GeoCultura

TAKING YOU BEYOND THE LANDSCAPE

The Rockies and Badlands of Alberta, Canada: Dinosaurs and deep time



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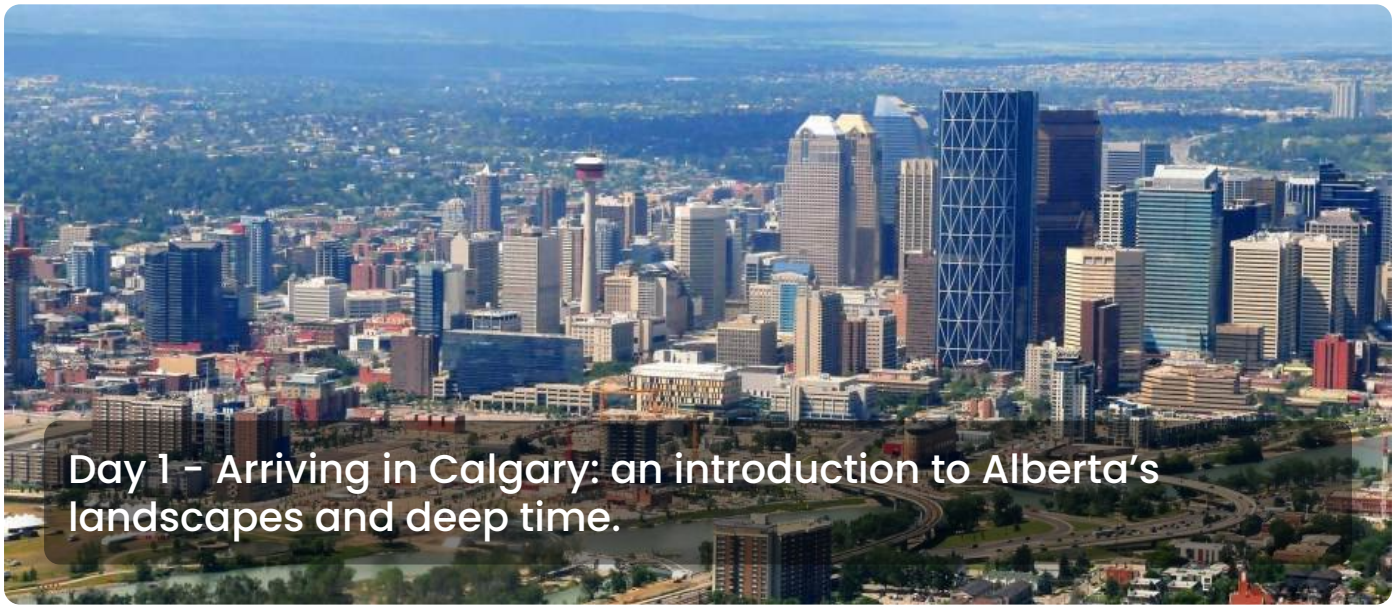
Highlights

- Marvel at the spectacular peaks of the Canadian Rockies and the rugged landscapes of the Badlands, and at the colossal forces that generated and shaped them.
- Walk in three beautiful glacial settings: Lake Louise, Moraine Lake and Grassi Lake.
- Visit two UNESCO World Heritage sites: the glacially carved peaks of the Banff portion of Canadian Rocky Mountain Park and the bone-riddled Badlands of Dinosaur Provincial Park.
- Examine world-class dinosaur fossils at the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology in Drumheller.
- Travel with expert guide Jon Noad, a geologist and working palaeontologist, and discover the fascinating deep-time history behind the landscapes, staying in hotels with dramatic views of the surrounding scenery.
- Price includes all accommodation, all breakfasts and lunches, 4 dinners, all transport and entry fees. Group size 6 to 12.



Day 1 - Arriving in Calgary: an introduction to Alberta's landscapes and deep time.

Begin Your Journey in Calgary with Panoramic Views

Afternoon get-together and introduction

We begin with an afternoon get-together in central Calgary, where the tour leader will introduce the remarkable landscapes of Alberta and the extraordinary story of how they formed.

Visit to Calgary Tower

This will be followed by a visit to the Calgary Tower, where spectacular panoramic views will provide our first opportunity to look beyond the scenery and discover the mountain landscapes that lie ahead.

Group dinner at Calgary Tower

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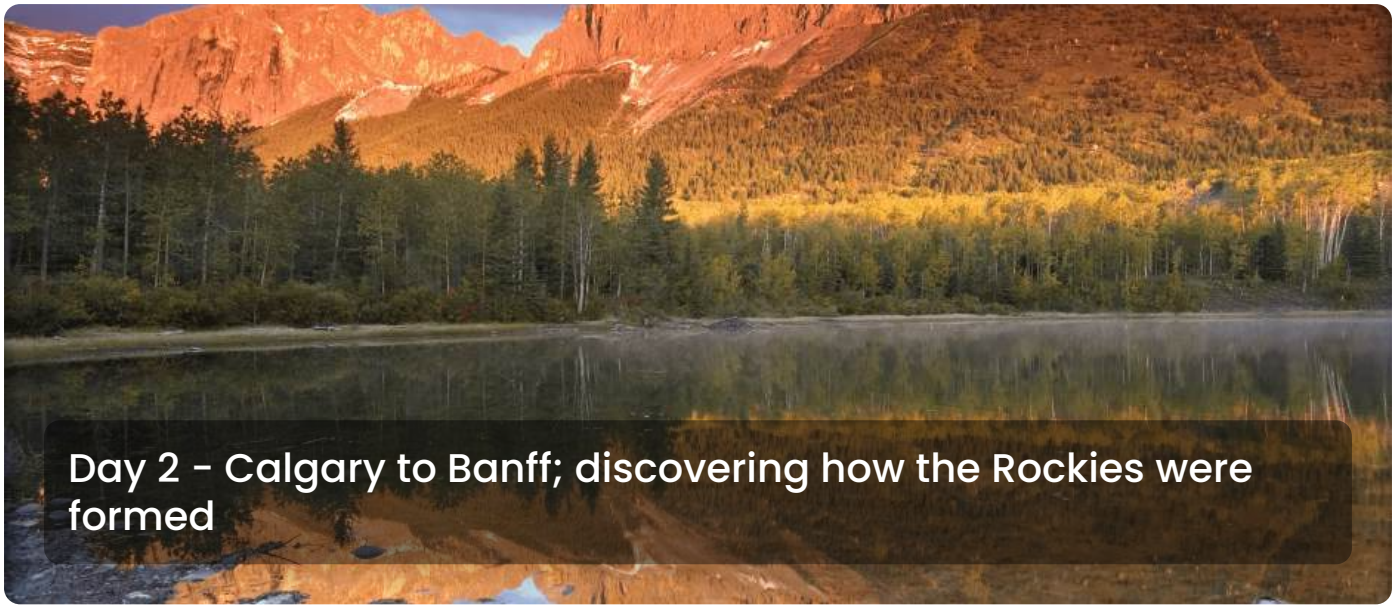
Le Germain Hotel, Calgary

A full-service and classy refuge within walking distance of many restaurants and museums.



Day 2 - Calgary to Banff; discovering how the Rockies were formed

Journey from Calgary to Banff and Explore Mountain Geology

Kananaskis Valley and Mount Kidd: Lewis Thrust Fault

An early departure takes us into the spectacular Kananaskis Valley, where we begin to uncover the immense forces that created the Rocky Mountains. At Mount Kidd, we will explore the remarkable Lewis Thrust Fault, a spectacular example of how enormous slabs of rock were pushed for around 80km from the west, creating the dramatic structures that define the mountain landscape.

Triassic Bone Bed and Rock Exposures

The morning continues with visits to striking rock exposures, including a 240-million-year-old Triassic bone bed, offering glimpses of the ancient environments that existed long before the mountains rose.

McConnell Thrust on Yamnuska Mountain

In the afternoon, we will discover the striking McConnell Thrust on Yamnuska Mountain and examine 70-million-year-old rock layers containing fascinating evidence of ancient rivers, sediments and animal activity, including trace fossils recording trails and burrows.

Scenic Drive to Banff

A final scenic drive takes us to Banff, nestled in the magnificent mountain setting of the Canadian Rockies.

The Kenrick Hotel, Banff

The Kenrick Hotel is a newly renovated boutique stay in the heart of Banff, just steps from downtown and mountain trails. With 70 modern rooms and suites, many with balconies and mountain views, it's designed for comfort and style. Guests can relax at Nora Spa or enjoy Italian-Alpine dishes at The Fat Ox restaurant, all in one stunning mountain setting.



Day 3 - Lake Louise and Moraine Lake; discovering the landscapes shaped by ice

Explore Lake Louise, Moraine Lake, and Banff

Travel along the Icefields Parkway to Lake Louise

Today we travel along the spectacular Icefields Parkway to Lake Louise, surrounded by some of the most magnificent mountain scenery in Canada. Expect breathtaking views of ancient glaciers, waterfalls, towering rock spires and reflective lakes, as we discover how the movement of ice has carved and shaped these remarkable landscapes.

Viewing stop at Banff Meadows

A viewing stop at Banff Meadows provides a spectacular panorama before we continue for a stroll along Lake Louise and a picnic lunch at Moraine Lake, considered by many to be one of the most beautiful lakes in the world.

Stroll along Lake Louise and picnic lunch at Moraine Lake

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Evening in Banff: group meal and exploration

After returning to Banff, there will be a group meal in the evening and an opportunity to discover more about the history of this famous mountain town. We will also explore the origins of its natural hot springs, where heated water emerges along the Sulphur Mountain Thrust Fault, providing another fascinating link between the landscape and the forces beneath it.

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Group dinner in Banff

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Day 4 - Grassi Lakes to Drumheller; from ancient reefs to the Badlands

Explore Canmore, Grassi Lakes, and Drumheller Badlands

Explore landscapes around Canmore: Pekisko Limestone and Mazama Ash Beds

During the morning we explore the remarkable landscapes around Canmore, discovering how to read the evidence preserved in their rocks. We will visit the Pekisko Limestone, named from the Blackfoot word for “rolling hills”, and the Mazama Ash Beds, deposited around 7,600 years ago when a volcanic eruption created Crater Lake in Oregon, 1,500km (900 miles) to the southwest.

Lunch in Canmore and Devonian landscapes

After lunch in Canmore, we will discover 400-million-year-old Devonian landscapes, with fascinating ancient reef-building sponges (stromatoporoid), and enjoy the stunning scenery on a comfortable 2km (1.5 mile) walk at Grassi Lakes.

Drive to Drumheller and Badlands introduction

In the afternoon, a drive of around three hours takes us east towards Drumheller, with stops to introduce the very different landscapes of the Badlands. Here the scenery begins to change dramatically, revealing the story of ancient environments and the processes that have exposed and sculpted these extraordinary formations.

Dinner at bar and restaurant in Wayne

We will dine at a renowned bar and restaurant in Wayne, an outlying part of the town once home to numerous coal mines.

Discover Drumheller history

Drumheller itself has a fascinating history, shaped like much of western Canada by the development of the railway network in the early 1900s. It is Alberta’s largest town by land area, despite having a population of fewer than 10,000 people.

Canalta Jurassic, Drumheller

Close to central Drumheller and near the Royal Tyrell Museum, the hotel is ideally situated to explore the Badlands of Alberta.

Group dinner in Drumheller

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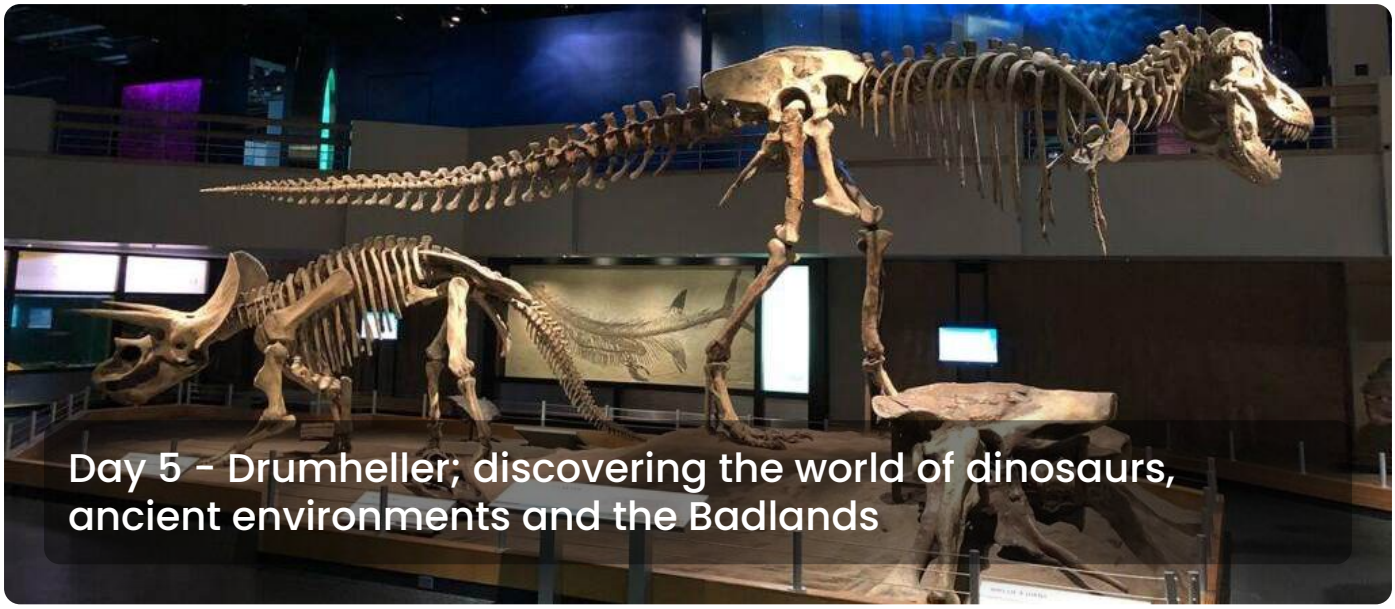

Day 5 - Drumheller; discovering the world of dinosaurs, ancient environments and the Badlands

Explore Drumheller, Royal Tyrrell Museum, and Badlands

Visit to Royal Tyrrell Museum

The day begins with a visit to one of the world's premier dinosaur museums and a highlight of the tour, the Royal Tyrrell Museum. The remarkable collections bring to life the extraordinary world of Alberta 66 million years ago. We will enjoy a talk on fossil preparation and visit the museum's fossil preparation laboratory, discovering how palaeontologists uncover and piece together evidence of prehistoric life, followed by lunch at the museum.

Visit to Horseshoe Canyon and Badlands exploration

The afternoon begins with a visit to Horseshoe Canyon, where spectacular layers of exposed rock create a landscape that has provided a backdrop for numerous films and TV series. These rocks lie just beneath the 66 million year old, Cretaceous-Tertiary, (K/T) boundary, marking the end of the dinosaurs' reign. Further stops will reveal how to read the Badlands landscape, exploring dramatic hoodoos, evidence of ancient river channels and shorelines, enormous fossil tree stumps and remarkable preserved burrows in the wood, all helping us reconstruct the environments that existed here millions of years ago.

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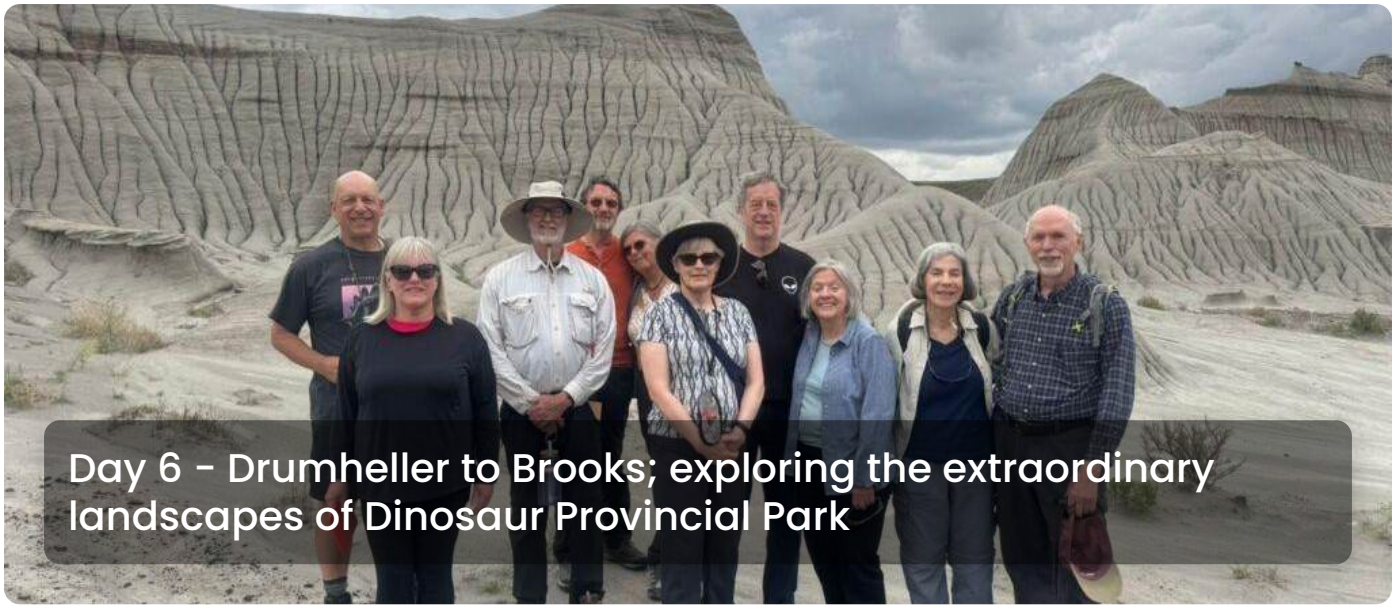

Day 6 - Drumheller to Brooks; exploring the extraordinary landscapes of Dinosaur Provincial Park

Explore Dinosaur Provincial Park and Brooks

Visit to Dinosaur Provincial Park

Today we visit Dinosaur Provincial Park, a World Heritage Site and one of the world's most important areas for dinosaur discoveries. We will spend the day exploring the remarkable Badlands scenery and the locations of some of the most famous dinosaur fossil finds. Our visit follows a 6km (4 mile) walking trail, which is not usually open to the public; although we won't walk its entire length. This offers a special opportunity to immerse ourselves in this extraordinary landscape and discover the story it reveals. A picnic lunch will be provided.

Hadrosaur House and ancient river channel deposits

Our itinerary includes Hadrosaur House, home to an almost complete dinosaur skeleton featuring preserved skin impressions, and visits to ancient river channel deposits. Here the landscape and fossils tell a dramatic story of Cretaceous rivers, sudden flooding and its impact on the animals living there. The extensive cottonwood groves alongside the Red Deer River provide a beautiful contrast to the eroded Badlands terrain and a fitting backdrop to our exploration.

Supper at steak pits in Patricia

Supper will be at the famous steak pits in Patricia (vegetarian options available), where everyone can cook their own meal, before we continue to Brooks.

Canalta Hotel, Brooks

The Canalta has all you need to make the most of your stay: spacious rooms and enjoyable amenities such as a pool and hot tub.



Day 7 - Brooks to Calgary; reflecting on the landscapes and the journey

Return to Calgary and Reflect on Alberta's Wonders

Coach journey from Brooks to Calgary

Departure: Brooks | Destination: Calgary

A two-hour journey returns us to Calgary, arriving around noon. As we travel west, there will be a final opportunity to reflect on the remarkable landscapes we have explored, from the towering peaks of the Rockies to the extraordinary Badlands, and the fascinating story of Earth's history revealed along the way.

End of tour and departure

Guests are then free to return home or continue exploring Alberta.