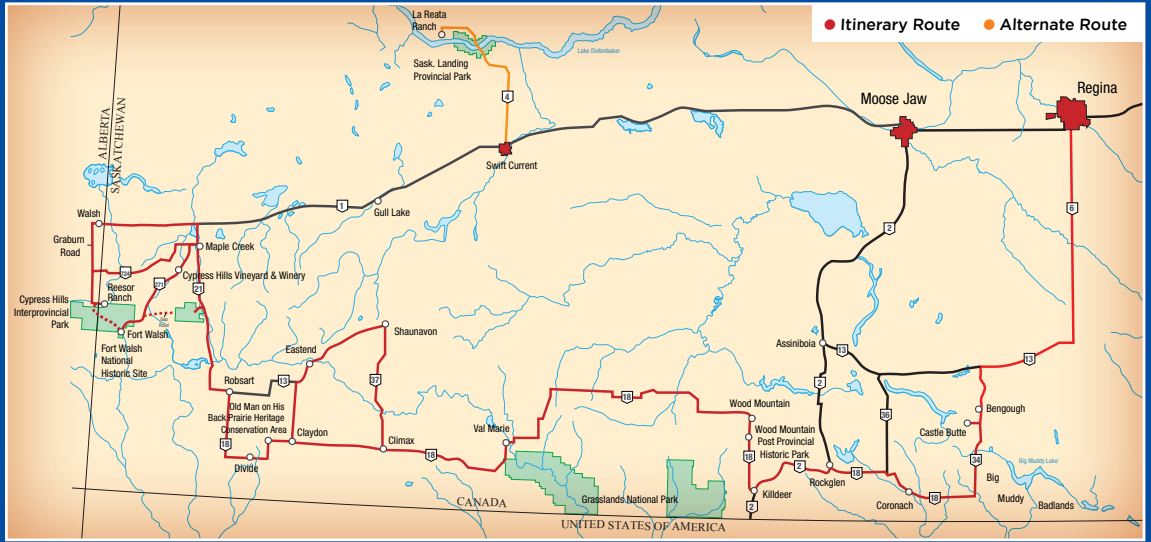




To access online maps of Saskatchewan or to request a **Saskatchewan Discovery Guide** and **Official Highway Map**, visit: www.sasktourism.com/travel-information/travel-guides-and-maps

TRIP
LENGTH
6 days
876-1001 km

A JOURNEY THROUGH **COWBOY COUNTRY**



Saskatchewan's southwest is steeped in a rich history of ranching and western culture, and ranching continues to play an important role in the local economy.

This tour offers an authentic vacation experience that will bring you in contact with living legends, natural wonders and the adventurer within. Whether you're looking to live the life of a cowboy for a day, to explore the sweeping ranchlands by vehicle or to immerse yourself in history, this itinerary has something for everyone.



Wood Mountain Stampede. *Tourism Saskatchewan/Eric Lindberg*

DAY ONE Big Muddy

Standing atop the majestic Castle Butte in the heart of the Big Muddy Badlands, a sense of awe will seep into your soul. In the mind's eye, cowboys ramble along the colourful horizon, cresting the majestic plateaus and disappearing behind the rugged hills and striated outcroppings. The elevations and undulations of the Big Muddy are sure to captivate you, so take plenty of time (and a camera) as you enter this glacier-sculpted landscape starting in Coronach, located approximately 224 km south of Regina via Hwys 6, 13 and 36.

Four different tour options are offered by Badlands Tours originating out of Coronach, highlighting various attractions like a North West Mounted Police (NWMP) site, Aust's General Store, buffalo and turtle effigies, the caves where infamous outlaw Sam Kelly hid out and First Nations' ceremonial circles. Castle Butte is accessible to the public; however, many of the aforementioned sites are located on private land and are reachable only by special permission with Badlands Tours. Castle Butte is located 22 km south of Bengough on Hwy 34, and 5 km west on a grid road. Watch for the sign at the grid turn-off.

After a day of exploring the historic and captivating Big Muddy where you'll feel as if you've taken a step back in time, relax in the comforts of the present in one of Coronach's fixed roof accommodations and enjoy a meal at one of the local restaurants. Serviced and non-serviced camping is also available.

Grasslands National Park of Canada. *Tourism Saskatchewan/Robert Postma*

DAY TWO Coronach

Today you're off to explore the Wood Mountain area. From Coronach, travel 106 km on Hwy 18 to reach the village along a scenic drive which traverses through ranch country. Your first stop is the Wood Mountain Post Provincial Historic Park, located 8 km south of Wood Mountain on Hwy 18. Explore recreated buildings and exhibits which chronicle the history of this former NWMP post, established in 1874 during the NWMP's epic Great March West.

Located close to the US border, the officers posted at Wood Mountain first policed the illegal American whiskey trade and dealt with local ranchers and rustlers. After the infamous Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876, where Chief Sitting Bull's Sioux (Lakota) defeated the US Seventh Cavalry and the battalion led by General George Armstrong Custer, the area became a region of importance to both sides of the border, when Sitting Bull and nearly 5,000 Sioux sought refuge in the Wood Mountain area. Learn about the relationship between NWMP Superintendent James Walsh and Chief Sitting Bull, and the struggles to maintain peace and diplomacy during these difficult years.

Take a short walk along a picturesque path to discover Wood Mountain Regional Park. This expansive recreational area has activities for the whole family from swimming in the outdoor pool to camping, baseball and events like the Wood Mountain Stampede, held annually since 1890 (second week of July). The history of the Stampede, the longest continuously running rodeo in Canada, is artfully displayed in the Wood Mountain Rodeo Ranch Museum located inside the park. The museum also serves as an information centre for the East Block of Grasslands National Park. If time permits, explore the East Block, home to Canada's richest resource of dinosaur fossils.

To cut down on some of your driving tomorrow and allow yourself more time for exploration, travel 126 km west on Hwy 18 to Val Marie. This small community is home to the Grasslands National Park visitor centre and boasts several excellent accommodations including the Convent Country Inn, The Crossing Resort, Rosefield Church Guesthouse and Ride with Lamotte. Wherever you choose to lay your head, you can settle in as Val Marie will be your home base for the next two nights. See the Contacts and Resources section for links to area accommodations and services.

DAY THREE Grasslands National Park of Canada

A full day awaits you as you continue your journey with a visit to one of Canada's most unique reserves, Grasslands National Park of Canada. Carved out of the rolling prairie landscape is a 906 sq. km expanse of land where mixed prairie grasses are preserved and endangered species are protected. Listen to the rhythmic call of a peregrine falcon and scan the distance for pronghorn antelope as you tour through the diverse park terrain. Coulees studded with wolf willow, creeks carved out by glacial streams and buttes that rise as high as 100 metres above the valley floor are all part of the Grasslands experience.

Don't forget to take some time in the stillness of the night. Lie on your back and observe the awesome spectacle that is a Saskatchewan sky draped by the Milky Way. This is one of the best places to stargaze anywhere. The Grasslands National Park Dark Sky Preserve is currently the world's darkest, encompassing 527 sq. km.

The Grasslands National Park visitor centre will outline all of the amazing activity options from astronomy and photography to backpacking, camping, driving tours, hiking, geocaching, horseback riding and wildlife viewing.

*Tourism Saskatchewan/Robert Postma*

DAY FOUR Eastend and Old Man on His Back

From Val Marie travel 58 km west on Hwy 18, then 52 km north on Hwy 37 and 33 km west on Hwy 13 to Eastend in the heart of dino-country. The charming community of Eastend, situated in the picturesque Frenchman River Valley, is the focus for all things Tyrannosaurus rex-related. Canada's most complete T. rex skeleton, fondly named Scotty, was found here in 1991, turning the town into a dream for those interested in prehistoric times. The 16,000 sq. ft T. rex Discovery Centre is a world-class facility featuring a theatre, display area, education centre, research laboratory, discovery programs and gift shop.

From Eastend, you can take a well-laid-out hiking or driving tour to witness the breathtaking natural wonders of this area like Jones Peak, Chocolate Peak and Chimney Coulee which features the remains of a Métis wintering village and NWMP Post. Hiking and driving tours can be downloaded from the Eastend website from a link provided in the Contacts and Resources section at the end of this itinerary.

Eastend is also a cultural hub, having hosted over 100 artists, playwrights and poets at the Wallace Stegner House artists' residence over the past 15 years. The spirit of Wallace Stegner, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author who resided in the community from 1917 to 1921, lives on in Eastend. A creative vibe echoes through the town's numerous art studios, antique shops and galleries.

The Old Man on His Back Prairie and Heritage Conservation Area preserves a 5,300-hectare tract of untouched prairie grasslands. Sweeping vistas, abundant wildlife and a conservation herd of bison will take you back to the southwest as it was before settlement times. A visitor centre and the Butala homestead are located onsite. From Eastend, the site can be reached by travelling 60 km southwest on Hwy 13 and the Claydon Grid. The visitor centre operates on the weekends from May to September. For weekday access, please call ahead (see Contacts and Resources).

Evergreen splendor awaits you as you prepare to explore Saskatchewan's Cypress Hills. This forested plateau vaults itself above the prairie, creating an unexpected mountain-like oasis on the border between Saskatchewan and Alberta. The Centre Block Recreation Area of Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park will be your home for the night. To reach the park, travel 85 km northwest along Hwys 18, 13 and 21 (watch for Divide Road sign). Choose from cabins, condos and hotel rooms at the Cypress Park Resort Inn or camp in one of the park's campgrounds. The park is a designated Dark Sky Preserve and the brilliance of the night sky will amaze you if conditions are right for stargazing.

DAY FIVE Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park

This morning, languish over a hot cup of coffee while you breathe in the heady aroma of the lodgepole pine forest. If you're feeling adventurous, experience the park from a vantage point high up in the trees with Cypress Hills Eco-Adventures who offer zipline canopy tours, a climbing wall and slacklines. The park also offers a range of amenities including an outdoor swimming pool, boat rentals on Loch Leven, golfing at the lush nine-hole Cypress Hills Golf Course, mini-golf, tennis courts, Cypress Hills Riding Academy and nature trails galore.

Venture to the West Block Wilderness Area to discover Fort Walsh National Historic Site, a NWMP post established in 1875. Fort Walsh acted as the headquarters of the NWMP from 1878-1882 and played a key role in imposing law and order in the west. The Fort was later used as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Remount Ranch, which bred horses for the famed RCMP Musical Ride from 1942-1968. Guided tours of the fort are provided by staff in period costume and self-guided tours of the nearby townsite and cemeteries may be taken.



Historic Reesor Ranch. *Tourism Saskatchewan/Thomas Sbampato*

To reach Fort Walsh by the scenic route, travel 32 km west from the Centre Block on the rustic Gap Trail. The Gap Trail is impassable when wet, so please check with park officials for current road conditions. If road conditions are poor, you can reach Fort Walsh by travelling 27 km north to Maple Creek on Hwy 21, then 50 km southwest on Hwy 271. The Cypress Hills Vineyard & Winery is located just off Hwy 271 en-route to Fort Walsh (watch for signs). If time allows, be sure to stop in for a tasting of their wines made from Saskatchewan-grown fruits, a slice of saskatoon pie and a gourmet sandwich or artisan cheese platter.

Tonight you'll bunk in at Historic Reesor Ranch; a fifth generation ranch nestled in the Cypress Hills where the prairie and forest meet. Hosted by friendly folks who are real-life cowboys, enjoy the charming accommodations decorated with western flair and adventures on horseback. To access the ranch from Fort Walsh, travel 27 km west on Battle Creek Road, and follow signage to the ranch. In the off-season and after wet weather, you can reach the ranch by heading 50 km north of the fort on Hwy 271, then west on Grid 724 for 42 km (turns into 515 on the Alberta side of border), and then south on Graburn Road for 12 km to the ranch gate. From the gate, travel 3 km into the ranch.

DAY SIX Maple Creek

Enjoy a leisurely morning at Reesor Ranch and take some time to enjoy a hike on the wide-open ranchlands. Today you're headed to Maple Creek, a community steeped in western culture and heritage. Travel 3 km out of the ranch, north on Graburn Road for 12 km, and 42 km east to Maple Creek on Grid 724.

In Maple Creek, you can easily spend the day discovering what this "old cowtown" has preserved from the past. Locally-made bricks, pressed-tin ceilings and original hardwood floors will greet you as you enter the Jasper Cultural and Historical Centre. First built as the town's school in 1910, memorabilia from the past is now featured in the museum's theme rooms and collections. While walking down memory lane, stop at Saskatchewan's oldest museum – the Southwest Saskatchewan Old-Timer's Museum, where First Nations, Métis, NWMP and ranching history are on display. Historical walking tours featuring the community's acclaimed heritage district are available on select evenings in July and August, and more information is available by visiting the Maple Creek Tourism Visitor Centre.

Stroll along Jasper Street and discover a host of unique shops like Weswood Furniture & Dezin, where you'll find contemporary furnishings and giftware housed in an historic courthouse complete with original jail cell. Maple Creek's excellent dining options are sure to please any palate. Enjoy upscale dining at the THE STAR Café & Grill and Redmond House, or sample some of the best home-cooking around at Rockin' Horse Cookhouse & Bar, featuring amazing homemade burgers and hand-cut steaks made in their scratch kitchen.

Fixed roof accommodations and camping are available in the town. For a truly western experience, mosey on over to Ghostown Blues Bed & Breakfast and stay in a restored sheepherder's wagon or homestead shack. A beautifully restored church serves as the lodge and a venue for special events. A Saskatchewan sunset and a cozy bonfire around the chuckwagon at Ghostown Blues is the perfect way to wrap up your day of discovery.

Now that the adventurer within has been unleashed in Saskatchewan's wild west, head home with the memories or continue on for a few more days of real-life ranch work.

EXTEND YOUR TRIP!

If you haven't had your fill of cowboy culture, extend your trip at La Reata Ranch, located 45 minutes north of Swift Current via Hwy 4. La Reata features an authentic working guest ranch where you'll drive cattle, ride on horseback and experience the true cowboy way of life. You'll want to spend a night or two living this life of western adventure along the shores of beautiful Lake Diefenbaker.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Bengough:

The Gateway Festival, July –

www.2sk.ca/21163

Wood Mountain:

Wood Mountain Stampede, July –

www.2sk.ca/10182

Grasslands National Park:

East Block Party, Aug –

www.2sk.ca/14659

Astronomy Program, Friday evenings,

May-Sep –

www.2sk.ca/14659

Cypress Hills Tourism Destination Area:

Saskatchewan Summer Star Party, Aug –

www.2sk.ca/17082

South West Quest for Saskatchewan Art and History, July –

www.2sk.ca/18661

Fort Walsh National Historic Site:

Dominion Day Celebration, July 1 –

www.2sk.ca/14548

Maple Creek:

Maple Creek Cowtown Rodeo, July –

www.2sk.ca/10167

Cowboy Poetry Gathering and Western Art & Cowboy Gear Show, Sep –

www.2sk.ca/10172

CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Coronach

Information on accommodations, attractions and services

P: 306-267-3312

W: www.2sk.ca/com/1000184

Big Muddy/Outlaw Cave Tours

Depart from Coronach Golf Course, watch for signs

Open: June-Sep, call ahead for availability

P: 306-267-3312

W: www.2sk.ca/9504

Wood Mountain Post Provincial

Historic Park

8 km S of village of Wood Mountain on Hwy 18

Open: Jun – Sep, call ahead for seasonal hours

P: 306-662-5411 **TF:** 1-800-205-7070

W: www.2sk.ca/11231

Wood Mountain Rodeo Ranch Museum

Wood Mountain Regional Park, 8 km S of Wood Mountain

Open: May – Sep, call ahead for seasonal hours

P: 306-266-4953

W: www.2sk.ca/10279

Val Marie

Information on accommodations, attractions and services

P: 306-298-2022

W: www.2sk.ca/com/1000926

Grasslands National Park of Canada

SW Saskatchewan between Val Marie and Killdeer, S of Hwy 18

Park Visitor Centre located in Val Marie, call ahead for seasonal hours

Open: year-round

P: 306-298-2257

W: www.2sk.ca/14659

Eastend

Information on accommodations, attractions and services

P: 306-295-3322 / 306-295-3553

W: www.2sk.ca/com/1000247

Eastend Driving and Hiking Tours

W: www.dinocountry.com

Old Man on His Back Visitor Centre

60 km SW of Eastend via Hwy 13 and Claydon Grid

Open: weekends, May long-weekend to mid-Sep, call ahead for weekday access

P: 306-296-2077 / 306-347-0447

TF: 1-866-622-7275

W: www.2sk.ca/20152

Cypress Hills Vineyard & Winery

20 km SW of Maple Creek on Hwy 27

Open: May – Oct, call ahead for hours and food service availability

P: 306-662-4100

W: www.2sk.ca/21407

Cypress Hills Tourism Destination Area

W: www.cypresshills.ca

Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park

Centre Block (full services), 27 km S of Maple Creek on Hwy 21

West Block Wilderness Area (limited services), 57 km SW of Maple Creek on Hwy 271

Open: year-round

P: 306-662-5411 **TF:** 1-800-205-7070

W: www.2sk.ca/11231

Cypress Park Resort Inn and Ivan's Restaurant

30 km S of Maple Creek in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park

Hotel rooms, cabins and condominiums, licensed dining

Open: year-round

P: 306-662-12853

W: www.2sk.ca/12853

Cypress Hills Eco-Adventures Ltd.

Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park – Centre Block

Open: May-Oct

P: 306-716-6541

W: www.2sk.ca/23198

Fort Walsh National Historic Site

55 km SW of Maple Creek on Hwy 271

Open: May – Sep, call ahead for seasonal hours

P: 306-662-2645 / 306-662-3590

W: www.2sk.ca/14548

Historic Reesor Ranch

30 km S of Walsh, AB on Graburn Rd, 3 km E to ranch

Open: year-round, call ahead for reservations

P: 306-662-3498

W: www.2sk.ca/13987

Maple Creek Information Centre

114 Jasper St

Information on accommodations, attractions, shopping and dining

Open: year-round, call ahead for seasonal hours

P: 306-662-4005 / 306-662-2244

W: www.2sk.ca/com/1000555

Jasper Cultural and Historical Centre

311 Jasper St, Maple Creek

Open: year-round, call ahead for seasonal hours

P: 306-662-2434 / 306-662-2876

W: www.2sk.ca/16719

Southwest Saskatchewan

Old-Timer's Museum

218 Jasper St, Maple Creek

Open: May-Sep, other times by appointment

P: 306-662-2474

W: www.2sk.ca/14499

Weswood Furniture & Design

127 Jasper St, Maple Creek

Open: year-round

P: 306-662-4200 / 306-662-2692

W: www.2sk.ca/17586

THE STAR Café & Grill

32 Pacific Ave, Maple Creek

Open: year-round

P: 306-662-2202

W: www.2sk.ca/22413

Rockin' Horse Cookhouse & Bar

103 Maple St, Maple Creek

Open: year-round

P: 306-662-2430

W: www.2sk.ca/22183

Redmond House Bed & Breakfast and Dining Establishment

309 March Street, Maple Creek

Open: year-round, call ahead for dining room hours

P: 306-662-2717

W: www.redmondhouse.ca

Ghostown Blues Bed & Breakfast

1 km W of Maple Creek on Hwy 271

Open: May-Nov

P: 306-662-4522 **TF:** 1-877-992-4522

W: www.ghostownblues.com

La Reata Ranch

N of Swift Current near Lake Diefenbaker

Open: May-Oct

P: 306-375-2225 / 306-375-2291

W: www.2sk.ca/13090