

A Northern Outlook

There's a little rural road in west central Saskatchewan that's every bit as magical as the one that leads to Oz. On the south side of this road, small hay and grain fields occupy the foreground while almost all of Saskatchewan's population and industry lie in the vast reaches beyond.

On the north side of the road, however, are care-free mornings, sun-baked beaches, men without neckties, fire-lit faces, soaring eagles, pine-scented breezes, summer romance, fish as big as a paddle, friendly laughter, lonely loons, ham-and-sand sandwiches, silent canoe rides, tall tales, northern lights, splash fights and dancing under



Lac la Ronge Provincial Park celebrates part of the magnificent Churchill River system, where singing voyageurs once paddled the famous waterway to trade for furs with the Wood Cree. Nowhere else will you find anything to rival the 25-metre Nistowiak Falls, one of the most beautiful spots in Saskatchewan. It's also home to Saskatchewan's oldest building, Holy Trinity Church at Stanley Mission.

Further south, the Prince Albert National Park, the largest protected area in the province, brims with wildlife and also speaks to an important part of our Canadian heritage. Whether it be a trek to Grey Owl's cabin (last home to the world-renowned conservationist of the 1930s), the aspen parkland and fescue grasslands of the free roaming bison, or the boreal forest and waterways where Canada's largest white pelican breeding colony returns each year; every part of the park is an experience into itself.



the moon.

On the north side of the road lies Meadow Lake Provincial Park, two-dozen glistening lakes linked and refreshed by the Waterhen River in a wonderland of relaxation and water-based recreation. But that's just one of more than half a dozen parks that specialize in memories of Saskatchewan's majestic north.

For the initiated, Saskatchewan's north is a frame of mind as well as a region. It actually begins south of the geographic centre of the province where the grain belt gives way to the forest that covers half of Saskatchewan. A lush green land of aspen, white spruce, jack pine, black spruce and tamarack trees, it's a topographically diverse area blessed by thousands upon thousands of clean lakes, rivers and streams.

Black bear, elk, timber wolf, woodland caribou, whitetail deer, cormorant, great blue heron, white pelican, ruby-crowned kinglet and

American redstart reside here. Heavy concentrations of loons and the second-highest density of nesting bald eagles in North America are here as well. It's also home to the indomitable gray jay or whiskey jack, a venturesome and amusing fellow who thinks nothing of snatching food right out from underneath the nose of an inattentive camper.



Prince Albert National Park is a busy and popular four-season destination, offering travellers the opportunities to mix the northern wilderness with the comforts and recreational pursuits of a lakeside resort. The town of Waskesiu, located in the park, provides a broad array of accommodations and seasonal amenities.

Candle Lake and Narrow Hills provincial parks are within a two-hour drive east of Prince Albert National Park, yet each has a distinctive character. Legend has it Candle Lake received its name from the strange, glowing lights that appear on the water at the northern end of the lake. The mysterious lights add charm to this popular park, which is known for having some of the finest beaches and most beautiful sand dunes in Saskatchewan.

Narrow Hills offers breathtaking vistas and outstanding trout fishing. It's home to a cluster of tiny but deep lakes called the Gem Lakes - Jade, Opal, Diamond, Sapphire and Pearl - named for their ability to reflect lustrous blues and greens that almost seem unreal.

So, you see, our yellowbrick road leads to its own version of Emerald City. But then, there's a gem at the end of every road in Saskatchewan.