

Drumheller, Alberta, Canada area

Table of Contents

General Information.....	1
Campgrounds	2
Dinosaur RV Park.....	2
Dinosaur Provincial Park.....	2
Places	3
Royal Tyrell Museum	3
Willow Creek Hoodoos	4
Atlas Coal Mine	6
Rosedale Suspension Bridge	7
Event	8
Passion Play	8
Hikes	9
Fossil Hunt hike	9
Badlands Trail.....	10
Drive.....	14

General Information

A website - <https://traveldrumheller.com/>

Drumheller is northeast of Calgary about 100 miles. It is world famous for dinosaurs and other fossils – if you enjoy these or interested in prehistoric history, geology, and other topics. The area is referred to the Canadian Badlands.

Joseph Tyrrell found coal in 1884 and mining began in 1911. It became a city in 1930. This area has vast amounts of coal (no mining currently) and petroleum. With the settlers and mining, people found some fossils and has grown significantly.

This area was covered by an Ice Field about 10,000 years ago. The fossils in this area go back 75 million years ago. Think of 75 million years of earth sediment layers being stripped away with the ice movement and water erosion to create the area carved valleys hundreds of miles long exposing a infinitesimal fraction of dinosaurs and other types of fossils. Even today with continued erosion and active dig sites, new items are found.



Driving to Dinosaur Provincial Park is a hundred miles away and still has massive fossil areas.

Campgrounds

There are numerous hotels and RV parks in the area. We stayed at these 2.

Dinosaur RV Park

It is a private park just northwest of town. We spent 1 night here. There are a lot of sites, shade and various amenities. We enjoyed staying here. As with many campgrounds, there is a cost to take a shower and do laundry.

Dinosaur Provincial Park

We drove about 100 miles east to this park. We spent 2 nights here. This park has a relationship with the Royal Tyrell Museum. There are various types of guided tours that give you access to public off-limit areas – almost all of the area around the park.



It is like a mini Grand Canyon. The surrounding land is flat farm land and then drops into the Red Deer River valley. It drops up to 325 feet and the park is about 20,000 acres.

Here is the surrounding flat area near the valley.



Here is the valley area.



The south loop camp sites.



Places

Royal Tyrell Museum

Their website - <https://tyrellmuseum.com/>

The museum has incredible information about this area relating to numerous types of fossils. There is a great viewing spot taking stairs to a hill top. There are several trails you can walk and some allow bikes.

They have lots of RV parking, following the road past the building and going down a road to the right. They had a large cart shuttle available to drive to the entrance or you walk up some stairs.

The playground has a dinosaur fossil (not real) that kids can pretend to excavate.



One of the most common dinosaurs in this area is the Albertosaurus Sarcophagus. It is a cousin to the Tyrannosaurus.

Here is a picture of it and its foot.



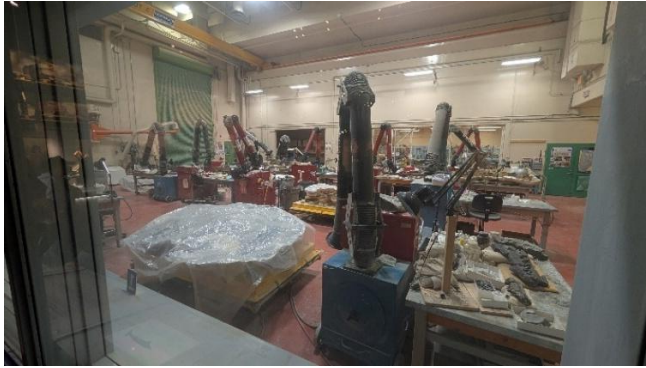
This is the most complete skull of a Triceratops in Canada.



Full scale of a juvenile Gorgosaurus.



There is a working lab inside the museum.



Here is a lady inside the exhibit showing how work is done.



This is an Edmontosaurus femur bone still embedded in rock. It looks like a piece of tree branch. The second picture shows where it is located (red circle). Only viewable on a guided tour.



We also saw an 18 inch bone (do not remember what it is) of an Albertosaurus.

Willow Creek Hoodoos

A website is https://tyrrellmuseum.com/whats_on/off_site_Experiences/hoodoos

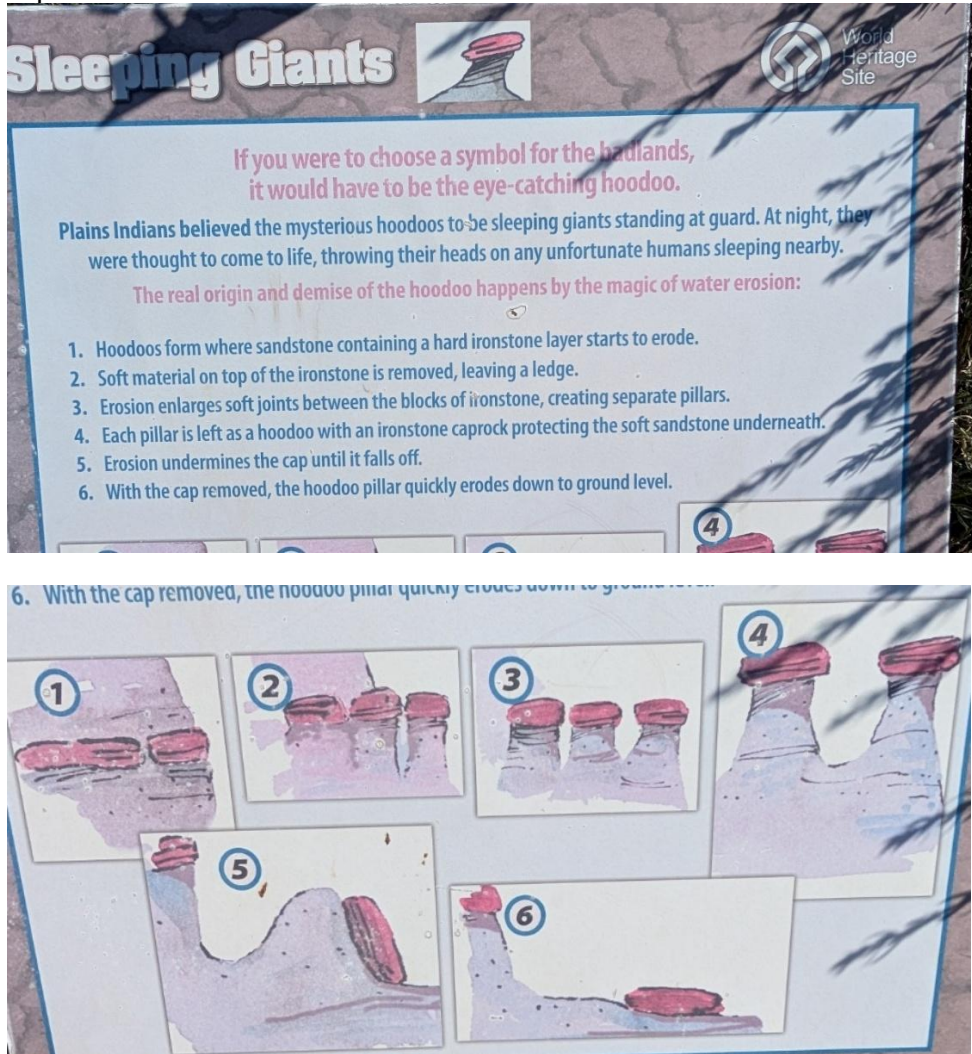
There are some decent size hoodoos in this area about 10 miles east of Drumheller. Some are 16 – 23 feet tall.



A hoodoo is geologic formation with a capstone of a harder rock over softer rock. These are found here and down through Montana, Wyoming, Utah and as far south as Arizona. They also exist in other places around the world.

Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah has one of the largest concentrations and some of the largest in the world. Some are up to 200 feet high.

Here is a picture with some hoodoo information.



Dale climbed to the top of the hill. It had some difficult and narrow sections and was very cautious coming down with all the loose materials.



Atlas Coal Mine

Their website - <https://atlascoalmine.ab.ca/>

There were originally 139 coal mines in the area. This mine was active from 1936 until 1987. It is now a National Historic Site and has the ONLY remaining wooden “tipple” in Canada, the last of thousands. It is about 15 miles east of Drumheller – down from the Suspension Bridge and Hoodoos.

This shows the coal coming out of the mine down a conveyer into the Junction building (not seen). There is preliminary sorting with the larger pieces going into rail cars.



The mine conveyer goes into the junction building and up the conveyer into the tipple. There is additional sorting and dropping into bins for loading into trucks or rail cars.

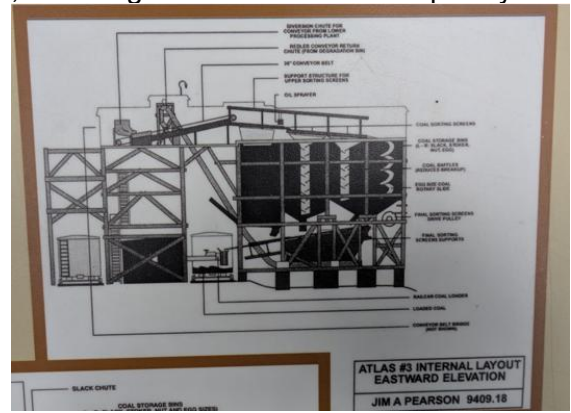
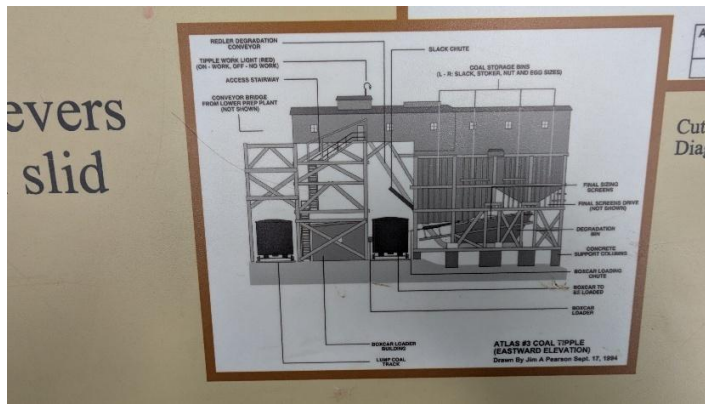


There is a tour going inside some of the buildings.

This comes down from the mine into the junction building. This goes up into the tipple.



Sorry some of the pictures are too small to read the information, but still give an idea of the complexity.



There is a tour to ride on an original rail train and cars. The train operator has a challenge keeping it running because the historic site prevents the use of modern parts. The tour provides a lot of information about the life of the miners.



One surprise was the start of wearing helmets in the 1950's and the primary materials were Bakelite (ash) and Formaldehyde – nasty stuff.

Rosedale Suspension Bridge

This is the old Star Coal Mine bridge built in 1931 and rebuilt in 1958. It is 380 feet long going over the Red Deer River. It was closed for 4 years due to support concerns and reopened in 2014.



View down the bridge. Interesting having open floor – some people will find unnerving.



Here is part of the support structure.



There are other places to visit.

- East Coulee School Museum – preserved building showing the history of early local education
- Rafting / Canoe expeditions

Event

Passion Play

This is an outdoor play about Jesus Christ finding the disciples and the crucifixion. There were about 70 actors involved and this is their 30th season. It starts at 4:00pm and over about 7:00pm with a 20 minute intermission.

It is an incredible show with the acting, hearing them talk, the sets and costumes, where you see them pop-up, and more. It is well worth the trip if in the Calgary or Edmonton area in July.

The website - <https://badlandsamp.com/>

It is at the Drumheller Amphitheater on 400 acres. It is performed 8 times in July 2025 on 3 weekends. One of our biggest surprises was performers on the top of the hills WAY in the background, but do not see anyone walking up there. At times we see performers behind us.

Video and picture taking during the performance is not allowed – sorry no visuals.

Here is a picture showing the actors after the performance. The picture does not show more sets to the right.



The complex is very large with 2,500 seats. **RECOMMEND** bringing something to sit on the wooden benches. Check the weather forecast and have a hat, maybe long sleeves and sunscreen because of the sun and maybe a light rain jacket if it rains - umbrellas are not allowed. **CONSIDER** bringing something to eat and drink – there are concessions with chips, candy, ice cream and drinks. There is lots of parking including RVs – no overnight.

Besides this play, they offer many other performances, guided hikes, and a 14,000 square foot event space.

Hikes

Alberta laws PROHIBIT disturbing anything on the ground in potential fossil areas (unless they are already loose). Absolutely no digging or removing anything (no souvenirs of any kind). Inside Provincial Parks, you cannot remove anything including a simple rock. To move or dig something in the ground requires a permit and a qualified person. Also, you must stay on actual paths, not walking on dirt or rock areas.

There is one exception to removing something. If you are on public or private (with permission) land, it can be removed and **MUST stay in Alberta. It is still owned by the government so you cannot sell or trade it or remove it from Alberta.**

Fines can be up to \$50,000 and a year in jail.

Fossil Hunt hike

This is a guided hike at the Royal Tyrell Museum. There is a small cost and Ben was our guide who is a wealth of information.

The hike followed a paved up and down path. With a guide, there are some spots we could go to.

The group stopped at a spot where we could look for dinosaurs, petrified wood and other interesting items. Several people found something and Ben confirmed or said what it was. There was one item he was going to come back to investigate further.

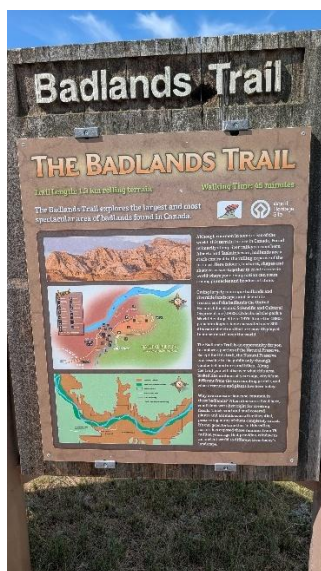
Here is a view.



Badlands Trail

This trail is in Dinosaur Provincial Park. There is a one-way scenic drive. Drive a little way to a parking area for this trail.

We rode our bikes to this trail and then around the loop. The trail is an easy 0.9 mile loop with 101 foot elevation. Most is packed gravel and sediment. There are a couple short steep walks and a set of stairs near the loop section.



Here are some pictures.

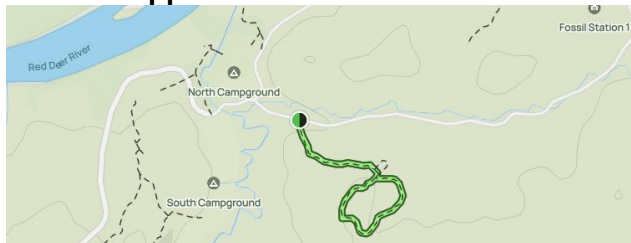
Softer sediment with hoodoos.



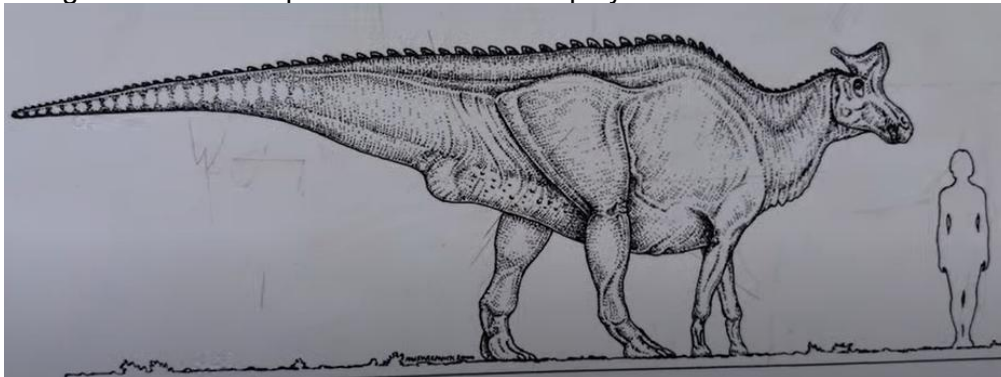
Larger rocks / boulders



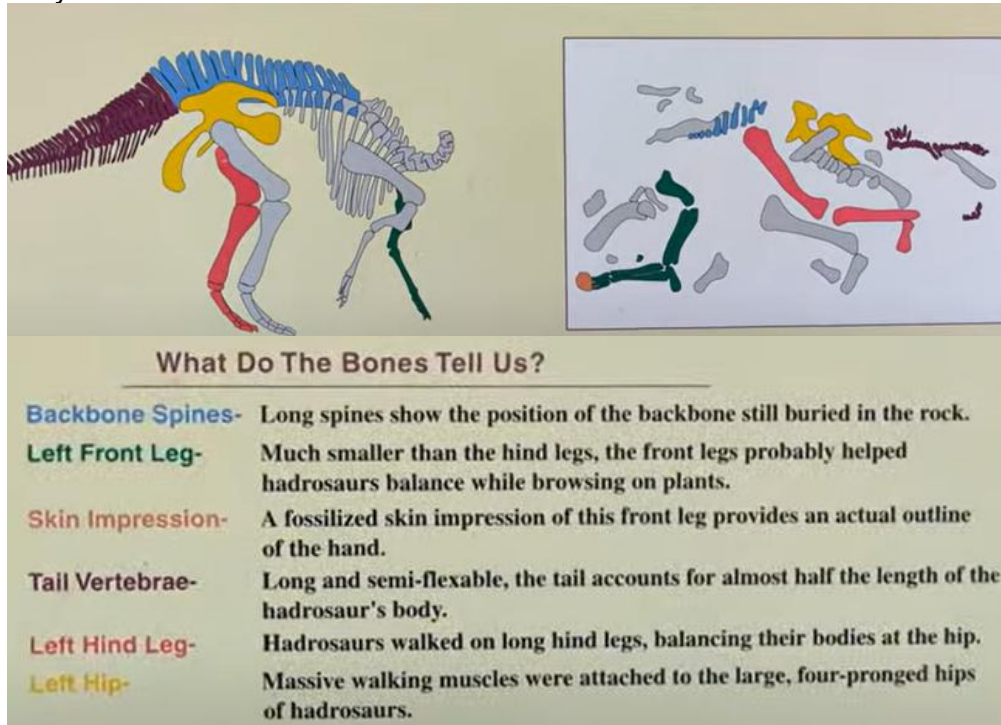
AllTrails App



Along the 1.8 mile loop drive are 2 fossil displays. The first shows a Hadrosaur.



Here the layout of the fossils.

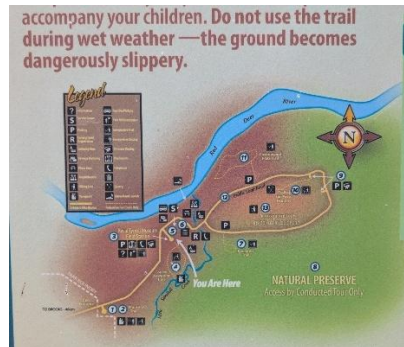


The second shows a Centrosaurus as it looks during an excavation with the typical items.

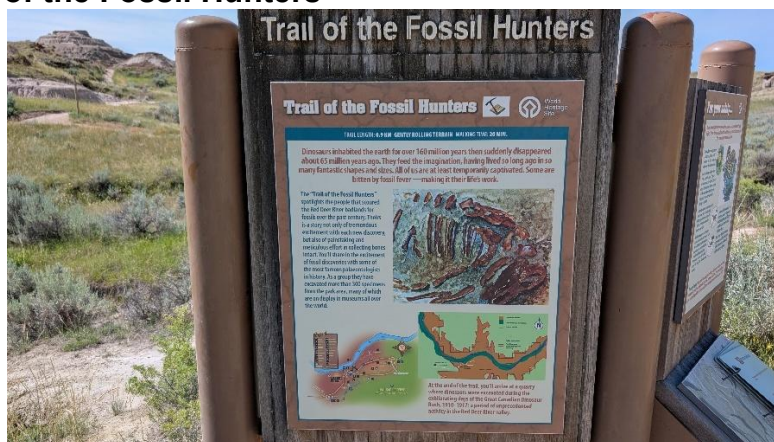


There are other trails around the campground and visitor center we did not do.

Coulee Viewport Trail



Trail of the Fossil Hunters



Cottonwood Flats Trail



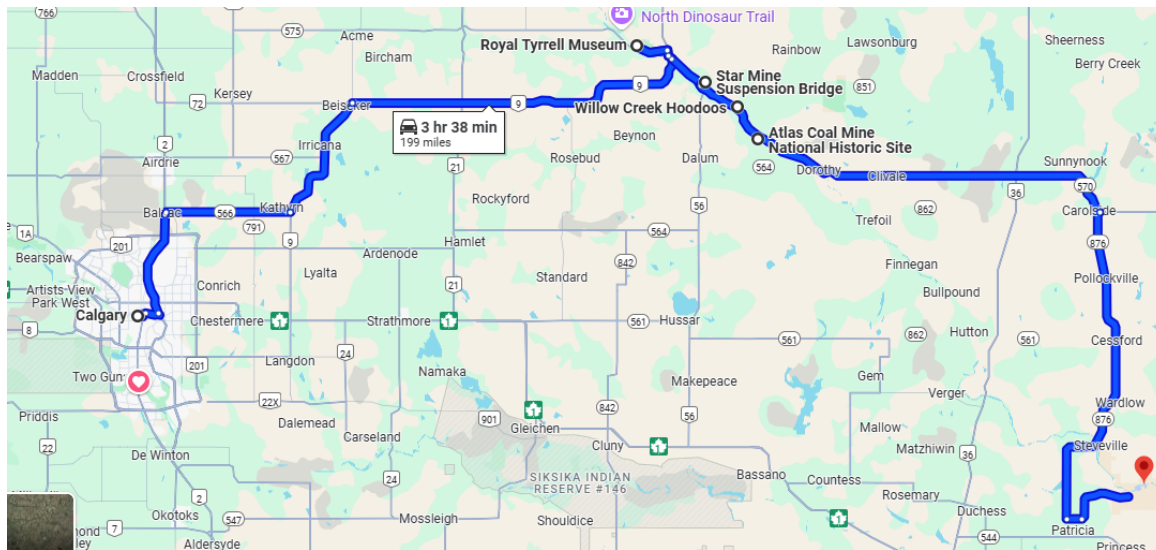
Drive

We drove from Calgary to Drumheller taking a more scenic and shorter route than going down Hwy 1 (Trans-Canada). Near Calgary are rolling hills, then it became flatter, then down into the Drumheller valley. We arrived mid morning to visit several places.

The next day we drove to Dinosaur Provincial Park passing the Suspension Bridge, Willow Creek Hoodoos and Atlas Coal Mine. If you drove this overall route, you could stop at these 3 places while driving to the Park.

The Park is off Hwy 876. The road to the Park is 10 miles and dead ends.

FYI – Dale personal note – I was born in Calgary, my mom and 2 aunts and uncles' families were raised on farms southwest of Rockford and I spent a summer working on a farm near Rosebud.



The return to Calgary using Hwy 550 then multiple highways to Hwy 22X.

