

The Canadian Prairies: Dinosaurs And One House Towns

London-Karen Dabrowska

Drumheller in the heart of Alberta, Canada's richest province, has over 50 tourist attractions in a 100 square kilometer area. They include the Hoodoo's, strange sandstone formations which are older than Egypt's pyramids, 11 single-lane bridges in six kilometers listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the shortest distance with the most bridges, wild west towns of Wayne and Rowley where the past is alive and well and of course dinosaurs.

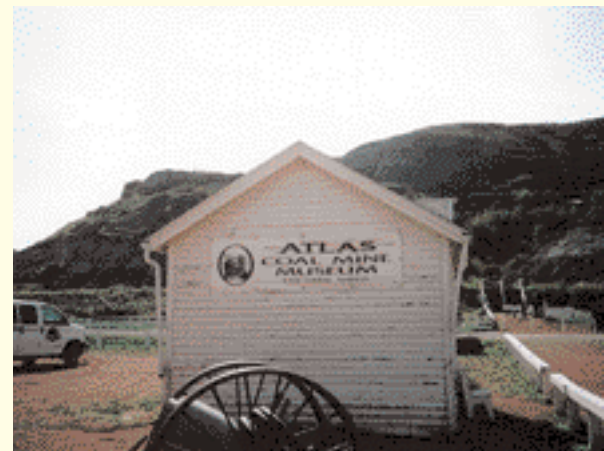
The area is known as the world's dinosaur capital. When the ancient glaciers melted they left behind a valley and wind and water erosion exposed magnificent fossil beds. But the residents were not content to leave anything to the imagination: The Drumheller Visitors Centre is flanked by a 26 meter statue of tyrannosaurus rex- four times as big as the creature which walked the earth 64 million years ago. Smaller dinosaurs stand outside supermarkets and on street corners. There are 50 life-size dinosaur skeletons in the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology - the world's largest dinosaur museum. The Badlands Historical Centre has a more modest collection including a 10 meter-long skeleton of an edmontosaurus. The town's shops sell fossils and dinosaur bones priced

from ten dollars upwards. The best touristy specimens are in The Fossil Shop run by a collector who has devoted his life to traveling the world in search of fossils. Last year Pat Mulgrew set up Wild West Jurassic Tours after retiring from the prison service where he worked for more than 30 years. Wild West Jurassic Tours is one of two tour companies in town. What Pat doesn't know about local history is probably not worth knowing. And if he doesn't know he makes it his business to find out. Maps on sale in London suggest that the Badlands is an area of quaint small towns such as Rose Lynn, Sherness, Dorothy and Sunnynook. The reality on the ground is somewhat different: All that remains of Rose Lynn is an abandoned farm house with a trailer outside. The notice on the door says 'office' but there is no sign of life. Dorothy is a template for one house towns: one or two buildings in various stages of decay. Hardly anyone is living in Sherness. But in Sunnynook there is a warm welcome from Urmah Tory (87) and her husband who have lived in the town for 50 years. Today Sunnynook means Urmah's house, her daughter's house six miles down the road and another house another six miles down the road.



Drumheller: Dinosaurs
on main street

درومهيلر: عاصمة
الديناصورات



Atlas Coal Mine

منجم أطلس للفحم



Dorothy: a template for one-house towns
دوروثي: نموذج مدينة البيت الواحد

In 1910 lawyers, teachers, doctors and other professionals liked the idea of setting up a homestead. But depression and drought dealt a death blow to the thriving little community; most of the people left and the prairies regressed. Today only the Tory family remains. Rowley was once a town which became a museum, with its building preserved for film sets. Bye Bye Blues and many other Westerns were filmed here. Pat can arrange a tour: first there is the railway station and a house which takes visitors back to the beginning of the last century with a calendar from 1923 and numerous household appliances. A life-like moose stands guard. There is a school house with text books and children's' exercise books. The school mistresses' rooms are behind the classroom. The main attraction is the Sam's which serves mouth watering pizzas once a month and can be rented for private functions. Next door is a shop where 'we repair everything' and the church is across the road. The latest movie to be filmed in Rowley was a documentary about the Wright Brothers. Eleven bridges in six kilometers lead to Wayne, where the main attraction is the Rosedeer Hotel. A plaque states that nothing happened here in 1867! The house

specialties are buffalo burgers, steaks and home-made apple pie. It is a place of jam-packed with memorabilia and bullet holes in the ceiling fired in the 1970's as a warning shot to customers who did not want to pay their bill. Throughout the 1920's and 30's 27 different languages were spoken in Wayne where Hungarians, Poles, Ukrainians, Welshmen and other nationalities lived happily together and worked in the mines. The last mine closed in 1957.

The tourists started coming during the 1980's with the opening of the Royal Tyrrell Museum and the area became a major tourist attraction after the first Jurassic Park movie in 1991.

The Rosedeer hotel is run by Fred Dayman who has lived in Wayne most of his life and bought the business from his mother 22 years ago. He worked on the oil rigs and in Vancouver but always came back and predicts a bright future as Wayne has re-invented itself as a wild west tourist attraction. Trail rides are on offer at a nearby ranch run by a prairie seed farmer and cowboy. The wild west adventure continues at the Atlas Coal Mine National Historic Site which offers mine tippie tours. The East Coulee Big School Museum is a 12 room school built during the 1930s where every room relives the history of the days when coal was king. The Willow Tea room serves 20 different varieties of tea.

Big Valley is the town of the steam train. The historic 1912 Canadian Northern Railway standard second-class depot is the main attraction with heritage displays. The Big Valley Historical Society has preserved a traditional wooden cribbed grain elevator which complements the railway station, yard and roundhouse interpretive centre. There is also a pleasant shopping centre with delicious home cooking.

After a day's touring with Pat, dinner in Drumheller is certainly welcome. There is no shortage of many and varied eating places among them the Café Italiano, the Whistling Kettle, the House of Chan and Yavis Family Restaurant. Before saying goodbye to the dinosaurs, the hoodoos and the badlands don't forget to visit the gallery run by the Canadian Badlands Artists' Association with its charming paintings of local landscapes,



Big Valley: the town of the steam train

الوادي الكبير: مدينة القطارات البخارية



Pat Mulgrew

بات مليغرو



Drumheller: the world's dinosaur capital

درومهيللر: عاصمة الديناصورات

rich rolling farmlands, canyons and rock layers dating back to the Late Cretaceous Period just before the demise of the dinosaurs.

Getting there: Transet flies to Calgary. Drumheller is a two hour ride on the Greyhound bus, or rent a car.

Where to Stay: Taste The Past B & B, a 1910 historic home, antique decor. 281, 2nd Street Drumheller. Tel: 001-403-823-5889; www.bbcanada.com/taste; taste@telusplante.net

Tours: Pat Mulgrew, Wild West Jurassic Tours, Tel: 001-403-823-3118; wildwestjurassicstours@telus.net ■