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TRIP LENGTH
4-5 days
1310 km

TRAIL OF THE MOUNTIES



RCMP Sunset Retreat Ceremony, Regina. Tourism Saskatchewan/Hans-Gerhard Pfaffer



The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), formerly known as the North West Mounted Police (NWMP), are Canada's national police force and one of the most respected and well-known law-enforcement agencies in the world.

Nothing quite says Canada like the image of Mounties clad in the Force's traditional scarlet tunic, and no other place in the country has closer ties to the RCMP than Saskatchewan. Starting in Regina, this five day driving tour takes you to four of Saskatchewan's, and indeed Canada's, most significant RCMP sites.

DAY ONE Regina

A visit to Regina's RCMP Heritage Centre is the perfect place to start – a fascinating look at the world-famous police force through exhibits, multi-media presentations and on-site interpretation. The building is impressive in its own right, a unique and environmentally-friendly stone, glass and concrete structure designed by famous architect Arthur Erickson. While the building is modern, the setting on the grounds of the RCMP Academy is steeped in history. Established in 1885, the RCMP's Training Academy, "Depot" Division, is considered

the “Cradle of the Force,” because all RCMP members from across Canada receive their training here.

Inside, the imposing 30-metre long March of the Mounties exhibit sets the stage for the Force’s long and continuing story. Learn about the formation of the NWMP in 1873, and their historic 1874 Great March West to maintain law and order in this rapidly developing part of the country. In the north, Mounties conducted Arctic patrols and protected Canadian sovereignty, and even carried mail to far-flung communities. Challenges they faced are also portrayed in the legendary accounts of searching for the Lost Patrol and tracking the Mad Trapper of Rat River.



RCMP Sunset Retreat Ceremony, Regina. *Tourism Saskatchewan/Greg Huszar Photography*

You’ll also discover the role of today’s RCMP who take part in everything from community policing to intelligence gathering and international missions. Don’t miss Cracking the Case, a popular interactive exhibit showcasing high-tech crime solving. Ever wonder how they analyze tire tracks, DNA or ballistics?

Throughout the year, you can observe RCMP trainees taking part in the Sergeant Major’s Parade, which is a dismounted cavalry drill on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 12:45 pm in the Parade Square or in the Drill Hall during late fall, winter or inclement weather.

On Tuesday evenings from July to mid-August, visitors are invited to join the cadets as they participate in the dazzling RCMP Sunset Retreat Ceremonies, presented by “Depot” Division. Experience a true slice of Canadiana as troops in Red Serge take part in this 45-minute ceremony featuring cannon firing, a troop drill display and the lowering of the flag, followed by the March Past. The RCMP Sunset Retreat Ceremonies have been repeatedly named to the American Bus

Association’s prestigious Top 100 Events in North America list.

After immersing yourself in the history and rich traditions of the RCMP, enjoy a leisurely evening meal and be sure to get plenty of rest – tomorrow you have a full day ahead of you.

DAY TWO Wood Mountain

From Regina travel 71 km west on Hwy 1 to Moose Jaw, then journey south on Hwy 2 for 103 km until you reach the Red Coat Trail/Hwy 13. Turn west and continue south on the Red Coat Trail/Hwy 13 for 20 km to Hwy 358. Turn south on Hwy 358 and travel 43 km to Wood Mountain.

Your first stop is Wood Mountain Post Provincial Historic Park, located 8 km south of the village on Hwy 18. It preserves one of the oldest NWMP posts, established in 1874 during the March West. From this post, which was close to the United States border, authorities tried to prevent American whiskey traders from coming into Canada, and later, the Mounties’ key role shifted to keeping tabs on some unexpected visitors.

When Chief Sitting Bull’s Sioux (Lakota) defeated the US Seventh Cavalry, including the Custer Battalion led by General George Armstrong Custer at the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876, they sought refuge near Wood Mountain. NWMP Superintendent James Walsh established a good rapport with Sitting Bull, and while peace was maintained, the presence of nearly 5,000 Sioux caused a major refugee and diplomatic crisis. Canadian authorities tried to convince the Sioux to return to the United States but they resisted, even though facing starvation. After years of difficult diplomacy, Sitting Bull and most of his followers agreed to return to the United States in 1881.

In addition to reconstructed buildings, a tipi is erected each summer and decorated by a local Sioux artist using traditional designs. Exhibits chronicle the story of the Sioux, the post’s strategic setting in the scenic Wood Mountain Uplands, early Métis settlement, and the Boundary Commission survey of the 49th parallel between Canada and the United States. You’ll also learn about the routine work of the NWMP officers including acting as customs agents and dealing with ranchers and rustlers.

The Wood Mountain Rodeo Ranch Museum, located nearby in the Wood Mountain Regional Park, explores the area’s rodeo and ranch culture. The Wood Mountain Stampede held each July is Canada’s oldest continuously-running rodeo, originating from Dominion Day celebrations first held at the NWMP post in 1890. The museum also serves as an information centre for the East Block of Grasslands National Park.

Eastend (229 km west on Red Coat Trail/Hwy 13) has several accommodations options, and we encourage you to overnight here to cut down on your driving time tomorrow. See the contact information section for links to area accommodations and dining.

DAY THREE Fort Walsh National Historic Site of Canada

From Eastend, drive west on Red Coat Trail/Hwy 13 for 54 km, turn north onto Hwy 21 and continue 60 km to Maple Creek, then 55 km southwest to Fort Walsh on Hwy 271. Alternatively, take Grid 615 at the junction of Hwy 13 and 21 and continue north to the historic site, watching for directional signs.

Nestled in a scenic valley of the Cypress Hills, Fort Walsh was once the most important and most heavily armed fort in the west. It was an incident here that hastened the formation of the NWMP. On June 1, 1873, a group of American wolfers attacked a camp of Assiniboine (Nakoda) whom they accused of stealing horses, leaving over 20 men, women and children dead. When news of the Cypress Hills Massacre reached Ottawa, the government realized it could no longer delay policing the west and hurriedly formed the NWMP. Established in 1875, Fort Walsh played a key role in enforcing Canadian law in the west and later became NWMP headquarters.

Exploring the fort today, you will learn more about the Cypress Hills Massacre and the NWMP's role in asserting Canadian law and sovereignty, making the land ready for settlement through the treaty adhesion process and negotiating with Sitting Bull. The fort closed soon after the NWMP headquarters was moved to Regina in 1882, but was revived for a time in the mid-20th century as the RCMP Remount Ranch (1942-1968) to raise the Force's distinctive black horses made famous by the Musical Ride.

The fort goes beyond static exhibits, recreating the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of old Fort Walsh. Wander through 11 period-furnished buildings such as the Commissioner's Residence, Non-Commissioned Officers' Barracks and Guard House. Costumed guides relate stories from the past and stage re-enactments, such as firing the nine-pound muzzle-loading field rifle. Take part in the daily programming, check out the horses or wander over to the cook tent and sample bannock fried on the wood stove. Outside the stockade, tour the remains of the old townsite and historic cemeteries and explore the scenic hills along Battle Creek. The spectacular setting alone makes a visit worthwhile.

After a busy day of travel and exploration, retire for the evening in the peace and tranquility of Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park's Centre Block Resort Area. A range of accommodations are available including campgrounds, cabins, condominiums and hotel rooms and food services are available year-round. The Centre Block is accessible via the Gap Road which runs 32 km between the Centre and West Block Wilderness Areas. The Gap Road may be inaccessible during wet weather, so please call the park prior to travelling. If the Gap Road isn't suitable for travel, drive 55 km north on Hwy 271 back to Maple Creek, and overnight in this charming "old cowtown."

If time permits, stop by the picturesque Cypress Hills Vineyard & Winery, located 20 km south of Maple Creek on Hwy 271. Partake in a tasting of their flight of wines, take a self-guided vineyard tour, or relax with a bistro-style meal or a slice of saskatoon pie on the patio.

DAY FOUR The Battleford Trail and Beyond

From Maple Creek, travel 138 km east on Trans-Canada/Hwy 1 to the city of Swift Current. The NWMP travelled to Riviere Au Courant (Swift Current Creek) in 1874 to bring law and order to the area and to facilitate the signing of Treaty 4 in preparation for the coming of the railway and the subsequent influx of settlers to follow. In its early years, the settlement of Swift Current was a bustling hub, acting as the western freight terminus of the railway. Between 1882 and 1891, Swift Current was the closest rail shipping point for the Battleford district, and supplies for the area were freighted the long distance overland on the Battleford Trail by wagon and oxcart.

During the North West Resistance of 1885, the NWMP routinely patrolled the trail between Swift Current and Battleford to ensure the safe freighting of supplies for government troops. During this time of conflict, Swift Current became the main military, supply and communications centre for government forces. It was at Swift Current that Colonel Otter and his men embarked from the train and marched north in 1885 to quell the "Siege of Battleford." Settler fears and dire conditions for Chief Poundmaker's Cree had made for a tenuous situation. To learn more about the area, stop in at the Swift Current Museum and Visitor Centre which is open year-round and features permanent and travelling exhibits.



Fort Walsh National Historic Site of Canada. *Tourism Saskatchewan/Greg Huszar Photography*

Your next stop along the Battleford Trail is Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park, located 50 km north of Swift Current on Hwy 4. When you reach the park, you can access Goodwin House on the left side of the highway. Built by former NWMP member Frank Goodwin, the circa 1900s stone dwelling now houses the park's visitor information and interpretive centre. Check out the excellent displays in the newly-renovated interpretive centre and pick up a trail map. The traffic on the Battleford Trail was so heavy during the late 19th century, that the deeply carved ruts made by burdened wagons and oxcarts are still visible to this day, leaving their ghostly mark on the prairie landscape. The Rings, Ruts and Remnants trail takes you past tipi rings, cart ruts and the remnants of homesteads. An historical cairn commemorating the Battleford Trail is also located at Goodwin House.



Fort Battleford National Historic Site of Canada. *Tourism Saskatchewan/Eric Lindberg*

Food services are available at the Saskatchewan Landing Golf Resort and Papa Joe's Convenience Store. Dining is also available in Kyle and Rosetown, located further north on Hwy 4.

After you've stretched your legs on a leisurely hike and re-energized with a bite to eat, continue your journey north on Hwy 4, travelling 131 km to Rosetown. If time allows, you may want to venture the short distance over to Herschel and the Ancient Echoes Interpretive Centre, located 12 km north of Rosetown on Hwy 4, and 23 km west on Hwy 31. Ancient Echoes interprets the history of First Nations people and their relationship with the plains buffalo. Ancient petroglyphs are also located onsite and are accessible with a guide. The interpretive centre is open seasonally from May to September, and a tea room operates selected afternoons and by appointment.

Your final overnight destination is the Battlefords (collective term for the City of North Battleford and the Town of Battleford), located 154 km north of Rosetown on Hwy 4. A variety of fixed roof accommodations, camping and dining options are available in the two communities.

DAY FIVE Fort Battleford National Historic Site

Established in 1876 when Battleford became capital of the North West Territories, the fort was the NWMP headquarters for the District of Saskatchewan and was responsible for keeping the peace. Today, the fort plays tribute to the role of the Mounties in the development of the Canadian west with a visitor centre, five original buildings, interpreters in period dress and a variety of programs. Fort Battleford National Historic Site is located 4.8 km southeast of North Battleford.

Learn about the fort's role during the 1885 North West Resistance when local Cree and Assiniboine bands, under the leadership of Chief Poundmaker, marched on Battleford to demand better rations. Many

were starving and government promises of assistance were slow in coming. Fearing violence, some 500 settlers took refuge in the fort. When Poundmaker and his followers arrived at Battleford, the community was deserted. Negotiations to meet with the government's Indian Agent failed, and some of Poundmaker's followers looted buildings in the community.

In response, the government sent militia under Colonel Otter to come to the aid of Battleford. The troops arrived on April 24. Then a week later, acting without orders, Otter decided to attack Poundmaker's camp near Cut Knife Creek, 60 km to the west.

A short video at the fort provides background to the conflict, while maps, interpretive panels, exhibits and programming fill in the details. You can see Chief Poundmaker's ceremonial war club and Winchester rifle, as well as militia and NWMP uniforms. The Gatling gun is identical to the one used by Otter's troops in the Cut Knife battle. A highlight for many visitors is the fort's daily firing demonstration using a vintage seven-pounder field rifle, another weapon used by troops at Cut Knife.

If time permits, you may choose to tour the Poundmaker Battlefield located on the Poundmaker Cree Nation before or after you visit Fort Battleford. Tours of the battle site where Colonel Otter and Chief Poundmaker clashed can be arranged, and Chief Poundmaker's grave is located onsite. The Poundmaker Historical Centre is open seasonally and hours may vary, so please call ahead before visiting. To reach Poundmaker Cree Nation, travel 57.5 km west on Hwy 16 to Paynton, located just south of Hwy 16. From Paynton, travel 14 km south on Grid 674 to Poundmaker.

Trails of 1885 commemorates the significant events that occurred in 1885 during the Northwest Resistance. Visit www.trailsof1885.com for information on self-directed tours, events, festivals and happenings.

CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Regina Regional Opportunities Commission

Information on accommodations, attractions, shopping and dining
1925 Rose St, Regina

Open: year-round

P: 306-789-5099 **TF:** 1-800-661-5099

W: www.2sk.ca/com/1000752

RCMP Heritage Centre

5907 Dewdney Ave, Regina (entrance to RCMP Depot Division)

Open: year-round

P: 306-522-7333 **TF:** 1-866-567-7267

W: www.2sk.ca/13476

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

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

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

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 Vineyard & Winery

20 km SW of Maple Creek on Hwy 271

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

P: 306-662-4100

W: www.2sk.ca/21407

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

Swift Current Museum/Tourism

Visitor Centre

Information on accommodations, attractions, shopping and dining

44 Robert St W

Open: year-round

P: 306-778-9174

W: www.2sk.ca/com/1000884

Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park

50 km N of Swift Current on Hwy 4

P: 306-375-5525 **TF:** 1-800-205-7070

W: www.2sk.ca/11231

Ancient Echoes Interpretive Centre

West St, Herschel

P: 306-377-2045

W: www.2sk.ca/14626

Battlefords Tourism & Convention Association

Information on accommodations, attractions, shopping and dining

Suite 502-1101-101 Main St, North Battleford

Open: year-round, Mon – Fri

P: 306-445-2000 **TF:** 1-800-243-0394

W: www.2sk.ca/com/1002271

Battlefords Tourism Visitor Information Centre

Junction of Hwys 16 & 40 E, North Battleford

Open: year-round, call ahead for seasonal hours

P: 306-445-6226

Fort Battleford National Historic Site

4.8 km SE of North Battleford, through Battleford and SE on Central Ave

Open: May – Sep, call ahead for seasonal hours

P: 306-937-2621

W: www.2sk.ca/10569

Poundmaker Historical Centre

Poundmaker Cree Nation, 14 km S of Hwy 16 at Paynton

Open: summer, call ahead for seasonal hours

P: 306-398-2316 / 306-398-1036

W: www.2sk.ca/13070

SPECIAL EVENTS

Regina:

RCMP Sergeant Major's Parade, year-round, Mon/Wed/Fri, 12:45 pm – www.2sk.ca/11136

RCMP Sunset Retreat Ceremonies, Jul 1, Tues until mid-Aug, 6:00 pm – www.2sk.ca/11136

Wood Mountain:

Wood Mountain Stampede, July – www.2sk.ca/10182

Fort Walsh:

Dominion Day Celebration, July 1 – www.2sk.ca/14548

Children's activities, available seasonally – www.2sk.ca/14548

Fort Battleford:

Canada Day Celebration, July 1 – www.2sk.ca/10569

Ghost Walks, selected dates – www.2sk.ca/10569