

# Welcome to Bearpaw Sea Trail

The prairie is a land defined by contrasts: the bone crunching winter cold and the searing summer heat, the tableland and the glacial melt water channel, the minute and the majestic, the exposed and the sheltered. But this landscape may also be defined by gentle transitions between these extremes. You will explore the shift of landscape as you walk over the scars caused by the retreated glacier, across plateaux, down hidden draws and along broad coulee flats. While walking you will experience astonishing diversity of flora and fauna.



Blue grama grass

## 1. Different Every Year

This upland prairie is dominated by blue grama grass, needle grass and various wheatgrasses. The composition of the mixed grasslands is at the whim of the weather: a spring of great moisture, a summer of drought, or a winter of fierce cold. Various grasses become evident under different conditions and the presence or absence of prairie wildflowers is even more variable. The grassland dresses differently every year.

## 2. Buck Brush

Sheltered in the draw are plants not found in the open prairie: cinquefoil, yarrow and snowberry. Snowberry growing in dense shrubby clusters offers refuge from the midday heat for mule deer bucks; this small shrub is often called "buck brush".



Left: Yarrow  
Below: Snowberry  
or "buck brush"



## 3. Chokecherries

The spring melt water and captured summer rain have nurtured thickets of chokecherry along this trail. These bushes offer nesting sites for

magpies and shelter for deer. It is a fortunate animal that enjoys a feast of the ripe red berries in the autumn!



## Backcountry Camping

This trail offers excellent Backcountry Camping opportunities. Recommended sites are:

- East Side of Tableland. Beautiful Vistas in an ideal location for sunrise.  
⇒ GPS: 13U 310554 5451779
- East side of Bog Coulee. Panoramic scenery in an ideal location for sunrise or sunset. To escape the wind, camp in a sheltered area to the south.  
⇒ GPS: 13U 317101 5447180

### Logistical Suggestion

If the one way option presents logistical issues then start at 70 Mile Butte and follow the yellow markers until Stop #5 to see the most unique aspects of this hike.

## Suggested Horseback Riding Route

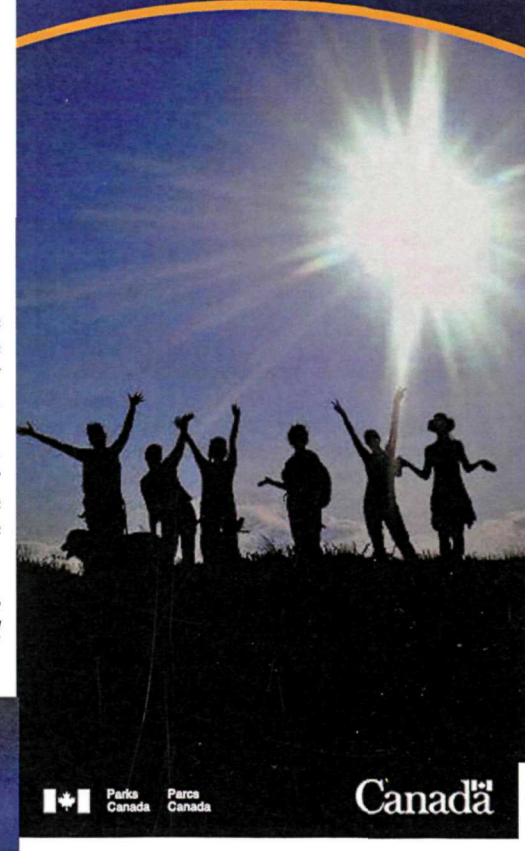
Park at Ecotour Road Stop #3. Follow the Bearpaw Sea Trail West. Once you reach the bottom of 70 Mile Butte where the yellow markers and the barren ground trail begins, head South into the Frenchman River Valley. Find your way back East to Ecotour Road. You are welcome to ride close to the river to water horses. You may see one of the largest prairie dog colonies in the park. On Ecotour Road ride north to your vehicle at Stop #3.

*Please note that horses are not permitted on the 70 Mile Butte or Eagle Butte Loop constructed Trails.*

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# Bearpaw Sea Trail

*Follow in the Steps of  
Past Prairie People*



#### 4. Coulees

What is a coulee? The word “coulee” was first used by the French Canadian voyageurs to describe the wide valleys along which water flowed during the spring snow melt and after heavy rains. “Coulee” originates from the French word couler meaning to flow. The valley bottom is wider and deeper when the coulee is older or more water-eroded. In many ways, a draw with its steep sides and narrow width is simply a very young coulee. Before descending off the upland, look out at Laouenan Coulee flats and imagine the beginning of the prehistoric glacial channel as you follow the twists of this draw.



#### 5. Dugout

This dugout was built by hand by a homesteader or early rancher to water cattle in the dry prairie.

As you walk across the berm, look for red-winged black birds that now make this small wetland home.



#### 6. Seven Year Imprisonment Marker

Near this mound of rocks, look for a metal stake. Be sure to bend over and read it! This is a land survey marker, likely from the dominion land survey. Over 100 years ago, this land was divided into sections, townships and quarter sections for homesteaders and landowners to locate their land.



#### 7. Old Prairie Trail

The first homesteaders and ranchers in this area traversed the prairie using this old trail. As you walk across the tableland, you may notice that historical evidence of



#### Strategic Location

What did the first travelers to this spot see from this ridge? Perhaps, a herd of buffalo below? This high place would have allowed prey and enemies to be noticed easily and, maybe more importantly, would have been exposed to the wind. A stiff summer breeze still brings relief from aggressive mosquitoes.



Enjoy meadows of Spring wildflowers on one side and scenic vistas of the Frenchman River Valley on the other side. This valley was carved by glacial melt water thousands of years ago.  
Above: Gaillardia

#### 8. Panoramic View Point

Climb to the top of this hill to enjoy an amazing panoramic view of the park. Look both high and low! Note the large pieces of gypsum emerging from the clay. As you proceed West towards 70 Mile Butte imagine being part of the North West Mounted Police on horseback using this prominent landmark to navigate.  
(Below: View of 70 Mile Butte in Distance)



#### 9. Salt Flats

Salt flats are created by the movement of water through the soil of the surrounding hills. The water holds dissolved salts from the hill as it moves to the low land. The underground water table in this coulee sits close to the surface and provides a supply of dissolved salt to be wicked up by the wind and sun. The heat of the day and the drying action of the wind causes evaporation of the soil surface moisture; salt crusts are left behind on vegetation and rocks. The salt in this coulee has moved through the soil and is an ancient gift from an ocean 70 million years ago.



As you walk from Stop #9 to 70 Mile Butte (or vice versa) look for bearpaw shale. This is evidence of the Bearpaw Sea from millions of years ago.