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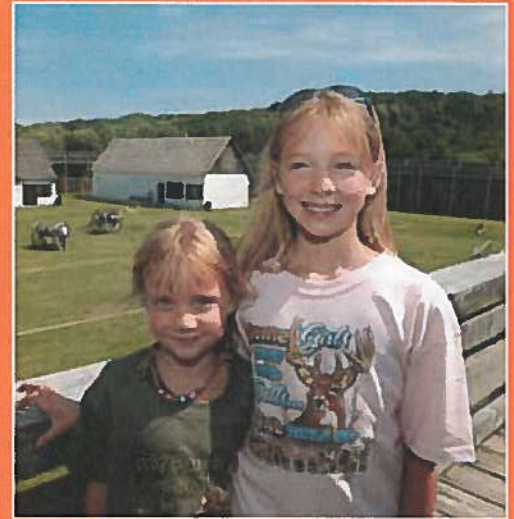
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Travel Itinerary | TRAILS OF 1885

TRIP LENGTH
1 day
260 km

TRAILS OF 1885

A Drive through the Valleys of the Saskatchewan



Fort Carlton Provincial Historic Park. Tourism Saskatchewan/Paul Austing

Relive the dramatic days of 1885 when Métis led by Louis Riel clashed with the Canadian militia. This day trip takes you north from Saskatoon to the areas around the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers, the centre of Métis settlement and site of the main battles between the Métis and government forces.

The Métis had serious grievances with the federal government. Tensions came to a head when the government began surveying land in square mile sections, ignoring the long river-lots the Métis traditionally used. After failed attempts at diplomacy, Riel declared a provisional government at Batoche on March 19, 1885. A week later a skirmish broke out near Duck Lake between a group of Métis and North West Mounted Police (NWMP) backed by civilian volunteers, leaving several dead. The government sent a force of militia from eastern Canada to quell the uprising.

Battle of Tourond's Coulee Fish Creek National Historic Site

Begin the loop tour by travelling 69 km north on Hwy 11 to Rosthern, then approximately 15 km east on Hwy 312 to the junction of Hwys 312 and 225. The Battle of Tourond's Coulee - Fish Creek National Historic Site is located 16 km south of the junction (watch for signs). Interpretive panels tell the story of the first military engagement between Métis forces and the North West Field Force under Major General Frederick Middleton.

It was here on April 24, 1885 that Riel's military leader, Gabriel Dumont, set an ambush for the troops by hiding in the coulees and bushes. Despite being discovered by Middleton's scouts, the Métis were victorious at Tourond's Coulee and managed to hold Middleton's forces off of Batoche for two more weeks. The militia suffered the most casualties in the ensuing battle with 10 dead and more than 40 wounded. Middleton set up camp to wait for reinforcements, while the Métis withdrew to Batoche where they rallied to protect the community against the government's inevitable attack.

To see Middleton's camp, continue north to the next road and head west for 2 km through a steep valley to the clearing near the South Saskatchewan River. A stone cairn and interpretive panels tell more about the encounter, while a headstone marks the graves of three militia men.

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Batoche National Historic Site

Return to Fish Creek Road and continue north along the scenic route, with views over the river and past the imposing Fish Creek Church, long since abandoned. Cross Hwy 312 and continue 11 km north on Hwy 225 to Batoche National Historic Site. Along the way you can still see some of the long narrow river lots established by Métis when they first settled the area.



Fiddlers, Batoche National Historic Site. Tourism Saskatchewan/Greg Huszar

Batoche National Historic Site portrays the larger story of Métis culture and heritage, as well as the events of 1885. The fighting started here on May 9, when Middleton sent the steamship *Northcote* down the river to create a diversion while the militia attacked from the south. The plan failed when ground troops arrived late and the *Northcote* ran into the ferry cable, shearing off its smokestacks. Skirmishes continued over the next two days. On May 12, with Métis forces weakening and running out of ammunition, the militia mounted its final assault and captured the village. Riel was captured, tried and hung for treason on November 16, 1885 after a controversial and widely debated trial held in Regina.

The Visitor Reception Centre has extensive exhibits, audio-visual presentations and other programming that brings the history and culture of the Métis alive. Guides show you through the Church of St. Antoine de Padoue and rectory, both restored to 1896. You can still see the bullet holes above the rectory door made by advancing militia. Explore the ridges and trenches marking Middleton's *zareba* or enclosed camp, rifle pits that Métis used to defend Batoche, the Caron homestead and the archaeological remains of the village. Nine crosses together in the cemetery mark the mass grave of Métis killed on the final assault on Batoche. Gabriel Dumont is also buried here beneath a huge triangular stone overlooking the riverbank.

St. Laurent Shrine (Our Lady of Lourdes)

Just north of Batoche, Hwy 225 curves east. From this corner, continue north along the grid road to the St. Laurent Ferry and cross the South Saskatchewan River. When you leave the ferry, take the north branch of the road which will take you to historic St. Laurent, beautifully situated near the river. Dating to the 1870s, this early Métis settlement is still an important religious site with a magnificent log church as its centrepiece. Inspired by the shrine at Lourdes, France, the St. Laurent Shrine was established in 1879 and is the focus of pilgrimages that take place here every summer. The hillside grotto features a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes dating to 1885. Métis who died during the Duck Lake battle are buried in the cemetery, including Gabriel Dumont's brother, Isidore. The St. Laurent Shrine is open to the public from May to September.

Duck Lake

Continue northwest to the roadside statue on Hwy 11 and turn south for the short drive to Duck Lake, famous for its many large murals painted on town buildings. The murals depict various historic themes including the Carlton Trail, the signing of Treaty 6 and women of 1885-era Batoche. The 1885 conflict is represented with murals of Riel and Dumont and a fallen Métis fighter. The latter is in front of the Duck Lake Regional Interpretive Centre. In recounting the events of 1885, the centre interprets the conflict from the perspectives of the settlers, First Nations and the Métis. Among the many exhibits are NWMP items, Gabriel Dumont's gold watch and a letter written by Louis Riel. Be sure to climb the centre's 24-metre tower for sweeping views of the countryside.

Head a short distance west of town on Hwy 212 to the First Shots Cairn, located at the site where the first shots of the Battle of Duck Lake were fired on March 26, 1885. The battle marked the first skirmish of the North West Resistance. Mounted Police from Fort Carlton, along with civilian volunteers from Prince Albert, were on their way to try to secure the arms and provisions in the Duck Lake store. They were intercepted by the Métis here, and in the fighting that followed, nine volunteers and three Mounties were killed, while the Métis lost five men.

Fort Carlton Provincial Park

Continue 26 km west along Hwy 212 to Fort Carlton Provincial Park on the North Saskatchewan River. Established in 1810, its strategic location at the junction of the river and the overland Carlton Trail made it one of the most important Hudson's Bay Company posts on the prairies. Today, the fort recreates the golden era of the fur trade, although one area deals with the tragic events of 1885. By the early 1880s, Fort Carlton's glory days were all but over. It briefly gained a new life when NWMP were stationed here as the government grew concerned about unrest in the North West. Following the disastrous battle at Duck Lake, the Mounties realized the post could not be defended and retreated to Prince Albert. In the hurried evacuation, the fort caught fire and was destroyed.

Return to Duck Lake and follow Hwy 11 for 86 km south to Saskatoon.

CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Tourism Saskatoon

Information on accommodations, attractions, shopping and dining
101-202 4th Ave N, Saskatoon
P: 306-242-1206 **TF:** 1-800-567-2444
W: www.2sk.ca/com/1000795

Batoche National Historic Site

15 km E of Rosthern on Hwy 312, then
11 km N on Hwy 225
Open: May-Sep, call ahead for
seasonal hours
P: 306-423-6227
W: www.2sk.ca/14060

Battle of Tourond's Coulee – Fish Creek

National Historic Site
Hwy 312 on Fish Creek Rd, along South
Saskatchewan River
Open: May-Sep
P: 306-423-6227
W: www.2sk.ca/14060

St. Laurent Shrine (Our Lady of Lourdes)

8 km directly E of Duck Lake on grid
road; alternate road at statue on Hwy 11,
approximately 5km NE of Duck Lake
Open: May-Sep, call ahead for
seasonal hours
P: 306-467-2212 / 306-467-2060
W: www.2sk.ca/14334

Duck Lake

Information on accommodations,
attractions and services
P: 306-467-2277
W: www.2sk.ca/com/1000237

Duck Lake Regional Interpretive Centre

5 Anderson Ave, Duck Lake
Open: Daily mid-May to Sep, other times
by appointment
P: 306-467-2057 **TF:** 1-866-467-2057
W: www.2sk.ca/15940

Fort Carlton Provincial Historic Park

26 km W of Duck Lake on Hwy 212
Open: May-Sep, call ahead for
seasonal hours
P: 306-467-5205 **TF:** 1-800-205-7070
W: www.2sk.ca/17365

TRAILS OF 1885:

Trails of 1885 commemorates the significant events of the North West Resistance in 1885 – a turbulent and formative time in Canadian history. For more information on 1885 attractions, special events and self-guided itineraries, visit the Trails of 1885 at www.2sk.ca/22489 or call 1-866-467-2057.

Trails of 1885 Geo Quest

Visit www.trailsof1885geocaching.com to learn more about caches at Trails of 1885 sites. Unscramble clues and search out souvenirs on this high-tech treasure hunt.

River Trails of 1885

Take to the waterways to experience 1885 sites from a different vantage. CanoeSki Discovery Company of Saskatoon offers guided canoe treks to 1885 sites along the South Saskatchewan River. For more information, visit www.2sk.ca/14319 or call 306-653-5693.

History and Heroes with Clearwater Canoeing

Join Clearwater Canoeing on a two-night guided canoe trip on the North Saskatchewan River filled with local folklore and history of the fur trade and North West Resistance. For more information, visit www.2sk.ca/21554 or call 306-895-2001.

FERRY INFORMATION:

For information on the operation of ferries, visit Saskatchewan Highways and Infrastructure at www.highways.gov.sk.ca/ferry.

St. Laurent Ferry: 306-423-6520

SPECIAL EVENTS

Batoche:

Back to Batoche Festival, July – www.2sk.ca/17059

St. Laurent Shrine:

Pilgrimage events, selected dates in July, Aug and Sep – www.2sk.ca/14334

Duck Lake:

Beardy's & Okemasis First Nation Annual Powwow, July – www.2sk.ca/com/1000237

Trails of 1885:

Commemorative events, various locations – www.2sk.ca/22489