

Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park

Our first morning in Banff began at the rather early time of 04:00! Blasted Jet Lag! Determined to make the most of our time here, we decided after a coffee and shower to make the most of our early morning by going for a hike to acclimatise to our new surroundings.

Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



We took a walk down the high street, which was empty at this hour meaning we could get all the pictures we could possibly wish for in the beautiful morning light.

Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



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Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



We took the Bow River Trail down to Bow Falls, a very well maintained and flat path which followed the Bow River.

Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



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Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



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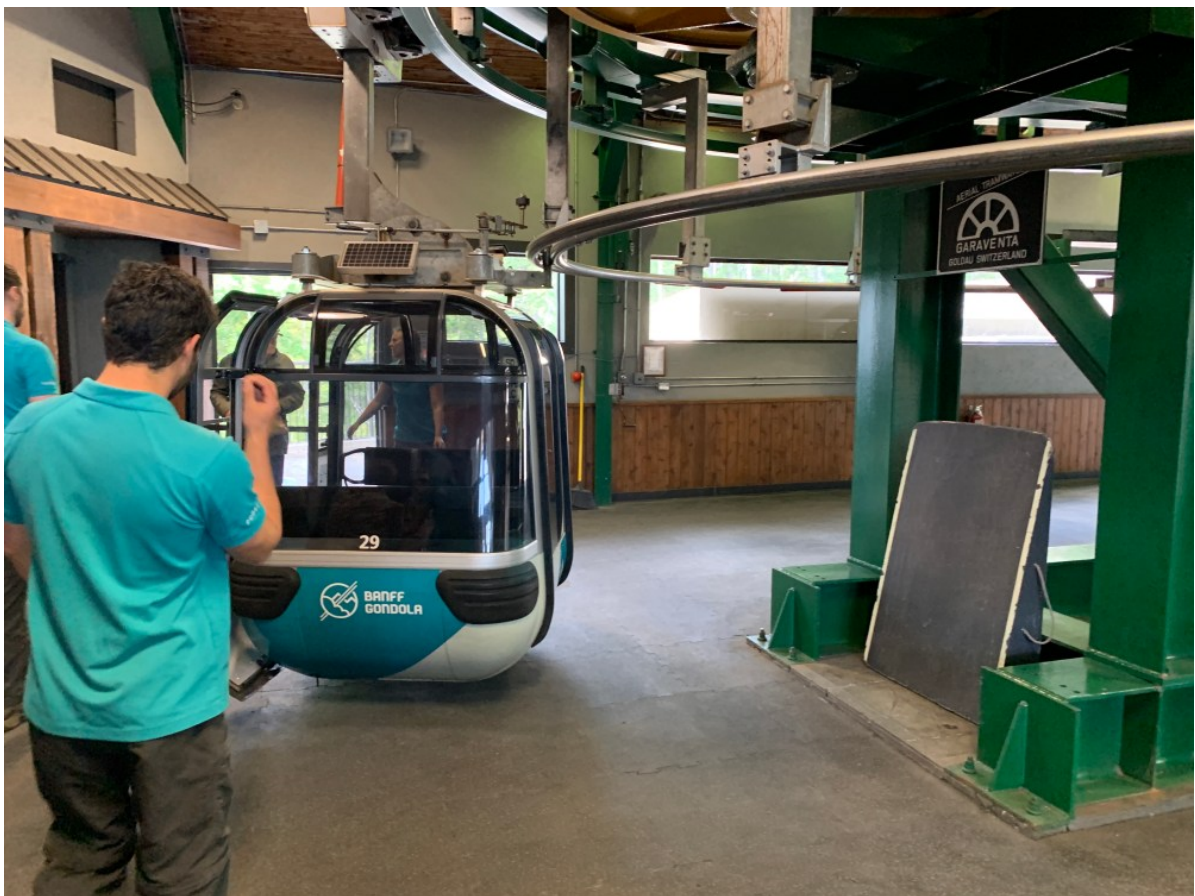
Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer
and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 –
exploring Banff National Park
Along this we discussed what the correct procedure would be if we ran into a bear! Then mused on how different our pre breakfast walk chat was to when we are at home!

The scenery was just simply breathtaking and I'm going to let the pics show you as I still can't quite find the right words!

We arrived back at the hotel ready for breakfast at 07:30- feeling good that we had managed a 2 mile walk but also completely in awe of the scenery here.

After breakfast our group met in the foyer ready to start our days excursions. First up was the Banff Gondola- a cable car which took us up to the peak of Sulphur Mountain.

Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer
and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 -
exploring Banff National Park
We were rewarded with phenomenal views of
Banff and beyond. We had an hour on the
peak so once we'd taken all the pictures we
took the boardwalk up to the weather sta-
tion.



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Our next stop was the iconic Lake Louise. This was simply incredible. The unusual blue and green colour of the water is formed by eroded rock “flour”, eroded by the glacier. The flour then settles in the base of the lake which gives it the unusual but absolutely mystical colour.

Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



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Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 –

exploring Banff National Park
We had a couple of hours here so grabbed a sandwich and beer, before walking round the base of the lake. It was simply awesome.

Next up, we carried along the Highway 1 west to Yoho National Park, where we had a 30 minute stop at the Emerald Lake. Some of the members of our group watched a wild bald headed eagle circle above – we missed it as we needed the loo!



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



A question arose as to why Lake Louise was named that and not Emerald Lake. It turns out the reason is that actually it's original name was that. But then during the Victorian Era, the increase in tourism meant that there were lots of Emerald Lakes so it was re-named Louise in honour of Queen Victoria's

Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer
and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 –
exploring Banff National Park
daughter.

Our final stop of the day was what we fondly called a 'Ted Special'. Ted is our coach driver and local guide and he made a suggested photo stop at the Natural Bridge in Yoho National Park.



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



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Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



This extremely scenic location is unusual because it used to be a waterfall where the water flowed over and dropped. Over time, the glacial water has eroded through underneath and as such has opened up a chasm. It's beautiful and atmospheric and with the mountainous backdrop was a worthy photo

Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer
and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 –
exploring Banff National Park
stop.

On the journey back to Banff, Keith and I, along with a couple of other ladies in our group saw two black bears in the distance! Too quick for pics but amazing nonetheless!!

We arrived back to the hotel around 5:30pm – what an incredible first day we'd had! It was now free time, so Keith and I grabbed our swimwear before jumping on the free local bus up to Banff Upper Springs. This was the site of the first hot springs in Canada and as such the tourism popped up around it. Now it's a smallish swimming pool filled with natural mineral water at a temperature of 39 degrees c. The views over mountains were wonderful and it was a nice way to contem-

Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer
and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 –
exploring Banff National Park
plate what we'd seen that day.



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



After a quick freshen up and change at the hotel we went out in search of dinner and some beers. We found the Elk Bar with its rooftop patio and enjoyed some local beers

Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer
and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 –
exploring Banff National Park
and cider along with the National Canadian
dish of Poutine – a chips and gravy with
cheese dish – accompanied by elk tacos!

Absolutely delicious!

Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer
and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 -
exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer
and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 -
exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 – exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 –

exploring Banff National Park
We managed one final beer at the Banff Avenue Brewing Co- also with a nice outdoor patio with views over the high street.

Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 - exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer
and Alaska Cruise - July 2019 Part 2 -
exploring Banff National Park



Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 –

exploring Banff National Park
We couldn't believe we'd been up since 4am
and made it to 11pm. We'd had a phenome-
nal first day!!

Until next time

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Adventures on the Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska Cruise – July 2019 Part 2 –

exploring Banff National Park

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