

COAL MINES AND DINOSAUR FINDS DRIVING TOUR

Royal Tyrrell • Atlas Coal Mine National Historic Site • East Coulee School Museum • Hoodoos Recreation Area
Rosedale Suspension Bridge • Bleriot Ferry • World's Largest Dinosaur



Hike through the spectacular Hoodoos in the Canadian Badlands

The Canadian Badlands is like no other place on earth. Home to the world's most extensive dinosaur bonebeds, badlands and hoodoos and a world-class dinosaur museum, our natural heritage is more than 75 million years old. Our culture is literally layered in the land. National historic sites and provincial parks reveal First Nations rock art, farming and ranching history and a rich industrial heritage. Communities large and small boast festivals, rodeos, live theatre, local art and tea houses. Whether you prospect for fossils, canoe a meandering river or horseback ride in glacier-carved coulees, the Canadian Badlands experience is as vast and remarkable as the landscape.

The Canadian Badlands Touring Routes dig through the layers of our natural and cultural heritage. Local driving tours are one to two days long and offer many ideas of what to see and do. You can customize your own half-day road trip or use Side Trips and regional driving tours to create a three to four day vacation. The Touring Routes can be enjoyed in any season. While larger attractions are open year-round, local attractions often open from mid-May to early September. We wish you a memorable journey in the Canadian Badlands. Call **1-800-ALBERTA** or visit canadianbadlands.com for more Canadian Badlands Touring Routes.

Dinosaur Trail

- Admire world-class dinosaur specimens at the Royal Tyrrell Museum
- Wander through an old mine site in Midland Provincial Park
- Squeeze into a pew in The Little Church
- Float on the Bleriot Ferry across the Red Deer River
- Soak up stunning panoramas at Orkney Hill Viewpoint and Horsethief Canyon

Hoodoo Trail

- Take a swaying walk across the Red Deer River on the Rosedale Suspension Bridge
- Cross the eleven single-lane bridges to the ghost town of Wayne
- Inspect the other-worldly shapes of hoodoos at the Hoodoos Recreation Area
- Sit in a 1930s' classroom and sip tea at East Coulee School Museum
- Ride a rattling "mantrip" train at Atlas Coal Mine National Historic Site

Drumheller

- Climb into the mouth of the World's Largest Dinosaur
- Cool off in Rotary Spray Park and cascade down the Aquaplex waterslide
- Search for "cementosauruses" and historic buildings in downtown Drumheller

This tour packs an amazing diversity of experiences into just a 48-km stretch of the narrow, winding Drumheller Valley. You'll need at least two days to sample the unique dinosaur and coal-mining museums, narrow bridges, intricately-sculpted hoodoos and sweeping vistas – all nestled in an exquisite badlands setting. The showstopper is the Royal Tyrrell Museum, one of the world's finest dinosaur museums, where you can cringe beneath the bone-crushing jaws of an enormous Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton, one of hundreds of specimens on display. The nearby Dinosaur Trail takes you on a cable ferry ride across the Red Deer River and leads to stunning viewpoints of badlands formations and the deeply-eroded Drumheller Valley. Heading east of Drumheller, the Hoodoo Trail is no less varied, ranging from a walk across

the swinging Rosedale Suspension Bridge to a tour up Canada's last standing wooden coal tibble. Situated between these two short driving tours, Drumheller boasts the World's Largest Dinosaur, a popular waterpark, an impressive reptile collection and a whimsical collection of cement dinosaurs.





Visitor Information Centres

Travel Alberta
1-800-ALBERTA
travelalberta.com

Drumheller

60 – 1 Avenue West
1-866-823-8100
traveldrumheller.com

Accommodations

Visit the Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association online at explorealberta.com for approved accommodation or contact 1-800-ALBERTA. Reservations highly recommended.

Camping: There is a campground and a recreational vehicle park in Drumheller and, along **Dinosaur Trail**, a recreational vehicle resort and a provincial campground (the latter first come, first served). Along the **Hoodoo Trail**, there are three campgrounds in Rosedale, one in Wayne and one across the river from Cambria. These facilities are often full by early afternoon, and reservations are highly recommended where permitted. Additional campgrounds can be found in surrounding communities such as Rosebud, Dorothy, Delia, Michichi and Morrin.

Distances and Driving Times

Calgary, 138 km, 1 hr 20 min
Edmonton, 279 km, 2 hr 50 min
Red Deer, 165 km, 1 hr 40 min
Lethbridge, 282 km, 2 hr 50 min
Brooks, 139 km, 1 hr 20 min
Medicine Hat, 247 km, 2 hr 30 min

This map is not intended for navigation. Pick up an official Alberta Road Map at a Visitor Information Centre or call 1-800-ALBERTA.

Events

April
East Coulee Spring Festival

June
Beethoven in the Badlands,
Drumheller

July
Canada Day, all communities
Canadian Badlands Passion Play,
Drumheller
Richard Cosgrove Memorial Rodeo,
Drumheller
Badlands Dinosaur (Chuckwagon)
Derby, Drumheller

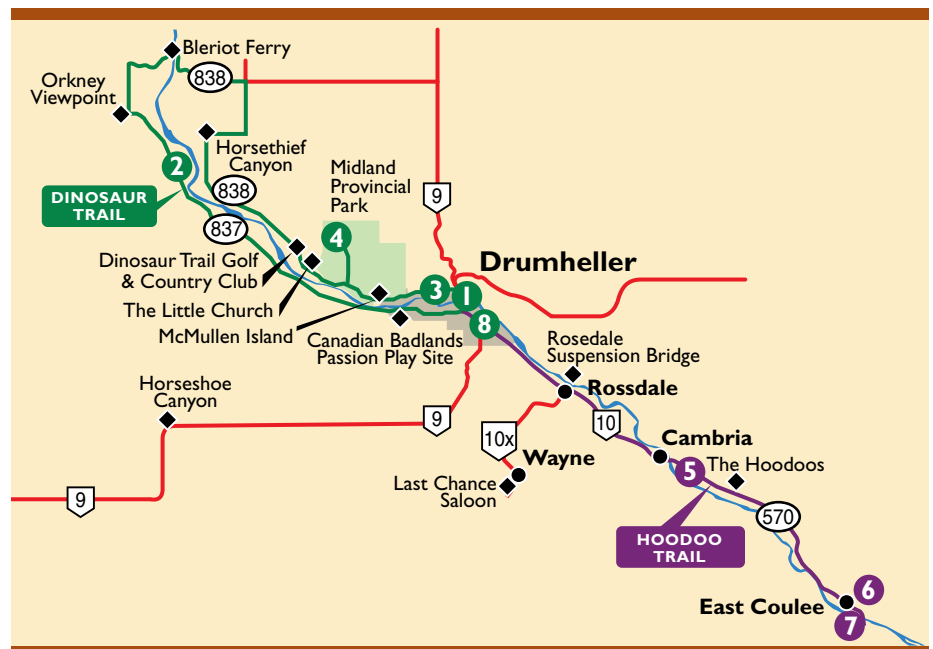
August
Celebrity Golf Tournament,
Drumheller

September
Waynefest Music Festival, Wayne

Year-round
Rosebud Theatre, Rosebud
Haunted Atlas Coal Mine
Farmers' Market, Saturdays in
Drumheller

Attractions

- 1 World's Largest Dinosaur
1-866-823-8100, traveldrumheller.com
- 2 Dinosaur Trail
1-866-823-8100, traveldrumheller.com
- 3 Homestead Antique Museum
403-823-2600, virtuallydrumheller.com
- 4 Royal Tyrrell Museum
403-823-7707, tyrrellmuseum.com
- 5 Hoodoo Trail
1-866-823-8100, traveldrumheller.com
- 6 East Coulee School Museum
403-822-3970, ecsmuseum.com
- 7 Atlas Coal Mine National Historic Site
403-822-2220, atlascoalmine.ab.ca
- 8 Reptile World
403-823-8623, reptileworld.net



The Canadian Badlands Touring Routes aim to follow good secondary highways and, occasionally, gravel road alternatives. Most attractions are accessible on hard-surfaced roads; some have gravel road access. Please drive carefully and respect private property. Every effort has been made to ensure accurate information at the time of publication. Attraction hours and seasons of operation vary. You are advised to contact each attraction in advance. This publication is for information purposes only. We are unable to accept responsibility for any inconvenience, loss or injury sustained as a result of anyone relying upon this information.

Dropping steeply into the Drumheller Valley, you suddenly enter a parched, rocky landscape sculpted into strange badland formations and dotted with the odd sagebrush and cactus. Yet this dry valley owes much – including its famed dinosaur and coal-mining heritage – to water.

Some 70 million years ago, rivers and flooding seas deposited sediments in a lush coastal environment that harboured dinosaurs and nurtured luxuriant plants, which over the ages were transformed into coal. Then about 15,000 years ago, the rapid melting of a 1000-metre-thick ice sheet carved a deep valley through those compressed, colourful sediments

and exposed rich coal seams and dinosaur bones.

Today, the dinosaurs are long gone and the last of the 139 coal mines that once crowded this valley has closed. But their legacy lives on in museums, ghost towns, mining artifacts and fossilized remains, the latter which continue to be unveiled



Witness nature's fascinating creations in the Drumheller Valley

as this unique landscape slowly washes away.

The attractions of the Drumheller Valley are as densely packed as the rock layers, carrying you back to the days when dinosaurs and, much later, coal mining ruled these lands. Plan to spend two or three days exploring the area, with the better part of a day devoted to each of the two main driving tours described here – **Dinosaur Trail** and **Hoodoo Trail**. The Royal Tyrrell Museum, along the **Dinosaur Trail**, can alone captivate you for half a day or more. Make sure to set aside at least a few hours to sample the diverse delights of the burgeoning town of Drumheller.



Dinosaur Trail

Generally followed in a counterclockwise direction, the Dinosaur Trail is a lovely, looping drive that closely follows both sides of the slow-moving Red Deer River, climbing twice to commanding viewpoints. This 48-km tour nicely combines the riveting intensity of the Royal Tyrrell Museum with a couple of short walks, a short ferry ride and the scenic majesty of the Drumheller Valley.

From the World's Largest Dinosaur in the heart of Drumheller, take **Highway 9** north across the Red Deer River and

turn left on secondary **Highway 838** to pick up the **Dinosaur Trail**. It's less than 2 km to the Homestead Antique Museum, a large domed building housing one of the oldest and best-stocked local history museums in Alberta. Through the more than 30,000 historic items on display, you can examine the long tenure of human settlement in this valley, ranging from aboriginal camps to pioneer farming and the era of steam engines. The museum's highlights include a popular children's scavenger hunt, school song-and-dance programs and the amazing sight of a rare, stuffed two-headed calf.

As you continue west, the sprawling outskirts of Drumheller embrace what once was the thriving town of Midlandvale, which boasted a population of 600 residents and four

major coal mines, including the colourfully-named Brilliant Mines and Western Gem. While the town's early buildings and sports fields have largely disappeared, some coal mining legacy has been salvaged. In 1974, Sidney McMullen, former president of the Midland Mining Company, donated 595 hectares of the closed mine's land to the province, forming the basis of Midland Provincial Park.

Within the park, you can follow interpretive trails to displays at grassed-over remains of old coal mining sites. A 1912 mine office building contains something that was nearly as valuable as the mine's coal – the safe. Mind you, anyone interested in seizing the safe's payroll (delivered by armed guards) might have needed some coal-mining dynamite to crack its thick brick walls.

💡 The dry, rocky badlands of the Drumheller Valley can feel like an oven on a hot summer's day. Be sure to pack plenty of water and sun protection and try, if possible, to plan your outdoor excursions for the cooler hours of morning and early evening.

Across the road is McMullen Island, an oasis of greenery in the otherwise parched badlands, offering a fine picnic spot or riverside walk on a typically hot summer's day. As you drive into this day-use area, notice how the dry sagebrush quickly gives way to poplars, cottonwoods and thick clumps of sandbar willows along the Red Deer River's banks. This thin strip of green – attracting deer, rabbits and songbirds – is the result of deposited silts in a broad, flat part of a river valley that elsewhere is eroded into steep banks.

Just over 1 km further on the **Dinosaur Trail**, take a short spur road to the world-renowned Royal Tyrrell Museum, which opened in 1985. Canada's largest dinosaur museum, this magnificent facility houses thousands of fossils, discovered by rock hounds and palaeontologists over the past 100-plus years in the Canadian Badlands.

Almost immediately upon entering this handsome, sprawling sandstone building, you're confronted with the heart-stopping sight of a pack of *Albertosaurs* in a Cretaceous environment so realistic you can practically smell the swamp and hear the gnashing of flesh-eating jaws. This arresting introduction is a mere appetizer for the beckoning Dinosaur Hall, where you can inspect 130-million-

year-old fossilized footprints, dinosaur eggs and magnificent skeletons of exotic creatures such as the duck-billed *Edmontosaurus*. A new exhibit tells the story of Ceratopsians, a dinosaur group distinguished by its elaborate horns and frills. Casting a large shadow over the room is the towering, toothy *Tyrannosaurus rex*, the largest of the meat eaters and one of the last dinosaurs in this area.



Stand beneath a terrifying T-rex at the Royal Tyrrell Museum

Spring and fall, brave youngsters and their families can sign up for a “snore with the dinosaurs” night in the Dinosaur Hall, warily bedding down beside these prehistoric giants. In summer, the museum's busy Education Department runs more than 20 hours of programming a day – including dinosaur prospecting trips, simulated digs and fossil casting – for amateur palaeontologists of all ages.

Not everything in the museum is fossilized. During the summer, you can

chat with a technician painstakingly brushing grains of sand off, say, a freshly-excavated dinosaur femur. Visible at work through a nearby window are many of the museum's other technicians, whose expertise is in demand at dinosaur digs around the world.

💡 The dinosaur skeletons in the Royal Tyrrell Museum are so life-like, it wouldn't seem surprising if they suddenly started lumbering through the exhibit halls. But most are, in fact, reproductions of the real thing, meticulously cast and constructed by skilled artists. Besides protecting often-fragile originals from damage, the artificial skeletons are a lot lighter than the real versions, which might collapse under their considerable weight.

Want to know what kind of world the dinosaurs lived in? Just step into the steamy Cretaceous Garden and you'll discover many prehistoric plants like the ones *Triceratops* or *Hadrosaurs* dined on 70 million years ago. Indeed, the lush, warm environment these creatures inhabited on the edge of an inland sea was much closer to today's southern U.S. coast than the dry badlands outside the museum. Close your eyes and try to picture the primordial swamps and forests of giant redwoods, cypress and pines. Fossilized bits of these trees can be found throughout the valley, often in close proximity to coal seams.

Though dinosaurs are the main draw, the Royal Tyrrell Museum reaches far beyond their relatively short 100-million-year reign to interpret 3.9 billion years of life on this

planet. Geological highlights include a meticulously-constructed Devonian reef and a Burgess Shale exhibit, where you walk on a glass floor over lifelike recreations of 500-million-year-old sea creatures.

You'll likely need at least three hours to tour the museum's many exhibits. If you're getting glassy eyed, remember your admission is good for the whole day (two-day passes are also available), and you can come back for another session after a lunch break or an outdoor excursion.

SIDE TRIP

There are a lot of active ways to explore the Drumheller Valley. You can launch a canoe or raft upstream and then lazily drift down the Red Deer River. Take a shaded riverside walk in Drumheller or, for a longer trek or cycle, follow a good trail out of the Royal Tyrrell Museum. For a stunning birds-eye view, book a scenic helicopter ride over the valley. Contact the Tourist Information Centre in Drumheller for details on these activities and more.

A good choice is to stretch your legs on the 1-km Badlands Interpretive Trail, just outside the museum's main entrance. Here, you'll get a close look at the Drumheller Valley's distinctly coloured rock layers, deposited as sediments by ancient tropical rivers and floodwaters and then compressed into white sandstones, gray-to-brown siltstones and mudstones and chemically transformed reddish-brown to purplish-black ironstones. Of course, the thin black lines are swampy plants transformed into coal seams.

Over thousands of post-glacial years, these relatively soft, exposed rocks have been rapidly eroded by water, wind and frost into the steep slopes and varied, fantastic formations that make the Red Deer River Valley so distinctive. Early French fur trade trappers called similar landscapes in South Dakota *mauvais terres à traverser*, or "bad lands to cross." Interestingly, South Dakota Sioux called the same terrain *mako sica*, or "land bad."

Back on the **Dinosaur Trail**, it's only a few kilometres to the popular Little Church, a seven-by-eleven-foot structure complete with a steeple and brass bell. If you're in luck, you might see a wedding in progress. The church, which accommodates six people, was erected in 1968 by a local contractor as a unique roadside attraction and place of worship and contemplation. In dire need of repairs, the church was reconstructed in 1991 by inmates of the Drumheller Institution, a medium-security federal jail that has long been one of the town's major employers. For a closer look, duck into the church and squeeze into one of the one-person pews.



Squeeze into a pew at the Little Church

Nearby is the Dinosaur Trail Golf and Country Club. Its spectacular back nine, opened in 1996, weaves through badlands and coulees and is considered one of the most challenging stretch of holes in Canada. Errant shots here might well ricochet off sandstone walls.




Experience the awe of Horsethief Canyon

The road now climbs steeply out of the valley to Horsethief Canyon Viewpoint. Looking down, see if you can pick a meandering line through the badland formations crammed within the canyon's walls. When ranchers began grazing their cattle on the open range here in the late 1800s, rustlers apparently thought this maze of gullies was the perfect place to hide stolen cows and horses from detection until they could safely be trailed south to Montana for sale.

You'll still find cows grazing on the broad plateau beyond, intermingled with crops of grain and pumpjacks rhythmically lifting oil from rock formations 1.5 km below the surface. Along with agriculture, petroleum is now the economic mainstay of the Drumheller region, replacing the long run of coal mining in the valley. Long before the coal miners or ranchers arrived, the plateau's soils supported a rich carpet of native grasses, grazed by massive bison herds and roamed by wolves and grizzly bears.

After this brief interlude atop the expansive plains, the **Dinosaur Trail** plunges back into the confined valley for an historic crossing of the Red Deer River on the Bleriot Ferry, in operation since 1913 and one of only a handful of ferries still running in Alberta. The quick, free ride carries you back to the days when nine ferries worked in the Drumheller Valley, providing dry transportation and a vital link between otherwise isolated pioneer farms and ranches. Named after its first ferryman, rancher Andrew Bleriot, the ferry runs from spring break-up to late fall freeze-up.

As a stout cable pulls the ferry across the river, see if you can spot anyone paddling a canoe or floating a raft down the river. A century ago, you might well have spied a raft of grizzled prospectors scouring these banks for unburied treasure. These were bone hunters, lured here by stories of local ranchers finding impressive dinosaur remains throughout the valley. During the Great Canadian Dinosaur Rush (1910-17), expeditions launched by top North American museums and universities discovered more than 200 complete skeletons in the valley, including species never seen before.

 See a fossil? Have a good look, but leave it where it is. Report your find to the Royal Tyrrell Museum so a palaeontologist can check it out. Digging for fossils in Alberta, or removing them from the Province, is illegal without a permit.

The **Dinosaur Trail** now swings south on secondary **Highway 837**, climbing from

the river flats past stands of white spruce, which grow on the valley's cooler, wetter north-facing slopes, in sharp contrast to the rocky slopes and prairie grasses on other aspects. A short side road to the left leads to Orkney Hill Viewpoint, offering a spectacular panorama of the Red Deer River Valley. From this lofty perch, you can clearly see how the river has carved a succession of deeper channels, leaving behind old riverbeds as higher terraces.



Enjoy the Red Deer River Valley from Orkney Viewpoint

Keen eyes might spot grassed-over circles of stone on the high bluffs on both sides of the valley. They are evidence of teepee rings from First Nations camps, set up partly to provide a commanding view of bison herds, which helped sustain a nomadic way of life for thousands of years. When fur trade explorer Peter Fidler passed through the area in 1793, he noted the “ground is entirely covered by buffalo and appears quite black... I am sure there was some millions in sight.”

Turning east on secondary **Highway 575**, the **Dinosaur Trail** passes Ghostpine Creek and then Kneehills Creek. The reason these creeks are much smaller than their containing valleys is the latter are remnant fingers of the immense Glacial Lake

Drumheller, which formed as a huge ice sheet began melting some 15,000 years ago and then carved these channels when its floodwaters were finally released.

In 1884, Joseph Tyrrell made the first discovery of an *Albertosaurus* skull along Kneehills Creek, only a few kilometres from the museum bearing his name. But as the 26-year-old head of a geological survey, he was perhaps more interested in the extensive coal deposits he discovered in the valley.

Still, it was a quarter century before coal's vast potential was finally realized in the valley, thanks to the arrival of the Canadian National Railway. In 1911, Jesse Gouge and G.N. Coyle, with a loan from the latter's mother, opened the area's first coal mine in Newcastle, which you pass through on the outskirts of Drumheller. Within a year, nine other mines had opened in a valley previously populated only by scattered ranches, and Drumheller was soon one of the fastest-growing towns in North America.

Over the next seven decades, a total of 139 coal mines opened and closed in the Drumheller Valley. It was an economic rollercoaster ride, with massive cutbacks during the 1930s followed by a post-war boom and the ultimate death knell – the discovery in Alberta of large quantities of oil and gas, which largely replaced the need for coal. To learn more about this fascinating history, spend a day exploring the many coal-related attractions along the **Hoodoo Trail**.

SIDE TRIP

17 km southwest of Drumheller on Highway 9, Horseshoe Canyon is an isolated pocket of prairie badlands, well removed from the Red Deer River Valley, where most of these distinctive landforms are found. Yet the view of this small canyon's sharply-eroded rock layers is as stunning as anything found in the Drumheller Valley. Note the narrow coulee that drains at the back of the canyon.



Hoodoo Trail

This 24 km route journeys southeast from Drumheller through a rich vein of the valley's coal-mining past. It takes you across narrow bridges to mine scars and a ghost town and guides you to a national historic site that splendidly preserves much of the valley's last coal mine. Along the way, stop for tea at a school museum and amble around fantastically-eroded hoodoos.

From its intersection with Highway 9 in Drumheller, follow **Highway 10** southeast to the lovely town of Rosedale, which developed around a candy and fruit store established in 1918 by a returning World War I soldier. Follow signs through the town to the reconstructed, 117-metre Rosedale Suspension Bridge, which takes you on foot across the Red Deer River to

the former Star coal mining site. If this slightly swaying bridge makes you feel unsteady, imagine what the twice-daily passage was like for early coal miners, who at first crossed in rowboats and later were slung across on an aerial cable system.


These crossings were the least of the occupational hazards faced by the mostly-immigrant miners at the Star and adjacent Rosedale mines. Often working long hours for poor pay and sleeping fifty to a building on small cots lined with straw mattresses, many of them joined the newly-formed One Big Union in 1919. After mine owners refused to recognize the union and hired returning war veterans to replace the workers, a nasty strike broke out, which included the tarring and feathering of one union leader. The violence was limited only by police intervention and the eventual dismissal of the replacement workers.



Dare to teeter across the Rosedale Suspension Bridge

On the far side of the bridge, you can explore the remains of the Star mine, much of which was buried by the collapse of an unstable hillside shortly after the

mine closed in 1957. Note the places where the hillside deposits of shale are brick red in colour, a telltale sign that gases in the underlying coal seam have ignited and burned. Such baked shale spots are evident throughout the valley, and a few continue to burn.

 Throughout the Drumheller Valley you can see red piles of shale near mine entrances. These piles frequently burn for years, often without any smoke, so take care to stay off all slag heaps. Similarly, stay clear of old coal mine entrances and abandoned buildings and equipment, all of which can pose risk of injury.

From Rosedale, it's well worth taking a short detour southwest on secondary **Highway 10X** to the ghost town of Wayne. The road follows the narrow, twisting Rosebud River Valley, crossing eleven one-way bridges in a span of just 7 km. In the 1920s and '30s, six coal mines in this valley supported a population of nearly 2,000 people, more than the town of Drumheller. But like many of the region's mining communities, prosperity was short lived. By the late 1950s, Wayne was in a tailspin from which it never recovered. The moonshine distilleries that operated in the surrounding hills during Prohibition in Alberta (1916-1923) have also long disappeared, but you can still taste a bit of the outlaw experience by visiting Wayne's colourful Last Chance Saloon.

Back on **Highway 10**, continue southeast to the Hoodoos Recreation Area for a

close look at the strange rock pillars on the lower hillside. A European variation of the word voodoo, hoodoos are formed when pieces of harder caprock protect softer underlying rocks from erosion, leaving a free-standing column on a thick shale base. Once the caprock falls, wind and water will wear away the exposed pillar, perhaps in a few hundred years. In the meantime, you can help preserve these delicate structures by staying on the paths that encircle them.

SIDE TRIP

After you have explored the confines on the Red Deer River Valley, this tour takes you northeast on secondary Highway 854 to the lofty Hand Hills. At their peak atop Mother Mountain, these hills rise nearly 185 metres above the surrounding, rolling prairie, making them the second-highest point between the Canadian Rockies and the East Coast. At the base of the hills is the lovely village of Delia, which features an old, wind-powered grist mill and a 1912 lumber building that's been transformed into a delightful tea house and restaurant.

A short distance further down the **Hoodoo Trail** is the town of East Coulee. Drop into the East Coulee School Museum, a provincial historic resource still heated by coal. After a snack in the Willow Tea Room, walk across a creaking wooden floor to a 1930s-era classroom. Take a seat in an old desk and imagine the plight of an early teacher who, besides instructing grades one through twelve, had to provide a hot winter's lunch for students and help them harness their horses – all for \$35 a month.

As you drive around the attractive community of East Coulee, the relative prosperity is evident in well-kept homes, abundant gardens and large shade trees. Yet the town almost didn't survive its early years. The initial hurdle was its isolation from the rest of the Drumheller Valley because of the high cost of building a spur railway line to its primary coal mine. Soon after that line was built, in the late 1920s, the mine closed because of wet coal seams, threatening East Coulee's existence until the nearby Atlas Coal Mine opened in 1936. If you look carefully through a gap in the trees, you can see an abandoned truss bridge, which crossed the river to the mine and was uniquely shared by trains and passenger vehicles.

East Coulee was a boom town in the 1940s, reaching a population of 3,800 and boasting four hotels, a pool hall, a movie theatre and even a Hungarian cultural centre. But

SIDE TRIP

The Drumheller Valley's badlands don't officially end at East Coulee. For a charming extension of the Hoodoo Trail, continue about 10 km southeast on secondary Highway 570 to the picturesque hamlet of Dorothy. A semi-ghost town, Dorothy's scattered remaining homes are intermingled in the prairie grasses with two abandoned but still majestic historic churches and a magnificent old grain elevator, and increasing rarity in rural Alberta. Cross the Red Deer River on a steel bridge and drive south up the hill on secondary Highway 848 for a commanding view of the valley. Halfway up the hill, watch for nesting bluebirds in colourful roadside boxes.

with the eventual demise of the valley's coal industry – supplanted by oil and gas for heating homes and running trains – the town's citizenry dwindled to fewer than 200 people, which today include some retired miners or their widows.

From East Coulee, return to **Highway 10** and cross a bridge to reach the Atlas Coal Mine, declared a national historic site in 2002. Arguably the most modern and efficient mine in the Drumheller Valley, it ultimately could not escape the fate of all the others. Ceasing operations in 1979, it officially closed its doors in 1984, ending the 73-year reign of coal in the valley.

The good news is the Atlas preserves the most complete plains coal mine plant in Canada, allowing you to relive the era when coal was king. It's well worth spending a couple of hours touring its old buildings (including a miner's shack built of mud, straw and manure) and exhibits of mining equipment. The highlight of any visit is taking a guided tour to the top of Canada's last standing wooden coal tipple, which at eight stories remains the highest building in the Drumheller Valley.

The tipple tour starts with a short, teeth-rattling "mantrip" ride on a string of little coal cars pulled by a battery-powered locomotive. Imagine being one of a dozen miners crammed into one of these open-air cars, hunched over for the better part of an hour so you didn't whack your head as the train pulled you deep into the mine. Even the ponies, which for many years worked underground hauling carts of coal from the mine face, wore little helmets.



Take a mantrip ride at the Atlas Coal Mine

Once your short, above-ground ride is over, it's a steady climb on foot through the creaky tippie to its dusty top. Here is where men, working in deafening and soot-choking conditions, sorted coal from the mine into various sizes for loading onto trains bound for distant markets. The mines of the Drumheller Valley were relatively safe, suffering only a fraction of the fatalities of those in the Crowsnest Pass in southwestern Alberta. Still, accidents did happen, and if you take one of the highly-popular ghost tours at the Atlas Coal

Mine, you, too, might spot a spectral miner or grieving widow roaming the mine site.

The old mine entrance, marked by a flag, is located halfway up the hill behind the tippie. A short walk up to the entrance, now closed, takes you through one million years of geological history to a million-dollar view of the Drumheller Valley.

From the Atlas Coal Mine, retrace your route along the **Hoodoo Trail** to Drumheller. The town is named after Samuel Drumheller, an American entrepreneur who opened one of the valley's early coal mines. He bought land here from pioneer homesteader Thomas Greentree and apparently won a coin toss between the two for the fledgling town's naming rights. Drumheller has grown from a population of 50 in 1911 to a vibrant

community of 8,000 today. It's well worth taking the time to explore its many attractions.

SIDE TRIP

For a unique slice of prairie pioneer life, take an excursion north of Drumheller on Highway 9 for 22 km and then west for 5 km on Highway 27 to reach the Morrin Sod House and Historical Park. Step inside the reconstruction of a dirt-floored sod house and notice how the thick earth walls provide surprising insulation from the summer's heat. If you're in luck, hot bread might be emerging from the house's clay oven. From Morrin, drive 13 km north to the ghost town of Rowley on a gravel road or alternatively, return to Highway 9/56 and follow it north to the Rowley turnoff. Rowley's remaining residents have restored several pioneer buildings and purchased the local grain elevators. Local people drive a fair distance to Rowley the last Saturday of each month for pizza night, held at Sam's Saloon, which features swinging doors, a long bar top and mounted bison heads.



Drumheller

If one word describes all that Drumheller has to offer, it's eclectic. A quick list of the town's attractions includes man-made dinosaurs big and small, water parks, a live reptile museum, a badlands amphitheatre, a statue of Jesus, riverside walks and picnics, and good food and shopping.

In the heart of downtown Drumheller, look up, look way up into the toothy jaws of the World's Largest Dinosaur. A 26-metre-high, man-made *Tyrannosaurus rex*, it became an instant landmark when erected beside the Tourist Information Centre in 2000. Clamber onto its giant toes for a photo or ascend a flight of stairs into its gaping mouth for a unique view of the town centre and the Red Deer River.

Within the dinosaur's large shadow are the Rotary Spray Park and the waterslide at the Aquaplex, both popular family



Splash under the shadow of the world's largest dinosaur in Drumheller

diversions on a typically hot summer's day. You can also cool off by going on a shady walk, bicycle ride or picnic along the Red Deer River or by ducking into a nearby, locally-owned restaurant or tea house for lunch, a scoop of ice cream or a slice of freshly-baked pie.

While in the Tourist Information Centre, pick up a downtown walking tour brochure, which guides you past a number of nearby historic buildings, as well as some interesting shops and galleries. As you roam the downtown streets, see how many brilliantly-

painted, whimsical "cementosauruses" you can spot. These concrete creations once graced a hillside amusement park and have now been scattered throughout the town. Another unique Drumheller attraction is Reptile World, Canada's largest live reptile display, where you can view cobra and anaconda snakes, gila monsters and crocodiles, plus get introduced to friendly boa constrictors.

On a hillside above the west end of Drumheller, visit the site of the Canadian Badlands Passion Play,

which each July attracts thousands of spectators to this unique badlands amphitheatre. It's just one of Drumheller's year-round events, ranging from Beethoven in the Badlands to a rodeo and a chuckwagon derby. Not far from the Passion Play amphitheatre is another town landmark, a large white statue of Jesus that has overlooked the valley since the early 1930s.

As you'll discover, there's lots to see and do in a small stretch of the Drumheller Valley. It's well worth coming back for more visits to this stunning landscape.



Roar from the mouth of the world's largest dinosaur



Stop in at the East Coulee School Museum



Visit hoodoos near Drumheller

From a historical wooden tipple to ancient dinosaur bone beds, this touring route has given you a taste of the Canadian Badlands. More discoveries await in the Canadian Badlands. You can canoe the Milk River, trail ride in Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park, tour ancient petroglyphs at Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, and take in local rodeos, farmers' markets and festivals in communities across the region. To plan your next Canadian Badlands experience, go to canadianbadlands.com or contact Travel Alberta at **1-800-ALBERTA**.