extra 30min drive. We'll have a plan in place to make sure that the transfer allows plenty of time for those flying out today.

Thank you once again for joining Mountain Madness Tours. Safe travels back home.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast



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### The Tour includes:

- Hotel accommodation for 14 nights. (Arrival night accommodation is an optional extra)
- 14 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 9 dinners and snacks during the riding days (includes tips)
- Transport in Mercedes 11 - 15 passenger vans
- Bike Transport in a custom enclosed secure bike trailer
- Up to Three riding Guides and mechanic depending on the final size of the group.
- National Park Passes
- Gran Fondo entry
- \* Capilano Bridge entry

### Optional extras:

- Airfares and travel insurance
- Bike hire VR30 Felt road bikes
- Additional excursions (golf, hot springs etc)
- \* Alcoholic beverages with meals
- \* Some Meals

### Pricing:

Please contact Ben from Mountain Madness Tours for a custom quote.

### Contact:

**Mountain Madness Tours:** Ben Johnson | **Web:** [www.mountainmadnesstours.com](http://www.mountainmadnesstours.com)

**Email:** [info@mountainmadnesstours.com](mailto:info@mountainmadnesstours.com) | **Phone:** + 1.780.885.9813

**More info:** <http://www.mountainmadnesstours.com/jasper-to-banff-cycling-tours/>