

The Banff Commonwealth Walkway



Vermilion Lakes “Blue 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

Follow us at [#banffcommonwealthwalkway](https://twitter.com/banffcommonwealthwalkway)

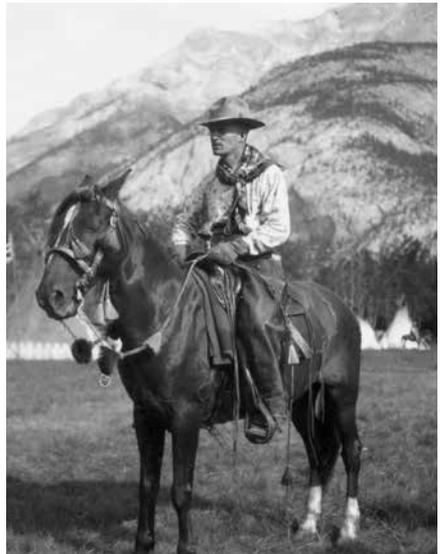
From the interpretive panel walk south along Banff Avenue past the Banff Park Museum National Historic Site. Do not cross the bridge. Take the path down to the Bow River and follow it west. The marker is located in a rest area with benches across the river from the Buffalo Nations Museum.

Marker #10 – Norman Luxton and the Buffalo Nations Museum

Norman K. Luxton (1876-1962) was an adventurous pioneer known as “Mr. Banff”. He strived to improve the community of Banff and the relationship between its residents and the Indigenous community. Among many other impressive feats, he published the Crag and Canyon newspaper, built the King Edward Hotel and founded the Sign of the Goat Curio Shop. Eventually, Luxton achieved his lifelong dream of establishing the Luxton Museum of Plains Indians, now the Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum. The museum was built in co-operation with Eric Harvie of the Glenbow Foundation of Calgary. It is dedicated to celebrating the traditions, values, diversity, continuity and the resilience of the Indigenous Peoples of North America and their trading partners.

Norman Luxton married Georgina Elizabeth McDougall of the pioneer missionary McDougall family of Morley, Alberta. They had one child, Eleanor Georgina, born in Banff in 1908.

Did you know? In 1907, Norman Luxton was asked by Rocky Mountains (now Banff) National Park Superintendent Howard Douglas to help him reintroduce bison in Canada’s Elk Island National Park. Douglas and Luxton participated in the great buffalo round up which took several years. Wild plains bison were brought back to Banff National Park in 2017 after over a century of absence. This was supported by a campaign of The Eleanor Luxton Historical Foundation which encourages the promotion of the ecological, cultural and historic values of bison in Banff National Park.



Norman Luxton at Banff Indian Grounds. V408/NA-87, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, whyte.org.

Continue walking along the pathway adjacent to the river. The marker is located near benches just south of the gazebo.

Marker #11 - Louis Trono Gazebo

Band leader Louis Trono played for visitors and local residents for most of his 94 years. His fans ranged from local labourers to visiting dignitaries – people who gathered at dance halls during the Depression, military socials in wartime, jams at clubs on Friday nights and star-studded parties at the Banff Springs Hotel on New Year's Eve. Louis helped shape the character of Banff, and, more importantly, demonstrated how music can help us all remain, in the words of his favourite song, "Young at Heart". The Louis Trono Gazebo is a tribute to Banff's Music Man. It continues to attract musicians, school children and brides and grooms.

Did you know? Born in Bankhead to a pioneer family of Italian miners, Louis bought a mail-order trombone in 1923. After playing horn and mandolin in Major Bagley's Band, he toured Canada with several orchestras before beginning a 45-year musical run in Banff.



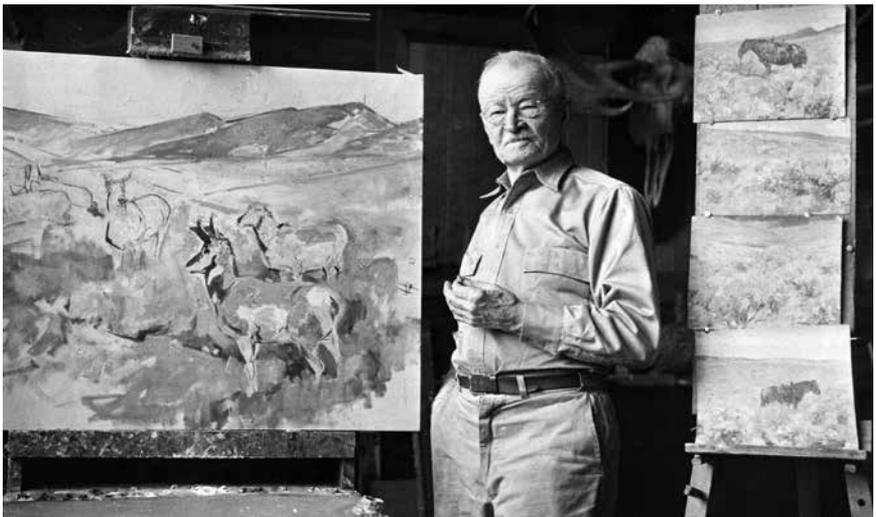
Louis Trono, Banff's Music Man, photo courtesy Town of Banff.

Continue walking north along the pathway adjacent to the river. This marker is located next to benches overlooking the river. The Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies is located to the east.

Marker #12 - Visual Artists in the Bow Valley

Many local artists have developed their craft under the light of mountain skies. Banff artist Peter Whyte met his wife, Catharine Robb, at the Boston Museum School of Fine Art in 1925. They settled in Banff, built a studio, travelled extensively and painted. They were often in the company of outstanding artists like Carl Rungius and Belmore Browne, who influenced their ideas and use of colour. The Whyte's interest in culture and the artistic community led them to establish the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, which was opened in 1968. Today the museum (located behind you) collects, preserves, studies, exhibits and interprets cultural resources from the Canadian Rockies and around the world.

Did you know? The oldest paintings in the Bow Valley are pictographs painted on rocks east of here. When the transcontinental railway was built, the Canadian Pacific Railway needed a means of enticing tourists to visit the Rocky Mountains and stay in its hotels. It gave free passage to select painters and photographers to produce high quality images for its travel brochures.



Carl Rungius in his studio. NA66/1314, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, whyte.org.

Continue walking north along the pathway beside the river.

Marker #13 - Catharine Robb Whyte's letter

Catharine Robb Whyte, local artist and founder of the Whyte Museum in Banff, delightfully describes the atmosphere and goes on of two Royal Visits to Banff in letters to her mother.

Friday, May 27th 1939

"Dearest Mother,

There was a stir at the King Edward corner, they were coming...It was an open car, the Queen on our side smiling and making her gracious gesture with her right hand, she had on a lovely pinkish hat...Then I realized I hadn't seen the King and as they passed us he was sitting on the edge of his seat and was bare headed looking quite tanned and very young. It was all over and we just stood, it seemed like a dream it was all so unreal, Pete felt they had looked like wax, and though they were within ten feet of us we hardly could take it all in."



Peter and Catharine Whyte outside their home. V683/I.C.2b ai, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, whyte.org.

Continue walking north along the pathway.

Marker #14 - Yuk Soy Goon Serves Tea by Howie Goon

When the King and Queen visited Banff in 1939, my father had the pleasure of serving tea to the royal couple when they stopped by Jim Brewster's home on Bow Avenue. Jim had been touring the royal couple around town and at one point, he decided to bring them back to his house to show them his renowned collection of big game trophies. They all arrived unannounced, surprising his wife, Dell. The household staff were told to stay out of sight, but father decided he wanted to meet the royal couple, so he made tea and brought it out to them.



Yuk Soy Goon at the Brewster's home. V233/7(PA), Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies. whyte.org

Continue walking north along the path. This marker is located next to benches just south of the Canoe Docks.

Marker # 15 - North Landing

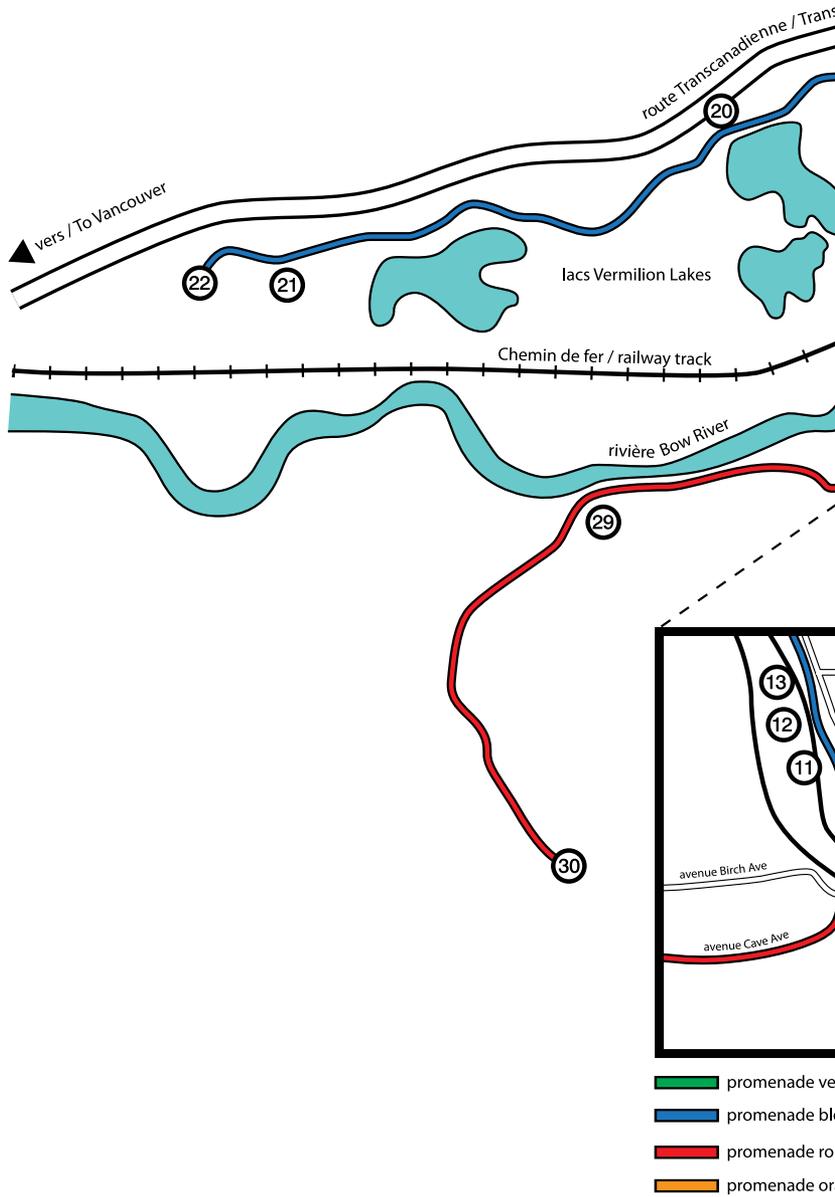
In 1899, William "Bill" Mather purchased the Bow River Boat House, located near today's Buffalo Nations Museum, and he built a second dock, the North Landing, here in front of you. Visitors staying downtown would walk to the North Landing, down the Rundlestone steps, and onto a floating dock where they would board on the passing riverboats.

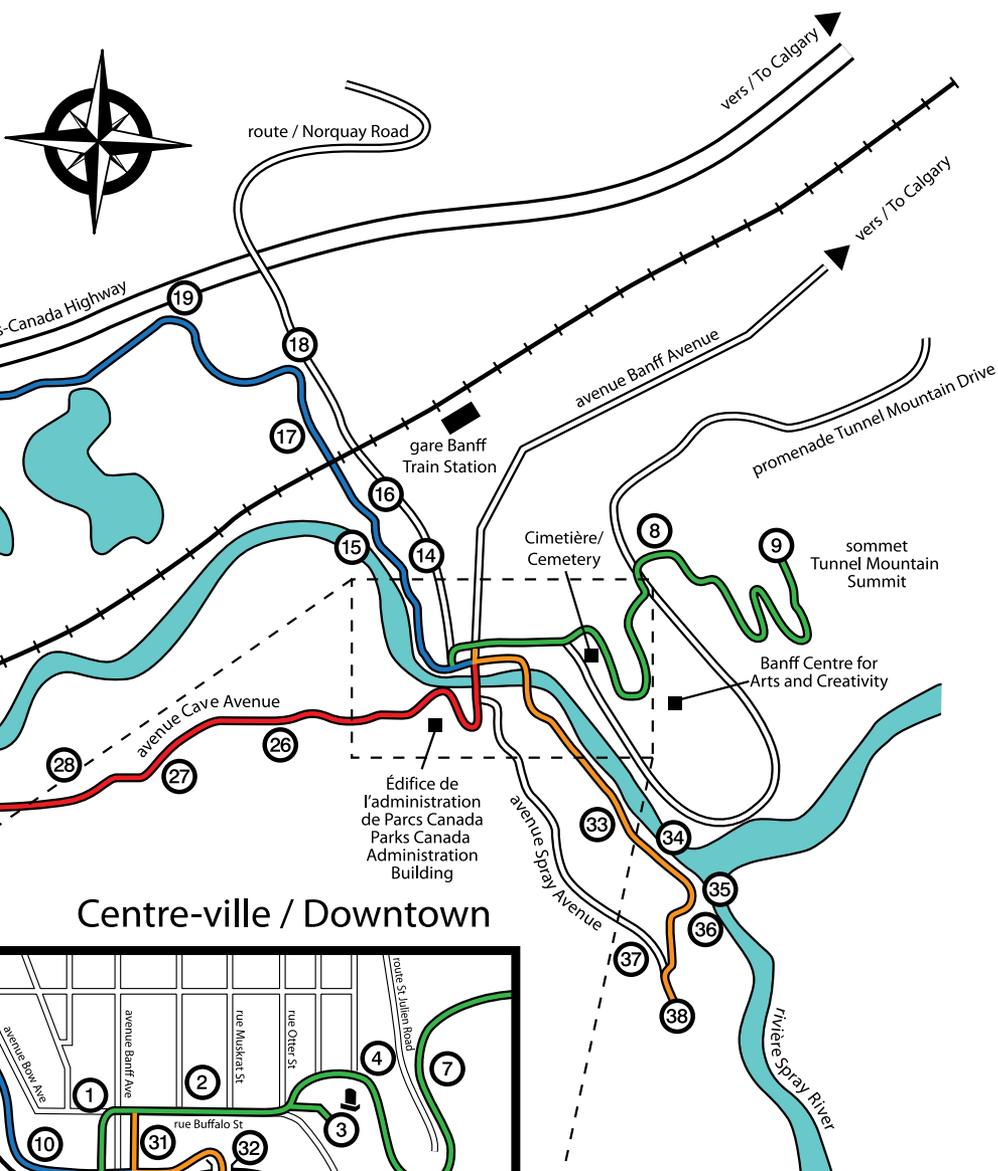
Did you know? The Bow River was once a busy place. As early as 1888, residents and visitors explored the river by renting a canoe or embarking on a scenic tour aboard R.M. Rooper's motor launch, the Mountain Belle.



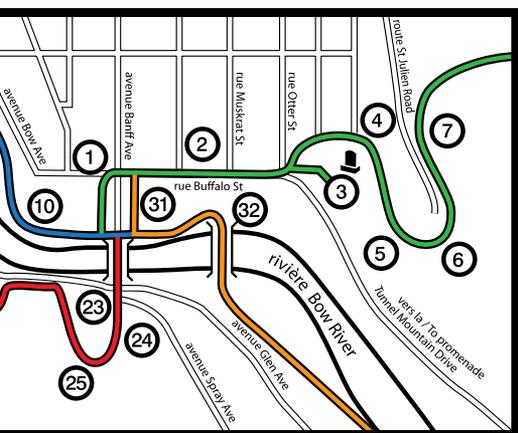
The North Landing on the Bow River, ca. 1949. Bill Gibbons, V227 / 2559, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, whyte.org.

Commonwealth Walkway Map





Centre-ville / Downtown



Route / Green Walk - 4 km, 120 min, 9 points of interest, lieux d'intérêt

Route / Blue Walk - 6 km, 90 min, 13 points of interest, lieux d'intérêt

Route / Red Walk - 5 km, 70 min, 8 points of interest, lieux d'intérêt

Route / Orange Walk - 3 km, 45 min, 8 points of interest, lieux d'intérêt

Continue north along the pathway behind the hospital and out to the Norquay Road. The marker is on a large boulder adjacent to the pathway.

Marker # 16 - Train Station, by Kathy McNeil

The Banff Train Station is an icon in our town. The present building was constructed in 1910 and has greeted millions of tourists. What makes this building so special for me is that my maternal grandfather, George Aitkens, often came through here as a brakeman when he worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway. Although my grandfather died five years before I was born, my mother and her siblings told us stories about how he was able to bring each of them on trips to Banff and Field. In 1939, my grandfather was chosen to work as the brakeman on the western section of the Royal Tour when King George and Queen Elizabeth travelled across Canada by train. He wrote about what a special honour it was to be able to bring the royal couple to the Canadian Rockies. Last year, I started working for Rocky Mountaineer out of the Banff Train Station. As the building is much the same as it was when my grandfather worked for the railroad, I feel a strong connection to both him and this building. I sometimes look at the historic photographs that hang in the station and imagine that maybe one of the people in the picture is my grandfather.



Banff Train Station. Bill Gibbons, V227/762, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, whyte.org.

Stay on the west side of the Norquay Road and cross the railway tracks. The marker is located at the welcome sign to the Town of Banff.

Marker #17 – The Dairy

Banff's illustrious pioneer, John Brewster, originally from Kingston, Ontario, moved to Banff in 1886. Here he established a dairy to service the new and growing community and the CPR (Banff Springs) Hotel. The first dairy was at the corner of Banff Avenue and Moose Street, but in 1896, he moved it across the tracks from the train station, where The Fenlands Banff Recreation Centre is today.

Under John, the dairy grew to 100 cows. When John purchased his ranch in Kananaskis, he moved a large portion of the herd there to winter. The dairy here became the first home of the packing and guide operation by two of John's sons, Bill and Jim. This company evolved into Brewster Transport.

The dairy was sold in the early 1900s, first to Frank Wellman, who was a guide for Jim & Bill, and then to Charles W. Moffat, who ran it for 27 years before selling it to the Union Milk Company in 1938. The original dairy barn burned shortly before this last sale, but Mr. Moffat continued to live onsite. He died in 1940 and the house was pulled down. The first indoor curling rink in Banff was built on the site in 1960, and upgraded several times before being completely rebuilt in 2010 and renamed The Fenlands.

Did you know? Jim Brewster toured multiple members of the British royal family around Banff, including the Prince of Wales in 1919, later King Edward VIII, and his brother, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1939.



King George VI & Queen Elizabeth in carriage with Jim Brewster & Col. Panet. V8 accn 1451, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, whyte.org.

Continue north along the pedestrian / bike trail to the Fenlands Trail-head. You can walk the entire trail or take the section that leads to the Vermilion Lakes Road.

Marker #18 – Fenland Trail

Here's an opportunity to take a break from the asphalt sidewalks and connect with nature. Pick up a copy of the self-guiding brochure and explore the forest, river edges and the open fens and marshes. This trail is a favourite for many local residents. Here's an account from Ethan Elliott Fenn: "In summer, my family and I bike along the trail with my dog and stop at the bench where there is a tree overlooking the water. My brother and I race up the tree and climb up as far as we can 'til our mom tells us not to go any further. Mom and dad walked the loop when my mom was pregnant with me and we still do the hike today - it's a family tradition."

Did you know? The Commonwealth Walkway continues along the Vermilion Lakes Road. You can access it between stops 6 & 7 on the Fenland Trail.



Canoeing on Bow River. Paul Zizka, Banff & Lake Louise Tourism.

Follow the Vermilion Lakes Road west.

Marker #19 - Fenland Trail – Vermilion Lakes Road

By Max Monette, Banff Community High School

Crunch. Sticks break under my feet as I run on the Fenland trail. As I come out onto the Vermilion Lakes road, the sun peers through the peaks. I take a deep breath, close my eyes, my mind goes clear and I smile. I start to run as the chilling breeze goes straight to my bones. I look over my shoulder and see families skating on the lakes, their faces red with smiles and laughter in the air. Running along the road frees my mind, calms me and makes me happy.



Mr. and Mrs. Byron Harmon skiing on Vermilion Lake. V263, NA71-4147, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, whyte.org

Continue west on the Vermilion Lakes Road.

Marker # 20 - Echo Creek

By Mary Harding, Banff resident

In late spring, I put my back into each stroke as I paddle against the current of the spring runoff in Echo Creek that empties Vermilion Lake into the Bow River. The creek winds through a forest of large spruce, past old beaver lodges and dams and eventually opens up into the marshland that borders the lake. As I skirt the lakeshore, I often see elk grazing, ducks and geese swimming stealthily among the rushes or hear the song of warblers. Dome-shaped muskrat push-ups emerge from the reed beds. Sometimes, I quietly follow in the wake of these aquatic architects. The lake is surrounded by mountains, which, in late spring, remain capped with snow. The names of those mountains: Rundle, Sulphur, Sanson Peak, Sundance, Bourgeau, Norquay, Cascade and Tunnel, tell the history of human activity in the valley. The story of mountain building and glaciation can be read in the contours of the surrounding landscape. On a bluebird sky day, with no one else around, a paddle around Vermilion Lake is an invigorating adventure.



Early morning paddle on Vermilion Lakes. Noel Hendrickson, Banff & Lake Louise Tourism

Continue west along the Vermilion Lakes Road to the end of the road.

Marker # 21 - Vermilion Lake

By Jack Collison, Banff Community High School

There.

The sun, rising steadily over the mountains we call home.

There.

The mist, ghosting across the lake, dancing with the crispness of the morning.

There.

The eerie mating call of the elk, anxiously searching out his mate.

There.

The lakes, slowly freezing over, day by day, the ice not quite thick enough to skate upon.

There.

The winter storm, blanketing the ice, a Rocky Mountain ocean.

There.

The bubbles trapped under the surface, awaiting the spring thaw to set them free.

There.

Vermilion Lake, a place of dreams.



Vermilion Lakes. Noel Hendrickson, Banff & Lake Louise Tourism

Congratulations, you have reached the end of this arm of the walkway.

Marker # 22 - Rocky Mountain Legacy Trail

This is the end of this arm of the Banff Commonwealth Walkway. In 2010, to commemorate the 125th anniversary of Banff National Park, the Legacy Trail was officially opened by Prince Edward. The Legacy Trail is a multi-use trail that links the communities of Canmore and Banff. It is used by thousands of people every year – some commute the 26 km on a daily basis from mid-April to mid-October; for others it is an opportunity to relax and enjoy the scenery and stop for a picnic along the route.

Did you know? The Great Trail (aka Trans-Canada Trail) follows much of the same route as the Rocky Mountain Legacy Trail.



Prince Edward and the Honourable Jim Prentice cutting the ribbon opening the Legacy Trail, July 24, 2010 Photo courtesy of Corrie DiManno.

Project Patron

The Honourable Lois Mitchell, Lieutenant Governor, Alberta

Project Partners

Banff & Lake Louise Tourism
Banff Canmore Community Foundation
Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity
Fairmont Banff Springs
Parks Canada
Town of Banff
Outdoor Trust

Project Donors

Mitchell Legacy Foundation
Alice and Sam Schultz
Betty Schultz
Royal Canadian Legion #26,
Colonel Moore Branch