



FRENCH AND MENNONITE SETTLEMENT

Self-Directed Cycling Tour

Welcome to a Routes on the Red self-directed tour of the Red River Valley. These itineraries guide you through the history and the geography of this beautiful and interesting landscape. Several different Routes on the Red, featuring driving, cycling, walking or canoeing/kayaking, lead you on an exploration of four historical and cultural themes: Fur Trading Routes on the Red; Settler Routes on the Red; Natural and First Nations Routes on the Red; and Art and Cultural Routes on the Red.

The purpose of this route description is to provide information on a self-guided cycling trip. The cycling trip described includes highways, gravel roads and trails. While enjoying yourself, please cycle carefully as you are responsible to ensure your own safety and that any activity is within your ability. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate and up-to-date. However, we are unable to accept responsibility for any inconvenience, loss or injury sustained as a result of anyone relying upon this information.

Just south of Winnipeg, pedal into the landscape patterns of settlement along and near the Red River. Choose a short tour for families and beginners, or turn the cranks on a longer ride of about 50 km. Begin at St. Adolphe, the first of two French settlements that you will visit. Pick up the Crow Wing section of the Trans-Canada Trail, cycling on gravel roads, black earth roads and grassy tracks, on a route similar to that followed by Red River carts. Ride into Niverville, then pause at the

Mennonite Landing site to learn about a different group of settlers in the Red River Valley. Ste. Agathe marks the turn-around point on the longer tour, while it serves as the start and finish on the shorter tour. You'll get views of the Red River and the prairies. As well, you will be riding through farmland most of the day. Please note that part of the trail can be muddy with gumbo clay after rainfall and that there is little shade on much of the route if the weather is hot.

There are two versions of this tour – a shorter route of 16 km, which appears first, and a longer route of just over 50 km is second.

- **For the Short Tour** – start the ride in Ste. Agathe, cycle to Mennonite Landing and back. This ride is on the quietest sections of the highway, and is a chance to also try easy, off-road cycling.
- **For the Long Tour** – start in St. Adolphe and cycle along the Trans Canada Trail en route to Niverville, Mennonite Landing and Ste. Agathe. The second half of this tour overlaps with the Short version. Over half of this route is on unpaved surfaces, and the higher rolling resistance will make cycling more challenging than an equivalent distance on paved road. Several options to shorten the ride are suggested in the text.

There are stores, cafes and restaurants in St. Adolphe, Niverville, and Ste. Agathe. Mennonite Landing is a lovely spot for a picnic if you would like to bring a snack or lunch along with you.

Short Tour:

Explore areas settled by two distinct cultural groups: the French and the Mennonites, both of whom have played an important role in shaping the culture and landscape of the Red River valley. There has been a French presence in Manitoba since the days of the fur trade, but this area was settled in the 1870s with the assistance of the Roman Catholic Church. The Church promoted French settlement in order to strengthen the language rights

granted by the Manitoba Act of 1870. Mennonite settlers arrived in the years between 1874 and 1881 attracted by the Canadian government's offer of land, religious freedom, and exemption from military service.

Begin in Ste. Agathe, which is easily accessed via PTH 75 south of Winnipeg. Park by Cheyenne Park, that is across from the church and a convenience store in Ste. Agathe.

km to next location	DIRECTIONS	Total km
0.0	Before your departure, take the time to explore the memorial in Cheyenne Park that talks about the "Cheyenne" Steamboat.	0.0

Once known as Pointe-à-Grouette (named for a local Métis family), where a ferryboat transported travellers across the Red River, this settlement received the name of Paroisse de Sainte-Agathe in 1876. The ferry continued to operate until 1960, when a bridge was opened to traffic.

Want to know more about the Métis settlement in the Red River Valley? Try Routes on the Red's Métis and the Path to Confederation: self-directed drive & stroll tour.

	From the park head north toward the bridge.	
0.3	Turn right at stop to cross over the Red River.	0.3
1.1	Turn left at stop sign on PR 200.	1.4
2.4	Notice the stone marker on the right commemorating the Century Farm of the Fontaine family	3.8
1.1	Cross Rat River and arrive at the turn off to the Mennonite Landing. Turn left.	4.9
0.2	Arrive at picnic site.	5.1

Mennonite Landing Site: Approximately 7,000 Mennonites came to Manitoba from Russia between 1874 and 1881. They had settled lands in Russia a century earlier after Catherine the Great persuaded them to settle in south Russia (the Crimea) by offering them exemption from military service. Tsar Alexander II later abolished this privilege and the Mennonites were attracted when the Canadian government offered them religious freedom, large tracts of land, and freedom from military service. They also received permission to settle in villages, which required an amendment to the Dominion Lands Act. Two reserves were granted to the Mennonites and the first group arrived in 1874. They settled first in the East Reserve (Steinbach area). In 1875, the West Reserve in the Altona-Winkler area was established. The southern half of the East Reserve was not easy to farm, however, because of the stony soil and the scrub brushland and so many settlers transferred to the West Reserve, which was open prairie.

The traditional Mennonite village is known as a "Strassendorf", which means street village because the village is strung out along one street. In a Mennonite settlement, land was allocated to each family so that each received a share of all the land types available. Houses and barns were joined, a common form of farm architecture in many parts of Europe and retained because it offered social, religious and cultural advantages in Canada by its communal nature.

The traditional villages and house-barns no longer exist in this part of Manitoba, but they can still be seen at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach and in Neuberghthal as well as other surviving villages in the West Reserve in southern Manitoba near Winkler.

Want to know more about the Mennonite settlement in southern Manitoba and the natural history of the Red River Valley? Try Routes on the Red's Prehistoric Prairies: self-directed drive & stroll tour.

0.1	Return to stop sign. Go straight on Fontaine Road.	5.2
0.8	Gravel road turns to black dirt road.	6.0
0.8	Curve left onto grassy knoll.	6.8

You will ride on grass for the next 2 km.

1.8	Turn right onto black dirt.	8.6
1.8	Turn right onto paved road (PTH 305).	10.4
1.1	Cross over the Rat River.	11.5

In the distance, you should see the tall spire of the Ste. Agathe Cathedral.

2.7	At the stop sign, go straight to Ste. Agathe.	14.2
0.5	Enter Ste. Agathe.	14.7
0.4	Cross Red River. See the Church on your left.	15.1
0.2	Turn left after crossing bridge.	15.3
0.3	Pass Church on right.	15.6
0.2	Arrive back at the Cheyenne Steamboats.	15.8

Long Tour:

Explore areas settled by two distinct cultural groups: the French and the Mennonites, both of whom have played an important role in shaping the culture and landscape of the Red River valley. There has been a French presence in Manitoba since the days of the fur trade, but this area was settled in the 1870s with the assistance of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church promoted French settlement in order to strengthen the language rights granted by the Manitoba Act of 1870. Mennonite settlers arrived in the years between 1874 and 1881 attracted by the Canadian government's offer of land, religious freedom, and exemption from military service. The route takes you through the communities of St. Adolphe, Niverville, and Ste. Agathe, to Mennonite Landing and along the river, where remnants of the old river lot system are still visible.

This cycling excursion begins in St. Adolphe, in front of their lovely cathedral. The local Métis inhabitants who were already living there originally called this town, established as a mission of Saint-Norbert in 1857, "Pointe Coupée". In the latter half of the 19th century, a number of settlers came to join the community from other parts of the Red River and also from Québec and the northeastern United States. There are a variety of theories as to the naming of this community, however, the most likely one suggests that the town was named in honour of Father Norbert Ritchot – who was born near the town of Saint-Adolphe in Québec. However, Geographical Names of Manitoba says the community was named after Adolphe Turner, who donated a large amount of money for the erection of a church here.

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0.0	Start in front of St. Adolphe Cathedral. Head south on PR 200. As you leave town, the shoulder turns to gravel.	0.0
1.1	Turn right onto Carriere Road.	1.1
0.1	Turn left at stop onto Prom Carriere Drive and join the Trans Canada Trail. Note that this section is not presently signposted.	1.2
1.3	Turn right at stop sign to rejoin PR 200.	2.5
0.3	Turn left onto Gauthier Road (gravel).	2.8
2.3	Turn right at first intersection onto dirt road, unposted. If this section is muddy, it can be avoided by continuing straight at this junction and then turning right at the next intersection, which is a T-junction. Continue straight on this road until you reach the intersection with PR 311 (km 10.8). Continue with the route descriptions from this point.	5.1

Land Surveys

As you cycle along, you'll be able to see the differences between the two main ways that land was surveyed for settlement. On the right you'll see an example of the French River Lot system, the first land survey system used in what is now Manitoba. Known as the long-lot system, it is characterized by narrow lots two miles long running back from the river. Settlers' houses were close to the riverbank, since the river was the main transportation route. This survey system was

based on the one used in Quebec and was adopted because it was the one to which French settlers were accustomed. You can still see traces of the lots running down to the river. On the left, however, is land divided according to the "Dominion Lands" township survey system, which was adopted in 1869 to survey the territory that was about to be transferred by the Hudson's Bay Company to the Dominion of Canada.

The first line to be laid out was the Principal Meridian, a straight-line running north and south 23 km west of Fort Garry. The line was chosen to be at the western end of the most westerly river lots (in the Morris area) and was to form the baseline from which all of western Canada would be divided into townships, each of which comprised of 36 one-mile sections. Each section was divided into quarter sections of 160 acres. A homestead claim was a quarter section that could be

acquired for a fee of \$10. Settlers also had to meet residence and land improvement requirements. The result is the grid of long straight roads that now characterize the countryside. It was the surveying itself that contributed to what was to become the Red River Uprising.

The Métis, led by Louis Riel, believed that their land would be taken from them and they rose up to defend their rights and traditions and established their own Provisional Government.

0.8	Cross drainage ditch.	5.9
2.4	Turn left onto dirt road as road inclines momentarily.	8.3

You are cycling along a portion of the Niverville dyke. This has been constructed to protect the town of Niverville in the event of another huge flood – similar to the one that occurred in 1997, which is referred to as the Flood of the Century. The Red River has always been prone to flooding and there were disastrous floods in 1826 and 1950. At the flood's peak in the spring of 1997 the Red River overflowed to become a lake (dubbed "The Red Sea" by the media) 40 km wide covering 454,000

acres of agricultural land. Homes, farms, and businesses were destroyed or severely damaged. After the floodwaters receded, communities faced months of rebuilding and taking measures to protect them from another catastrophe.

Want to know more about flooding in the Red River Valley? Try Routes on the Red's the Floods of the Red River Valley: self-directed drive & stroll tour.

0.9	Turn right onto gravel road (slight decline in road). You are now on PR 210 (Krahn Road not marked).	9.2
1.6	Turn left at stop sign onto paved PR 311 to head into Niverville.	10.8
0.4	Enter Niverville.	11.2

This town is named for an early explorer and fur trader – Chevalier Joseph Claude Boucher de Niverville. This was a decision that was taken by the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1877 – one year before the railway into town was built and an official town plan was actually registered.

it was known as the East Reserve. The first grain elevator in western Canada was built in Niverville in 1879 from which the first western Canadian barley sold to overseas markets was shipped.

The area around Niverville was the first location for Mennonite settlement in Manitoba, which occurred in 1874. At that time

Today Niverville has a population of almost 2000 and continues to be an important agricultural centre.

1.2	Turn right onto 5th Avenue (across from Subway at Keystone Hatchery).	12.4
1.8	Turn right on gravel road 40 N at a brown sign for a baseball field.	14.2
0.8	Cross Railway tracks.	15.0
1.6	Continue straight at stop sign onto Crown Valley Road.	16.6
0.7	Gravel turns to black dirt road.	17.3
3.8	Turn left at stop sign onto a paved road. You are now on PR 200.	21.1
0.4	Just before the bridge turn right to the Mennonite Landing site.	21.5
0.2	Arrive at picnic site.	21.7

Mennonite Landing Site: Approximately 7,000 Mennonites came to Manitoba from Russia between 1874 and 1881. They had settled lands in Russia a century earlier after Catherine the Great persuaded them to settle in south Russia (the Crimea) by offering them exemption from military service. Tsar Alexander II later abolished this privilege and so the Mennonites were attracted when the Canadian government offered them religious freedom, large tracts of land, and freedom from military service. They also received permission to settle in villages that required an amendment to the Dominion Lands Act. Two reserves were granted to the Mennonites and the first group arrived in 1874. They settled first in the East Reserve (Steinbach area). In 1875, the West Reserve in the Altona-Winkler area was established. The southern half of the East Reserve was not easy to farm, however, because of the stony soil and the scrub brushland and so many settlers transferred to the West Reserve, which was open prairie.

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0.1	Return to stop sign. You have two options: Turn left to return to St. Adolphe on PR 200 for a shorter ride of about 31 km, or go straight on Fontaine Road to add 16 km to the day's total.	21.8
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Along this road, note how the orientation of the roads shifts. This is due to realignment of the river lots as the Red River

curves back and forth. As much as possible, river lots were meant to be perpendicular to the river.

0.8	Gravel road turns to black dirt road.	22.6
0.8	Curve left onto grassy knoll.	23.4

You will ride on grass for the next 2 km.

1.8	Turn right onto black dirt.	25.2
1.8	Turn right onto paved road (PR 305).	27.0
1.1	Cross over the Rat River.	28.1

In the distance, you should see the tall spire of the Ste. Agathe Cathedral.

2.7	At the stop sign, go straight to Ste. Agathe.	30.8
0.5	Enter Ste. Agathe.	31.3
0.4	Cross Red River. See the Church on your left.	31.7

The River Lot survey system is quite discernible here.

0.2	Turn left after crossing bridge.	31.9
0.3	Pass Church on right.	32.2
0.2	Stop at Cheyenne depanneur (store). Cross the street and explore the memorial that talks about the "Cheyenne" Steamboats.	32.4

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de Sainte-Agathe in 1876. The ferry continued to operate until 1960, when a bridge was opened to traffic.

0.3	Turn around to head back to the bridge. Turn right at stop to cross back over the Red River.	32.7
1.1	Turn left at stop sign on PR 200 to return to St. Adolphe.	33.8
2.4	Notice the stone marker on the right commemorating the Century Farm of the Fontaine family	36.2
1.1	Cross Rat River and pass Mennonite Landing.	37.3
9.8	Enter St. Adolphe.	47.1
0.9	End at church.	48.0

Thank you for joining Routes on the Red's self-directed excursion exploring French and Mennonite settlement south of Winnipeg. We hope that you had an enjoyable trip. We would love to have you discover more of the Red River valley on our other self-directed itineraries.

We greatly value your input and comments. If something was not clear, a road sign changed, or if you found a delightful picnic site or visit that you would like to share with future travellers, please let us know. The best way to communicate is to write the changes or new information directly onto the appropriate route description page, and mail or fax it to the Rivers West office. Thank you in advance for your contributions!

Rivers West, officially known as Red River Corridor Inc./L'Association du Corridor Rivière Rouge, is a not-for-profit organization, with the overall objective to develop the Red River Corridor as a destination. Our mandate is to create and implement a long-term tourism and conservation strategy focusing on the development, promotion and management of the natural, tourism, cultural and heritage, and recreational resources of the Red River from Emerson to Lake Winnipeg.

We are pleased to receive financial support from the federal and provincial governments and the participation of rural municipalities, towns and cities along the length of the river. A variety of projects are underway in the Red River region. These include the preservation of special lands for conservation, designation of the Red River as a heritage river, increasing opportunities for public access to the River, and the development and promotion of the river valley's natural, cultural, recreational and tourism resources.

Contact us for more information at:

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