



**Grasslands
National Park**
parkscanada.gc.ca

Grasslands

National Park

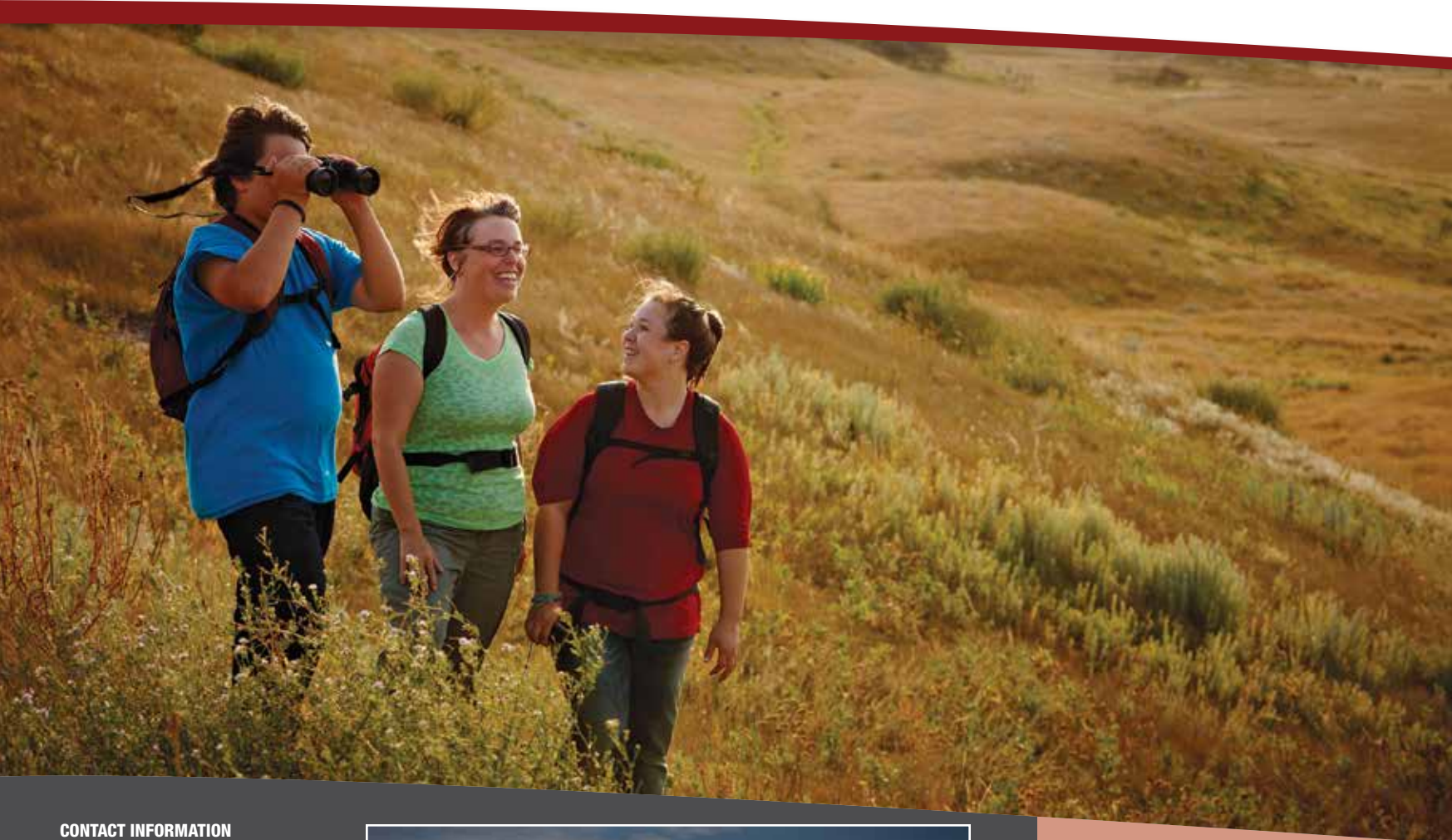
Visitor Guide



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada

Canada 



WELCOME

Discover Grasslands National Park in Southern Saskatchewan! Connect with national treasures and see some of the rarest wildlife in Canada as you explore the West Block's Frenchman River Valley. Catch a glimpse of a Black-footed Ferret, Short-horned Lizard or Plains Bison and spy on the comical Black-tailed Prairie Dogs. Hike the breathtaking badlands of the East Block. Discover the astonishing dinosaur bones exposed in the eroding layers of earth. Connect with ranching like nowhere else.

Escape and enjoy the exciting trails, challenging geocaches, guided hikes, special events and the kids Xplorers program. Don't forget to check out the new camping opportunities. True western hospitality awaits!

Grasslands National Park is the only park to represent the Prairie Grasslands Natural Region.

Diverse

The grasslands that surround you are situated at the northern tip of North America's mixed-grass prairie. It is unique in Canada bringing with it many uncommon plants and animals. Find a Eastern Yellow-bellied Blue Racer coiled under the lavender blue blossoms of slender beardtongue. Watch a threatened Ferruginous Hawk swoop down to catch a rare Black-tailed Prairie Dog.

Resilient

Once the grassland is broken by the plough, it takes many years and a nearby seed source for the native plants to return. If the protective grass, moss and lichen ground cover is removed, the fertile soil is soon blown away by the strong prairie wind. With care and a gentle hand, it will survive and thrive.

Evolving

Less than one quarter of Canada's original mixed-grass prairie remains in its natural state. The park and area is one of the largest and least disturbed remaining pockets of native prairie in North America. Grasslands continues to evolve by reintroducing prairie species and restoring native prairie vegetation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Website: www.pc.gc.ca/grasslands
Email: grasslands.info@pc.gc.ca

VISITOR CENTRE

West Block (306) 298-2257
East Block (306) 476-2018 (May–October)

Grasslands National Park
P.O. Box 150
Val Marie, Sask. S0N 2T0

EMERGENCY SERVICES

911-Police, Fire, Ambulance
(Limited cell coverage)

Park Dispatch: (306) 298-2166 "press 2"
1-877-852-3100
Park Warden: (306) 741-4148

RCMP – West Block (306) 625-6400 Ponteix 24 hrs.
RCMP – East Block (306) 642-7110 Assiniboia 24 hrs.



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Grasslands National Park “Top 12” amazing experiences! Your Journey Begins Here...



Douglas Walker

1 Ecotour Driving Adventure

Impress your friends on one of Saskatchewan’s most scenic roads filled with grand skies, prairie wildlife big and small, buttes and river valleys, and storytelling panels highlighting the park’s unique secrets.



2 Wildlife Wonders

Make your own Saskatchewan Safari and see if you can find five or more species in one road trip. It’s possible here! Some visitors have checked the working badger, cautious Coyotes and majestic Plains Bison off their lists before breakfast.



3 Ranching Roots

Discover the Larson Ranch. Kids will have fun trying their hand at throwing a lasso (see the Parks Canada Xplorer booklet), while parents imagine ranch life as it once was. Explore the underground barn that once sheltered Walt’s horses. Walk the interpretive trail. This was the real west!



Robert Postma

4 Dogtown Chatter

It is worth the trip to see the only place that Prairie Dogs exist in the wild in Canada. Walk the Top Dogtown Trail to catch their antics announcing your presence from atop a burrow. These comical Black-tailed Prairie Dogs greet each other with an identifying ‘kiss’. While there, look out for Burrowing Owls and rattlesnakes that may have reclaimed an abandoned burrow for a home.



Johanne Janelle

5 Badlands of Rock Creek Viewpoint

Behold the badlands! It’s not just the abundance of fossils underground that is striking – it’s the panorama that puts a lump in your throat! McGowan Visitor Centre staff can direct you and your guests to the road accessible viewpoints.



Robert Postma

6 Sunset at the Top of 70 Mile Butte

Hike the new trail to reach the highest point for miles around. This flat-top landmark guided people for centuries, from First Nations to the North-west mounted police. Let it guide you to a perspective of the prairies you did not think possible. Go an hour before sunset for an awe-inspiring colour display and a breathtaking view.



7 Front Country Camping Elegance

With a new shelter building borne of a prairie landscape, and spacious campsites, the Frenchman Valley Campground balances comfort with a rustic prairie feel. Enjoy lunch in the shade of the Coulee Centre shelter and maybe catch a fun, family program there. Take in the night sky splendour, cap off your family day with a gooey marshmallow roast. You can even rent a tipi! (book at Visitor Centre)



8 A Backpacker’s Dream

Greg Huszar

If you like to carry your home on your back, and cover the ground on your feet, then a traverse of the Grasslands wilderness to the remote North Gillespie land is a must. From rolling hills to deep coulees, stunning valleys to badlands features, you will understand why Canada created a ‘prairie’ national park! And, you’re likely to have it to yourself. Contact the Visitor Centre prior to departure for safety and access information.



9 Two Trees and Riverwalk Trails

Grab your camera and head into the cool morning to enjoy the prairies decorated with splashes of floral colour. Spring’s prairie crocus and golden bean, early summer’s blue-eyed grass and purple milk-vetch, and late summer’s coneflower and dotted blazing star never fail to delight!



10 The Land of Ancient Homes

Horseback riders aim for the high points here. Ride to a rim overlooking the Frenchman Valley, and discover ancient tipi rings placed here from horse riders many generations ago. Keep an eye open for fire cracked rocks, cairns, and arrow heads too.



11 Picnic at the Cric

Got guests? Bring them for a day to the Rock Creek day-use area for a special type of picnic. Sit under the shade of the summer kitchen. Afterwards, leisurely cross the bridge over Rock Creek, enjoying the swallows overhead.



12 A Horseback Rider’s Delight

Base your adventures from the Rock Creek day-use area, and embrace a day of miles of open riding, badland buttes, open skies and a truly western feeling. Keep an eye open for soaring Ferruginous Hawk’s overhead and geological wonders below.

JUST FOR KIDS DO YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE?

Pick up your Xplorers guide at the visitor centre, and have FUN doing activities and collecting your COOL certificate and souvenir.



Cycling: A prairie bike ride has its challenges, and its rewards. Travel the gravel Ecotour road, an old prairie trail or try a bladed trail – they are relatively smooth and cactus free.



Geocaching: Start your day on geocaching.com to get the coordinates for your first geocache at Grasslands National Park and embark on a self guided trip to experience some of the parks’ most interesting cultural and natural hotspots! Don’t have a GPS? Stop by the Visitor Centre and rent one.

Did you see something amazing? Come and tell us about it! Visitors are our greatest adventurers and are out and about all hours of the day. There is a very good chance you will see something unique and exciting and we want to hear about it.

How to Have a Safe Adventure!

Grasslands National Park is a prairie wilderness environment with few services. Be prepared! Your safety depends on awareness of wild animals such as Bison and rattlesnakes, prairie wildfires and storms, and being able to find your way!

Prior to entering the park, observe the following for an enjoyable visit:

- Bring 2-3 litres of water/person/day
- Carry a first aid kit and cell phone (coverage is limited)
- Wear a hat and sunscreen
- Roads become impassable when wet



Prairie Dog Visits

- Know that fleas from wild rodents such as Prairie Dogs may transmit diseases
- Keep pets away from Prairie Dog towns – for their safety and yours
- Tuck pants into socks and use insect repellent with DEET
- Beware of black widow spiders and fleas, especially in prairie dog burrows
- Don't handle deceased wildlife! If possible, report to park staff (photos and location appreciated)



Finding Your Way

- Tell someone your plans or leave details in writing
- Orient yourself at the visitor centre and use navigation tools (e.g. maps, compass, GPS and batteries)
- Stop frequently to be aware of your surroundings
- If lost or disoriented, stay put, stay calm and remain visible
- Find shelter if the weather turns bad or if night falls

Quicksand

- Beware of quicksand in the East Block – typically, they are identified with signs
- Contact McGowan Visitor Centre before venturing out

Prairie Wildfires

- Be prepared for sudden weather changes such as strong winds and electrical storms. Lightning frequently ignites grass fires – avoid high ground and barbed wire fences
- Report sightings of smoke or flames to the park office or call 911
- Grass fires travel quickly! Be prepared to evacuate!
- If fire traps you, head for low vegetation areas (e.g. gravel roads, Prairie Dog colonies) or burned areas (e.g. the 'black zone')

Bison

- Remember that Bison are wild animals – and, as the herd grows, visitor encounters will increase. Your best protection is to maintain a safe distance of 100 metres or more. Getting too close is wildlife harassment at the least, and life threatening at the most
- If encountering Bison during your drive, stay in your vehicle, drive slow and do not honk
- Use caution when cycling, horseback riding or hiking (especially with pets) – maintain that 100 metre distance (length of a football field)
- Remember that Bison are more aggressive during calving (May) and rutting (mid-July – August)
- Read the Bison-Rattlesnake Brochure

Watch for These Signs of Bison Aggression:

- Shaking their head
- Pawing
- Short charges or running toward you
- Loud snorting
- Raising the tail

Rattlesnakes

- Wear over-the-ankle footwear and long pants to protect against snake bites
- Watch where you walk and keep children close – you may not hear the rattle
- Stay calm and slowly move away if you see or hear a rattlesnake
- Know that snakes will only strike when threatened or cornered
- Consider renting snake gaiters for your personal comfort – see Visitor Centre
- Contact the Visitor Centre regarding snake hibernaculum restrictions
- Read the Bison-Rattlesnake Brochure

If Bitten:

- Stay calm and restrict movement
- Call 911 (limited coverage) and seek medical attention immediately
- Cleanse the wound, keep limb below heart level and do not drink fluids

Explore with a Park Interpreter



Guided Walks

Join an interpreter for a guided walk as they share with you their knowledge, insights, and love of this place.

Special Events

Discover the secrets of a prairie night with stories of the open range, astronomy fun, wagon rides, seeking out Black-footed Ferrets in the dark and more. An adventure awaits, have a blast!! Special events are a great way to have fun with your friends and family while discovering more about the park.

Fireside Chats

Join us for S'mores and more. It's fun for the entire family. Bring along a blanket, and flashlight.

Interpreters Out and About

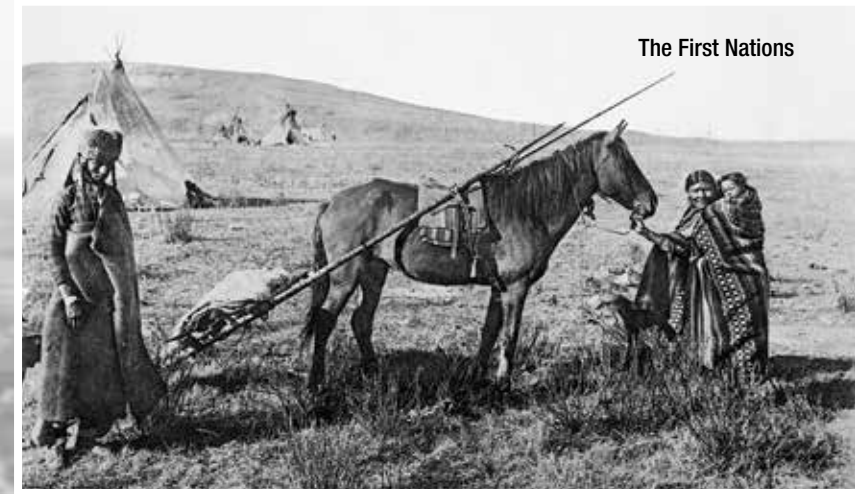
Keep an eye out for roaming interpreters. Their knowledge is vast and they may be able to help you discover a thing or two about your favourite trail or animal.

[Check Out The Event Guide For More Information On Special Events And Interpretive Programs.](#)



YOU CAN HELP PROTECT YOUR NATIONAL PARK

- Keep vehicles on designated roads and pull-offs
- Leave natural and cultural objects undisturbed for others to discover and enjoy
- Give wildlife their space and respect. **Do not approach or feed!**
- All terrain vehicles and snowmobiles are not allowed in the park
- Keep pets on a leash and off the Prairie Dog colonies
- Report any concerns or unlawful activities to Parks Canada staff or RCMP



The First Nations

The Prairie People

First Nations and Métis

For centuries, the prairies were the domain of native peoples who had linked their lives to the migrations of Bison. One after the other, they came –Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, Cree, Blackfoot and Sioux. They left behind Bison drive lanes, arrow heads, and tipi rings for you to see.

After the Battle of Little Big Horn against the American Cavalry, Sitting Bull and 4000 Lakota Sioux sought sanctuary here. Following the Buffalo in the summer and setting up winter camps in the wooded coulees and ravines, the Lakota migrated seasonally from area to area.

The Métis hunted Bison in the region for decades. Evidence of their presence is in the Pinto Horse Buttes. With the disappearance of the Bison, the Métis dispersed. A few families settled near the

Wood Mountain Uplands and few others settled near Lac Pelletier.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are over 12,000 tipi rings found in the park.

The park has thousands of archaeological areas and is one of the largest concentrations of undisturbed pre-contact cultural resources in Canada.

The Métis are descendants of First Nations women and European and Euro-Canadian fur traders who worked in the fur trade era (circa 1670-1850). They are their own distinct nation of people with their own inherent Aboriginal rights. Today, the Métis are recognized as one of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples along with First Nations and Inuit.

The Ranchers



The Homesteaders



Ranchers

By the late 1800's, cattle replaced Buffalo creating a different way of life on the prairies. The government passed leasehold legislation to promote ranching in the west. The rolling grasslands that stretched into the horizon was divided up into huge ranching companies such as "N-N", the "76 Ranch", and the "Turkey Track", grazing thousands of cattle on the "range". However, a succession of harsh winters, the massive die-off of cattle in 1906-07 and the Homesteaders Act in 1908 contributed to the loss of the open range. Cattle were fenced and the glory days of the open range were gone.

DID YOU KNOW?

Will James, legendary artist and novelist lived life as a cowboy right here, where he homesteaded and worked on the 76 ranch, now part of the park.

Homesteaders

Pioneers were enticed by government to "tame the west" and "break the land". However, poor soils, rough topography and a hot, dry climate spelled disaster. After only a few years, many homesteaders picked up and left; their signature remains on the prairie to this day. The ranchers and homesteaders, who stayed, combined ranching and farming with western hospitality to create our local prairie communities.

Geology and Palaeontology

The geology and palaeontology of Grasslands National Park and surrounding area tell a story of fascinating land formations and fossils. The diverse landforms are windows into geological time. Whether it is a prehistoric triceratops skull from the Badlands or an iridescent clamshell gleaming in the Frenchman River Valley, discoveries of fossilized land and sea creatures stand as testimony to the prehistoric world 60 to 80 million years ago! The East block is one of a handful of places around the world that reveals the Cretaceous-Tertiary Boundary – evidence

bearing witness to a world changing event. The revealing landscape of the Badlands led to the first recorded find of dinosaur remains in western Canada in 1874.

What is the Cretaceous-Tertiary Boundary? *A thin, white, chalky layer in the soil, separating age of dinosaurs from mammals. Below the line dinosaur fossils are found, above the line are mammal fossils.*



Above: Vertebrae Fossil.

Top Right: Inoceramus shell fossils from the last intercontinental seaway 70-80 million years ago.



DID YOU KNOW?

The East Block Badlands are one of the richest resources for dinosaur fossils in Canada.

A new species of prehistoric birds called the *Brodavis americanus* was discovered recently in the East Block of the park.

EAST BLOCK TRAILS

1. Zahursky Ridge Trail-Route

Choose high ground with horizon stretching views of the badlands, or delve to the intimacy of the valley bottom. This route delights either way.

Moderate terrain – 11 km loop (two options for return)



Start: Rock Creek Day Use Area



2. Rim Walk Trail

Looking for a short, sunset walk? Grab your coffee, your kids and leave the Rock Creek Day Use Area to the rim overlooking the valley and red-fired buttes.

Easy terrain – 2 ½ km loop



Start: access at hill top above Rock Creek Day Use Area



3. Rock Creek Trail

Immerse yourself in a 360° view of native grasslands. With playful swallows close by, disappear into the prairie of days gone by. Enjoy the story along the way on this new trail.

Easy terrain – 2 km loop



Start: Rock Creek Day Use Area, across the Rock Creek bridge



4. Butte Creek/Red Buttes Route

Curlews, Swift Fox or Sage-Grouse may be one of your surprises along the way. Navigating a creek crossing and rough topography will be worth the rewarding view at the end.

Difficult terrain – 16 km out-and-back



Start: Rock Creek Day Use Area, across the Rock Creek bridge



Trail

A defined trail experience identified by one of the following:

- built trail with hardened surface
- mowed prairie outlining the trail
- yellow markers may be present

Route

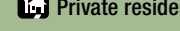
An undefined experience characterized by one of the following:

- no defined trail or path
- requires route finding skills (i.e. ability to read compass, read map and understand written instructions)
- hiking route guide available for loan at the Visitor Centre

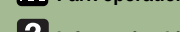
Legend



Visitor Centre



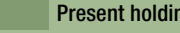
Private residence



Park operations



Information kiosk



Viewpoint



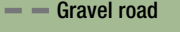
Present holdings



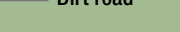
Lands in transition – contact Visitor Centre for permission and updates



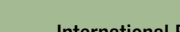
Proposed park boundaries



Paved road



Gravel road



Dirt road



Trails and Routes



International Boundary



Ecotour Scenic Drive



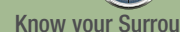
Grass Fires are Dangerous



Know your Surroundings



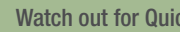
Watch out for Quicksand



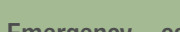
Emergency – call 911 (service limited)



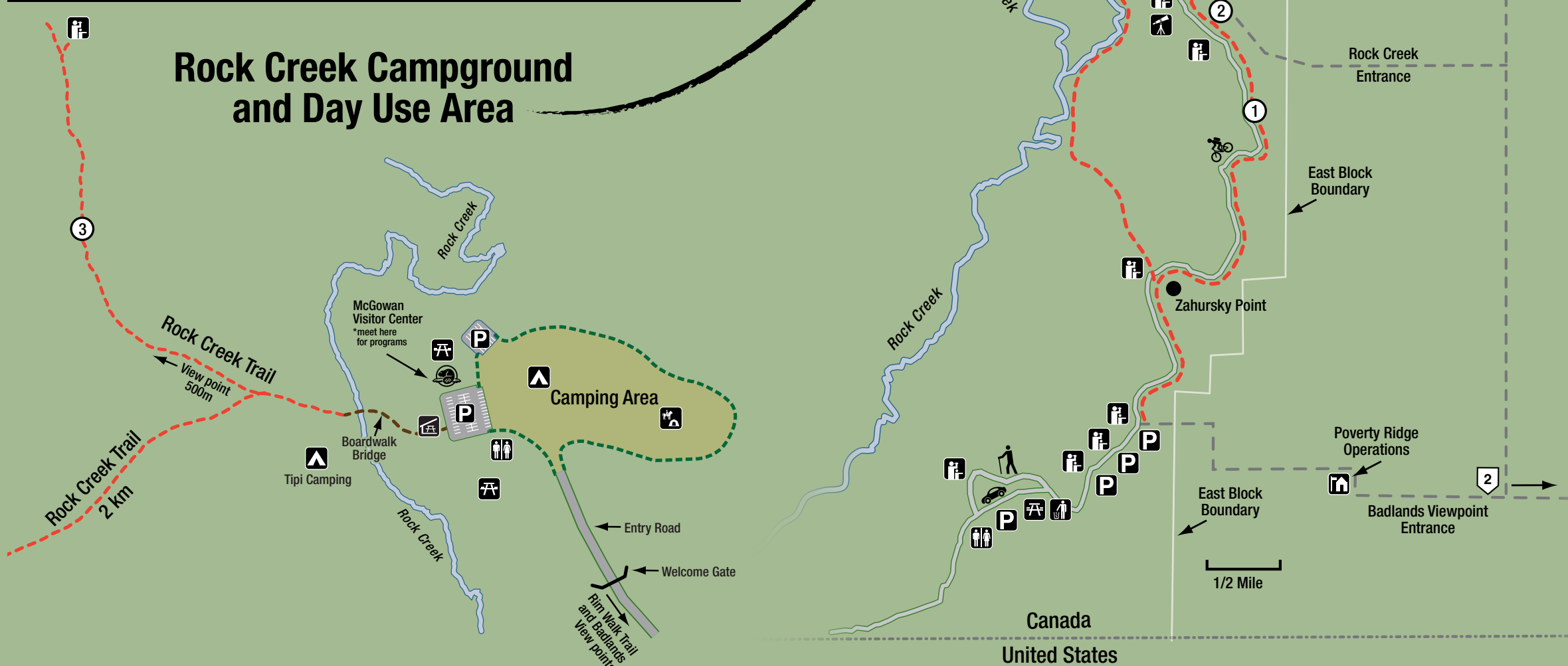
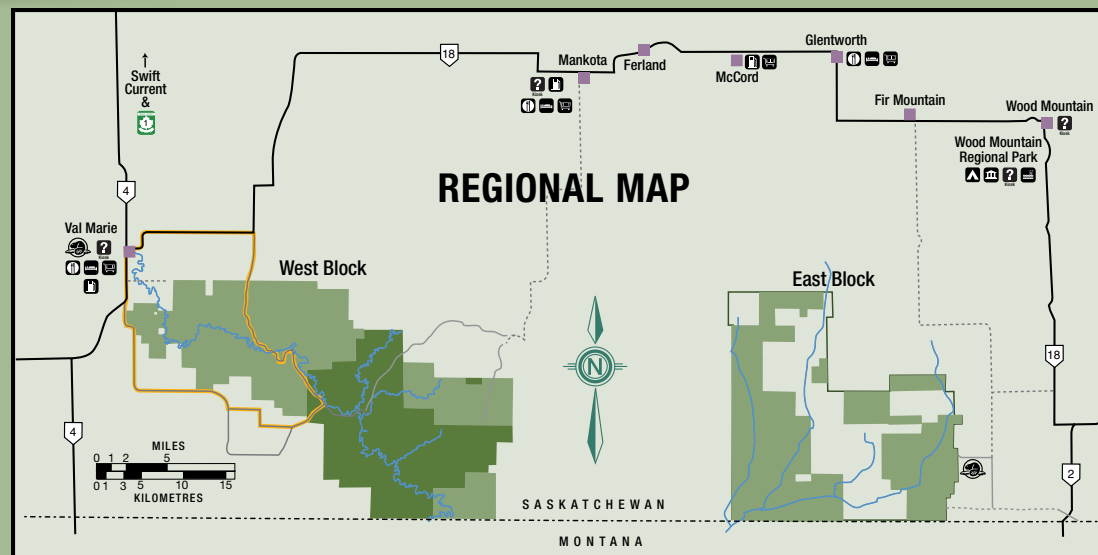
Emergency – call 911 (service limited)



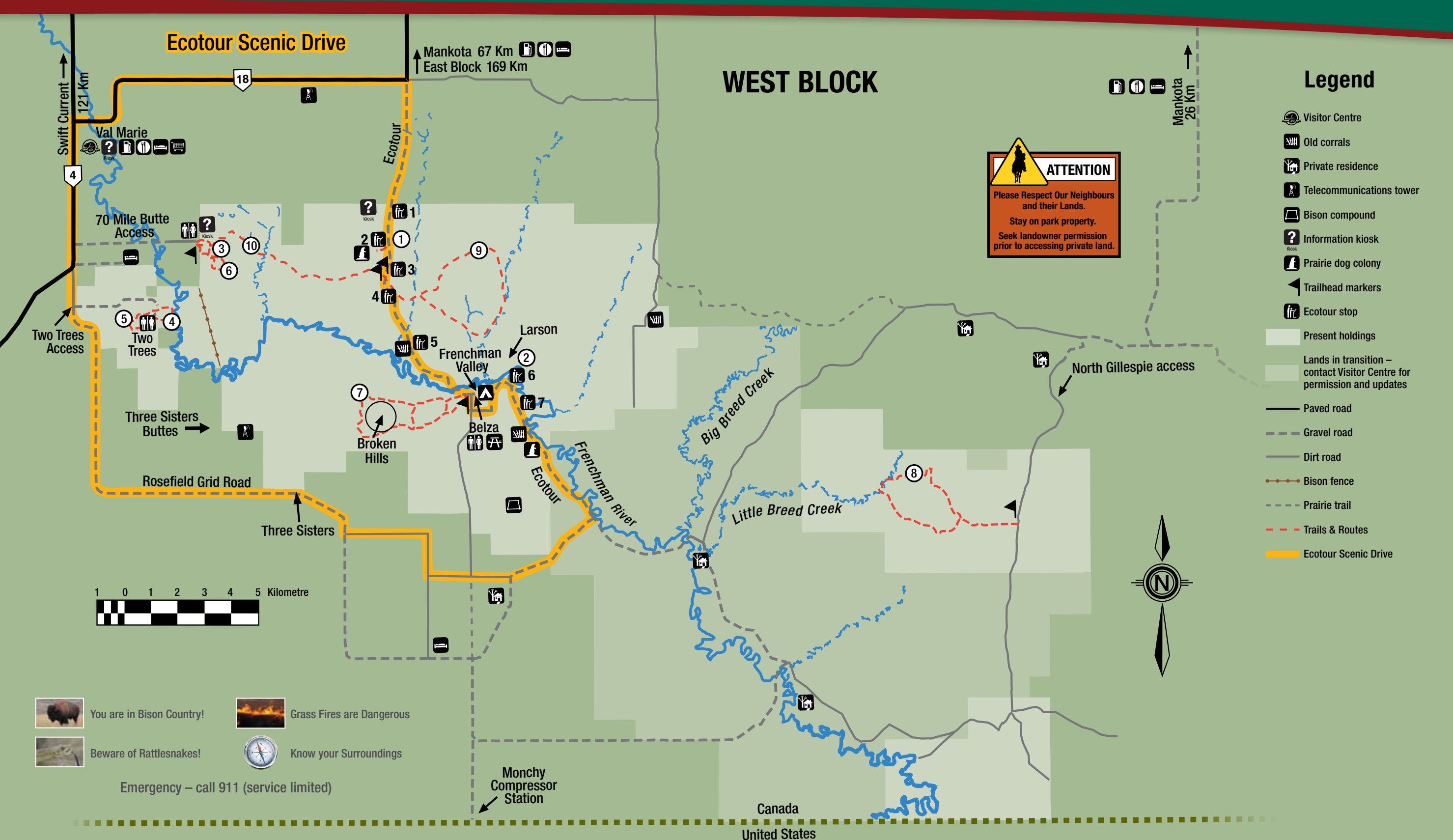
Emergency – call 911 (service limited)



Emergency – call 911 (service limited)



Badlands Viewpoints



WEST BLOCK

ATTENTION
 Please Respect Our Neighbours and their Lands.
 Stay on park property.
 Seek landowner permission prior to accessing private land.

Legend

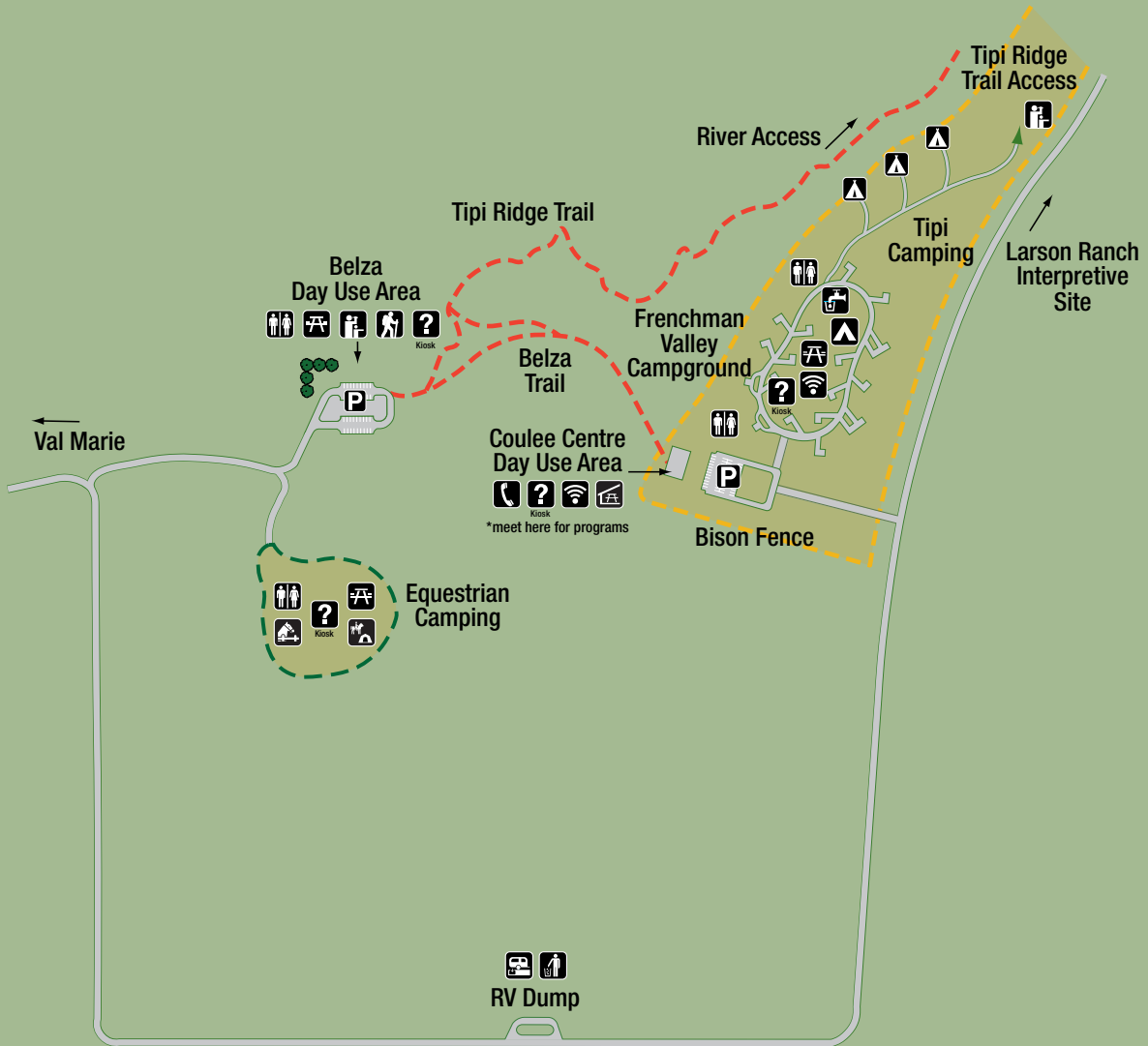
- Visitor Centre
- Old corrals
- Private residence
- Telecommunications tower
- Bison compound
- Information kiosk
- Prairie dog colony
- Trailhead markers
- Ecotour stop
- Present holdings
- Lands in transition – contact Visitor Centre for permission and updates
- Paved road
- Gravel road
- Dirt road
- Bison fence
- Prairie trail
- Trails & Routes
- Ecotour Scenic Drive

WEST BLOCK TRAILS

- 1. Top Dogtown Trail**
 Listen to the rare Black-tailed Prairie Dog's chirping 'bark' as you cross a colony to a superb viewpoint.
Easy Terrain – ½ km loop
 Start: Ecotour Road Stop #2
- 2. Larson Interpretive Trail**
 Discover the story of one cowboy and his family as he rode the open range, roughed out broncs, and built a ranch that one day became a national park.
Easy terrain – ½ km loop
 Start: Ecotour Road Stop #6
- 3. Eagle Butte Loop Trail**
 Enjoy the common and rare flowers, the intriguing geology and surprising views along this new trail.
Easy terrain – 2 km loop
 Start: 70 Mile Butte Access Road
- 4. Riverwalk Trail**
 Want an easy amble following a picnic lunch? Then, explore the banks of the Frenchman River with this trail.
Easy terrain – 2 km loop
 Start: Two Trees Trail Access at Two Trees Day Use Area
- 5. Two Trees Trail**
 Enjoy rolling hills and a scenic Frenchman River Valley view plus a story.
Easy terrain – 3½ km loop
 Start: Two Trees Trail Access at Two Trees Day Use Area
- 6. 70 Mile Butte Trail**
 Looking for a challenge? Conquer one of the highest points in the park. The view is worth the climb.
Difficult terrain – 5 km loop
 Start: 70 Mile Butte Access Road
- 7. Broken Hills Route**
 Hike through undulating and broken prairie – country frequented by Mule Deer and soaring hawks.
Difficult terrain – 11 km loop
 Start: Ecotour Road at Belza Day Use Area
- 8. North Gillespie Route**
 Seeking solitude and remoteness? This challenging hike will meet your desires of open prairie wilderness and spectacular views
Difficult terrain – 15 km loop
 Start: North Gillespie
- 9. Timbergulch Route**
 Experience the essence of land and sky. This is truly a hike of open vistas.
Difficult terrain – 16 km loop
 Start: Ecotour Road Stop #3
- 10. Eagle Butte – Ecotour Route**
 Rise and fall with the 'coulees' – a defining prairie land feature. Move from height-of-land to valley bottom, while embracing the Frenchman River Valley.
Difficult terrain – 9 km one way
 Start: Ecotour Road Stop #3
 *vehicle shuttle required

You are in Bison Country!
 Grass Fires are Dangerous
 Beware of Rattlesnakes!
 Know your Surroundings
 Emergency – call 911 (service limited)
 Monchy Compressor Station

Frenchman Valley Hub



Legend

- Tipi camping
- Coulee Centre
- Electrical sites
- Fence
- Trails and Routes
- Gates — pedestrian
- Grey water
- Handicap access
- Information kiosks
- Parking
- Potable water
- Public washrooms
- Telephone
- Viewpoint
- Waste bins
- Wifi

Frenchman Valley Campground



Choose Your Camping Adventure

Camping is one of the best ways to enjoy all the park has to offer. Whether pulling a trailer, stuffing a tent into your backpack, or simply arriving to the convenience of a ready-to-use tipi, Grasslands has your camping experience covered.

Front Country Camping

Roasting marshmallows until golden brown. Sharing stories of your first Bison sighting. Laughing about pulling the burrs from your socks. Memories are made when camping at one of our two, vehicle accessible campgrounds. See map for locations.

Enjoy the **Frenchman Valley Campground** (West Block) with its 20 tent/RV campsites (including 4 electrical, 3 pull through, and 1 wheelchair accessible area) plus three walk-in tipi accommodations. Tent/RV areas are equipped with fire pits, lantern hangers, picnic tables and easy access to potable water and vault toilets. The Coulee Centre building serves as respite from the heat, a location for cooking and eating, and a hub for park programs.

The **Rock Creek Campground** (East Block) includes a cook shelter and bridge, tipi camping, tenting area, 10 terraced RV campsites, picnic tables and a vault toilet. Park programs also happen here.

To Make Your Front Country Experience More Enjoyable!

Conditions vary year-round, but plan for fire bans in summer. Contact Visitor Centre for details.

Register at self-registration kiosks located at both campgrounds.

Confine vehicle and camping equipment to the gravel area.

Keep campsites clean and attend campfires at all times.

Check out or re-register by 11:00 am.

Store food in a vehicle or RV when not in use.

Robert Postma



Jehane Lamelle

Back Country Camping:

Drop your pack following an exhilarating hike. Pitch a tent where no one has camped before – well, maybe not for a thousand years! Look forward to the sunset, and perhaps a Coyote howl. The park is yours to explore when Back Country Camping. See map for ideas – you get to pick the location.

Tipi Camping

Feel like a kid again and live out a dream. After returning from a tipi-ring scattered ridge in the park, tuck into your sleeping bag in your own tipi. Let the rustling prairie grasses rock you to sleep. Being close to amenities, you and your family will enjoy the rustic nature of this tipi camping experience.

Tipi areas sleep up to 4 people and include camp mattresses. Rent additional supplies for an extra cost. Tipi locations are located adjacent to campgrounds with shelters, vault toilets and potable water.

To Make Your Back Country Experience More Enjoyable!

Register at Visitor Centres or campground self-registration kiosks.

Park and begin from one of our campgrounds, or road pull-offs.

Plan to camp out of view of a road – a minimum of 1 km.

Conditions vary year-round, but plan for fire bans in summer, banning camp stoves. Contact Visitor Centre for details.

Pack out everything that was packed in.

Contact the Visitor Centre for further details.

Make Your Tipi Camping Experience More Enjoyable!

Reserve your tipi at one of the Visitor Centres.

Bring a sleeping bag or rent one of ours.

Plan for a short walk from the parking area to the Tipis (~500 metres). Carry carts are provided for assistance.

Contact the Visitor Centre for further details.

Regional Camping:

If camping closer to communities, and outside the park is more your scene, there are public and private campground operations within a short drive of the park – perfect for a day trip. Enquire at the park or regional communities for details.



Backpackers' Dream



Choose Your Trail Adventure

Experience the rare opportunity of walking a timeless, prairie landscape. Horseback riders can amble from ridge top to ridge top. Cyclists can spin their wheels to one of our new trails, before embarking on foot. Trails are a great way to discover the park. See map for locations.

Select a trail experience right for you by using the following criteria. Contact Visitor Centre staff for further assistance. Classifications are based upon trail 'characteristics' and not on individual 'fitness'.



Easy Terrain

- Trail surface is hard packed or mowed
- Little or no elevation gain – grades up to 7%
- Trail width can be up to 1.5 metres wide
- Few or no obstacles



Moderate Terrain

- Trail surface may be hard packed or mowed
- Moderate elevation gain with some steep sections – grades are up to 15%
- Trail width is 0.5 – 1.5 metres wide
- Obstacles are infrequent



Difficult Terrain

- Natural material
- Major elevation gain with several steep sections – grades up to 20%
- Trail width can be up to 0–1 metre wide
- Obstacles common



Bison

Nigel Finney

Grasslands National Park—

A Leader and Contributor to the Recovery of Canadian Species at Risk

Home on the Range

Visitors from around the world come to Grasslands National Park in southern Saskatchewan to see the who's who of prairie species at risk: Burrowing Owls, Greater Sage-Grouse and the crowd pleasing colonies of Prairie Dogs, just to name a few. The park is home to over 20 species at risk.

Prairie Bandits

Black-footed Ferrets were once found in the mixed grass prairie of southern Alberta and southern Saskatchewan, but they began disappearing after European settlers arrived in the region in the early 20th century. They were believed to be extinct, but a small population was found near a ranch in Wyoming, U.S.A. in 1981. Several ferrets were trapped and used to begin a successful captive breeding program which now supports the reintroduction of this species to its natural habitat across the United States, Mexico, and Canada. The Toronto Zoo began its own breeding program

in 1992. By 1997, it had 12 males and 18 females. In October 2009, 35 Black-footed Ferrets, which were born at the zoo, were released in Grasslands National Park.

Cool Fact: In 2012, the park discovered a Canadian wild born Black-footed Ferret (born in 2011), with her own litter of wild born kits in 2012!! This second generation of wild born ferrets in Canada is another important benchmark in the recovery of the species.

Return of the Plains Bison Now

In December 2005, after a 120-year absence, Plains Bison were brought back to the park. They came from Elk Island National Park's well-established herd. Now, a herd of approximately 350 animals is once again at home on the wild open prairie.

Bison or Buffalo? So what is the difference? Simply put, the correct term for the largest land



Black-footed Ferrets

Mike Lockhart



Burrowing Owls

Robert Postma

mammal in North America is Bison. Bison may resemble their relatives but they are different species than that of the Asian water Buffalo and African Buffalo that live in Southeast Asia and Africa. There are three distinct sub-species of Bison in the world today. European Bison live in Poland and portions of the former Soviet Union. Plains and Wood Bison are exclusive to North America. The park is home to the Plains Bison.

IN DANGER TODAY.....

Extinct: A species that no longer exists.

Extirpated: A species no longer existing in the wild in Canada, but occurring elsewhere.

- Black-footed Ferret
- *Reintroduction is in progress at Grasslands National Park*

Endangered: A species facing imminent extirpation or extinction.

- Burrowing Owl
- Greater Sage-Grouse
- Greater Short-horned Lizard



Threatened: A species likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed.

- Loggerhead Shrike
- Sprague's Pipit
- Mormon Metalmark
- Ferruginous Hawk
- Eastern Yellow-bellied Racer
- Swift Fox
- Chestnut-collared Longspur
- Common Nighthawk
- Black-tailed Prairie Dog
- Plains Bison

Special Concern: A species of special concern because of characteristics that are particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events.



- Long-billed Curlew
- Northern Leopard Frog
- Short-eared Owl
- McCown's Longspur



** 2013 Committee on status endangered wildlife in Canada*


CHECK OUT	EASY ID TIPS	CLUES	WHERE TO VIEW	GNP FACTOID!
Plains Bison 	Male or female? Look at the horns for size and shape. Bulls grow larger, more robust horns and 'horn buds' are visible on the male calf within the month they are born.		Ecotour Road after a prescribed burn; they are attracted to the green, tender grass shoots.	Bison were absent from this landscape for over 120 years. As of 2005, Bison roam free in the West Block of GNP.

Black-tailed Prairie Dog 	They are easily distinguished from the Richardson's Ground Squirrel "gopher" as the Prairie Dogs are twice the size. Prairie Dogs are ALSO highly... social critters and live in extensive communal 'dog towns'.		Sneak a peek at the Prairie Dogs through the telescopes at Stop 2 and Stop 7 on Ecotour Road.	The West Block and neighbouring lands are the only places in Canada where Black-tailed Prairie Dogs exist in their natural habitat.
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Black-footed Ferret 	The Black-footed Ferret is a third larger than its cousin the weasel and has a creamy buff coloured coat; and a chocolate covered mask that covers their shiny black eyes.		A very rare sight, perhaps if you're lucky, you'll spy them in the night on a Prairie Dog colony!	The Black-footed Ferret was once thought to be globally extinct until 18 infamous ferrets were discovered in Wyoming in 1981! GNP reintroduced ferrets to the park in 2009 and this is the only place in Canada where wild born ferrets are found!
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Burrowing Owl 	Burrowing Owls are comical birds that appear to look like a short, fat Owl on stilts. They can be mistaken for a gopher due to their size and that they perch on abandoned gopher holes and Prairie Dog burrows.		At dawn and dusk from Ecotour Road within the Prairie Dog towns.	GNP Burrowing Owls arrive in early May and head south to Mexico and Texas in early October to spend the winter.
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CHECK OUT	EASY ID TIPS	CLUES	WHERE TO VIEW	GNP FACTOID!
Pronghorn Antelope 	Male and female pronghorns have the only forked horns in the world. Pronghorn are much faster than deer; they can endure speeds of 100 km per hour to escape Coyotes.		In the open grasslands browsing sage bush, grease wood and cactus in the valley bottoms. <i>Fences: Pronghorns go under and deer jump over!</i>	Less than 300 antelope survived the harsh winter of 1926! Today, antelope are once again a common sight in the grasslands.

Mule Deer 	Mule deer have large 'mule-like' ears and are easily distinguished by their white rump patch and short black-tipped tail. Mule deer are often spotted bouncing on four limbs up and down hill sides.		At dawn and dusk they emerge from sheltered coulees to feed on shrubs and grasses. Snowberry bushes are nicknamed 'buck brush' as it makes for excellent shelter for 'bucks' to bed down in.	South-west Saskatchewan is well-known for producing magnificent mule-deer with large beautiful antlers. Perhaps, it is the sun-cured native grasses that provide the nutritional edge!
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White-Tailed Deer 	'White-tailed' refers to the white underside of the flag-like tail, which waves when they are alarmed.		Grain and hay fields neighbouring the park lands. In the winter time, you can over see over 100 deer feeding in one hayfield.	Did White-tailed deer occur in SW Saskatchewan prior to farm settlement? It is uncertain, however, populations have risen due to agricultural development.
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CHECK OUT

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CLUES

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GNP FACTOID!

Coyotes



James R. Page

These medium sized 'song-dogs' can be identified by their iconic howl and high-pitched bark. Since the extirpation of the prairie wolf, the Coyote is 'top-dog' on the prairie!



Coyotes are native to the prairie, but can be seen in both prairie and non-prairie environments.

Coyotes are territorial and will kill red and swift foxes. Foxes are viewed as competitors for hunting gophers, rabbits and mice.

Greater Short-horned Lizard



Short-horned Lizards do not resemble any other reptile or amphibian in the park. They look prehistoric, as they are a living remnant from the days of the dinosaurs!



In Badland habitat. Bearpaw shale slopes in the Frenchman Valley and the lower reaches of Rock Creek. August is the best time to view them as the young of the year have been born, and they are temporarily more abundant.

Short-horned Lizards are very difficult to see as they are very small and their camouflage is superior. Usually, you can only spot them if they move! In winter, the lizards will bury themselves under about 10 cm of loose soil on south facing slopes.

Prairie Rattlesnake



They have a wide, flat triangular shaped head and a rattle on their tail. Female colouring is a light olive green and males are pale gold; both have dark blotches on their back.



Within 100 square kms of the Frenchman River Valley. Slumping hillsides provide ideal locations for winter hibernation dens. They gather at these areas in September for the winter, and emerge from hibernation in Spring.

In 2011, historic moisture conditions created flooding and slumping in the Frenchman River Valley and buried one of the largest rattlesnake dens in the park. The same type of natural phenomenon that created these slumping formations destroyed it!

CHECK OUT

EASY ID TIPS

CLUES

WHERE TO VIEW

GNP FACTOID!

Greater Sage-Grouse



Bob Gurr

Greater Sage-Grouse or Sharp-tailed Grouse? Sage-Grouse are very rare in Canada and Sharp-tailed Grouse are comparably common. Sage-Grouse only exist in large tracts of sagebrush habitat.



Sage brush flats in the Frenchman Valley and Rock Creek tributaries.

The historical range of Sage-Grouse has been reduced by 94% in prairie Canada. This is one of the few places in Canada you may be fortunate to see this endangered bird.

Ferruginous Hawk



James R. Page

It is the largest hawk in North America. Ferruginous Hawks usually have full white breast and belly with rust coloured legs. It sometimes is mistaken for the Golden Eagle.



Look for 3 habitat requirements: native grass, gophers and high elevated nest areas, i.e. steep cliff sides.

Before the 1900s, nests were often constructed with Bison bones and lined with fur and Bison dung. Nests today are made of dried sticks, lined with bark and cow dung.

A PRAIRIE IN BLOOM...

There is a succession of vibrant colours and sweet aromas in the grasslands as the wildflowers take their place under the sun. Crocus, prairie onion, cinquefoil, rose, cactus, vetch, locoweed, violets, asters, fleabanes, goosefoot, and buttercup to name a few! June is the peak season to see the most prairie flowers in bloom at one time!

1: Dotted Blazing Star, 2: Pin Cushion Cactus, 3: Prickly Pear, 4: Three Flowered Aven



BIRDER'S PARADISE

The grasslands bird community is in steep decline in North America. Here, visitors can 'check the list' (copy available) for the unusual as well as 'iconic'. Enjoy the Sprague's pipit's swirling trill, the horned lark's twinkle, the grasshopper sparrow's rasp and of course the meadowlark's welcoming gurgle.



Golden Eagle



Loggerhead Shrike

Bob Gurr



Meadow Lark

Wendy Micheal



HORSE USERS

SCENERY-SUN UP TO DOWN!

“Where can a horse kick off their shoes?”

Horse camping is available at two locations South of the Belza day use area in the West Block, and the Rock Creek Campground in the East Block. Area includes: Information kiosk, horse pens, outhouse, water troughs, and manure receptacle.

Horse Use Information:

- Horses, while hobbled, tethered or corralled may graze in the park. Avoid grazing crested wheatgrass after May 31st to avoid the spread of this non-native plant species. Crested Wheatgrass is an aggressive, exotic plant that is a threat to native prairie.

- Dispose of horse manure at on-site receptacles.
- Bagged cubes, pellets and rolled or steamed oats are the preferred feed. Weed free hay is permitted only at the Rock Creek Campground and South of the Belza day use area.
- Horseback riders may go anywhere in the park. Please respect private landowners around the park and remain on park owned lands.
- Protect your horses against West Nile Virus
- Caution! Extreme fire risk and horseshoes can be a bad combination. Sparks may result from a horse clipping a rock with their shoes.
- For emergency vet and farrier information, please contact our Visitor Centres.
- Watch where you ride. Many prairie species, including rattlesnakes, are highly adapted to the prairies and camouflage well.
- Topographic maps are available for purchase at the Visitor Centres, or at Prairie Wind and Silver Sage – Friends of Grasslands.

Visitor Centre

The Visitor Centres will make your trip most memorable, as friendly knowledgeable staff provide up-to-date information on park programs, camping opportunities,

maps, road conditions, weather, safety and more!

The centres exhibit significant prairie stories: grassland ecosystems, endangered species, human history, palaeontology and geology.

The West Block Visitor Centre is located in Val Marie, Saskatchewan at the junction of Hwy #4 and Centre Street, and the McGowan Visitor Centre is located at the Rock Creek campground.

Working with Our Communities

Prairie Wind & Silver Sage – Friends of Grasslands is a volunteer, non-profit organization based in Val Marie, Saskatchewan on the edge of the West Block. The organization provides additional visitor services (on a seasonal basis) at the historic Little Brick Schoolhouse, across the street from the Parks Canada Visitor Centre.

Services include:

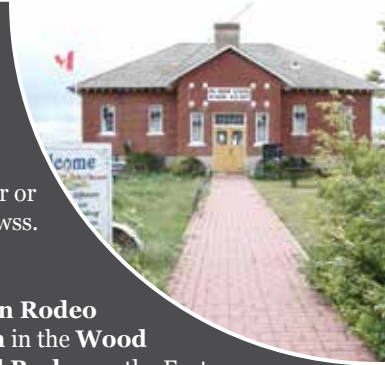
- publication and sale of Grasslands National Park Field Guide
- museum featuring the natural history of the grasslands
- art gallery exhibiting work by Saskatchewan visual artists
- gift shop emphasizing books, pottery and other gift items with a connection to the landscape
- coffee bar offering delicious treats to eat and drink, including lattes
- wireless internet access
- special programs in support of both park and community activities

Grasslands National Park has the quietest purest sounds. To be considered a truly quiet place, there has to be at least 15 minutes, during daylight hours, when only the sounds of nature are present and there are no human intrusions.



To see more, volunteer or donate, email info@pwss.ca, visit www.pwss.ca.

The **Wood Mountain Rodeo and Ranch Museum** in the **Wood Mountain Regional Park** near the East Block of Grasslands National Park offers Park information. Visitors can experience a wide range of historical activities as they explore the **Rodeo & Ranch Museum**, the Métis Adobe or the Heritage House featuring homesteaders from Eastern Europe. In addition to museum activities and group tours, the local Historical Society offers an archive including an extensive photograph collection, and a bookstore featuring books by local authors. The Rodeo Ranch Museum is open daily from May long weekend to September long weekend. To learn more contact them at 306-266-4953 (seasonal) or visit their website at <http://woodmountain.ca/RodRanc.html>.



For more information on operating hours and dates, please visit the Grasslands National Park website at parksCanada.gc.ca/grasslands.

The Park itself is always open.



FEES

National park user fees support the maintenance, conservation and protection of Grasslands National Park. Park fees are an investment in the future, so that generations to come will also enjoy this beautiful place. Fees apply for entry, overnight camping, and interpretive programs.



**Grasslands
National Park**
parkscanada.gc.ca

Grasslands National Park

www.parkscanada.gc.ca/grasslands

grasslands.info@pc.gc.ca

306.298.2257 (West Block Visitor Centre)

306.476.2018 (McGowan Visitor Centre)