

Vancouver to Calgary Road Trip Itinerary

August 28 - September 15, 2025

18 Days • ~2,200km driving

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Days 1-3: August 28-30 (Thursday-Saturday)

📍 VANCOUVER • 3 nights • No car yet

Activities:

-  Explore Granville Island Public Market
-  Stanley Park Seawall (rent bikes or walk)
-  Gastown historic district
-  Optional: Capilano Suspension Bridge or Grouse Mountain
-  Vancouver Aquarium

Food Recommendations:

-  Vij's or Published on Main (upscale Indian/modern Canadian)
-  Granville Island restaurants for casual waterfront dining

Notes:

- Consider Sea-to-Sky Gondola day trip in Squamish (can do Aug 30 before car pickup)
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Day 4: August 31 (Sunday)

📍 VANCOUVER → WHISTLER • 1.5 hours drive • 1 night

Activities:

-  Pick up rental car in Vancouver
-  Drive Sea-to-Sky Highway (scenic coastal route)
-  Peak 2 Peak Gondola in Whistler (optional)
-  Explore Whistler Village

Accommodation: Whistler

Day 5: September 1 (Monday)

📍 **WHISTLER → PEMBERTON → LILLOOET** • ~3 hours total • 1 night

Activities:

- **Morning:** Joffre Lakes Provincial Park hike (11km return, 3-4 hours)
 - Three stunning turquoise glacial lakes
 - Most Instagram-worthy hike in BC
- Drive through Mount Currie area
- Arrive Lillooet (historic gold rush town)

Accommodation: Lillooet or Cache Creek

Day 6: September 2 (Tuesday)

📍 **LILLOOET → KAMLOOPS** • ~2.5 hours • 1 night

Activities:

- Scenic drive through interior BC
- Optional stop: Sun Peaks Resort (summer hiking/mountain biking)
- Explore Kamloops city
- Riverside parks and trails

Accommodation: Kamloops

Day 7: September 3 (Wednesday)

📍 **KAMLOOPS → CLEARWATER (Wells Gray Provincial Park)** • 1.5 hours • 1 night

Activities:

- **Wells Gray Provincial Park** - "Waterfall Park"
- Helmcken Falls (4th highest waterfall in Canada - 141m drop)
- Dawson Falls
- **Excellent bear viewing area** - watch for black bears and grizzlies
- Several hiking options: Ray Farm Trail, Green Mountain Lookout

Accommodation: Clearwater

 **Note:** Prime bear habitat - bring bear spray and make noise on trails

Day 8: September 4 (Thursday)

📍 **CLEARWATER → MOUNT ROBSON → JASPER** • ~4 hours total • Start of 3 nights

Activities:

-  **Mount Robson Provincial Park** (highest peak in Canadian Rockies - 3,954m)
-  **Valley of a Thousand Falls hike** (30km return, 8-10 hours, strenuous)
 - Alternative: Hike to Kinney Lake only (14km return, 2-3 hours, easier)
 -  Trail goes: Kinney Lake → Valley of 1000 Falls → Berg Lake
 -  Decide on the day how far you want to push
-  Continue to Jasper (beautiful scenic drive)

Accommodation: Jasper (3 nights)

 **Pack:** Lots of water, snacks, rain gear, bear spray

Days 9-10: September 5-6 (Friday-Saturday)

📍 **JASPER AREA** • 2 full days

Activities:

Bear & Salmon Viewing:

- **Guided wildlife tour** (book in advance: Jasper Wildlife Tours or SunDog Tours)
- Early morning is best for grizzly sightings
- Maligne Valley is excellent for bears
-  Check Maligne River tributaries for spawning salmon

Hiking Options:

- Sulphur Skyline (8km, panoramic 360° views)
- Maligne Canyon (easy trail with dramatic gorge)
- Valley of Five Lakes (4.5km loop, turquoise lakes)
- Edith Cavell Meadows (8km, alpine meadows)

Other Activities:

-  Jasper SkyTram (highest aerial tramway in Canada)

-  Maligne Lake boat tour to Spirit Island (iconic photo spot)
-  Miette Hot Springs (longest drive but worth it)

Food:

-  Evil Dave's Grill, Fiddle River Restaurant (upscale)
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Day 11: September 7 (Sunday)

📍 JASPER → BANFF VIA ICEFIELDS PARKWAY • Full day scenic drive • Start of 3 nights

🏆 One of the world's most scenic drives (232km)

Must-Stop Highlights:

-  Columbia Icefield & Athabasca Glacier
 - Glacier Skywalk (glass-floor walkway)
 - Optional: Ice Explorer tour onto glacier (book ahead)
-  Peyto Lake (iconic turquoise viewpoint)
-  Athabasca Falls (powerful waterfall)
-  Bow Lake (pristine glacial lake)
-  Sunwapta Falls
-  Numerous pull-offs for wildlife and scenery

Timing: Budget full day (leave Jasper by 8am, arrive Banff late afternoon)

Accommodation: Banff (3 nights)

Days 12-13: September 8-9 (Monday-Tuesday)

📍 BANFF AREA • 2 full days

Activities:

🐻 Bear & Salmon Viewing (Peak Season!):

- **Johnston Canyon** 🌟 PRIME SPOT
 - Early morning (6-7am) for best bear sightings
 -  Watch bears catching spawning salmon
 - Beautiful waterfall canyon hike (5.4km to upper falls)
- Vermilion Lakes (sunset/sunrise for bears)

- Bow Valley Parkway (early morning/dusk drive)

Lake Louise Area:

-  **Critical:** Arrive before 6am OR book Parks Canada shuttle
 - Road closes 6am-5pm in peak season without shuttle pass
-  **Lake Louise** - iconic turquoise glacial lake
-  Plain of Six Glaciers Trail (13km from Lake Louise)
-  **Moraine Lake** - even more stunning than Lake Louise
-  Larch Valley hike (larches may start turning golden mid-Sept)

Other Activities:

-  Banff Gondola (Sulphur Mountain summit)
-  Banff townsite: Cascade Gardens, Bow Falls, shopping
-  Lake Minnewanka scenic drive (bighorn sheep, possible bears)
-  Banff Upper Hot Springs

Food:

-  The Bison Restaurant (farm-to-table, bison dishes)
-  Park Distillery (craft cocktails, local ingredients)
-  Bear Street Tavern (casual)

 **Book Now:** Lake Louise shuttle passes (if not arriving before 6am)

Day 14: September 10 (Wednesday)

 **BANFF → GOLDEN (via Yoho National Park)** • ~2 hours • 1 night

Activities:

-  **Morning in Banff:** Vermilion Lakes or Lake Minnewanka
-  Drive through **Yoho National Park**
-  **Emerald Lake** - stunning turquoise lake, canoe rentals
-  **Takakkaw Falls** (380m - 2nd highest in Canada)
-  Natural Bridge (river carving through rock)
-  Arrive Golden
-  Optional: Whitewater rafting on Kicking Horse River

Accommodation: Golden

Day 15: September 11 (Thursday)

📍 **GOLDEN → REVELSTOKE** • ~1.5 hours • 1 night

Activities:

- 🌲 More Yoho exploration if desired
- 🚗 Drive to Revelstoke
- 🌸 **Meadows in the Sky Parkway** (Mount Revelstoke National Park)
 - Drive/hike to subalpine meadows
 - Short summit trails with panoramic views
- 🏙 Explore Revelstoke downtown
- 🏛 Railway Museum (if interested in Canadian history)

Accommodation: Revelstoke

Day 16: September 12 (Friday)

📍 **REVELSTOKE → CALGARY** • ~5-6 hours drive • Start of 2 nights

Activities:

- 🚗 Long driving day via Trans-Canada Highway
- 🏙 Optional stop: Salmon Arm (lakeside town)
- 🏙 Arrive Calgary afternoon/evening
- 🏙 Explore Stephen Avenue pedestrian mall

Accommodation: Calgary (2 nights)

Days 17-18: September 13-14 (Saturday-Sunday)

📍 **CALGARY** • 2 full days

Day 17 Activities:

- 🐻 **Optional day trip:** Drumheller & Canadian Badlands (1.5 hours each way)
 - Royal Tyrrell Museum (world-class dinosaur museum)
 - Hoodoos and alien-like landscape

- OR stay in Calgary: Calgary Tower, Prince's Island Park, Heritage Park

Day 18 Activities:

- **Drop off rental car** (September 14)
- **Calgary Stampede grounds** (if interested in Western heritage)
- **Kensington or 17th Avenue shopping districts**
- **Fish Creek Provincial Park**

Food:

- **Charbar** (Argentinian-inspired, rooftop patio)
 - **Model Milk** (creative modern cuisine)
 - **Caesar's Steakhouse** (if you want Alberta beef)
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Day 19: September 15 (Monday)

CALGARY → VANCOUVER → LONDON

Activities:

- **Flight from Calgary to Vancouver**
 - **Connect to London**
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🎯 Key Highlights Summary

Bear & Salmon Viewing Opportunities:

1. **Wells Gray Provincial Park** (Sept 3)
2. **Jasper area - guided tour** (Sept 5-6) - grizzlies
3. **Johnston Canyon, Banff** (Sept 8-9) - PRIME for bears catching salmon
4. **Vermilion Lakes, Banff** (early morning)
5. **Bow Valley Parkway** (dawn/dusk drives)

Top Hikes:

- Joffre Lakes (turquoise lakes)
- Valley of a Thousand Falls (Mount Robson)
- Sulphur Skyline (Jasper panoramas)

- Johnston Canyon (waterfalls + bears)
- Plain of Six Glaciers (Lake Louise)
- Larch Valley (golden larches)

Scenic Drives:

- Sea-to-Sky Highway (Vancouver to Whistler)
- Icefields Parkway (Jasper to Banff) - world-class
- Bow Valley Parkway (wildlife corridor)
- Meadows in the Sky Parkway (Revelstoke)

Must-See Photo Spots:

- Joffre Lakes
 - Peyto Lake
 - Moraine Lake
 - Lake Louise
 - Columbia Icefield Skywalk
 - Maligne Lake Spirit Island
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Bookings to Make NOW:

Essential (Book ASAP):

1.  **Jasper guided wildlife tour** (Sept 5 or 6)
 - Jasper Wildlife Tours or SunDog Tours
2.  **Lake Louise/Moraine Lake shuttle passes** (if not arriving before 6am)
 - Parks Canada reservation system
3.  **All accommodations** (especially Jasper and Banff - book now!)

Recommended:

1.  **Columbia Icefield Glacier Adventure** (if you want to walk on glacier)
 2.  **Jasper SkyTram, Banff Gondola** (can book closer to dates)
 3.  **Maligne Lake Spirit Island boat tour**
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Important Notes:

Bear Safety:

- Carry bear spray at all times on hikes (purchase in Canada)
- Make noise on trails - talk, clap, use bear bells
- Never approach bears - minimum 100m distance
- Store all food properly

Driving:

- Wildlife on roads - drive cautiously at dawn/dusk
- Gas up regularly - stations can be sparse
- Check weather and road conditions daily (especially mountain passes)

Parks Passes:

- You'll need a **Parks Canada Discovery Pass** (covers all national parks)
- Purchase at first park entrance or online

Connectivity:

- Cell service can be spotty in mountain areas
- Download offline maps before trips

Weather (Late August/Early September):

- Days: 15-25°C (59-77°F)
- Nights: 5-10°C (41-50°F)
- Mountains can be much cooler
- Pack layers, rain gear, warm jacket

What to Pack:

- Hiking boots (broken in!)
- Layers: base layers, fleece, waterproof jacket
- Daypack for hikes
- Water bottles (refillable)
- Sunscreen & sunglasses
- Camera + extra batteries

- Binoculars for wildlife
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Budget Considerations:

Estimated Daily Costs (per person, approximate):

- Accommodation: \$100-200/night (shared room)
- Food: \$50-100/day (mix of casual and nice meals)
- Activities/Tours: \$50-150/day (when doing paid activities)
- Car rental: ~\$60-80/day
- Gas: ~\$30-50/day
- Parks pass: ~\$10/day or \$145 annual pass

Splurge Meals Budget:

- Plan for 4-5 nice dinners @ \$80-120 per person
 - Suggestions: Vij's (Vancouver), Evil Dave's (Jasper), The Bison (Banff), Charbar (Calgary)
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Pro Tips:

1. **Early mornings = best wildlife** - set alarms for 5:30-6am for bear viewing
 2. **Lake Louise/Moraine Lake** - seriously, arrive before 6am or book shuttle
 3. **Johnston Canyon** - go at 6am for bears, it gets VERY crowded after 9am
 4. **Icefields Parkway** - stop everywhere, you'll want to
 5. **Pack snacks** - mountain restaurants are pricey and limited
 6. **Fill up gas** when you see stations in mountain areas
 7. **Download trails on AllTrails app** before hiking (works offline)
 8. **Charge devices nightly** - you'll use your camera a LOT
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Emergency Contacts:

- **Parks Canada Emergency:** 1-877-852-3100
- **Alberta Emergency (including Banff/Jasper):** 911
- **BC Emergency (including Vancouver, Whistler):** 911
- **Road conditions (Alberta):** 511

- **Road conditions (BC):** 1-800-550-4997
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Summary:

- **Total nights:** 17
- **Nights by location:**
 - Vancouver: 3 nights
 - Whistler: 1 night
 - Lillooet: 1 night
 - Kamloops: 1 night
 - Clearwater: 1 night
 - Jasper: 3 nights
 - Banff: 3 nights
 - Golden: 1 night
 - Revelstoke: 1 night
 - Calgary: 2 nights

Have an incredible trip!   