

EVOLUTION OF NATURE & CULTURE

DAY 1 DEPART UK, ARRIVAL CALGARY

Fly from the UK. Welcome to Calgary, Alberta, and Canada! When you arrive at the Calgary International Airport your Field Instructors will be waiting to meet you. After collecting your belongings you have a chance to call home and exchange money. This afternoon we'll look back into Canada's past. At Heritage Park you step back in time and learn about Calgary's frontier days, exploring a living history landscape that has recreated three different eras from the region's past and populated it with characters in costume. You'll see first-hand what life was like for the fur-traders who explored the region in the 1860s, the pioneers who settled Calgary before the railroad came through in the 1880s, and the townsfolk who lived in the bustling small city that was Calgary in 1910. Afterwards, you head downtown for dinner, then up to the top of the Calgary tower for a commanding view of the city. Then it's off to the University of Calgary where you stay for the night.

DAY 2 & 3 HEAD SMASHED IN BUFFALO JUMP

Leaving the big city behind, our first stop will be the massive glacial erratic known as the Okotoks Rock. Then we are off to Head Smashed In Buffalo Jump, where for the next two days you will study and experience Native American culture in the Porcupine Hills south of Calgary. Living in your own private teepee encampment at one of the most sacred First Nations sites in North America, you learn about their history and traditions as you study medicinal plants and survival skills, play games, and try some traditional foods. Relive the past on a hike past vision quest hill to the drive lanes and see the "aki", left behind from thousands of years of use. These stone cairns helped herd the bison to the cliff, where they met their demise and supported a nation on the plains of Alberta. Through discussions and interactions with Blackfoot people, you also gain insights to their spiritual beliefs, customs, and culture. While here you will stay warm and dry at night under the canopy of your teepee.

DAY 4 DRUMHELLER BADLANDS

After an early breakfast this morning you head north on Highway 22, following the shadow of the Rocky Mountains. We stop at a Hutterite Colony to learn about the Old World traditions that live on in this region of Canada. You'll see how this community works together successfully as they show you their kitchen, school, daycare, farm buildings, and church. Afterwards you head for the Badlands of Drumheller – land of the dinosaurs. When you arrive, you undertake an excursion to learn about the Drumheller Valley and establish a "sense of place." The first stop is the Atlas Coal Mine. Your guides are the granddaughters of some of the men that mined the Atlas - one of the largest coalmines in Canada. You'll get a tour inside the last remaining coal tipple in Canada and then ride one of the old coal trains around the property, learning about how the coal was mined, processed, and transported out of the valley.

This evening you visit the East Coulee School Museum and experience first-hand what it was like to be a student in the 1930's during the Great Depression and enjoy a special "dino-themed" dinner, with Dinosaur Ribs, Pterodactyl Wings, Devonian Reef salad, Mud Flats Jell-O, and Prehistoric Punch. Afterwards, you head to your campsite and roll out your sleeping bag to fall asleep to the calls of wild coyotes under a star-filled sky.

DAY 5 ROYAL TYRRELL MUSEUM

This morning you have breakfast at the camp and then visit a nearby bison paddock. These animals, which can weigh upwards of 2,000 pounds, used to roam the Great Plains of North America by the millions and were relied upon by First Nation people for food, clothing, shelter, tools, and many other things. Driven to the brink of extinction, bison are now making a comeback.

Afterwards, it's time for the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology, the largest dinosaur museum in the world and a world-class facility dedicated to the study of dinosaurs. Interactive displays, murals, and skeletons all help bring the past to life in such galleries as Extreme Theropods, Burgess Shale, Devonian Reef, Dinosaur Hall, Cretaceous Garden, and the Ice Ages.

Tonight you relax at your campsite. Normally the sunsets are spectacular here, and afterwards you can roast marshmallows on the campfire.

DAY 6 BANIFF NATIONAL PARK

Our morning commences as we ride the Banff Gondola, the best way to get an overall view of Banff's landscape. In 8 minutes, the enclosed gondolas lift you 2,257 ft. from the valley floor up to the top of Sulphur Mountain (7,369 ft.). At the top we will take a short Hike on the trails that lead out along the mountain ridges. We continue to Cave and Basin National Historic Site, where the discovery of the hot springs, now preserved at this historic site, spurred the creation of the national park in 1888. During the 1910s, these hot mineral waters, which rise in a limestone cave, were piped into a rather grand natatorium. Although the Cave and Basin springs are no longer open for swimming or soaking, the old pool area and the original cave have been preserved; interpretive displays and films round out the experience. Our day concludes as we take a Lake Minnewanka Boat Tour a popular scenic and wildlife-viewing trip in glassed-in motor cruiser. This is a relaxing experience and features stunning scenery along the glacial lake wedged between two mountain ranges.

DAY 7 JOHNSTON CANYON

Today is a "half and half" day: this morning while half your delegation spends time in Banff calling home, doing laundry, and catching up on their workbooks and journals, the other half hike into Johnston Canyon. After lunch, the groups switch activities.

Johnston Canyon is one of the most beautiful day hikes in Banff National Park. Along the way you encounter Aspen trees with their smooth white bark and green leaves, which contrast with the Lodgepole pine and Douglas fir trees that have rougher brown bark and needles instead of leaves. There are seven waterfalls along your route, the last of which is over 100' high. As you hike, keep an eye out for mountain goats and bighorn sheep along the canyon walls.

Tonight after dinner you have a relaxing soak in the hot springs at the base of Sulphur Mountain while enjoying the setting sun and alpen glow.

DAY 8 WALKING ON A GLACIER

This morning is about glaciers: vast sheets of ice created on the landscape by thousands of years of snow accumulating and compacting. Over time, the sheer size and weight of the glacier causes it to move down slope, making the glacier look like a river of ice coming down the mountain. You get to walk on one of these rivers of ice! Your day begins with a journey to the Columbia Icefields along the Icefields Highway, which is recognized as one of the most scenic roads in the world. This highway will be your best chance to see grizzly bears, mountain goats, cougars, lynx, foxes and sheep. Along the way you'll also have a chance to see Eisenhower Peak and hear the story of how this mountain got its name.

The Columbia Icefields encompass one of the largest accumulations of ice and snow south of the Arctic Circle, covering an area of nearly 200 square miles. The south end is in Banff National Park and the north end (including the Athabasca Glacier) is in Jasper National Park. Once you arrive at the Icefields, you load up in specialized vehicles for a ride on the Athabasca Glacier. Half way up the 3.75-mile long glacier you can get out and run around on the ice, which is hundreds of yards thick. Make sure to bring an empty water bottle so that you can taste some of the purest water available on the planet (it fell from the sky hundreds of years ago)!

Lunch is at the Brewster Lodge located at the foot of the glacier, and then it is time to head back to Banff, making a few stops to see some waterfalls and the powder blue waters of Peyto Lake. In the evening there will be time to stroll through Banff.

DAY 9 DEPART CALGARY

Today we catch an overnight flight back to the UK from Calgary's International Airport.

DAY 10 ARRIVE IN THE UK

Today we will arrive back in the UK.