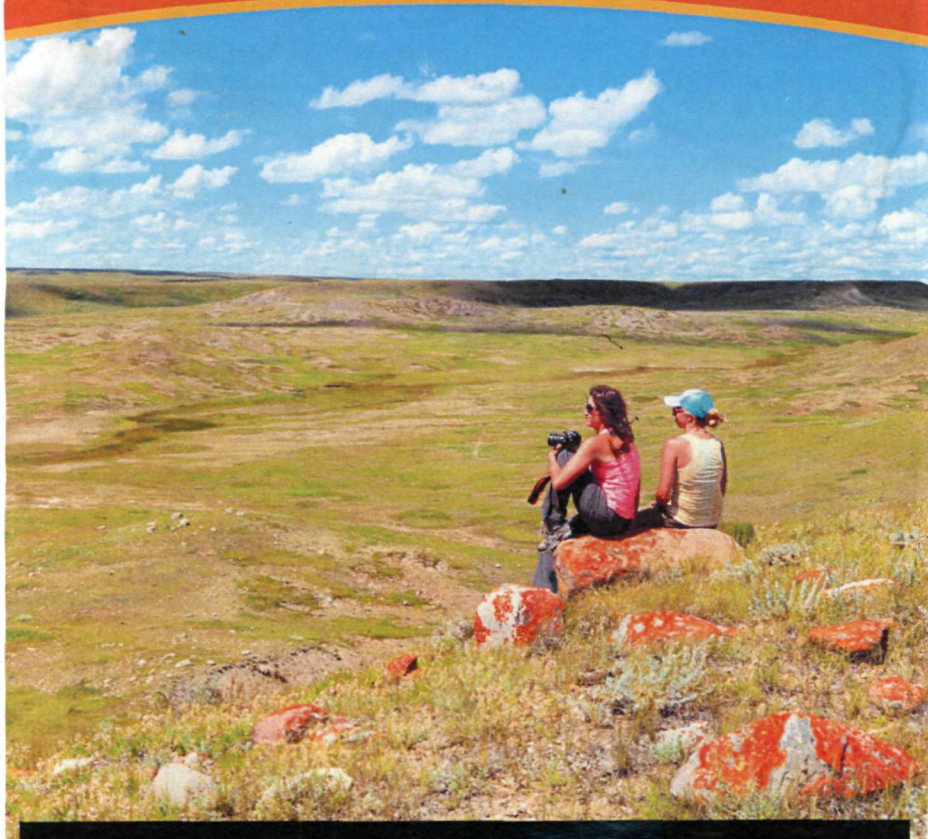




Grasslands
National Park

Timbergulch Hiking Route

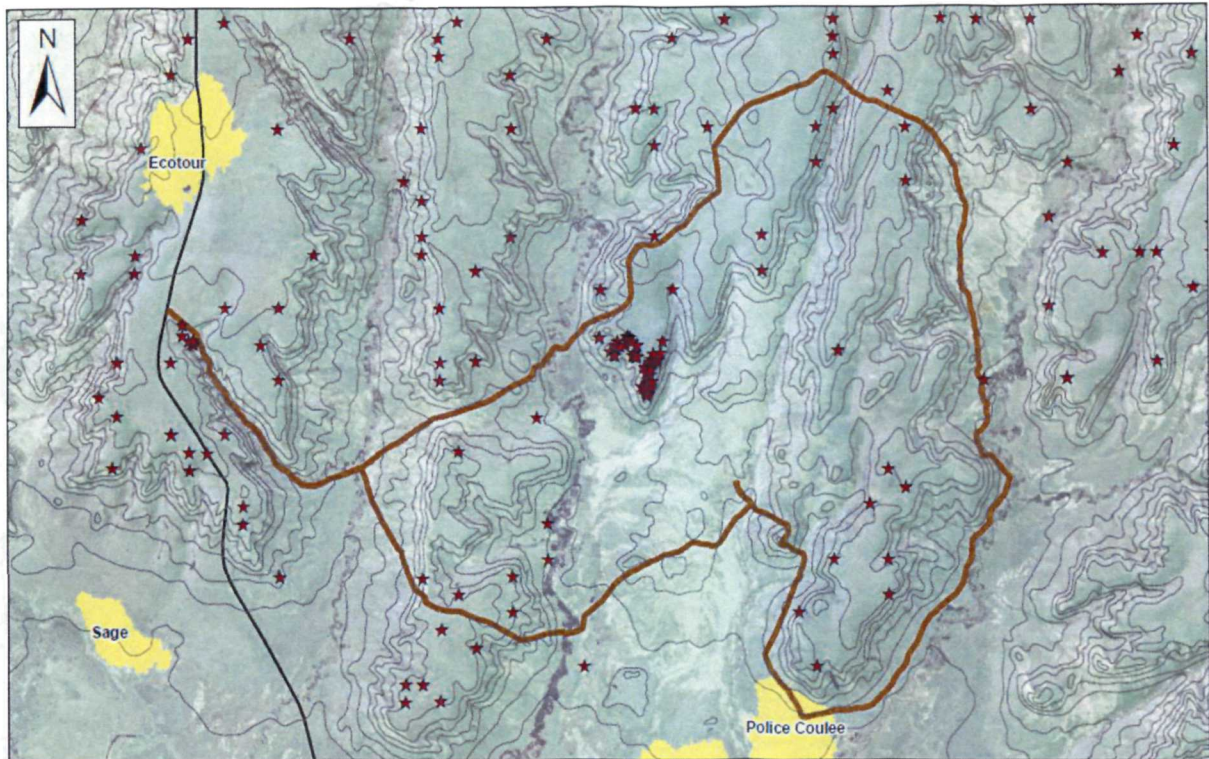
*Seek Silence, Solitude and Species at Risk
An unmarked route for the experienced hiker. GPS required.*








Parks
Canada

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Canada

Canada



Legend

-  Timbergulch Trail
-  Contour Interval = 25ft
-  Prairie Dog Colony
-  Archaeological Finds
-  Road



Welcome to Timbergulch Hiking Route

Grasslands National Park is the only national park in Canada to protect the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem. Home to a unique diversity of plants, animals and insects, Grasslands is a haven of species. The park is home to over 18 species listed as "At Risk" by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). This committee meets annually to analyze data and evaluate the status of all Canadian species.

- Extinct: a wildlife species that no longer exists
- Extirpated: no longer exists in a geographic area.
- Endangered: a wildlife species facing imminent extirpation or extinction.
- Threatened: a wildlife species likely to become endangered if nothing is done.
- Special Concern: a wildlife species that may become threatened because of identified threats.

As you explore the Timbergulch trail, you will come across signs of species at risk. While enjoying the scenic vistas, remember to stop and listen to the amazing sounds of prairie wildlife. Remember there is no right or wrong way to do this hiking route. Use this guide, the GPS coordinates or map to guide you on your adventure.

Global Positioning System Navigation (NAD 83—13U) *optional*

Landmark	Easting	Northing
Hike beginning and ending	313,123	5,451,975
Gap at Timmon's Coulee (2.2km)	314,696	5,451,415
Manitoba Maple Tree	316,830	5,453,006
Entrance to Timbergulch Coulee (6km)	317,456	5,452,785
Police Dogtown	316,655	5,449,666

Hike Outline:

- 0.0 km: parking at the Ecotour stop #3 pulloff
 - 0.0 - 2.2 km: Ecotour stop #3 to the gap at Timmons Coulee
 - 2.2 - 4.3 km: the gap at Timmons Coulee to the 1st Tabletop
 - 4.3 - 6.0 km: 1st tabletop to Timbergulch Coulee
 - 6.0 - 9.7 km: Timbergulch Coulee to the Frenchman River Valley
 - 9.7 - 13.0 km: Frenchman River Valley to the 2nd tabletop
 - 13.0 - 14.0 km: 2nd Tabletop to the draw
 - 14.0 - 16.0 km: the draw back to Ecotour #3
- With the Knoll Viewpoint, this hike will be 17km.*

Backcountry Camping

This trail offers excellent Backcountry Camping opportunities.

Recommended sites are:

- West of Police Coulee with a view of the sunset GPS: 13U 0316530 5450707
- North of Timbergulch Coulee in one of the quietest areas of the park. GPS: 13U 0317379 5453022

Multi-day Trek

Park at 70 Mile Butte Parking. Follow the Eagle Butte Loop to the 70 Mile Butte Trail. On the East side of 70 Mile Butte, follow the Bearpaw Sea Trail to Ecotour Road—Stop #3. Then follow the Timbergulch Trail markers. You will end up at Stop #3 and follow Bearpaw Sea trail back to 70 Mile Butte. This trek would be about 36km in total and can be completed in 1-3 days. Water can be cached ahead of time near Stop #3.



By Horseback

This hike can be explored by horseback. Feel free to venture West off the trail into Fireguard Coulee to find the bison herd. Water horses at the dugout by the Manitoba Maple Tree (between Police and Timbergulch Coulees).

0.0 - 2.2 km: Ecotour stop #3 to the gap at Timmons Coulee

This is your starting point. At the Ecotour stop #3, stay on the East side of the road and walk Southeast down the deep, narrow draw that leads into Timmons Coulee. This draw is heavy with brush and other vegetation and may hide animal burrows. Be careful! You may choose to use one of the game trails that lead down this draw. Continue until you come to the bottom of Timmons Coulee.



Wild Mint

As you descend this coulee, look for Marsh Hedge Nettle, part of the mint family. Snow run off provides much needed moisture to this coulee and is a refuge for wildlife. You may smell hints of mint in the air.

As you enter the wide, flat bottom of Timmons Coulee, notice the slope of the coulee on the far (east) side. There is a large gap to the north east which splits this slope in two. This will be your means of passing into Police Coulee on the other side. This gap may be your choice for a rest as it offers views of both Timmons and Police Coulees.



Timmons Coulee

You are now on the west side of Timmons Coulee. Depending on the time of year, if you look to the East you may see a lone bison bull. These males enjoy the solitude away from the main maternal herd.

If you see something shining in the hills, this is gypsum. It formed when evaporation exceeds precipitation for long periods of time. As the ground-water moves through the bedrock it picks up sulphur oxide ions and either combines with calcium carbonate ion to create gypsum. It comes up to the surface through erosion and is often seen on sunny days, glistening in the hills.

2.2 - 4.3 km: Gap at Timmons Coulee to the 1st Tabletop

From the gap, continue east into Police Coulee until you arrive at a meandering stream bed. This is your indication to turn north. You will need to cross the creek where it is convenient. Beware, as there are carpets of cactus in this coulee bottom. Make your way north toward an eroded, bare slope on the east (right) side of the coulee (see illustration). After the eroded slope you will need to work your way east (right) to the tabletop. For an easier climb, continue north from the eroded slope, past the first small draw, to the larger draw rising north-eastward (to your right). There is a knoll in the center of this draw. This provides a gradual route to the top.



Police Coulee

As you follow this table top along the east side of Police Coulee, enjoy the views of this small valley named after the North West Mounted Police back in the 1880s. Look for rock piles, archeological cairns left behind by first nations people hundreds of years ago. The one here is likely a beacon cairn, and may signify a good camping location. Ceremonial or burial cairns also exist in the park.

4.3 - 6.0 km: 1st Tabletop to Timbergulch Coulee

Use this moment to look westward, back towards 70 Mile Butte (the tabletop feature that rises above all others). Within 500 m to the east, you can come across a seasonal slough the size of a hockey rink. Circle around the slough to the north side. Continue in a northeast direction until you meet a north/south draw that bisects the upland. This is Maple draw.

As you walk between Police Coulee and Timbergulch Coulee listen for Sprague's Pipits. This territorial bird will fly 100m high and has the longest known flight display of any bird (up to 3 hours). They are a *threatened species*. Listen for its song (a jingling cascade of *shirl shirl shirl...*)

Bison Wallow

As you wander across this plateau, look for bison wallows—patches or depressions of barren ground. Both male and female bison, of all ages will wallow as a way to scratch an itch, or to minimize the effects of mosquitos.

Wallows are an important part of the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem and they create a diverse, mosaic landscape.

Wallows also act as small ponds for insects.

Wallowing also helps disperse prairie grass seeds, which stick to the bison's fur.



Nesting Birds of Prey

The nest in this Manitoba Maple Tree is likely from one of the two hawks that make the park their summer home—the Swainson's Hawk or the Ferruginous Hawk. The Swainson's Hawk is very common, and often has a "bib" pattern plumage while the Ferruginous hawk has feathered legs. They are listed as a threatened species by COSEWIC.

Right: a nesting hawk.



6.0 – 9.7 km: Timbergulch Coulee to Frenchman Valley

Cross the draw where it is convenient. Continue east until you drop down into another broad, flat bottom coulee. This is Timbergulch Coulee, the farthest reach of this hike. Turn south (right) at the Timbergulch Coulee bottom. This will be your route for the next 5.0 km leading to the Frenchman River Valley. Choose your own path south, or follow one of the many game trails. Depending on the day and season, you may want to walk close to the slope to experience the sun or to avoid it. The Frenchman River Valley travels in an east and west direction. You can see the old Walt Larson homestead to the south-east. You will arrive at the Police Prairie Dog Colony. There will be a tree on the west side.

This tree is at the south opening of Police Coulee. This will be your cue to choose your own adventure. You may continue Northwest across Police Coulee (hike will be 16km total), or head North to the hill for the Top of the Knoll View Point (Hike will be 17km total).

Timbergulch Coulee

As you walk South, let your senses take over. Take in the cinnamon-like smell of Wolf willow, the ominent plant along this trail. This is the most remote area of this trail and offers silence and solitude. Take a few minutes to enjoy the natural sounds of the Grasslands. Gordon Hempton, an acoustic ecologist has claimed that Grasslands National Park may be the quietest place in North America—from human made noise, that is! Noise pollution can have a huge impact on the biology and ecology of species at risk.

Police Prairie Dog Colony

The Calgary Zoo has been researching Black-tailed Prairie Dogs in Grasslands National Park since 2006. To learn more about the population size of each colony, they count burrows, do visual counts and use the mark recapture method. They use peanut butter to trap prairie dogs, and then test them for fleas. Fleas can carry a dangerous bacteria which can wipe out entire prairie dog colonies. Traps are used on this colony seasonally.



Top of Knoll View Point

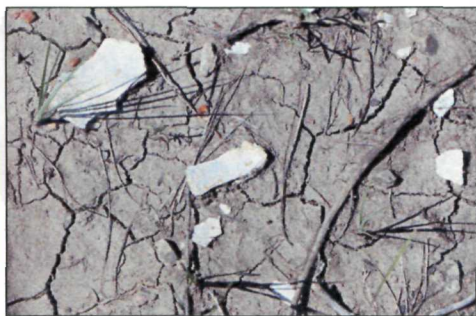
After climbing up this large hill, take time to enjoy the vista of the Frenchman River Valley and Police Coulee.



9.7 - 13.0 km: Frenchman River Valley to the 2nd tabletop

Continue northwest across Police Coulee. Again, this will require that you negotiate a stream - the same one you crossed before. Now your goal is to attain the tabletop on the West (opposite) side of Police Coulee. Once across the stream, the west hills in front will expose a gradual draw that rises westward to the tabletop. Follow this upwards and to the western (far) edge of the tabletop. You will be South of the gap you crossed previously, (2.2 - 4.3 km 'gap at Timmons Coulee').

Walking on the flat land between the Knoll View Point and Timmons Coulee, you may notice white flakes. These are oyster shells remaining from the Bear Paw Sea which extended over the North American Plains millions of years ago!



13.0 - 14.0 km: 2nd tabletop to the draw

Looking west from the ridges across Timmons Coulee, try and find the draw that you originally walked to descend from Ecotour stop #3. You will see two draws on the western side (far side) of Timmons Coulee. You want the smaller, more southerly draw of the two.

East Facing Slope

The Greater Short-horned Lizard, makes Grasslands National Park home. This is the only lizard species found in Saskatchewan. It lives on bare, eroded areas or juniper covered slopes facing South or East (like this one here). Short-horned Lizards are listed as an endangered species by COSEWIC, so you may need a little luck to find one.



14.0 - 16.0 km: the draw back to Ecotour #3

Follow this draw back to your departure point. This draw will appear different on the return journey and may be confusing when confronting other small draws in the land. Keep on the North (right) side of the coulee when you pass three small draws from the South (left). At the fourth draw from the South (left), proceed upwards to your departure point, Ecotour stop #3.

Grasslands National Park
West Block Visitor Centre
(306) 298-2257
grasslands.info@pc.gc.ca