

The Banff Commonwealth Walkway



route / Norquay Road

Spray River “Orange Walk”

Canada's Commonwealth Walkway project consists of an interpretive panel at the southwest corner of Banff Avenue and Buffalo Street. Four routes radiate from this location.

There are 38 points of interest along the four routes. The points of interest are indicated with a bronze marker, bearing the Queen's cypher, that is either set in the walking path or located on large boulders adjacent to the pathway/trail. Refer to the map in the centrefold of the brochure to help you with route finding.

Download the app at: banffcanmorecf.org or banff.ca

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Cross Banff Avenue, turn south and walk along the east side of the street. The Banff Legion is just before the bridge.

Marker #31 – Banff Legion

The Banff Legion has been a centre of our community since 1918. The Legion was started by veterans for veterans. They knew they needed to come together with their comrades to be united in their shared experience. It is a place and a tradition many of us grew up with. Every November 11th, we stand together at the cenotaph placed by the local IODE on this spot in 1923. The names on that monument represent the families from that time and many of those families and their descendants live in this valley today. It is a place for not just remembering the past, but also for living the present life and looking toward the future. People come here for dances, bingo games, guest speakers, to play a game of pool and to meet some old and new friends for a libation. All are welcome – locals and visitors. Join us in the Banff Royal Canadian Legion #26 Colonel Moore Branch. Come to say hello, bring your story, have a drink, play some pool and take a look around inside at our memorabilia. You are welcome here.



Laying wreaths on Remembrance Day. Photo courtesy of Mark Walker.

Do not cross the bridge. Walk down the foot path below the Banff Legion and follow the path east along the Bow River to the Pedestrian Bridge. The marker is at the north end of the bridge.

Marker #32 – The Second Crossing

For 116 years, there was just one crossing over the Bow River, first for horse and buggies and then for vehicles. It wasn't until 2013 that the second crossing of the river was completed, a bridge for pedestrians and cyclists. The bridge was designed to be in harmony with the surrounding views, and built to withstand a 100-year flood, which is the very first thing it did. On June 20, five days before the planned ribbon cutting, Banff, like much of southern Alberta, experienced the worst flooding in province's history. Heavy rains and highway washouts delayed the opening, but the pedestrian bridge itself easily passed the test. On July 2, 2013, just one week after the flood receded, the second crossing of the Bow River opened.

Did you know? With its 113-metre length, including the 80-metre central span, the pedestrian bridge is among the longest timber bridges in the world, and the glulam beams are among the largest installed in North America. The bridge design and engineering has won multiple international awards.

Did you know? In May 2017, morning commuters crossing the bridge were joined by 500+ lb grizzly bear 136, known as Split Lip, who must have decided the bridge would work just fine as a wild-life overpass. Humans backed away, and he made it halfway across before Parks Canada wildlife officers shooed him off the bridge and out of town.



Grand opening, July 2013. Photo courtesy of Town of Banff.

Cross the Pedestrian Bridge and turn left on the south side of the bridge and follow the path southward along the Bow River for about 10 minutes.

Marker #33 - Fish Hatchery

Between 1913 and 1956, the Banff Fish Hatchery operated near here. Park managers were keen to improve angling opportunities for visitors. Their goal was to introduce and maintain game fish (e.g. brook trout, rainbow trout) in mountain lakes that had no native species of trout. Stocking lakes in Banff National Park was stopped in 1988. Efforts to return some lakes and aquatic ecosystems to a natural state have occurred in places such as Devon Lakes where non-native brook trout have been removed.

Did you know? Since 1915, nearly 40 million non-native fish and eggs were released in Banff National Park's watersheds.



Banff Fish Hatchery 1940. Don Coltman, AM1545-S3-: CVA 586-255, City of Vancouver Archives.

Continue walking south along the path beside the Bow River. There are a series of stairs to climb and descend before you reach the viewing area below the falls. The marker is located at the north end of the short stone wall.

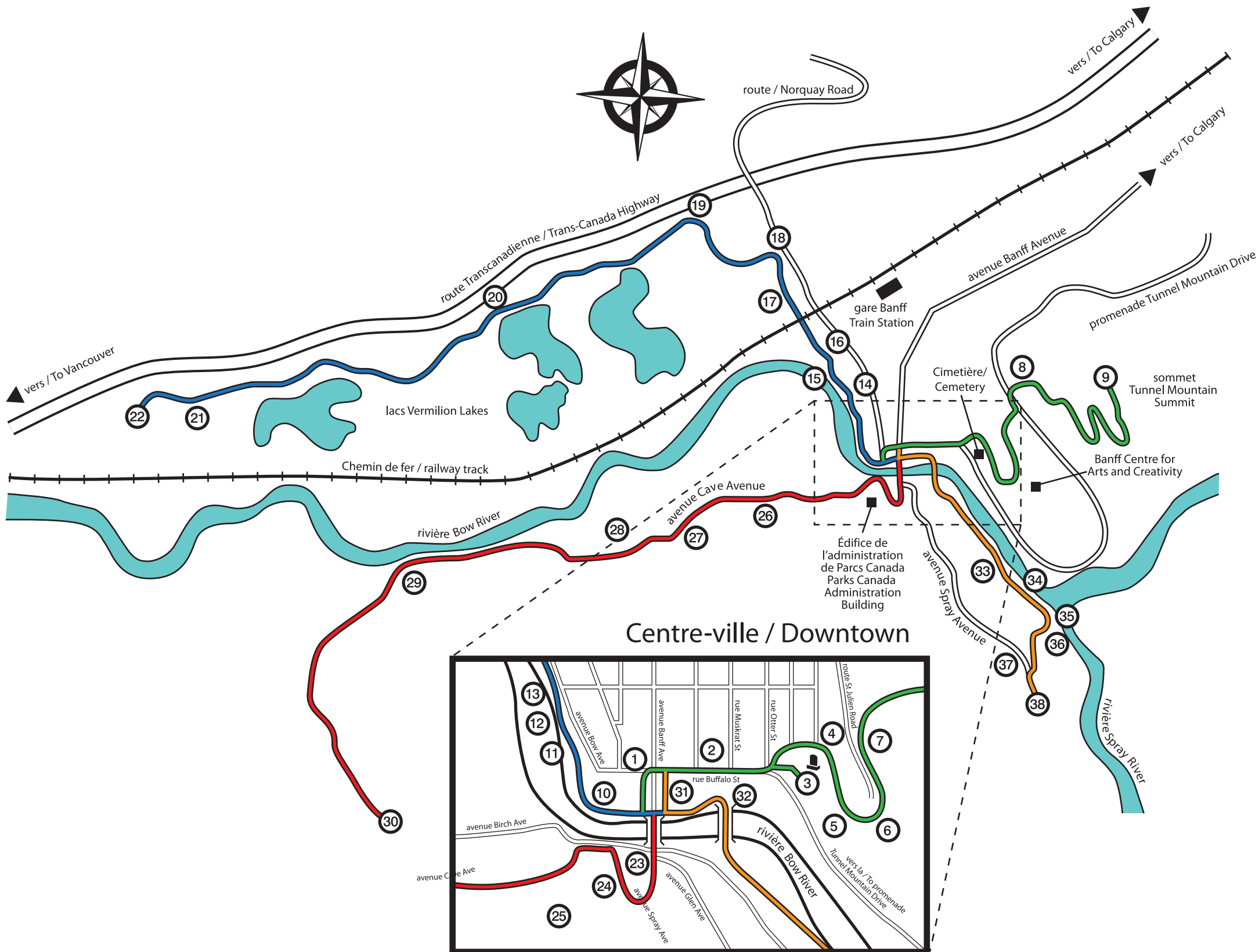
Marker #34 - Bow Falls

Imagine running logs over Bow Falls on their way to Calgary in the 1880s. Prior to the creation of Banff National Park, timber berths were created along the Bow River. The Eau Claire and Bow River Lumber Company eventually set up a mill in Calgary that was supplied by logs coming from Castle Mountain. Forestry and coal mining brought many new people to the Bow Valley. However, it was tourism that soon became the dominant industry in Banff as visitors from Europe and eastern North America came west to “take the waters” at the hot springs, view the mountain scenery and relax in luxury at the Banff Springs Hotel.

Did you know? The mining community of Bankhead, at the foot of Cascade Mountain, boasted a domestic electric, water and sewer system years ahead of Banff.



Log run above Bow Falls, ca. 1890. John Woodruff, NA66-1348, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, whyte.org.



Centre-ville / Downtown

- promenade verte / Green Walk - 4 km, 120 min, 9 points of interest, lieux d'intérêt
- promenade bleue / Blue Walk - 6 km, 90 min, 13 points of interest, lieux d'intérêt
- promenade rouge / Red Walk - 5 km, 70 min, 8 points of interest, lieux d'intérêt
- promenade orange / Orange Walk - 3 km, 45 min, 8 points of interest, lieux d'intérêt

Continue walking south along the path towards the bridge over the Spray River (road leads to Banff Springs Golf Course). The marker is on the north side of the bridge adjacent to the foot path.

Marker #35 – Princess Patricia

The iconic Fairmont Banff Springs has welcomed international heads of state and celebrities for over 125 years. From the Royal Visit of future King George V and Queen Mary in 1901 to Princess Margaret visiting in 1958, the Castle in the Rockies has been a must-visit stop on the itinerary of many prominent guests. Pictured below is Princess Patricia Connaught, the namesake of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry Regiment (PPCLI), of which she became appointed the Colonel in Chief in 1918. Her father, Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught was named Governor General of Canada in 1911. The PPCLI serve as Western Canada's local infantry regiment, further demonstrating the longstanding ties in the area with the Commonwealth.



Princess Patricia arriving at Banff Train Station. V408-PA-7, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, whyte.org.

Cross the road and walk up the paved path towards the Waldhaus Restaurant. The marker is located at the foot of the stairs below the restaurant and tee box.

Marker #36 - Golf Course

Imagine a hickory club in your hand and a feather filled golf ball placed on a wooden tee before you. This spot marks the original first hole of the Fairmont Banff Springs Golf Course, designed by legendary course architect, Canadian born Stanley Thompson. When the course opened in 1928, what is now the Waldhaus Restaurant served as the original clubhouse, a prime location to take in the serene views of Spray Meadows. Many of the courses Thompson designed still remain on top 100 lists around the world, some almost one hundred years after they were constructed. Classic, iconic, and designed to showcase the stunning mountain ranges, it's a round on the bucket list for many golf enthusiasts.



Tom Wilson opening the Banff Springs Golf Course, August 1928. V701/LC-113, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, whyte.org

Find the stairs leading up to the Banff Springs Hotel. Your goal is to locate the traffic circle just south of the hotel. The marker is located on the sidewalk across from the statue of Van Horne.

Marker #37 - Van Horne

The Fairmont Banff Springs is an internationally recognized symbol of Canadian hospitality. Sir William Cornelius Van Horne, appointed general manager of Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) has been credited with recognizing the tourism potential of the Canadian west. Van Horne maintained tourism was an intricate ingredient in getting people to ride CPR, the railroad uniting Canada's East to the West. His philosophy reflected this awareness, "Since we can't export the scenery," he said, "we'll have to import the tourists."

So to enhance traffic on the CPR, Van Horne envisioned a succession of lavish resort hotels along the railway line through the Rocky and Selkirk Mountains. This hotel opened to the public on June 1, 1888 and was designated a National Historic Site in 1992. From celebrities to heads of state, the beloved Castle in the Rockies is a crown jewel in Banff National Park.



Sir William Cornelius Van Horne. © Library and Archives Canada / PA-182603

Continue south to the Spray River Trailhead. This is the end of this arm of the walkway.

Marker #38 – The Great Trail

This is the end of this arm of the Banff Commonwealth Walkway. The Spray River and Goat Creek trails are also part of the Great Trail (aka Trans-Canada Trail). The Great Trail network stretches across Canada and reaches the Arctic, Atlantic and Pacific coastlines. There are portions of the trail in all 10 provinces and three territories. It is over 24,000 km long and includes stretches on lakes and rivers. It is by far the longest trail network in the world. The vision for the Great Trail began in 1992.

Did you know? Prince Edward, during a visit to Canada in 2016, suggested that the Banff Commonwealth Walkway also follow a section of the Great Trail.



Prince Edward unveiling the Banff Commonwealth Walkway marker, Calgary, 2016. Photo courtesy of Town of Banff

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