

Contact

Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park

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

Programs, Resource Management, Public Safety and Enforcement

Phone: (403) 647-2364
Toll-Free: 310-0000 in Alberta

Campground and Group Reservations

Phone: 1-877-537-2757
Phone: 1-403-647 Comfort Camping

General Provincial Park Information

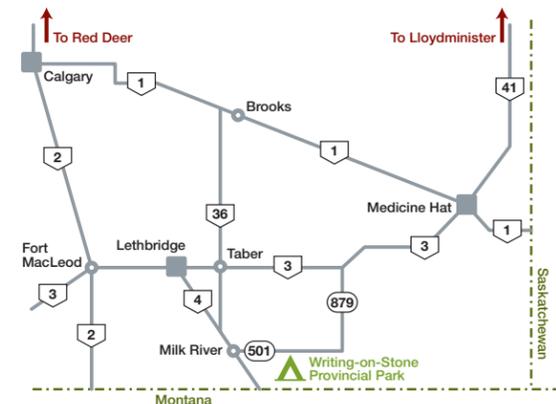
Web: albertaparks.ca
Toll Free: 1-866-427-3582

Fire Bans in Alberta

Web: albertafirebans.ca

Emergency (RCMP, Fire, Ambulance)

Phone: 911



ISBN: 978-1-4601-0488-0
Printed August 2012



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.



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. Blackfoot people still hold the land here sacred and maintain their traditions of ceremony and art.

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.



- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Amphitheatre | Interpretive Trail |
| Camping Area | Parking |
| Day Use Area | Picnic Shelter |
| Drinking Water | Playground |
| Dump Station | Registration |
| First Aid | Shower |
| Grocery Store | Telephone |
| Group Camping | Viewpoint |
| Historic Site | Washrooms |
| Information | Wheelchair Access |
| Park Office | 15/30 Amp Power |
| One Way | Gate |



Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park

Áísínai'pi National Historic Site

PARK GUIDE



Alberta

Where Histories, Stories and Dreams Become One.

Writing-on-Stone is a sacred landscape that has a special spiritual significance to the Blackfoot people who have hunted and travelled these Great Plains since the beginning of time. Located near the Alberta-Montana Border, the park is 42 km south east of the town of Milk River. When you visit this area, you can't help but feel inspired. Here the traditional Blackfoot culture and religion are based on a long and intimate relationship with the land. Abundant First Nations petroglyphs, and pictographs cover the sheer sandstone cliffs, protected as a living legacy of the spiritual connection between Blackfoot people and this place. This landscape continues to be part of Blackfoot tradition.

The spectacular sandstone formations along the meandering Milk River and the adjacent large stretches of unbroken grasslands make Writing-on-Stone a unique environment. The river winds through a wide valley filled with an intriguing mix of cliffs, hoodoos, grassy knolls and coulees. Rich plant and animal life fill the main valley, coulees and grasslands.

A North West Mounted Police (NWMP) outpost was reconstructed near its original location. Now in the park's archaeological preserve, it is a glimpse into NWMP peacekeeping activities and daily life in the area from 1887 to 1918.

The Archaeological Preserve

Vandalism, 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 or 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>.

Backcountry Hiking

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 the hiking zone.

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.

Carry your binoculars, bring drinking water, wear a hat and cool clothing so you can safely stay out on the trail for a few hours!

Participate in interpretive programs, held almost every evening during the summer months. Plan ahead and check the schedule and ticket sale procedures for daily summer interpretive hikes.

Sandstone and vegetation is fragile and easily damaged; please stay on trails.

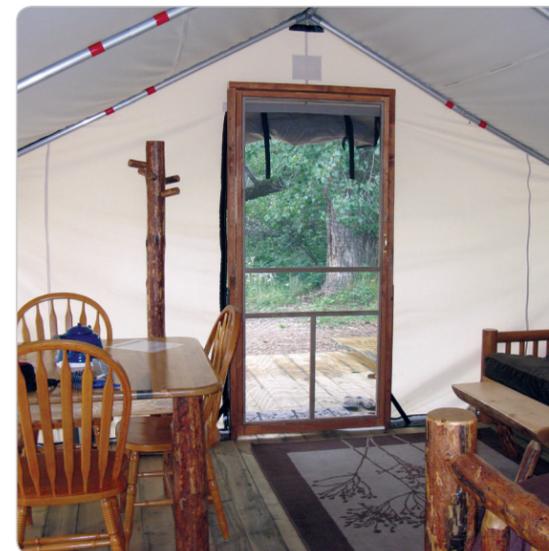
Relax in the shade of the cottonwoods or on the sunny beach watching the cliff swallows dart back and forth across the river.

Comfort Camping

Whether you are a first time camper, or looking for that extra level of comfort, these premium campsites will provide an unforgettable camping experience in the beautiful setting of Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park.

Three camp sites are located in a separate loop of the campground beneath the cottonwood trees. All comfort camp sites have private decks and comfortable beds that will give your outdoor adventures a touch of luxury.

For more information look up Comfort Camping on albertaparks.ca or call (403) 647-2364 ext 0.



You are in Rattlesnake Country

Contrary to popular belief, prairie rattlesnakes are very timid creatures and will try to escape from humans if given the chance. They rarely strike at large moving objects unless they are provoked. Leave them alone and they will leave you alone.

When you are in rattlesnake country:

- Watch where you are walking; stay on trails and out of long grass.
- Examine an area before you sit down to rest.
- Stop young children from running ahead and climbing hills and rocks.
- Keep your dog on its leash; prevent it from putting its nose into bushes, holes or anywhere else a snake might hide.
- Do not put your hands or feet into cracks, holes and crevices, or into or under bushes
- Do not lift rocks or logs.
- Never poke or throw things at snakes; not only will you bother them and make them more likely to strike, it is against the law to disturb all wildlife in the park!
- Do not walk under ledges; never reach up with your hands if you can't see where you are putting them—a snake could be there!
- Never handle an injured or dead rattlesnake.
- If you hear a rattling sound, do not move until you know the snake's location, then move away.