

Discover Saskatchewan

Have you ever wanted to become an explorer in your own province? Even your own town or city? Join along and discover special spots in Saskatchewan that satisfy your tourist urges.

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Historically Rich - Indian Head

I willingly admit I am not the biggest history buff. Much to my surprise, the history of Indian Head grabbed my interest and held it, resulting in an enjoyable day trip to this harmonious little town. Like most small towns, Indian Head has pretty much one of everything: a grocery store, a museum, a main street. What sets Indian Head apart is how richly these commonplace locations are steeped in history because of the dedication the town has to restore and cherish the old rather than rebuild the new. By the end of my visit, I was hooked.

Where it all started

My first stop, the historic Bell Barn, may be the oldest tourism attraction in Saskatchewan. For 132 years, people have been coming to Indian Head to see the original and recently restored round barn. Built as the first of its kind in the province as part of a corporate farm by Major William R. Bell in 1882, it exists as one of the oldest and historically significant agricultural buildings in Saskatchewan. How cool is that? My excitement about history was sparked.

This guy Bell was truly ahead of his time. This guy had vision. This guy had moxy. Hailing from Ontario, Bell saw a grand opportunity in the area now known as Indian Head to run a corporate farm. In one short year, he built 90 buildings and farmed the area where nothing had existed but grasslands. In order to make the barn secure he opted to utilize the round shape. The space today can be viewed May through September, or during the off season on a personalized tour by the informative tour guide, Jerry Willerth. As well, the loft area can be rented out for meetings and special events. It is truly a special space and perfect to rent out for a party or barn dance.

Find the Bell Barn left off highway 1 onto highway 56 (approx 2 km). To rent/view the Bell barn, contact Jerry Willerth 306-695-2086 / Bellbarn.ca

Continuing Bell's Vision

The real appeal of Indian Head is the progressive attitude and fondness that the town and residents have displayed through their efforts to embrace history. It is clear that they accept revitalization and preservation as solid options as opposed to building new. As the town continues to meet the needs of its ongoing growth, they seem well poised as they determine how best to maintain the historical quality of their town.

Grand Indeed

A good example of this is Grand Avenue. The town's main street takes you through a beautiful residential neighbourhood where

glorious early century homes can be spotted all around and then leads you into the downtown. What is so notable about Indian Head is that there are so many beautiful old homes and buildings that allow you to embrace the nostalgia. Deeper in the residential areas, historical homes turned Bed and Breakfasts can be found. Inspired by these remarkable buildings hailing from another time, I imagined myself staying a while pretending I lived here in days of old. My newfound love for history flared.

Interactive museum

Since I was already knee deep in history, I gave into it some more. I eagerly listened to long time collector and sport enthusiast Ken McCabe tell the stories behind the collection of sports memorabilia that exists in the town's Rural Sports Hall of Fame. I was enveloped in a room of memorabilia that was impressive, varied and expansive.

The name of the museum is misleading. Yes, there are many, many pieces that reflect the rich sport culture found within the province over the past 100 years or so, but there is so much more. What blew me away was the amount of memorabilia this satellite location (of the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame) held that seemed so unique and impressive. From Calvillo signed footballs, and Olympic outfits, to perhaps the first #99 jersey, it was overwhelming to see how much McCabe has been able to collect.

The stories behind the pieces, however, were the best part. If you have the chance to visit this museum and are fortunate enough to have Ken McCabe guide you through it, you will not regret the opportunity.

Ken encourages the rare museum experience of being hands-on by allowing visitors to touch, feel and even try on various items.

Find the Rural Sports Hall of Fame at 4 Dewdney Street.

Even more history

If I wasn't down the history rabbit hole far enough, I also learned that the town office offers a Heritage Walking Tour that will take you through many of the town's residences and buildings providing you with the history behind them. There is also the Indian Head Museum - housed in the historic 1907 Indian Head Fire Hall. The museum features exhibits on two floors in the main Fire Hall Building, in the Back Room (formerly a horse stable), the Museum Yard, the Military Building, the Country Garage, and the Carpenter and Blacksmith shops.

Two non-historic stops to make on Grand Avenue

1. The Indian Head Bakery

Stop in for lunch, pick up a loaf of bread or some fresh dinner buns and leave completely satisfied. At the owner's suggestion, I tried the club sub. It was made with real turkey and real ham (visualize my jaw dropping) – no processed stuff. It was so good! I also made sure to bring home a slew of their fresh cinnamon buns.

2. Yellow Butterfly Boutique & Design

It always surprises me when I come across a town boutique that

has truly different clothing than you can find in the city. Owner and former costume designer, Glenda Wales imports her lines from the west coast while also supporting local Saskatchewan talent. With an eye for the unique and a fondness for eco-friendly, she achieves the goal of making her boutique offerings fun, funky and affordable.

Other cool things about Indian Head

Did you know? The television sitcom "Little Mosque on the Prairie", which ran from 2007-12, was filmed in Indian Head mainly on Grand Avenue (and Toronto).

'Light the Lights' Winter Festival – Celebrate the beginning of winter in late November and see the town decorated for the Christmas season with 15,000 festive lights.

Join their Snowmobile Club - Situated along the #1 Highway in South East Saskatchewan, the Trans Canada Trail Drifters Inc. Snowmobile Club is a non-profit membership corporation. 55 kilometres of Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association designated trail joins the communities of Indian Head, Sintaluta and Wolseley with the snowmobile trails at Grenfell to the East and the Fort Qu'Appelle area. Other winter activities include cross-country skiing and ice fishing on nearby Katepwa Lake.

Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) – A nursery shelterbelt centre that was first set up in 1902 features a picnic area with nature trails along with tree nursery and floral displays. It is currently slated to close but there is opposition to keep that from occurring.



About the writer: Jenn Smith Nelson is a freelance travel writer/blogger/photographer who is a sky lovin', prairie wonderer at heart. With enthusiasm she seeks to explore, capture and promote the beauty of our province and share it with those who are curious to learn more. You can read more about her travel experiences and life in Saskatchewan at www.travellinlady.com.