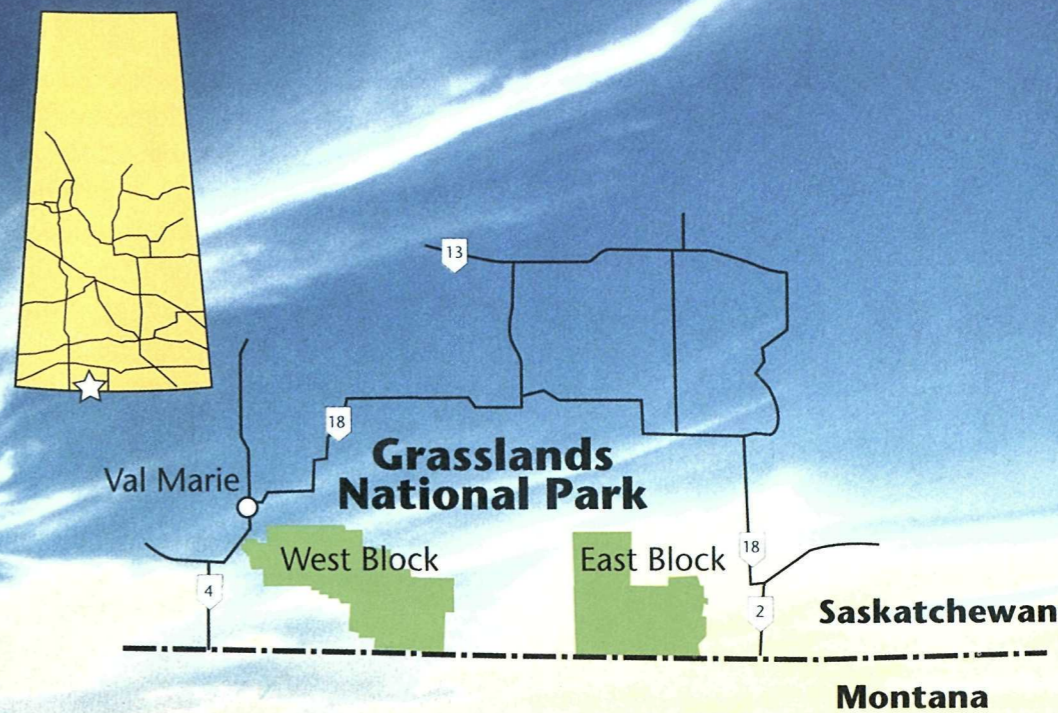


WELCOME TO Grasslands NATIONAL PARK



Canadian Heritage / Patrimoine canadien
Parks Canada / Parcs Canada



Canada

The Park's East and West Blocks

The park, when fully established, will encompass 900 square kilometers (350 sq. miles) in two distinct blocks: The Frenchman River Valley is the canvas upon which the park's West Block is painted. This glacial meltwater channel features deeply dissected plateaux, coulees, and the conspicuous 70 Mile Butte which rewards the adventurous with an impressive view.



The park's East Block features the Killdeer "Badlands" of the Rock Creek area and is representative of the Wood Mountain Upland. The landscape is characterized by the exposed layers of Bearpaw, Eastend, Whitemud, Frenchman and Ravenscrag formations. The Killdeer badlands, untouched by glaciation, reveal the multi-coloured hues representing 60,000 years of eroded strata. Indeed, this revealing landscape led to the first recorded discovery of dinosaur remains in Canada in 1874, by Sir George Mercer Dawson of the North American Boundary Commission.

For years I have walked the landscapes of the western half of this continent, wondering what attracted me to them, but now I think I know. It is the patterns: they are what give me this overwhelming sense of fulfillment. Architecture of grass and forb and rock and sky. Random patterns. There are a few patterns that I do understand: the layering of buckbrush where winter snowbanks accumulate, the colonization of dry sloughbeds, the frost-heaving of stones. There are a thousand more that I don't understand, in fact, don't even recognize yet as patterns, but there is a pleasant sense of potential.

– Don Gayton

A distance without limits, a horizon that did not bound the world but only suggested endless space beyond.

– Wallace Stegner

Grasslands National Park is a land of prehistoric badlands, lush coulees, and broad river valleys sweeping to distant horizons. This is one of the largest pieces of virtually undisturbed mixed-grass prairie in North America. Here you will find species rarely found elsewhere in the country. You may come across an eastern yellow-bellied racer coiled under the lavender blossoms of slender beardtongue or observe the ferruginous hawk wafting on midday thermals. It's the only place in Canada where colonies of black-tailed prairie dogs still exist in their native habitat.

A land of wide open spaces, of suave flowing lines, of harmonies of colour

– C. W. Jeffries



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Getting there:

Grasslands National Park is located in southwestern Saskatchewan near the Saskatchewan-Montana border. The park's West Block can be accessed near the village of Val Marie on Hwy #4. Val Marie is a one and half hour drive south of Swift Current. The Park's East Block can be accessed near the town of Wood Mountain on Hwy #18.

open weekdays and closed during holidays. The Park itself is always open.

Interpretive Events:

Check at the Visitor Reception Centre for special events, celebrations and heritage presentations. School tours are available in late May and all of June and extension programs are offered on a limited basis during the off-season. Park staff lead some guided events and can also arrange to have an experienced volunteer accompany groups into the park.

For more information, please contact the park at:

Park Information:

Stop at the Visitor Reception Centre located in Val Marie at the junction of Hwy #4 and Centre Street. Exhibits; a resource library complete with field guides and videos; maps, current information, self-guiding brochures and audio tours; as well as knowledgeable park staff, help you get the most from your visit.

The Visitor Reception Centre is open daily from the Victoria Day weekend in May to the Labour Day weekend in September. During the remainder of the year, the Centre is



Remnant teepee rings, projectile points and other artifacts indicate that the Plains Indians roamed here in search of bison, and it was a favorite bison hunting area for the nomadic Metis during the early days of the Red River Settlement. Sitting Bull and his Sioux followers took refuge here from the U.S. Army after the battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876.

Buffalo have a great need to rub and on treeless prairie, the only objects tall and rigid enough for them were the rare boulder erratics, huge stones that somehow missed being pulverized by glaciers. Rubbing stones on rangeland became sacred sites, and paths converged on them from all points of the buffalo compass... The stones sit in deep, rounded depressions, the result of generations of animals working their way around them.

– Don Gayton



Grasslands National Park

P.O. Box 150
Val Marie, Saskatchewan
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Phone: (306) 298-2257
Fax: (306) 298-2042
TDD: (306) 298-2217



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– Wallace Stegner

By the late 1880s, cattle were replacing bison. Ranching prospered despite the Homesteading Act of 1908 which closed the open range in favour of farming. Although farming practices were not productive, homesteaders had to adapt to the demanding prairie elements. Today, a combination of dryland farming and ranching drives the local economy.

It is a country to breed mystical people, egocentric people, perhaps poetic people. But not humble ones. At noon, the total sun pours on your single head; at sunrise or sunset you throw a shadow a hundred yards long. It was not prairie dwellers who invented the indifferent universe or impotent man. Puny you may feel there, and vulnerable, but not unnoticed...

Flora and Fauna of the Grasslands

To me prairie is a thin membrane of grass, stretched tightly over secret horizons of soil, and shaped by drought, geography and solitude.

– Don Gayton

In less than a century the prairie grasslands have become one of the most endangered habitats in the country. Human settlement of the prairies, brought about the extirpation of many species including the bison, swift fox, and greater prairie chicken.

As well as the common species like mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and badger, the park is home to several endangered species such as the peregrine falcon and burrowing owl; threatened species including the loggerhead shrike and Baird's sparrow; and the rare or vulnerable species like the longbilled curlew, and eastern short-horned lizard. It is one of the few remaining places in Saskatchewan where prairie rattlesnakes and sage grouse can be found.

Representative mixed grass species include spear grass and blue grama grass. Trembling aspen, green ash, wolf willow and thorny buffaloberry take hold on the valley floors and in the moist coulees. In drier locations, sage, rabbit brush, greasewood, mosses, lichens and cacti make up a significant part of the plant community. There is a succession of colours and fragrances in the grasslands when the wild flowers bloom.



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Getting Into the Park:

You don't get out of the wind, but learn to lean and squint against it. You don't escape sky and sun, but wear them in your eyeballs and on your back. You become acutely aware of yourself. The world is very large, the sky even larger and you are very small...

– Wallace Stegner

West Block: From the Visitor Reception Centre, travel east on Hwy #18 for approximately 14.5 km (9 miles), turn south and follow this road for about 4 km (2.5 miles). Watch for the park sign. Once inside the west block, watch for pull-offs and the numbered beaver symbols for the Ecotour. Exit the west block by the same route.

East Block: On Hwy #18, from the corner of the Wood Mountain Regional Park and the provincial Wood Mountain Post Historic Site, travel south on Hwy #18 for 22.4 km (14 miles), turn west for 6.4 km (4 miles). At this point, there is a speed curve. Turn south and go another 6.4 km, turn west and the entrance/exit is 2.4 km (1.5 miles) ahead. Shortly after entering the east block there is a display with maps. The road ends at an old ranch yard.

- Visitors can explore the west block by vehicle using the self-guided Frenchman River Valley Ecotour brochure or audio cassette tour.
- Two Trees Interpretive Trail (1.5 km) is the only designated hiking trail. Brochures are available at the Visitor Reception Centre in Val Marie.
- You are encouraged to explore the park on your own by hiking the valley and coulees.
- If you enjoy horseback riding, local outfitters can arrange pack trips and trail rides from June to mid-September.

Preparing for your excursion in the park:

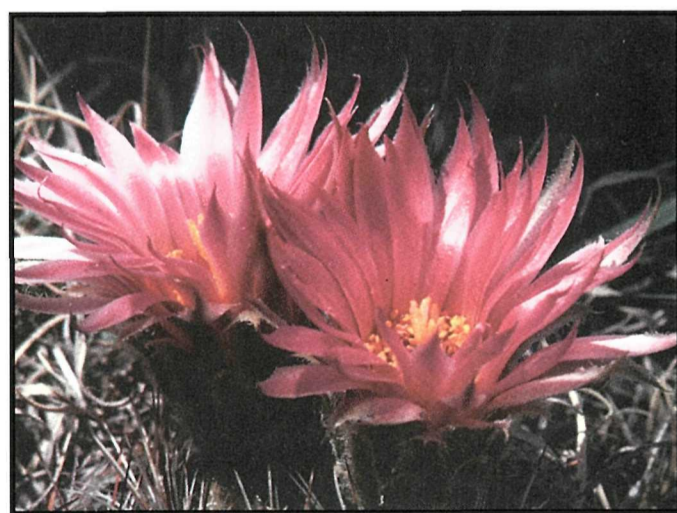
There are no facilities, no toilets, and no potable water in Grasslands National Park. For your comfort, safety

and enjoyment, ensure that you are self-reliant by including the following items among your travel gear:

- drinking water. You should allow at least 2 litres per person per day. You can fill up at the Visitor Reception Centre in Val Marie at any time.
- sturdy, high hiking boots to protect your feet from cactus spines
- sun hat and sun block
- maps for highway and grid roads, available at the Visitor Reception Centre.
- food
- binoculars
- mosquito repellent
- first aid kit
- rain gear

Conveniences:

The village of Val Marie provides limited essential services which include a café, hotel, service station, and small grocery store, as well as a post office, credit union, campground, museum, souvenir shop, and bed & breakfast. You can replenish your supply of drinking water at the Visitor Reception Centre in Val Marie at any time, or at the village campground open from May to October.



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Near the East Block of the park, the town of Wood Mountain provides: a service station, café, confectionery, bed & breakfast, and a post office.

To find out about local and regional events, attractions and accommodations, you may contact:

Tourism Saskatchewan
500 1900 Albert Street
Regina SK S4P 4L9
Phone: 1 (800) 667-7191 in Canada or the U.S.

Aussi disponible en français

Road Conditions:

The roads become impassable and very slippery with even a small amount of rain. Visitors are encouraged to leave the park when rain is imminent or to stay off roads during these times. Carry a map in your vehicle and watch for park signs and pull-offs.

Camping:

There is a village campground located in Val Marie that is equipped with washrooms and showers, electrical sites and picnic tables. It is open from May to October. Self-registration applies.

The Wood Mountain Regional Park provides: campground, water, electrical sites, laundry and shower facilities, picnic facilities, concession booth, swimming pool, craft store, playground and Rodeo Ranch Museum.

There are no designated campgrounds within the park boundaries but random tent-camping is permitted. In order to ensure no trace camping, please ensure that your tent site is at least one kilometer off roads and away from old ranch yards.

Roadside and motorized camping is not allowed in the park. Campers must register in and out at the Visitor Reception Centre or the Rodeo Ranch Museum. Camping fees apply.

Emergency Phone Numbers:

Park Wardens (306) 298-2257 or 2166 Val Marie
RCMP (306) 298-2033 Val Marie
RCMP (306) 478-2324 Mankota
Hospital (306) 778-9400 Swift Current
Hospital (306) 642-3351 Assiniboia
Emergency 911 Available in the West Block

Excerpts from Don Gayton, *The Wheatgrass Mechanism: Science and Imagination in the Western Canadian Landscape*. 1990. Reprinted by permission of Fifth House Publishers. Excerpts from Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow: A History, a Story, and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier*. 1990. Published by Penguin Books.

Help Us to Protect the Park

You can help us to protect the park by observing the following regulations:

- open fires are not permitted
- vehicles must remain on roads at all times
- visitors must have permission to be on private land
- please leave gates as you find them
- all pets must be leashed
- horses can be hobbled but not picketed
- it is illegal to harass, hunt or attempt to handle the wildlife
- collection and/or removal of any materials from the park is strictly prohibited
- people conducting research in the park must obtain a permit
- please report any unlawful activities to the Park Wardens or to the RCMP



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