

Trans Canada Trek Towards UPEI: Saskatchewan

by Rebecca Shorten

Part 3 of 9

I think that Saskatchewan was one of the prettiest provinces I've seen (besides BC, of course). The general image of Saskatchewan is big and flat, lots of wheat, and a big bowl of blue sky overhead. But I didn't see that at all. Sure, along the highway it was flat, but the scenery is constantly changing: long rolling hills, waves of tall grasses, a peppering of small lakes, occasionally a grove of trees along the banks of a creek, and lots of small towns. We drove a really long way over those two days; 565 km the first day and 625 km the second day.

We stopped at Reed Lake to stretch our legs and we saw many interesting birds, including the American pelican, American avocet, black cormorants, snow geese, several kinds of gulls, and other water fowl. I took some pictures of some wild sunflowers in bloom. There were so many grasshoppers and locusts, hundreds of them would scatter at our every step. While we were standing on the lookout at Reed Lake, a train went by and I waved and I think the engineer saw me and pulled the whistle, which kind of was neat.

Our target for the day was the middle of Saskatchewan and I settled on Buffalo Pound Provincial Park. After Reed Lake, we saw further ahead by the highway an old wooden grain elevator, peeling paint and all. It was still being used. I got a great picture with a train passing right behind the building. The train's whistle sang out as it went by. Those grain elevators are slowly being torn down and replaced by newer and more advanced silos, which is too bad. But I suppose they do pose a hazard if they are not being maintained.

Finally, after a long day's drive, we made it to Moose Jaw. We stopped at IGA and got some groceries and headed 20 km N to Buffalo Pound Provincial Park. We had

a nice campsite. It was very quiet there – so quiet you could hear all the insects buzzing around. It sounded like listening through a long paper tube, like the ones Christmas paper comes wrapped on. It was quite eerie. We went to the little buffalo reserve they have there and saw a lone male off in the distance, plus a female and her calf closer by. The calf was the same colour as the dry grass, but a little darker, and very cute. There were also some deer with growing antlers, and on the way back, a porcupine crossed our path. Neither of us had seen a porcupine before; they are huge and deceptively fuzzy looking.

There were more low rolling hills around there with lots of trees, and there happened to be a good one just behind our camp with a trail going straight up. I decided it would be fun if I went to the top and blew some bubbles (childish, I know, but fun!). So I got to the top, barely noticing the wide variety of plants along the way and sat down. I sat on a sharp rock, so I shifted my weight so I was more comfortable. Eventually my friend came up, took my picture and said,

"Did you notice the opuntia?"

"What's that?" Of course I ask.

"A cactus." He says.

(It is more commonly known as prickly pear cactus.) Oh great, it would be just my luck if I'd sat on one. But I figured I would have noticed sitting on a cactus, so I didn't get up. I wasn't finished blowing bubbles. Eventually I got up and looked to make sure it was just a sharp stone I'd sat on. It



was, thank goodness. But my friend noticed the spines sticking out of my shorts on the other side. I had sat on a cactus after all! That'll teach me. Some of the spines had gone right through my shorts and into my skin and I hadn't even noticed.

The next day, the longer day, we spent driving into Manitoba. But first we stopped in Regina. I really liked Regina, I thought it rivals Victoria with its gardens, and all the old buildings. I particularly wanted to stop there because I wanted to see the city where my grandfather was born and raised. We saw the government buildings there, and they were nice, again a lot like the buildings in Victoria. All the streets were lined with big, old trees. I would love to visit Regina again.