

Banff Gears Up: Two Days of Skijor Madness

Along the sidelines, the audience in their grandma's fur coats, cowboy hats and boots hold their warm beverages in one hand and their phones in the other, capturing athletes mid-air. They watch in awe, cheering as riders on horseback pull gliders in style.

Every year in the town of Banff, audiences from across Canada and even around the world gather to witness the [Skijor](#) event, which happens two days a year.

Liv Brooks, a visitor from the United Kingdom, came to Banff to experience winter sports and happened to be in town for the Skijor event. Brooks described her feelings as "excited", and says she's looking forward to the "cool outfits and a good atmosphere". She'll be back next year "expecting more".

The Skijor event is a part and serves as a kickoff of Banff and Lake Louise tourism's [SnowDays Festival](#), running from Jan. 17 to Feb. 8, 2026.

With its rising popularity across North America, Skijoring is a mix of skiing and horseback riding. Riders guide their horses while pulling gliders, who navigate obstacles and perform tricks along the track.

This year's event moved to a new location, stretching from the 200-300 block of Banff Avenue to Banff community high school. Large sections of the street were closed and several road closures were put in place for the event.

This new relocation was intended to give the audience a clearer view and a better experience, with bleachers for seating.

The exhibition not only showcases the skills and talents of Canadian athletes but also celebrates Alberta's cowboy culture.

Roz Cameron, Skijor Canada team member says that the sport "honours both skill and tradition."

"It brings together western horsemanship and mountain sport culture in a way that reflects Canada's unique identity," she added.

While the exhibition draws people together, it's the personal stories of the athletes that bring the event to life.

On the course, Hailey Stewart saddles up, ready to tow her glider. She slides her boots into the stirrups, takes a deep breath and commands her horse. She smiles and waves at the crowd all hyped up. This is a familiar feeling for her. After all, she's been doing this for 11 years.

However, for Stewart, it goes beyond tricks and skills, it's the people she loves the most. The fans.

"It's really like nothing else. It's exciting to watch world class sliders and everyone loves horses. You get some fast horses and these amazing athletes that hit jumps, and really being able to interact with the crowd and it's just so much fun, and we get to be up close with the fans," Stewart said.

The event was a huge success. According to the organizers, about 35,000 people showed up this year, compared to the 8,500 last year.

"It's just so awesome. 20,000-30,000 people come out here to watch it and we have just as good of a time riding as you guys do watching," said Griffin Swan, Skijor 2026 glider and snowboarder.

Another Skijor event will take place in Confluence, Calgary in Feb., however for Banff, people can expect nothing less than, "High energy, great fashion and the best show on snow," says Cameron.