**Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park**

Box 297
Milk River, AB T0K 1M0
Email: writingonstone@gov.ab.ca

**Programs, Resource Management, Public Safety and Enforcement**
Phone: (403) 647–2364
Toll-Free: 310–0000 in Alberta

**Comfort Camping, Campground and Group Reservations**
Phone: 1–877–537–2757
Web: reserve.albertaparks.ca

**General Provincial Park Information**
Web: albertaparks.ca
Toll Free: 1–866–427–3582

**Fire Bans in Alberta**
Web: albertafirebans.ca

**Emergency (Police, Fire, Ambulance)**
Phone: 911

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**Contact**

**What is a Hoodoo?**

The mushroom shaped sandstone features you see, are sculpted when the rock is eroded primarily by frost and wind-directed rain. The resulting unusual looking rock shapes are known as hoodoos. Some hoodoos have a “cap” consisting of many small, harder rock layers that are more resistant to weathering and protect the underlying softer sandstone. As the softer rock breaks apart, the cap remains on top and the formation takes on its mushroom shape. Holes in the formations occur when very hard deposits of rusty coloured, round-shaped ironstone, become dislodged and fall out as softer sandstone erodes.

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**The Rock Art and Artists**

Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park contains the largest concentration of rock art on the North American Plains.

There is evidence that people camped in this unique place for at least 3,500 years. The natural environment here sustained them physically with water, food and shelter, while supernatural powers, believed to inhabit the sandstone cliffs, sustained them spiritually. The rock art takes two forms, pictographs or paintings and petroglyphs, where the images are carved right into the rock face.

In the past, First Nations people created rock art to depict important events in their lives, such as hunts, significant life experiences and battles. It also played a ceremonial role; some of the rock art may be a record of spiritual dreams that occurred during vision quests.

Although some of the rock art at Writing-on-Stone may be as much as 5,000 years old, the exact date it first appeared is not certain.

Many who follow traditional Blackfoot ways believe the rock art at Writing-on-Stone is the work of the spirit world. The sculpted rocks and mysterious carvings fill them with reverence. First Nations people continue to visit the rock art sites for spiritual guidance.

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**Park Map**

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**Printed May 2016**

The Archaeological Preserve

Vandallism, which includes graffiti, has taken a heavy toll on the rock art. To protect the art from further damage, the archaeological preserve was created. Visitors may only access the preserve on guided tours.

Petroglyphs are very fragile and easily damaged, even by light touching. Please do not touch the cliffs or rock art. It is illegal to damage these, and any natural object protected in a provincial park.

There are more than 50 rock art sites in the park. You can take a guided hike into the preserve to see one of these sites. Tickets for tours are available for sale at the Visitor Centre or online at https://sales.tpr.alberta.ca/wos.

Petroglyphs are very fragile and easily damaged, please stay on trails. Sandstone and vegetation is fragile and easily damaged; please stay on trails.

Activities

Hike to excellent viewpoints throughout the park, or follow a self-guided trail. Bring field guides for prairie wildflowers and birds. These, together with the park checklists, will make your walks much more informative! Maps, trail guides, plant and animal checklists, rock art and other fact sheets are available. Ask park staff for help finding the information you are interested in.

The Davis and Humphrey coulee areas, south of the river, comprise the 930 hectare backcountry hiking zone. Here you can explore rolling grasslands, hoodoo fields and narrow sandstone canyons. There are no developed trails, but a network of game trails provides easy access to most areas. Overnight camping and fires are prohibited in this hiking zone.

Backcountry Hiking

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