



GLACIERS TO GRASSLANDS Self-Directed Drive & Stroll 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 drive and walk. The walking described includes public lands and trails. While you enjoy yourself, please drive and hike carefully as you are responsible to ensure your own safety and that any activity is within your abilities. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this description 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.

This is a tour of landscape and imagination. Drive out into the eastern half of the vast Red River Valley, and picture the immense forces over tens of thousands of years which created the flat, rich plains. Read the details of the landscape and imagine melting glaciers, ancient beach ridges and huge marshes teeming with wildlife. Stretch your legs on walks that reveal our natural heritage in the midst of the farming which sustains our cities. We end at a remnant of tall grass prairie that reminds us of what the Red River valley looked like over a hundred years ago.

Today's drive takes you from Winnipeg to Tolstoi. On the direct route, you could be there in about one hour, but our recommended route covers approximately 150 km of

scenic highway. If you would like to cut the day short, you could drive to St. Malo and then back to Winnipeg. It is also possible to make this into a two-day tour, by spending the night in St. Malo, and picking up the routes down to Tolstoi the following day.

For walks, you can enjoy two at St. Pierre-Jolys: a short stroll behind the museum and an out-and-back walk along the ridgeline, or continue to the seven km walk at Rat River Heritage Marsh and the one km walk at Tall Grass Prairie Preserve in Tolstoi. There are restaurants to choose from in St. Pierre-Jolys and St. Malo. Small markets and stores can be found in St. Adolphe, Ste. Agathe, St. Pierre-Jolys, St. Malo and Tolstoi.

On today's trip you will visit the following sites:

Le Musée de Saint-Pierre-Jolys

phone: (204) 433-7226

St. Malo Provincial Park

phone: : 1-888-482-2267

open May to September

Camping is available – it is possible to make reservations (888-482-2267 or in Winnipeg 948-3333).

Rat River Heritage Marsh

open year-round.

This wildlife preserve is open to hunting during season.

Tall Grass Prairie Preserve, Tolstoi

open year-round

Glaciers to Grasslands is one of a pair of tours that explores the natural and geological history of the Red River Valley. The focus for this tour is on the east side of the Red River. Its partner tour is Driving to Dinosaurs, which takes you to the west side of the Red River Valley, all the way to the Manitoba Escarpment.

Explore the incredible natural history that can be found in Manitoba's Red River Valley. The remnants of an ancient glacial lake, pristine fields of tall-grass prairie, tranquil paths through river bottom forests and a lively marsh are all to be found on this journey. Before you begin your trip, take a few moments to become familiar with a geological event that gave rise to the landscape you will be exploring today – the Ice Age.

Starting over 75,000 years ago (in an era known as the Pleistocene) and coming to an end only 8,000 years ago, the Ice Age lasted for more than 65,000 years. During this time most of Canada was covered by a huge glacier, and at its height Manitoba was covered by more than two kilometres of ice.

In the beginning, as the ice sheets advanced from the northwest across Manitoba, the ice scraped away a huge trough through the centre of the province. The resulting long and broad depression is known as the Manitoba Lowlands. Today the Red River Valley forms the southern end of these lowlands, while Lakes Winnipeg, Manitoba and Winnipegosis and the land between the lakes (Interlake) make up the northern section.

When the air temperature started to warm (starting around 16,000 years ago), the ice melted and the glacier began its retreat northward. The resulting meltwater formed a huge lake known as Lake Agassiz in front of the glacier, following it as it continued to recede northward. The deepest parts of Lake Agassiz were found in the huge glacial trough that had been scraped away 60,000 year earlier. During the existence of Lake Agassiz, the entire Red River Valley was part of the floor of this immense lake, while the Manitoba Escarpment (in the West) and a variety of ridgelines in the east were beaches along the lakeshore.

Once the glacier had retreated far enough north to open the passage to the Hudson Bay, the lake water was able to drain away, leaving Lakes Winnipeg, Manitoba and Winnipegosis as small reminders of Agassiz's past grandeur. The former lake bottom developed into grasslands that were cut by slow moving meandering prairie rivers. Ultimately, it is the deposits of silt and clay that were left on the lake bottom during the 3,000 years of Agassiz's existence that now allow for the variety of flora and fauna found in the area and form the rich agricultural land that is the basis of southern Manitoba's economy.

Your excursion begins in the south part of Winnipeg, at the intersection of St. Mary's Road (PR 200) and the Perimeter Highway.

km to next location	DIRECTIONS	Total km
0.0	With the perimeter at your back, head south on St. Mary's, PR 200.	0.0
4.3	Cross the floodway.	4.3

The Red River, which can be seen periodically on your right as you head south, flows northward from Lake Traverse on the Minnesota-South Dakota border, eventually emptying into Lake Winnipeg approximately 875 kilometres away.

As the river is flowing through the centre of the trough that was created by the glaciation and was the bottom of Lake Agassiz, there is minimal elevation change along its course (only 2.5 cm per kilometre or 2 inches per mile). This elevation change is so slight that the river has very little direct incentive to flow downstream – thus it often meanders back and forth across this gentle grade. In fact, this elevation is so small that in

10,000 years from now, as the earth continues to rebound from the weight of the ice that once covered it so long ago, the Red River will be forced to reverse its current course and flow southward into the Mississippi watershed.

As you drive along this section of highway, note the many empty driveways. These once led to people's houses. However, following the flood in 1997 many of these sites were abandoned and the families moved their homes to safer locations inside the floodway or to dyked communities. You will also see a number of other homes that have been built on raised plots of land or are ringed by a dyke as flood protection.

2.6	Enter the municipality of Ritchot and drive along side the Red River.	6.9
7.6	Enter St. Adolphe.	14.5
1.4	Pass St. Adolphe cathedral on your left.	15.9
10.2	Watch for a hidden turn just before bridge and orange & white hydro poles. Turn right to Mennonite Landing Site. If you miss the turn and cross the bridge over the Rat River, turn around.	26.1

Mennonite Landing Site: This landing site marks the place where the first large group of Europeans to settle on the prairies, the Mennonites, arrived in Manitoba in 1874. It is located near Ste. Agathe at the junction of the Rat and Red rivers. A monument commemorates the first Mennonite immigrants to settle in this part of Manitoba. This is also a popular fishing spot for local families.

Want to know more about French and Mennonite Settlement in this part of the Red River Valley? Try Rivers West's French and Mennonite Settlement: self-directed cycling tour.

This is a great place to stop for a few minutes and walk through some of the last vestiges of river bottom forest along the Red

River. Before the settlers arrived and the land was cleared for agriculture, forests flourished along all the rivers in the Red River Valley – the Seine, the Rat, the Roseau, and the Red, to name a few. In many places these forests extended for more than two kilometres on either side of the rivers. Today, the remains of these lovely areas have been almost completely denuded, except for a very narrow band along the immediate riverbank areas. Plants and trees growing in the zones along the rivers help to stabilize the soil and reduce erosion. The vegetation is also important during times of flood, as it soaks up the water and slows the speed of the water flooding its banks. Different trees that you will see in these forests include: oak, ash, poplar and willow.

0.3	After visiting the Landing Site, turn right onto PR 200.	26.4
0.3	Cross Rat River.	26.7
3.4	To visit Ste. Agathe, turn right on PR 305. Continue with route descriptions.	30.1
	If you do not wish to visit, continue straight and pick up the description again at kilometre 36.6.	
0.9	Cross the Red River, and then immediately turn left.	31.0
0.7	Just past the Ste. Agathe Church, there is a Co-op store to your right and a monument to your left. Park for a short visit.	31.7

You may wish to explore the small display commemorating the steamboats that used to ply the Red River.

Flood of the Century: In the winter of 1996/1997 the Red River Valley received almost double its average snowfall. Just as the spring melt was about to occur, a blizzard struck that dumped more than 50 cm of snow onto the valley. The result of all this precipitation has become known as the Flood of the Century. On May 3, 1997, despite the full capacity use of the floodway, the Red River crested at 24.5 feet in Winnipeg, and gale force winds accompanied the high water levels. On May 7, the Red River (or the "Red Sea" as it became known) was 30 kilometres wide at Emerson. The entire flood area covered 2,000 square kilometres (the size of Prince Edward Island), including 200,000 hectares of farmland. More than 22,000 people from rural areas and towns from the Red River Valley were evacuated, over 6,000 from Winnipeg.

There was a massive effort by the people of Manitoba (including the largest deployment of Canadian troops since the Korean War) to save as much as was possible. Within a few weeks (in many cases, days) dykes around all the towns as well as most farms and homes in the Red River Valley were reinforced,

2,000 cattle and 45,000 laying hens were evacuated. Tens of millions of sandbags were employed in this endeavour. Due to this massive effort, only one town in Manitoba was flooded: unfortunately it was the village that you are in – Ste. Agathe.

The 1997 flood was not the only one that the Red River Valley has experienced (nor is it likely to be the last). In the recorded history of this area – huge floods (some larger than the 1997 flood) occurred:

- There are numerous aboriginal stories, predating European settlement, which tell of the Red River becoming a raging sea during spring melt.
- 1826 – almost destroying the Selkirk settlement – causing many to predict the demise of any settlement in this area. This flood was one of the reasons that Fort Garry in the centre of Winnipeg was relocated downstream to Lower Fort Garry, north of Lockport.
- 1852 – another hardship for the small Selkirk settlement.
- 1950 – resulted in the largest mass exodus in Canadian history – 80,000 from Winnipeg alone. This flood resulted in the construction of the Winnipeg floodway.

	After visiting the display, do a U turn to return to your tour on the east side of the Red River.	
0.5	Turn right at stop sign to cross the Red River.	32.2
1.2	Turn right at stop sign to rejoin PR 200.	33.4
3.2	Continue straight when Hwy number changes to PR 246.	36.6

Some of the flattest land in the world is located in the Red River Valley. There are some great vistas on your left as you approach Aubigny (and if you would like to see “Empty Horizon” sightlines – just head a little further south past Aubigny. These sightlines, showing a boundless empty horizon, are now quite rare due to intensive shelterbelt plantings and farmstead developments). Enjoy the unobstructed views of the Red River valley, which are offered in this region. Celebrate the flatness that surrounds you – there are few other places on Earth where you can experience this!

The flatness of this land is the result of Lake Agassiz. As the glacial ice melted, the resulting lake covered much of Manitoba, north-western Ontario, parts of eastern Saskatchewan, North Dakota, and north-western Minnesota. This ancient lake well exceeded the total area of the five great lakes. At its largest, it was about 1500 km long, over 1100 km wide with an area of approximately 285,000 square kilometres, and its watershed was 906,000 to 1,295,000 square kilometres. If the lake were still in existence today, the surface would be more than 200 metres above your head (this is greater than the height of the Calgary Tower or almost twice the height of the Richardson Building in downtown Winnipeg).

As the ice sheet slowly melted away and the front retreated, the whole of the region covered by Lake Agassiz was blanketed by glacial sediments that had been caught up in the ice. These materials ranged from deposits of fine sand and gravels, to stones, rocks, and even huge boulders. This mix of material was added to and often modified by the action of the accumulating glacial melt waters. Swift-flowing glacial rivers, such as the Assiniboine and the Souris (at that time much different from their present incarnations), deposited a huge quantity of sediment into the lake. Upon entering Agassiz, the heavier particles (sand, gravel, boulders) settled quickly to the bottom (thus near the shoreline), and the finer material (silt and clay) remained suspended in the water for longer – only settling down in the undisturbed basins of the deepest part of the lake. The largest of these sediment basins became the Red River Valley. The surface of this basin was almost perfectly flat because it was so deep, that there were few forces to modify it, except for the occasional iceberg dragging along the lake bottom and creating tracelines. As a result, once the lake disappeared, the resulting land was also perfectly flat.

9.6	Enter Aubigny.	46.2
0.1	Turn left on paved PR 205 East, just before church.	46.3

As you drive along through the fields, note the rich black soil that surrounds you. This is not the same material that was at the bottom of Lake Agassiz. However, these black soils are the result of the mixture of those sediments with the decaying plant material that grew here after the waters of Lake Agassiz drained away. Unlike in other parts of the province, these soils have very few if any rocks or boulders in them because any boulders that were deposited here by the glaciers were buried beneath the thick layer of clay and topsoil.

Underlying this rich soil is a deep bed of very fine clay material (the remains of the glacial sediment). It is this clay – also known as Red River Gumbo – that contributes to the flooding difficulty of the Red River Valley, since it is essentially impervious to water. This prevents floodwaters, or any surface water, from having good drainage on these Red River flats. Before this area was put under cultivation, any kind of intense rainfall could result in standing water on the land for days and sometimes

months. However, as the settlers moved in and began to farm the land, they built drainage ditches to alleviate this problem. By 1881 there were 320 kilometres of these ditches across the Red River Valley and today there are tens of thousands.

Note the trees that you see among the crops. For the most part, all of these have been planted by the farmers. These rows of trees, called shelterbelts, are planted in order to protect the fields (field shelterbelts) or farmyards (farmstead shelterbelts) from the elements. For more than 90 years, farmers have been planting field shelterbelts in the Red River Valley in order to reduce soil erosion by blocking the wind. The rows of trees are usually planted perpendicular to the prevailing wind in order to reduce the speed of the wind (and thus its ability to blow away the soil). Field shelterbelts also help to retain moisture by trapping snow in the wintertime, which is especially important at times of drought.

5.6	Cross over the Marsh River.	51.9
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Also known as the ‘Rivière aux Marias’, this river is one of two major tributaries of the Rat River. The Marsh River originates in the open prairie – thus during dry seasons there may be very little, if any, water. However, during wet seasons, the low banks of this river made it especially difficult to cross during

the 1800s and early 1900s – as water would spill over onto the surrounding land. Oftentimes carts and wagons, along with horses, would become mired in the mud along the Marsh’s banks. In fact, one early map-maker labelled it “The Treacherous Morass”.

0.3	Turn right onto PR 205 East and PR 200.	52.2
1.6	Turn left to stay on PR 205, direction: St. Pierre.	53.8
7.6	Enter Carey (Don't blink!).	61.7
3.2	The lines of trees in front of you indicate that a river is nearby. You are looking at the river bottom forest that lines the Rat River.	64.9

As you continue to drive east you will notice a line of trees in front of you, indicating that a river is nearby. You are looking at the river bottom forest that lines the Rat River. Prior to human

management of the land (and the planting of shelterbelts), these riverbank treebelts could be seen from miles away on the open prairie.

5.2	Enter St. Pierre Jolys.	70.1
1.3	Turn left at stop sign onto Sabourin Street.	71.4
0.1	Turn left by statue on left. Swing right with road to the museum (musée).	71.5
0.2	Turn left into parking lot and arrive at the museum. There is a lovely restaurant attached to the museum. As well, there is a small walk behind the museum.	71.7

Le Musée de Saint-Pierre-Jolys is located in the former convent of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. Local history, religious and educational exhibits are featured in the museum.

Behind the museum, amongst the trees near Joubert Creek, is the Goulet House. This log house was built by Moïse Goulet, a freighter on the Crow Wing Trail for the Hudson's Bay Company, in 1870. The house is typical of French homes in the Red River Valley at that time. The house features a double-pitched mansard roof and has been refaced with vertical board and batten siding common to early French Manitoba buildings.

Want to know more about the fur trade era in the Red River Valley? Try [Rivers West's The People of the Fur Trade: self-directed drive & stroll tour](#) or [In the Footsteps of the Voyageurs: self-directed walking tour](#).

Following the trail past the Goulet House will take you to a short walk that meanders through the river bottom forests along Joubert Creek.

To reach the start of the Joubert Creek walk:

There is a stone plaque commemorating the Crow Wing Trail at the corner of the museum parking lot and road. Walk along the short hiking trail that leads away from the road. After crossing the two foot bridges over Joubert Creek, you will encounter sand deposits left from Lake Agassiz. Paths criss-cross but end up at a padlocked gate that is private property. Retrace your route out.

Joubert Creek is the second of the main tributaries of the Rat River. Joubert is only about 20 km long, and was previously known as the East Branch of the Rat River. Similar to the forests that you visited at Mennonite Landing, this trail takes you through river bottom forests, growing beside rivers and streams in a mutual cycle of dependency. The forests need the spring floods to deposit silt and replenish the soil with nutrients. In return, their roots stabilize stream and riverbanks, helping to reduce erosion.

The river bottom is divided into three sections: riverbank, the floodplain, and the terrace. The riverbank is characterized by the gentle sloping area beside the river where willows and

cottonwoods are the dominant trees. Few shrubs are found here, as they would be destroyed by the frequent flooding in the spring and the crushing ice during the winter. The floodplain is a relatively flat area where green ash, basswood, American elm and Manitoba maple are found. Adjacent to Joubert Creek you will also find wild grape and poison ivy. The terrace is furthest away from the river (and today has often been denuded of trees in order to increase the area for agriculture) and is the highest elevation. Bur oak, which prefer the drier ground, tend to be located on this part of the river bottom.

Another short walk in St. Pierre:

The Crow Wing section of the Trans-Canada Trail passes through St. Pierre-Jolys and offers you the opportunity to follow it through town and beyond. From the front of the museum, turn right onto the sidewalk and follow signs for as long as you like. The trail is well marked with blue arrows. The trail cuts through town and takes you up to a ridgeline of Ancient Lake Agassiz (which we will be driving to shortly).

The Crow Wing Trail was an old trail that was used by the Hudson's Bay Company to transport their furs and other goods by ox-cart down to St. Paul, Minnesota when it was found to be cheaper than shipping them north by Yorkboat to York Factory on the Hudson Bay. From St. Paul, the furs could be loaded onto steamships, and later railways, to New York, en route to Britain. Given the tendency of the Red River Valley to be susceptible to becoming water logged, the Crow Wing Trail was never a set route as the freighters (the men hired to man the ox-carts) would constantly veer back and forth to reach higher ground. Today, the Crow Wing section of the Trans-Canada Trail replicates the general route of the original trail; however, St. Mary's Road from St. Adolphe to Winnipeg (which you did earlier today) and portions of PTH #59 near St. Pierre-Jolys and St. Malo (which you will travel along shortly), overlap the exact route of the trail.

After your walks – return to your car to resume your drive through the Red River Valley.

	From the museum parking lot, turn right to return back the way you came.	
0.3	Turn right at stop sign onto Sabourin Street (PTH 59).	72.0
0.3	Cross Joubert Creek.	72.3
1.0	Turn left at PR 205 to Grunthal.	73.3

This short excursion takes you up the eastern ridgeline that once formed the eastern boundary of Lake Agassiz. As you turn off of PTH 59, note that the trees in the distance in front of you are at a slightly higher elevation (10 - 15 meters). This is the transition area that marks the change from the

flat Red River Valley landscape (the ancient lake bottom) to the undulating scrub woodland on thin soils that are littered with frequent surface rocks and boulders (one of Agassiz's past shorelines).

3.3	Pull off to the right at a small sign Rue Perreault. (Watch for a farm on the left, just after the trees and the small blue and white Trans-Canada Trail arrows). This is part of the Trans Canada trail to the right.	76.6
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If you would like to go for a bit of a stroll on the TCT, along one of Agassiz's beaches, you can park here. This would be an out-and-back walk, but if you kept on the trail it would take you all the way to St. Malo, a distance of approximately 20 km.

As you walk along this trail, you may come to an informal burrow-pit for sand created by local residents. This is evidence of the same kind of ancient sand beaches that you can explore in Grand Beach Provincial Park along the shores of Lake Winnipeg.

	After your walk, do a U-turn to return the way you came.	
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On your return drive to PTH 59, notice that the road descends ever so slightly back into the Red River Valley.

3.3	Turn left at stop sign onto PTH 59 South.	79.9
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To the left is ridgeline and to the right is flat river bottom forest along the Rat River.

You may have noticed on your travels south that you have crossed the Rat River a couple of times (and you will again

shortly) – this is because the flow of most of the tributaries on the east side of the Red River tend to flow in a north-west direction, which is the direction of the advance and retreat of the glaciers from the Ice Age.

12.5	Cross the Rat River.	92.4
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In the distance you can see the spires from the St. Malo church in the distance.

As you approach the town you will see a statue of two giant white tailed deer. The statue was erected in 1990 and

unveiled on July 7 by Prince Edward to commemorate the only successful deer relocation program in Canada. Between 1985 and 1988, 283 white-tailed deer were relocated from Winnipeg to the St. Malo Wildlife Management Area.

0.7	Turn left on Rue de la Grotte, also indicated by St. Malo camping sign. If you do not want to visit the St. Malo Provincial Park – continue straight on PTH 59, and pick up the routes were it says: "Turn left onto PTH 59, Direction: Thief River Falls."	93.1
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On your left is the entrance to the Maison Chapelle, a replica of the original church in St. Malo. No metal (not even nails) was used to build the wooden structure. In addition to being a restaurant (which will not open until fall 2003) and office complex, the structure houses a Métis craft store.

On your right is the entrance to the "Lady of Lourdes Grotto and Shrine". This hidden treasure tucked into the

woods overlooks an amphitheatre and creek. For a quiet relaxing stop, visit the church and walk down the Way of the Cross to the amphitheatre below – which is usually empty of people. Every year in mid-August, however, a pilgrimage is held here. At this time, mass, confessions and an afternoon of prayer and meditation take place.

0.9

Arrive at the entrance to St. Malo Provincial Park.

94.0

St. Malo Provincial Park is a lovely spot on the shore of an artificial lake that was created by damming the Rat River. In addition to camping facilities, there are two beaches as well as a number of walking trails. One of the trails takes you through a small patch of tall grass prairie. Be sure to pick

up a map of the park at the entrance kiosk - the entrance fee to the park is \$5.00 per vehicle per day unless you have a provincial park pass

After your visit, return to the park entrance and return to PTH 59.

0.9

Turn left to head south on PTH 59, Direction: Thief River Falls.

94.9

As you continue south on PTH 59 from St. Malo, note how the landscape has changed. You are now above the flatlands and are travelling through a transition zone – between the Red River Valley and the upland areas dominated by coniferous forests. This transition area tends to have mixed woods vegetation. However, the difference between the flat grasslands of the

valley and this higher elevation of mixed woods has become increasingly lost due to clearing of the land. The best way to see that you are no longer in the Red River Valley is by looking at the fields. Here they are dotted with rocks and boulders, which is quite different from the rich black (rock free) fields of the valley.

5.7

Watch carefully for a plaque in among the bushes on the right side of the road explaining the St. Malo Wildlife Management Area.

100.6**4.8**

Pass a bison ranch. Bison can often be seen grazing on the left and right side of highway.

105.4**3.4**

Turn left to reach the Rat River Wildlife Preserve – which is a Heritage Marshland.

108.8

This is a 12 km return trip on a gravel road that is well worth the effort, with a great opportunity for a good walk. The marsh is an amazingly diverse habitat full of waterfowl. It is also possible

to see deer and other animals as well. [This marsh is open to hunting during hunting season.](#)

5.7

Pass a community pasture on the left.

114.5**0.6**

Reach Heritage Marshland and park at the plaque.

115.1

The signs at this parking spot identify this as the Dubois Family and Rat River Heritage Marsh. To reach the marshland, return by foot to the gravel road and turn right. Walk 300 metres down the bumpy road to the end to reach the marsh.

At the top of the dyke you will find a sign on the left explaining the area and describing the walk around the marsh. The seven km loop includes an observation mound and an historic cairn.

This marsh is the result of the damming of the Rat Rivers – and is a small example of the vast marshes that once existed naturally in the Red River Valley. Rivers such as the Rat, Seine and Roseau originate in the highlands of the east that propelled the waters downhill. As they crested the lip of the Red River

Valley – over the eastern ridgeline, these waters arrived in very flat terrain with little slope or gradient. Before the arrival of settlers, these waters tended to pond across the landscape creating large marsh-like areas often very near the ridgeline, since the water's momentum was drastically reduced. In fact on early maps, the Seine River is shown flowing through two large marshes. Today, all of these marshes have been drained as well as the smaller sloughs that would develop during wet cycles on the impermeable clay beds. It is only possible to imagine what this habitat would have been like 150 years ago for the thousands of migrating and nesting waterfowl.

After your stroll, walk back to the parking lot and continue on your tour.

0.8	To return to highway, turn left onto gravel road.	
	Turn left at stop sign to rejoin PTH 59.	
	Cross the Roseau River.	

The Roseau River is one of the larger tributaries of the Red River south of Winnipeg. The Roseau (originally known as the Reed River) originates in northern Minnesota and is one of the first rivers in Manitoba to open up in the spring, usually around early April. Initially the gradient of the riverbed is comparatively steep as it winds through the transition lands from the sandy forests of southeastern Manitoba (where you are crossing in one of these transition areas) towards the prairie near the Red River. In the spring and at other times of high water there are no rapids – just a fast stream flowing along the Roseau. As the water level drops during the summer some boulders begin to appear, creating fairly long stretches of continuous class I rapids. As the water level drops further in late summer, it becomes more technical, and then eventually becomes too low to paddle. The river has carved some beautiful sandy cliffs (as much as 40 to 50 ft high) along its banks over the course of centuries, and has created numerous oxbows in its meanderings.

In the early years of exploration in the Red River Valley, the first Europeans encountered Assiniboin peoples in this area of Manitoba and the Sioux in the open plains of the valley. A short 75 years later, when the first settlers arrived in 1812, there had been a shift in the demographics of the region. The Assiniboin had completely vacated eastern Manitoba for the open prairies of the west, which allowed the Ojibwa (also known as Saulteaux and Anishinabe) to move into this parkland zone from the Lake of the Woods and Lake Superior regions and the Sioux had moved to the western side of the Red. Today, there is a large First Nations Reserve along the Roseau River – split into two communities, Roseau River (at the mouth of the Roseau) and Roseau Rapids (at the site where the river exits the rolling ‘upland’ and enters the open prairie of the Red River Valley). This latter site has been a significant campsite for the Ojibwa and other aboriginal groups for hundreds of years.

In the early 1700’s when the Ojibwa lived in the Lake of the Woods area and the Sioux lived in this area of Manitoba, the Roseau River became a “war-road” between the two groups. One of the more famous incidents between the Ojibwa and the Sioux occurred in 1736 when a Sioux raiding party encountered a French and Ojibwa canoe brigade – killing 20 men, including LaVérendrye’s son, Jean-Baptiste and a Jesuit priest, Father Aulneau. Another famous encounter took place near the Roseau Rapids (known as See-bos-qui-tan in Ojibwa) when a group of Ojibwa were being chased by the Sioux. In order to facilitate the escape of his companions, a wounded member of the Ojibwa hid behind a large boulder to fight the oncoming Sioux and delay them. When the Ojibwa were able to return to the site of the boulder, their warrior had been killed. But the Sioux were so impressed by the bravery of the wounded warrior that they resolved that the boulder would mark the northern boundary of the Sioux territory. Today this site is still sacred to the Sioux and the Ojibwa and often offerings of tobacco and sweetgrass are left in commemoration of the bravery of the wounded warrior.

Want to know more about the First Nations in the Red River Valley? Try Rivers West’s First Peoples on the Red: self-directed driving tour.

The Roseau River has long been a popular fishing river due to its clean, clear water and the shallow waters of the area around the Roseau Rapids made catching sturgeon, jackfish, goldeye and catfish quite easy. In fact, it has been claimed that when the sturgeon ran in early June they were so plentiful that you could walk across the river on their backs. In 1903, the biggest fish ever caught in Manitoba, a colossal 4.5 metre, 182 kg sturgeon, was taken from the Roseau River. Unfortunately, the construction of the St. Andrew’s Lock and Dam (1907-1910) north of Winnipeg, have prevented fresh water sturgeon from swimming down the Red River, as they are unable to pass through the small fish ladder.

0.9	Pass Roseau River Park.	128.0
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This park covers 37 acres and has camping facilities. Take time to pull over and enjoy the quiet setting of the park and river.

9.4	Pass the Tolstoi RC cemetery.	137.4
1.9	Enter Tolstoi.	139.3

This area of Manitoba was first settled in 1896 by pioneers from Bukovina in the western Ukraine.

Want to learn more about settlement along the Red River Valley? Try Rivers West’s The People of the Red River Settlement: self-directed drive & stroll tour.

	Turn left onto Railway Avenue, PR 209 East, to head towards Tall Grass Prairie Reserve.	
	Pass Holy Trinity Orthodox Church on left.	
	Turn right to enter Tall Grass Prairie Preserve.	

At one time the Red River Valley was a sea of tall-grass prairie, dominated by grasses that reached over two metres in height. Today, less than 1/2 of 1% of the original prairie remains.

Those areas that do still remain are rarely situated in the rich fertile valley, but rather are found in the uplands, where the land escaped cultivation because it was too difficult to plough, with its large boulders, aspen groves and marshy areas. The Tall Grass Prairie Preserve, of over 2,000 hectares, is one of the very few places left on the Canadian Prairie where indigenous tall grass exists. Over 150 plant species (some endangered, such as the western prairie fringed orchid and the small white lady's slipper orchid), 90 bird species, as well as numerous butterflies and a variety of other animals – frogs, voles, deer, moose and an occasional bear - make their homes in the preserve.

The ecology of grasslands is very dynamic and complex. Prior to human management of the land, grasslands were controlled by fire, drought and the rotational grazing of large mammals. Wildfires broke down dead and decaying plants – which

returned the nutrients to the soil. Additionally, these fires slowed the growth of trees and shrubs that would invade the prairie. The grazing of bison and elk provided native grasslands with fertilizer, a method of seed dispersal and seasonal periods of rest to recover and replenish themselves (once the herds had moved on). Today, to preserve this grassland it is necessary to duplicate some of these past natural occurrences. Every three years a prescribed burn is required to keep the prairie healthy. Some grazing by domestic animals is also encouraged or is imitated by mowing or haying, which, if properly timed, can encourage or discourage different plant species.

Explore the Prairie Shore self-guided interpretive trail. The trail is short, but it can be wet and marshy. Remember that this is a preserve – it is unlawful to pick, dig or collect any of the plants and animals. Don't forget to sign the guest book on your way out.

	Exit the parking lot and turn left to return the same direction from which you came.	
	Turn right at stop sign onto PTH 59 to return to Winnipeg.	
	Arrive in Winnipeg.	

On this trip you have had the opportunity to explore the formation of the Red River Valley – from its beginnings as a trough dug out by the advancing glaciers of the last Ice Age, to being the deepest basin of Lake Agassiz, before its transformation into

the fertile prairie landscape we see today. This unique landscape is one that is found only in Manitoba's Red River Valley.

Thank you for joining Routes on the Red's self-directed excursion exploring the natural heritage of the Red River Valley. 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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