

# Enjoy a glorious walk in the park

Glenbow is a world away from the city

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FOR NEIGHBOURS

Sometimes the best way to spend a refreshing summer's day is with a walk in the park. Gather a few friends and family and carpool out to Glenbow Ranch, Alberta's newest provincial park that combines an invigorating outing with learning opportunities about local historical ranchlands, fragile ecosystems, and wildlife.

Nestled on the 1A West between Calgary's western city limits and the town of Cochrane, the long winding gravel road to the park's entrance feels a world away from the city but is closer than a trip to the mountains. Originally owned by Eric Harvie, one of Canada's greatest philanthropists, the stunning vistas with mountain backdrops that unfold on arrival make it easy to see why Harvie's family recognized the importance of preserving this area for the appreciation of future generations and arranged the creation of the Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park with the Alberta government.

The Harvie family also established the Glenbow Ranch Park Foundation (GRPF), a trust to help develop park visitor facilities and deliver programming designed to highlight and conserve the area's ranching heritage. Because the park has only been open to the public for one year, Margaret Herriman, Program Coordinator for the GRPF, has had the unusual opportunity to help create and deliver many of the programs currently offered, often in collaboration with her colleague Lisa Corbett, Program Creation Assistant at GRPF. It provides an intriguing combination of Herriman's focus on history and Corbett's interest in ecology.

Herriman's commitment to helping others learn about the area is evident in original kids' programming, ranging from archeology-based activities where kids learn about artifacts already found and resources yet to be discovered to exploring ponds with nets, looking at curious water-hopping insects and watching frog eggs develop. A mutually beneficial partnership between Alberta Parks and the GRPF helps supply equipment used in these programs.

Herriman states the goal of the kids' programs is "to spend all day



Albertans can thank philanthropist Eric Harvie and family for the creation of Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park.

Ben Clarke

outside and hopefully send the kids home tired out from hands on learning."

There are programs for adults, from walking and biking tours through working ranch areas (you will see cattle — and a cow patty or two) to prairie foraging to learn to recognize edible plants. The cost to participate in many of these programs is donation-based or for a reasonable fee. Those who prefer to use the park for an inspiring backdrop while jogging or cycling are always welcome to do so. For those who prefer a footloose and fancy-free pace, self-guided learning is available from signage placed throughout the park.

The park features 26 km of paved and gravel trails with designated biking permitted. The terrain is often gently rolling with several challenging hill sections. A popular option for those with mobility considerations or visitors with limited time is the Golf Cart Tour. Guides drive visitors in golf carts from the very western edge of the park, down in through the valley and out to the most easterly point. Throughout the two-hour journey, guides stop at interpretive sites where visitors gain an appreciation for ranching life, native plants, and

area wildlife. Reservations are recommended.

Interest and attendance in the park and its programs are growing. Herriman notes, "An integral part of the GRPF's success is a strong volunteer base, acting as park stewards to share a respect for the park's conservation efforts." These volunteers are often available for impromptu tours that can be tailored to visitor interests and timelines.

Volunteers also perform important data-gathering and research for the GRPF, such as recording endangered plant life by counting rough fescue, a native grass that used to abundantly cover the prairies that today does not return naturally once removed. Herriman adds most people are surprised to discover our prairie lands are as man-affected as rainforest environments, which directly impacts the health of all surrounding ecosystems.

To ensure your adventure is a comfortable and safe one, Herriman suggests a checklist of drinking water, layered clothing for changing weather conditions including gloves and a sun hat, and a camera to capture the breathtaking landscapes before you. Be sure to pack out what you pack in — including



Ken Stevenson

The Rotary Music and Motion Fall Festival takes place Sept. 15 and 16.

garbage from snack wrappers or disposable beverage containers. If you bring along your canine companion, remember a leash and extra water for him too as it can be a long distance between drinking stops.

If you plan a visit for September 15 and 16, take in the Rotary Music and Motion Fall Festival. Created as a partnership between the GRPF and local Calgary and Area Rotary Clubs, you'll experience music by the Calgary Civic Or-

chestra, a 5-km and 10-km fun run and walk, a half marathon, and an evening under a tent featuring great food and entertainment. The GRPF encourages "kicking up your spurs" — but leaving your high heels at home. Funds raised at these events will support the GRPF and the creation of the Cochrane to Calgary Rotary Trail.

The next time someone suggests getting outside for some fresh country air, you'll know exactly where to take them.