

# GRASSLANDS NATIONAL PARK TRAIL GUIDE

# EAST BLOCK

## CREEK TO PEAK TRAIL

1.5 km Return; 30 minutes

**Trailhead:** 13U 0388294E 5436302N  
South of kitchen shelter

Wind up the hill along this mowed path to a rewarding peek of the Rock Creek valley and badlands beyond. The early morning sunshine makes this view especially beautiful.

## ROCK CREEK TRAIL

1 km loop; 30 minutes

**Trailhead:** 13U 0388192E 5436455N  
West across Rock Creek bridge

Stroll this mowed path for a bird's eye view of Rock Creek. Take in an unobstructed grasslands horizon on the back side. For a more challenging experience, branch off this trail to the Valley of 1000 Devils Trail.

## RED BUTTES TRAIL

16 km Return; 5-7 hours

**Trailhead:** 13U 387539E 5437105N  
Northwest off Valley of 1000 Devils Trail

View the buttes turned red by oxidized iron carbonate activity, as you navigate your way through challenging creek bottoms and by cattle fence lines. Your destination view is ample reward.

## VALLEY OF 1000 DEVILS TRAIL

10 km Return; 3-4 hours

**Trailhead:** 13U0387898E 5436816N  
Northwest off Rock Creek Trail

Meander through coulees and upland mixed grass prairie before traversing the basin of Hellfire Creek to access the gateway to the badlands. In badlands, it can be up to 10 degrees hotter than other areas. Plan to hike in the early morning and be prepared for extreme heat.

## OLD WAGON TRAIL

8 km Return; 2-3 hours

**Trailhead:** UTM 13U 388289E 5436302N  
Equestrian creek crossing south of day use area.

This is a historic wagon trail available to all users. Additionally, it can be used by non-motorized vehicles such as horse drawn wagons.

### MORE INFORMATION

Visitor Centre (in Val Marie)  
**1-877-345-2257**

Rock Creek Campground Reception (East Block)  
**1-306-750-0937**

Frenchman Valley Campground Reception (West Block)  
**1-306-774-2227**

Website: [parks.canada.ca/grasslands](http://parks.canada.ca/grasslands)

Weather: [weather.gc.ca](http://weather.gc.ca)

Camping Reservations:

**1-877-737-3783**

[reservation.parkscanada.gc.ca](http://reservation.parkscanada.gc.ca)

## EMERGENCY

Call 911 or

**Park Dispatch 1-877-852-3100.**

Cell phone reception is limited.

## GRASSLANDS NATIONAL PARK TRAIL GUIDE

Trails are one of the best ways for you to connect with the landscape and experience the immeasurable beauty and solitude of this park. Grasslands is a prairie wilderness with limited services and preparation is key to having a safe and enjoyable experience. Use this guide to help you choose a trail that is right for you.

Hiking times given in the trail descriptions are approximate. Distances are from the associated trailhead.

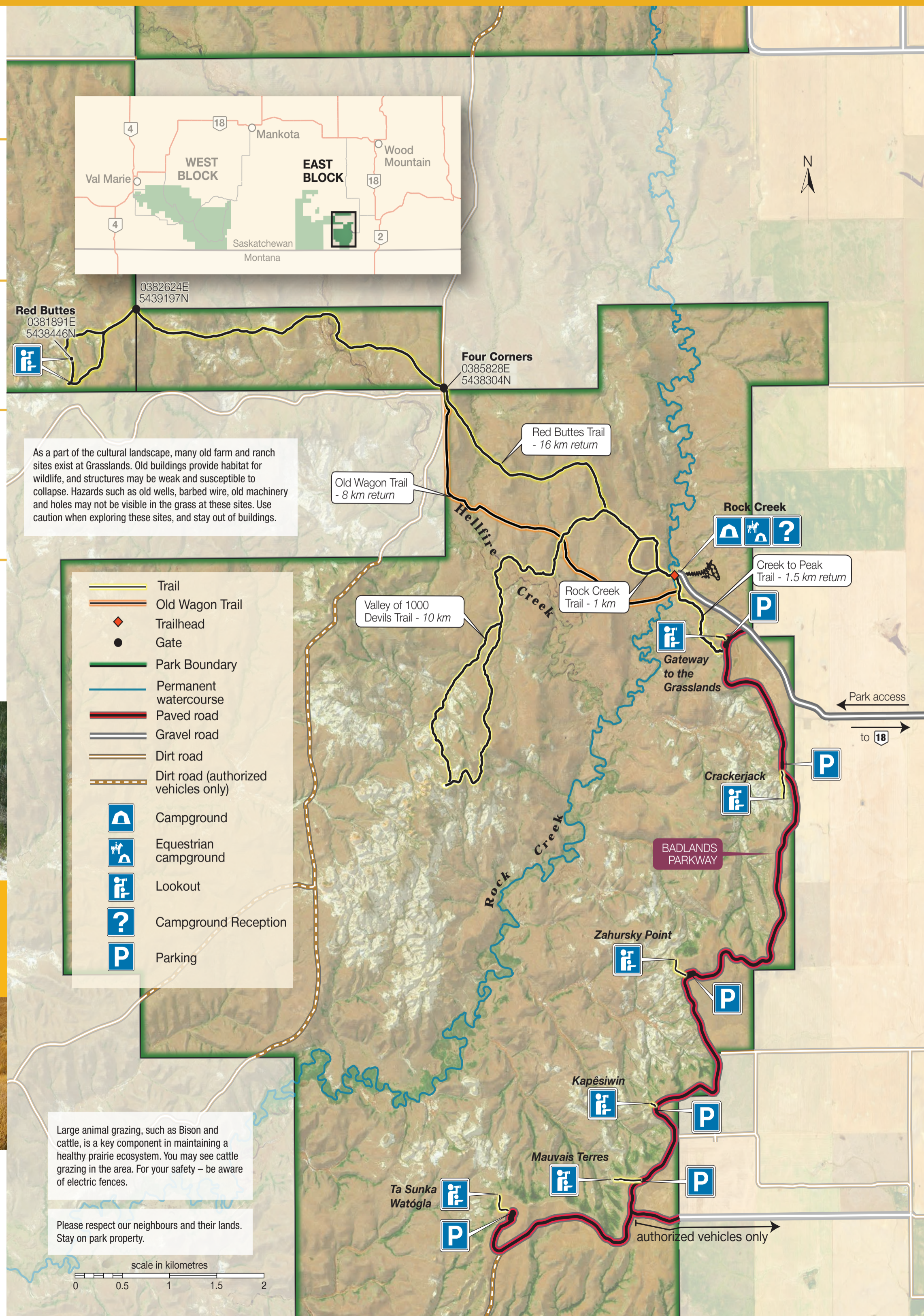
Coordinates given are UTM datum NAD 83

Easy  Moderate  Difficult  Very Difficult 



Help protect our native grasslands by preventing the spread of invasive plants.

- **REMOVE** plant parts & mud from boots, clothing and pets.
- **CLEAN** your gear before entering or leaving the park.
- **BRING** bagged cubes, pellets and rolled or steamed oats for your horses.
- **LEARN** to identify common invasive plants.
- **REPORT** invasive plants to park staff using the iNaturalist app.



## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

**Your Limits** – Choose a trail that suits your skills and experience, and those within your party.

**Plan Ahead** – Check with park staff for trail and road conditions, some roads within the park are impassable when wet. Inform friends or family of your itinerary and how to contact you. Check the weather forecast before leaving. Acquire a back country camping permit for all overnight trips.

Services in this area are limited. When travelling by vehicle, make sure to fuel up before heading into the park or travelling between the East and West Blocks. Please visit our website for a list of local services.

**Be Prepared** – Hike with a group. One person in your party should be familiar with wilderness first aid. Ensure you have adequate water, food, clothing and equipment for at least one day longer than your intended trip. Carry a first-aid kit, cellphone, GPS/compass and map.

Cell phone service in the park is limited.

## RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT

- Arrive and depart with clean gear and clothing to prevent the spread of invasive plants.
- Pack out all garbage including food waste, diapers, and hygiene products.
- To dispose of human waste, select a spot at least 70 m away from trails, campsites and water sources. Dig a shallow hole with a stick or heel of your boot. Cover the hole with soil afterwards. Pack out toilet paper.
- Keep your pet on a leash at all times. Pets are not permitted on prairie dog colonies.
- Wildflowers, horns, antlers, rocks, fossils, arrowheads, tipi rings and all other natural and historical objects in a national park are protected by law. Leave them in their natural setting for others to discover and enjoy.

## SAFETY - Remember the 5 W's

### You are responsible for your own safety

#### Wayfinding

Be aware of your surroundings and become familiar with the area before heading out. Always carry a map and GPS/compass. Roads may become impassable when wet. Please check road and trail conditions with park staff.

#### Water

Hydrate before starting your hike and bring at least 4L of water per person per day. Always pack more than you think you will need. Surface water is not suitable to drink. Drinking water is available at the Visitor Centre, the Frenchman Valley Campground and the Rock Creek Campground.

#### Wildlife

*Do not feed or approach wildlife – this harms their health, alters their natural behaviour, and exposes you to danger.*

**Rattlesnakes** - Beware of rattlesnakes and listen for their warning rattle. Wear boots or shoes that cover your ankles and long, loose fitting pants. Do not step on or over rocks or shrubs and keep children close by.

**Bison** - Maintain 100 metre distance from bison (length of a football field). Startled or irritated bison can respond aggressively. If you encounter bison along the Ecotour Scenic Drive, remain in your vehicle and proceed slowly. Maintain extra caution when hiking with pets, cycling, while horseback riding and during sensitive times such as calving (May-June) and rutting (July-September).

#### Weather

Be prepared for extreme heat and sudden weather changes. Severe winds and lightning storms are dangerous and it can be difficult to find shelter. Always check weather forecasts before leaving, plan your trip to avoid the heat of the day and make sure to pack all necessary supplies and equipment. Roads in the park can become impassable when wet.

#### Wildfire

Wildfire is common on the prairies and extremely dangerous. Lightning storms and strong winds are a contributing factor. If you see smoke, report it to Park Dispatch immediately. Fire travels quickly, be prepared to evacuate. If fire traps you, head for low vegetation areas (gravel roads, prairie dog colonies) or burned areas (the "black zone").





# WEST BLOCK

## EAGLE BUTTE TRAIL

2 km loop; 1 hour  
**Trailhead:** 13U 0305900E 5453568N • Gate at parking area

A great trail to view wildflowers and soaring birds of prey. May – early July is peak season for flower blooms. Well-graded and surfaced, it climbs gently around Eagle Butte. Suitable for all levels. Enjoy the interpretive panels describing prairie vegetation, human history and intriguing geology. For something more challenging, continue to **70 Mile Butte Trail**.

## 70 MILE BUTTE TRAIL

2 km loop; 1-2 hours  
**Trailhead:** 13U 0306224E 5453181N • Branches from Eagle Butte Trail

For breath-taking views of the Frenchman River Valley with a smaller time commitment, this trail is for you. Well-graded with short, steep sections and switch-backs, it is challenging but worth the effort. Enjoy the interpretive panels along the way.

**\*Special Note:** This trail becomes quite muddy after rain, allow time for trail to dry before using.

## TWO TREES TRAIL

4 km loop; 1-2 hours  
**Trailhead:** 13U 0304118E 5451015N • Two Trees Day Use Area

Only have a short amount of time? Take this trail for an introduction to prairie grasslands. Seek out cultural features at your feet while keeping an eye skyward for songbirds such as Sprague's pipits. A viewing scope at the end beckons faraway looks beyond the trail. Scan the horizon for a view of the Three Sisters buttes.

## RIVERWALK TRAIL

3 km loop; 1 hour  
**Trailhead:** 13U 0304133E 5450985N • Two Trees Day Use Area

Examine riparian plant life, discover hidden deer and observe birds utilizing the steep riverbank cliffs as you follow this mowed, grassy trail. The Frenchman River, formed by runoff of glacial melt waters, is the lifeblood to this ecosystem and plays an important role for the survival and navigation of people and animals alike.

## THREE SISTERS TRAIL

8 km Return; 2-3 hours  
**Trailhead:** 13U 0309599E 5443673N • Access from Rosefield Grid

An old vehicle trail leads through open grasslands to the Saskatchewan Natural monument that marks the establishment of the first Black-tailed Prairie Dog sanctuary in Canada. The colony still exists and surrounds the monument. Enjoy a river valley view prior to visiting the monument.

## TOP DOGTOWN TRAIL

750 m loop; 20 minutes  
**Trailhead:** 13U 0313283E 5453217N • Ecotour pull-off #2

Listen to the rare Black-tailed Prairie Dogs bark at your approach as you stroll across the Top Dogtown on this hard surfaced, level trail. Take advantage of the viewing scope to see deer or antelope crossing Laouenen Coulee, or look for blooming wildflowers at your feet along the ridge.

**\*Special Note:** It was the Black-tailed Prairie Dog that inspired the creation of a 'prairie' national park.

## BROKEN HILLS TRAIL

11 km loop; 4-5 hours  
**Trailhead:** 13U 316245E 5447266N • Park at Belza Day Use Area. Travel west back towards the entrance to trailhead.

One of the few locations to gain an uninterrupted, 360° view of grasslands. Then, rough, challenging topography is your gateway to a rewarding overlook of the Frenchman Valley. The nearby river follows you to your return.

**\*Special Note:** Enjoy this trail horseback with its proximity to the equestrian camping facilities.

## BEARPAW SEA TRAIL

10 km one-way; 4-5 hours  
**Trailhead:** 13U 0306941E 5452899N • Branches from 70 Mile Butte Trail 13U 0313111E 5452031N • Ecotour pull-off #3

From tabletops to valley bottoms, this trail explores the wide variety of habitats found within the park. You'll encounter a Prairie Dogtown, coulees sheltering deer and open country filled with song birds.

**\*Special Note:** This trail travels near a snake hibernaculum area that may have access restrictions or warnings. Exercise extra caution during April-May and September-October. Snakes can be encountered anytime. Plan within your group to leave a vehicle at the opposite end to avoid a return hike.

## TIMBERGULCH TRAIL

15 km loop; 5-6 hours  
**Trailhead:** 13U 0316205E 5447253N • Ecotour pull-off #3

The three prominent, glacially created, coulee bottoms you'll traverse have created an inviting habitat for bison which tend to linger in this area. One of the most challenging trails within the park, be prepared for exposure, wind, unstable footing and 'feeling small' in a big landscape.

**\*Special Note:** Trail markers may be missing as it is common for bison to knock them down. Be aware of your surroundings, wildlife and use your navigation skills.

**Geological point of interest** • 13U 317448E 5452478N

**Recommended back country camping location** • 13U 317344E 5452449N

## LARSON TRAIL

1.5 km loop; 30 minutes  
**Trailhead:** 13U 0317969E 5447621N • Ecotour pull-off #6

Observe evidence of early ranching along this mowed trail which also provides views of the adjacent Frenchman River. Begin at the Larson homestead and move past old grazing and hay fields. Wait Larson and his family ranched in this area from the 1920's until 1984 when his land became the first purchase to form the park.

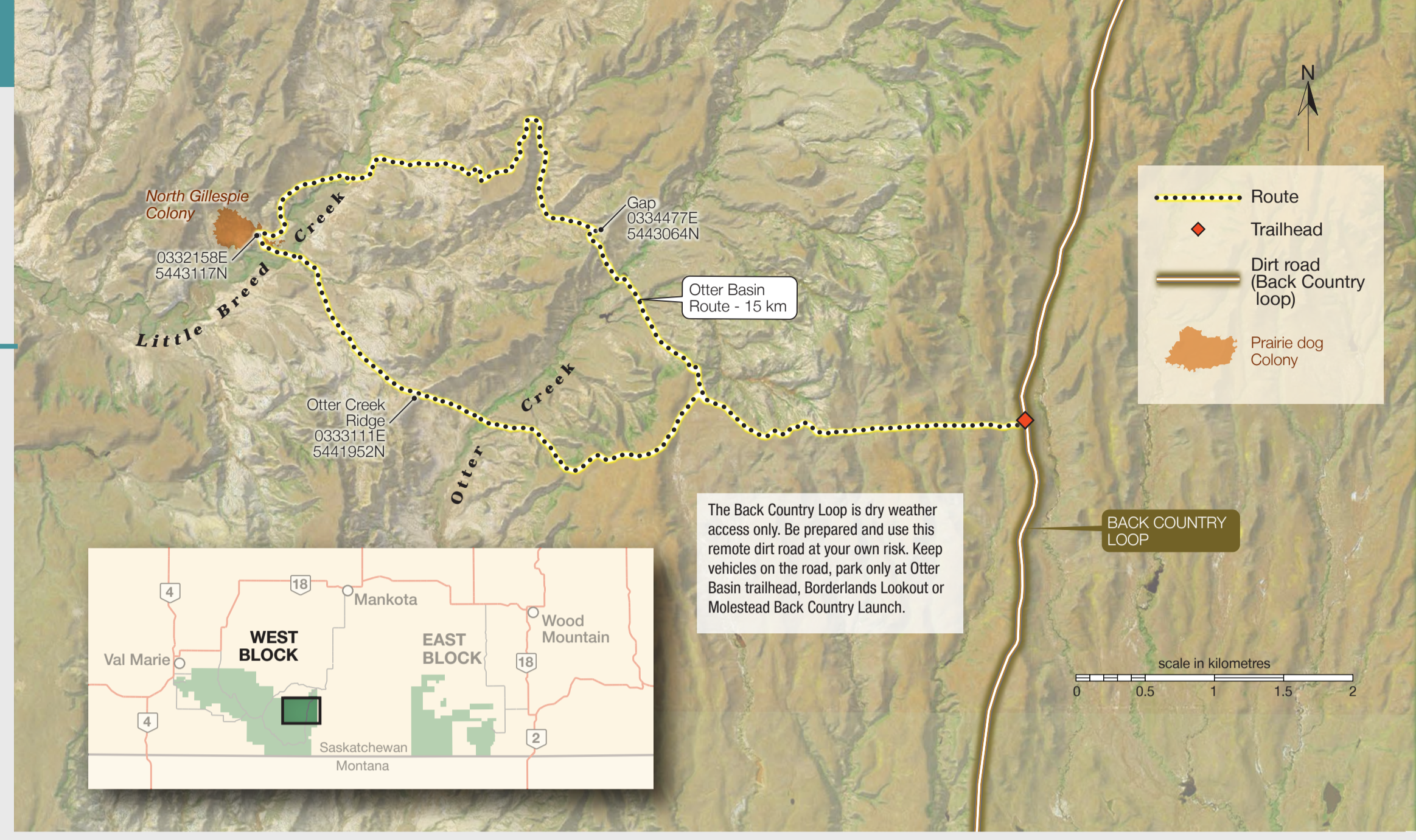
## OTTER BASIN ROUTE

15 km loop; 5-6 hours  
**Trailhead:** 13U 0337533E 5441624N • Access from Back Country Loop

This is the most rugged 'trail' experience the park offers. Expect isolation, loose footing, orientation challenges and rugged terrain. At 1006 metres (3300 feet), this area has the highest elevation in the West Block, which creates different soil conditions to support unique plant growth. The choice is yours to make it a day experience or pitch a tent overlooking the Otter Basin escarpment, with the nighttime glows and coyote yelps as your only companions.

**\*Special Note:** This route is a remote wilderness experience that requires preparedness, self-reliance and navigation skills.

**The Back Country Loop is impassable when wet. Be aware of cattle grazing in this area.**



## BACK COUNTRY CAMPING

- All back country campers are required to register with staff at the visitor centre or campground office and receive safety and regulation orientation prior to departure.
- Choose a Backcountry Zone and use designated parking areas.
- Plan to camp out of view of roads and trails – a minimum of 1 km – as there are no designated backcountry sites
- No open fires are permitted
- Conditions vary year-round, but plan for fire bans (including camp stoves) in summer. Contact the Visitor Centre for details
- Plan to carry sufficient water for your stay. All surface water in the area is unfit for human consumption. Treating water by boiling, filtering or adding iodine may remove some bacteria, but will not help with the salinity
- Pack out everything that was packed in
- Always carry a map and GPS/compass

## RANDOM HIKING

Random hiking is permitted throughout the park. Please use designated parking areas and Ecotour pull-offs. Seasonal restrictions may apply.

## CYCLING

The park currently does not have trail experiences that have been designed for cycling. However, you may cycle on the Badlands Parkway, Ecotour Scenic Drive or the Back Country Loop. Adventurous cyclists may choose to explore trails such as Valley of 1000 Devils, Broken Hills and Timbergulch. Please be alert for wildlife that may be along the roadways and for motorists.

## HORSEBACK RIDING

Horseback riding is permitted throughout the park. Equestrian camping areas with water troughs and pens are located adjacent to the Frenchman Valley and Rock Creek campgrounds. Please see the "Horse Users" section of the Visitor Guide for more information.

## KAYAKING

The Frenchman River water levels fluctuate seasonally. Kayaks may be launched at the Belza bridge. The Frenchman River flows through the park and private lands, be considerate of our neighbours and only camp or take-out within the park. Be aware of your proximity to the United States boundary.

