



*Fort Smith*  
*Northwest Territories*  
UNEXPECTED. UNFORGETTABLE.

EXPLORER'S GUIDE



[WWW.FORTSMITH.CA](http://WWW.FORTSMITH.CA)

# UNEXPECTEDLY CLOSE



**FORT SMITH** is easily accessible year-round by car. It is an unforgettable drive through a wild, Boreal forest on well maintained roads. Fort Smith also has a full-service, commercial airport with regular flights from Edmonton, Fort McMurray and Yellowknife.

**DRIVING DISTANCES TO FORT SMITH**

LOCATION.....	Km	Miles
NT/AB Border .....	380	237
High Level, AB.....	583	364
Peace River, AB.....	865	540
Grande Prairie, AB....	1024	640
Edmonton, AB.....	1365	853
Calgary, AB .....	1645	1028

Latitude: 60.0047° N  
 Longitude: 111.8817° W  
 Elevation: 205m / 673ft





# Fort Smith

Northwest Territories

UNEXPECTED. UNFORGETTABLE.

## WELCOME!

**WELCOME TO OUR TOWN** in the midst of Canada's pristine subarctic wilderness. We know you'll find it as unforgettable as we do.

**FORT SMITH** is a hidden gem tucked inside the Northwest Territories, just north of the Alberta border. Boreal forest surrounds it like a giant robe, with the Canadian Shield's innumerable lakes to the east and the limestone caves and sinkholes of Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP) to the west.

**THE TOWN'S** location on the banks of the Slave River made it a vital stop for explorers and fur traders travelling north to the Mackenzie River and Arctic Ocean beyond. Wander from the boardwalk down to 'the Rocks' for an intimate view of the white pelicans that summer

here. Shortly after the pelicans' spring arrival, kayakers come to challenge the mighty rapids in what has become one of the world's foremost whitewater playgrounds.

**FOR NEARLY A CENTURY** Fort Smith was the administrative centre of the Northwest Territories. The Northern Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church – which operated schools throughout the North – and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police had their headquarters here in the historic capital. The town's storied past is particularly evident at the Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre and Fort Smith Mission Historic Park. Today, Fort Smith is a thriving, modern community of 2,400 Métis, Dene and newer Northerners who live, play and work together.

**WHILE TRAVELLING** roads near the community, keep an eye out for WBNP's herd of more than 5,000 free-roaming wood bison. Canada's largest national park is the size of Switzerland and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's also home to the nesting grounds of the endangered whooping crane and the Salt Plains, which contributed to its designation.

**IN SUMMER** the land abounds with birds, fish and animals. The trails are endless, and fences are rare. Fort Smith is renowned for its gardens, musicians and artists – and so much more. In winter it becomes a peaceful oasis of sparkling snow, clear skies and Northern Lights. In fact, its latitude makes it one of the best places in the world to view the Aurora Borealis.



# OUR HISTORY

**FOR CENTURIES**, the Dene and Métis hunted and fished the land and tributaries flowing into the Slave River. The waterway was key to their movements, following the ancient rhythms of animals and seasons. Explorers and fur traders later used the Slave as a gateway from the Prairies when travelling north from Lake Athabasca.

**AS MORE TRADERS**, missionaries and supplies plied the Slave River, York boats and paddle wheelers replaced the canoe. To this day the only obstacles are four sets of impassable rapids along the 27-kilometre stretch between Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Smith: Cassette, Mountain, Pelican and Rapids of the Drowned. Explorers and Aboriginal people walked their canoes down the east side of the Slave to skirt these rapids.

**LATER**, several transportation companies established a portage system on the river's west side. Men using brute strength, log rollers, windlasses and Red River carts hauled boats and supplies up and down hills to avoid the rapids. Remains of this system can be seen today at Mountain Rapids.

**THE HUDSON'S BAY** Company built an outpost at Fort Smith in 1872 named for Lord Strathcona, Donald Alexander Smith. The northern headquarters of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Northern Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church soon

followed. A Roman Catholic mission was built in 1876 and the Oblate Brothers grew vegetables for missions along the Mackenzie River. The community soon earned its Chipewyan name, Thebacha, meaning "at the foot of the rapids."

**FOR PART** of the 20th century, the Northern Transportation Company Limited was based here for barges coming down the Athabasca River, headed for the Mackenzie River and Arctic Ocean. Barges were hauled through town by truck and re-launched at Bell Rock, 13 kilometres downstream from Fort Smith. For 200 years, all freight from the south travelled the Slave River on its way to the Arctic, until a highway to Hay River was built in 1949 and freight was transported to Great Slave Lake. Today, many federal and territorial government offices, including the headquarters of Aurora College, remain in Fort Smith.

## INTERESTING FACTS

- Thebacha is the Chipewyan name for the area, meaning "at the foot of the rapids".
- Trapping has been a traditional way of life for many people in the region for hundreds of years and still is to this day. Trappers collect furs of beaver, lynx, rabbit and many other animals in the boreal forest.
- The community owes its existence to the four sets of formidable rapids on the Slave River, which acted as a gateway for early travellers on the river system going North.

## A ROYAL VISIT

On July 8, 1970, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, along with her husband Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, and their children, Prince Charles and Princess Anne visited Fort Smith during a tour of the Northwest Territories to participate in centennial celebrations.



## OUR CULTURE

**FORT SMITH** has long been a cultural meeting place for the Dene First Nations and the Métis as well as the Francophones and other non-Aboriginal people. Its rich diversity is exemplified in Salt River First Nation, Smith's Landing First Nation, the Métis Council and the Fort Smith Francophone Association all calling the community home.

**SALT RIVER** First Nation has more than 750 members, many of whom live in or near Fort Smith. Their land claim, settled in 2001, gives them reserve land at 16 sites in and around the Town of Fort Smith, and four sites in Wood Buffalo National Park.

**SMITH'S LANDING** First Nation has 331 members and was formally recognized as an Indian band in 1988. In 2000, a TLE was signed and a 21,500-acre reserve was created around Thebathi Reserve 196 (known as Fort Fitzgerald) near the Alberta/Northwest Territories border, including three small parcels of land in Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta. About 10 families live in Thebathi Reserve 196 (Fort Fitzgerald) and 11 families live in Thebatha Nare 196A (known as Border Town) while many band members reside in Fort Smith.

**THE MÉTIS** have a long history in the area, dating back to when explorers and fur traders of European descent first set foot in the North and intermarried with Aboriginal people. About 800 members live in Fort Smith and they are one of the three South Slave Métis groups involved in land claims negotiations.

**ABORIGINAL CULTURE** comes alive each June 21 on National Aboriginal Day. A party atmosphere reigns along the boardwalk by the Slave River as the community comes together to participate in Dene hand games, chat with Aboriginal artists displaying their work inside tents, cook bannock over an open fire and enjoy refreshments offered on-site.

**THE FIRST PEOPLE** of this region were the Dene, a word that means "people" in their language. The Dene are all part of a greater family of the Athapaskan-speaking people, who range from the Den'a people in Alaska to the Navajo and Apache who live in the American Southwest. The Dene call their homeland "Denendeh" which means the "Land of the People". Denendeh is a huge terrain that spreads across a large section of the Northwest Territories.

## EXPERIENCE THE CULTURE

- Celebrate National Aboriginal Day, June 21 – A territorial holiday celebrating the culture and heritage of the indigenous people.
- Treaty Land Entitlement Days – This event has all the key ingredients to make it a memorable Northern cultural event: A community feast, music, entertainment and a major traditional men's hand games tournament.
- Take an Art Workshop taught by a local instructor – Try your hand at some traditional arts such as beading, moccasin making, and fish scale art along with contemporary art classes! Check the Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre for up-to-date workshop information, [www.nlmcc.ca](http://www.nlmcc.ca).
- Learn some of the language – Books, cookbooks, posters, CD's and more can be found at the NWT Métis Nation office or the community's Mary Kaeser Library.
- Use technology to help you learn the language! Visit the NWT Cree Language Program website: <http://nehiyawewin.com/> Here you will find music, downloadable books, and much inspiration to help you understand the Cree language and the people!

## THE OLD MAN OF THE NORTH

François Beaulieu II, known locally as "Old Man" Beaulieu, was an important Métis leader and the founding father of the Northwest Territories Métis. He lived from 1771-1872 and was designated a National Historic Person in 2000.



# OUR COMMUNITY

**FORT SMITH** has a fascinating past and a vigorous present. It's a great place to rest for a couple of days, take in the sights and stock up for excursions to the surrounding area. There are bed and breakfasts and two hotels, restaurants and several cafes, a gift store, a drugstore, grocery, liquor and hardware stores - everything you could expect to find in a progressive town.

**THE VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE** is located in the Wood Buffalo National Park Office on McDougal Road. The friendly staff is ready to answer your questions and direct you to activities around town.

**THE TOWN RECREATION CENTRE** has excellent facilities including a squash court, full-sized gymnasium, fitness and weight room, swimming pool, curling rink, youth centre and a seniors' centre. Drop-in fitness and yoga classes are also offered. In winter the curling club hosts leagues for youth and adults.

**ST. JOSEPH CATHEDRAL** sits at the main intersection in town on the corner of Breynat Street and McDougal Road. It was built in 1959 as the seat of the Northern Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church. Beside it is Fort Smith Mission Historic Park, which includes the Bishop's Residence (built in 1911), St. Isidore Church, workshops and other outbuildings.

**AURORA COLLEGE'S** Thebacha Campus is located in Fort Smith. This modern post-

secondary education institution serving the NWT began as a heavy equipment operator program. It now offers programs for teachers, renewable resources staff, office workers and trades such as carpentry, plumbing and electrical. The college also includes the Aurora Research Institute.

**FOR A LOVELY STROLL** and a wonderful view, follow the boardwalk along the riverbank. See the Rapids of the Drowned and watch the pelicans fish at sunrise. The rapids earned their name in 1788 when a guide decided to try paddling through a channel of the rapids. He was to fire his musket to let the men waiting above the rapids in another boat know that it was safe. He and his crew just barely survived, but before he had a chance to warn his waiting comrades another fellow in his boat fired at a duck. Mistaking the shot for a signal, the five men above the rapids drowned when they tried to follow the scouting party.

## MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

- Ice Arena & Curling Rink
- Aquatic Facility: Pool, Sauna, Hot Tub
- Recreation Centre: Sports Gym, Fitness Facilities, Theatre
- Sports Fields
- Track and Field Facilities
- Tennis & Squash Courts
- Parks & Playgrounds
- Trails & Pathways
- Thebacha Trail
- Snowboard Park
- Library
- Emergency Services & Fire Hall
- Campgrounds

## HEY, DID YOU KNOW?

Fort Smith officially became a town in 1966 and Paul Kaeser was its first mayor. Tony Whitford, one of the Town's first councillors, went on to serve as Commissioner of the Northwest Territories from 2005 – 2010. Fort Smith celebrates its anniversary every year in October.



# EXPLORE THE ARTS

**ABORIGINAL PEOPLES** have always woven artistry into their everyday existence. Their music, homes, clothing, hunting gear and cooking utensils all reflected their personal style. Today this talent finds an outlet in both traditional and contemporary art forms such as music, carving, weaving, beadwork, painting, quilting, stained glass, jewellery, writing and photography.

**SOME OF THE TERRITORY'S** best-known musicians and artists, such as carver Sonny MacDonald and author Richard Van Camp, are from Fort Smith. Many other creative people who thrive on the peace and beauty of the area make their homes here.

**THE WORK** of local artists is on display at the town's recreation centre, at the Wood Buffalo National Park office, the Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre, the Pelican Inn, the Rusty Raven and at the airport.

**SOME OF THE ARTISTS** who produce work for sale include Betty Dixon, a self-taught artist who creates a wide variety of hand sewn items such as beaver, rabbit and sealskin mittens,

beaded moccasins, beaded card holders, and jewellery. Mike Labine's stained glass now hangs in homes and offices across Canada and as far away as New York, the Netherlands and Australia. This glass artist makes custom northern pieces, which are available at local businesses. Ria Coleman weaves Métis sashes for visitors and locals. A graphic designer by trade, Chris DeWolf of DeWolf Artworks creates acrylic paintings and produces jewelry in her studio. Photographers Linda Martin and Jayne Murray have a wide selection of stunning northern landscapes.

**THE SOUNDS** of music fill the air every spring on a weekend in June as musicians join together in Fort Smith for the annual music event called Spring Stock, organized by the Fort Smith Music Society. Their is an active music scene in Fort Smith with musical performances at festivals throughout the summer.

**THE SUMMER SPLASH ARTS FESTIVAL** is one of the best Art Festivals in the region! Take part in a wide variety of workshops ranging from the traditional to the modern with plenty of opportunities for children to get involved too!

## WHERE TO SHOP LOCAL

- Rusty Raven Gallery & Gifts
- Thimble & Threads
- Joan's Health & Fitness – Storefront & Gift Shop
- Wally's Drugstore – T-shirts, gifts, and souvenirs
- Desnedé Farmers Market
- Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre - Gift Shop
- Pelican Rapids Inn – Gift Shop
- Visitor Information Centre – Wood Buffalo National Park gift shop and Town of Fort Smith souvenirs
- Kaesers Stores
- Northern Stores
- Home Hardware

## A WISE WOMAN, INDEED!

Jane Dragon has created native crafts her entire life. Her work is featured in the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa and also in the Northern Life Museum in Fort Smith. Jane has received both the Queen's Silver and Golden Jubilee Medals and the NWT Wise Woman Award. - [www.nwtarts.com](http://www.nwtarts.com)



# OUTDOOR LIVING

## BIRD WATCHING

Each spring the air comes alive with more than 200 species of birds flying in and out of the Fort Smith area. Some are migrating to and from the Arctic, but many stay to nest and raise their young throughout the summer. North America's most northern colony of close to 500 white pelicans fly from their winter home on the Gulf of Mexico to nest on islands at Mountain Rapids in the Slave River. Watch from "the Rocks" as they fish below the rapids. Our clever ravens provide year-round entertainment swooping down on garbage and grocery bags carelessly left in the back of a pickup truck, roosting on the roof of the cathedral or the water tower and best of all, cavorting in the wind above the riverbank.

## FISHING

The North is renowned for its incredible fishing - and the Fort Smith area is no exception. Each spring there is a pickerel (walleye) run on the Salt River and local fishermen throw out a line or set their nets at the base of the Rapids of the Drowned. Buy your NWT licence from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources just off Highway 5 or at Kaeser's store downtown.

## HIKING

Trails once used for portages have become hiking paths along the high bank of the Slave River. One of the most popular hikes begins at the boardwalk on the edge of downtown and leads to the pelicans feeding at the Rapids of the Drowned. The spectacular Pelican

Rapids can be visited after a brisk 45-minute hike beginning at the Halfway meadows. Four hikes in the national park's Salt River trail system range from less than a kilometre to nine kilometres in length. Highlights include active sinkholes, the hibernation area of red-sided garter snakes, salt flats and salt plains. *Thebacha Trails: A Guide to Special Areas Around Fort Smith* by Libby Gunn is an excellent source of information for hikers. It is available at The Rusty Raven, the Northern Life Museum gift shop and Wally's Drug Store.

## BIKING

The area's trails are for both beginners and experienced riders. Access all four sets of rapids while travelling along nearly 60KM of trails on the portage loop system. Cycle the entire loop or exit onto the road whenever you want. Wood Buffalo National Park has more challenging terrain. Many of the mountain biking trails run through remote areas that may not have cellular coverage, so come prepared.

## SWIMMING

Pine Lake, a 60-kilometre drive from Fort Smith, is a wonderful place to swim in crystal clear water. The lake has a large sandy beach, picnic grounds, camping facilities and a good safe place to boat, water-ski, canoe and windsurf. With its turquoise waters and calling loons, Pine Lake is a tranquil place to spend a few days. For those who prefer to swim inside, Fort Smith's indoor pool is open year round and can be accessed through the Recreation Centre.

## LOCAL WILDLIFE

- Pelicans
- Raven
- Wood Bison
- Moose
- Great Grey Owls
- Black Bears
- Hawks
- Spotted Owls
- Timber Wolves
- Lynx
- Beavers
- Snowy Owls
- Bald Eagles
- Martens
- Wolverines
- Peregrine Falcons
- Whooping Cranes
- Snowshoe Hares
- Sandhill Cranes
- Ruffed Grouse
- Red Fox
- Ptarmigan
- Red-sided Garter Snakes (World's most northern population)





# ENJOY OUR FRESH AIR

**IN BOTH THE SUMMER AND WINTER,** exploring Fort Smith will mean brushing shoulders with wildlife. Rare and endangered birds find sanctuary in the surrounding national park and salt plains which are ribboned with tracks of the animals that cross it during the quiet hours of dawn and dusk. At the very least, you can't miss massive, majestic bison napping on the shoulder – and sometimes in the middle – of Highway 5.

Fort Smith connects to both long and short side trips that will show you many different aspects of Northern life and wilderness. Over a thousand miles of hiking and biking trails extend

from Fort Smith. These trails are the best way to see not only the landscape but also local wildlife.

Fort Smith connects by road to a number of NWT Parks' campsites and camping routes, the nearest being the Wood Buffalo Route. As the name suggests, the route focuses on campsites and day use areas in Wood Buffalo National Park.

## GOLFING

Fort Smith's Pelican Rapids Golf and Country Club is very proud of its technical and challenging golf course. Some of its nine holes border on the Slave River and the first

tee-off has a spectacular view. The new artificial greens are state of the art and the fairways are well-maintained natural grass. The course is open from May until September. The clubhouse serves meals and refreshments. Phone (867) 872-GOLF.

Try your hand at the world's only Royal Canadian Mounted Police golf course. Step inside the detachment on Portage Avenue during business hours for a map of the nine-hole Blue and Gold course and tee off at the first hole in front of the building. RCMP members and volunteers ensure the upkeep of this free golf course.

## PLACES TO DISCOVER

- Pelican Rapids Golf & Country Club
- Rapids of the Drowned Hiking Trail – along the Slave River
- Mountain – Portage Rapids Hiking Trail – along the Slave River
- Pelican Rapids Trail – along the Slave River
- Fort Fitzgerald Loop, especially in winter – along the Slave River
- Little Buffalo Falls Territorial Park
- Salt River – Thebacha Campground
- Pine Lake – Wood Buffalo National Park
- Salt Plains – Wood Buffalo National Park
- South Loop – Wood Buffalo National Park
- Salt River Meadows – Wood Buffalo National Park
- Snake Pits at the Salt River Day Use Area – Wood Buffalo National Park
- Four-Mile Lake
- Fort Smith Nordic & Ski Club Trails
- Mission Historic Territorial Park
- Thebacha Trail – Biking and Hiking Trail



# EXPERIENCE THE SLAVE RIVER

**DURING THE SUMMER** the Slave River becomes a playground for boaters, picnickers, kayakers and canoeists. One of the greatest joys is setting out on the water to enjoy the peace and beauty of this magnificent river. Explore the trade routes that Aboriginal people and the earliest European explorers followed before you.

## **RAPIDS OF THE DROWNED**

Looking for a close-up view of the American White Pelican? The Rapids of the Drowned are the most visible rapids in Fort Smith. They are the rapids beside which the community is situated, and can be seen from "The Lookout" on Marine Drive. These rapids are a designated Historic Site of Canada. The riverside trails will lead you down to "The Rocks" where you can sit on the smooth rocks of the Canadian Shield and watch the pelicans, up close, feeding in the roaring whitewater rapids.

## **MOUNTAIN PORTAGE RAPIDS**

"The Playground" at Mountain Portage is a favourite spot for whitewater kayakers and beach bums alike. On summer evenings, skillful paddlers can be seen doing acrobatic manoeuvres in their tiny streamlined kayaks. Each ledge has its own play spots that come and go as water levels change. Visiting whitewater paddlers should contact the Fort Smith Paddling Club for guidance and information before venturing onto the Slave River.

The sandy beaches in the bays surrounding the rapids are a great gathering place for local swimmers and sunseekers. While in the early summer mosquitoes are kept at bay by the breezy shores of the river, the late summer makes this spot absolutely perfect with warm weather, long nights and is virtually bug free (at least by Northern standards).

## **PELICAN RAPIDS**

Enjoy the view of the largest set of rapids on the Slave River, The Pelican rapids. The trail leading to the rapids is accessible all year-round, by foot and bicycle in summer and ski and snowshoe in winter. An outcrop of Canadian Shield granite jutting up from the water allows hikers to walk halfway across the expansive river to get up-close views of the enormous rapids. This is a stunning scene, and a favourite site for local picnickers and photographers.

## **CASSETTE RAPIDS**

From June to September, it is not unusual to see canoeists and sea kayakers paddling up to the dock at Fort Fitzgerald. After hitching a ride into Fort Smith to bypass the rapids, they take a break, stock up and then put their boats back in the water and continue downriver to Great Slave Lake or on to the Mackenzie River and the Arctic Ocean.

Due in large part to the spray generated by these rapids, and the resulting humidity, the trees along this part of the river are enormous compared to their counterparts downstream. In the winter, when everything else is frozen solid, this steam creates stunning winter scenery as the trees become covered in hoar-frost several inches thick.

If you can brave the winter weather, this hike provides some visual treats, especially in the months of February and March, after the hoar-frost has had a chance to accumulate on the trees.

## HEY, DID YOU KNOW?

The Dene and Métis paddled and portaged their canoes down the east side of the Slave to avoid the four sets of rapids between present-day Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Smith. Many early explorers did the same but others tried to run the rapids and lost their lives. The last set of rapids below Fort Smith got its name, Rapids of the Drowned, in 1788 when five members of a trading party drowned in a chute.



# PADDLING PARADISE

**WORLD-CLASS** big water paddling, 24-hour daylight, warm water and good friends – what’s not to love!

The Slave River has always been like a highway. The Dene and Métis hunted and fished on the streams and smaller rivers flowing into the Slave. They used the Slave as a transportation route to move themselves, their families and their food and belongings to other locations as they followed the animals and the seasons.

**THE FORT SMITH PADDLING CLUB** continues to use these historic routes which led fur traders and early travellers to portage around the rapids that the paddlers now love to play in.

The Slave offers every type of paddling imaginable: from flat water canoeing around beautiful islands to wild Whitewater. Bring your kayak, canoe, stand up paddle board or raft and join us for a paddling experience you’ll never forget!

This section of the Slave is also extremely beautiful. It is the northern-most nesting ground for American White Pelicans, and we often paddle past these majestic birds.

Local paddlers looking for a relaxing getaway like to head to Pine Lake, in Wood Buffalo National Park, which is located about 60 km (a 45-minute drive) from Fort Smith. This aquamarine lake in the middle of the boreal forest, is created by a series of three sink holes. The lake is a great destination for everyone with its sandy beaches and warm water.

**WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK** and the Slave River offer opportunities for paddling trips for people of different skill levels. For details, visit the park’s web site at [www.pc.gc.ca/buffalo](http://www.pc.gc.ca/buffalo) or the Fort Smith Paddling Club at [www.fskayak.webs.com](http://www.fskayak.webs.com). Canoeists driving or flying into Fort Smith can also paddle up the Dog River, which empties into the Slave River.

**SLAVE RIVER PADDLEFEST** is the signature summer paddling event held on the August long weekend every year (the very first weekend in August). The festival began as a whitewater kayaking weekend and it has expanded to incorporate rafts, canoes, stand up paddle boards (SUPs) and voyageur canoes. There are clinics, river trips, races and competitions for paddlers of all skill levels, as well as “learn to kayak” clinics and games for kids, youth and adults.

Paddlefest includes lots of activities for spectators – come watch the whitewater events, join our “meet the river” hikes, partake in the community feast, learn Dene traditional games, try paddling with an expert in a duo kayak, or go on a guided hike to learn more about the local area.

The main events happen on the August long weekend, but many paddlers arrive a week or two early, as there are often river trips and clinics hosted by the Fort Smith Paddling Club happening in the weeks leading up to Paddlefest – it’s a long drive – come on up and stay a while!

## SLAVE RIVER PADDLEFEST

Paddlefest is a week-long event of friendly, water fun held the first weekend in August on the Slave River. The water is warm, the waves are exciting and the people are friendly.

### Example of Festival Events

- Voyageur Canoe Races
- Flotilla across the river with picnic lunch
- Dene Traditional Games
- Kids & Youth Kayak Games
- Kayak Beach Ball Team Race
- International Pool Toy Race on the river
- Beginner paddle down the Playground Rapids
- Advanced Whitewater Rodeo
- Parks Canada hike and interpretive program to the rapids
- Stand-up Paddle Board (SUP) jousting
- Beach Party
- Paddlefest Breakfast
- Paddlefest Awards & Feast

For more information:  
[www.slaveriverpaddlefest.ca](http://www.slaveriverpaddlefest.ca)  
<http://fskayak.webs.com/>  
Fort Smith Paddling Club  
facebook group



# A WINTER WONDERLAND

Each winter pristine snow decorates trees around Fort Smith and gives them a magical appearance. Bright and sparkling with the serenity of the season, winter is a favourite time for many travellers to visit.

## SNOWMOBILING

Winter makes it possible to drive snowmobiles over frozen lakes and rivers and visit spots that are inaccessible in the summer. There are few fences anywhere and the underbrush in the forests is well padded with snow. Locals use snowmobile trails around town for their day-to-day travels. One of them runs parallel to Highway 5 between Fort Smith and Salt River.

A highlight of the season are the Fort Smith Ice & Snow races held every February.

## SNOWBOARDING

The Fort Smith Snowboard Park is the place to be in the winter with one of the best terrain parks in the North! The site overlooks the majestic Slave River, along Marine Drive and includes seven features that let users build skills and develop confidence. From a boardercross run to a 20-foot big air jump, and smaller feature rides, there is fun for all levels. The snowboard park is designed with the whole family in mind, you can enjoy the park whether snowboarding, skiing or tobogganing. There is something for everyone.

## SNOWSHOEING

Don a pair of snowshoes and there is nowhere you can't go. They allow you to walk across deep snow and into the backcountry, travelling as did the hunters and trappers of old.

## SKATING, HOCKEY AND CURLING

The town's hockey arena and curling rink are always bustling with activity and visitors are welcome to participate. Hockey is a central activity in many Northern towns – and Fort Smith is no exception. The arena is busy with programs for virtually every age group, from minor hockey to women's teams and oldtimers. There are also free skating times.

## ICE FISHING DERBY

Every spring, when the days get longer and there's a hint of spring in the air, it's time to go ice fishing. The annual Fort Smith ice fishing derby is a three day long event with an opportunity for two nights of winter camping. There's great camaraderie, good eats, you'll probably catch a big fish and you might even win a prize!

## SO JUST HOW COLD IS IT? AVERAGE DAY TIME FORT SMITH TEMPERATURES

January.....-24° C	-11° F	April.....1° C	31° F	July.....17° C	62° F	October.....0° C	32° F
February.....-20° C	-4° F	May.....9° C	47° F	August.....15° C	58° F	November.....-12° C	11° F
March.....-12° C	10° F	June.....14° C	58° F	September.....8° C	46° F	December.....-21° C	-6° F

The coldest day ever recorded in Fort Smith was -54°C / -65°F in February, 1947.  
The hottest day in Fort Smith was 35°C / 96°F in August, 1981.



# CROSS COUNTRY MECCA

**SUMMER'S SCENIC HIKING TRAILS** can be used for cross-country skiing in winter. The Fort Smith Ski Club has a network of well-maintained trails groomed for classic and skate skiing. The club trails wind through the boreal forest and offer panoramic views of the river and surrounding landscape. They start at the Fort Smith Nordic Centre three kilometres east of town.

**FORT SMITH** has the longest running ski club in the NWT. Started in the sixties by a group of enthusiasts who skied in the tracks with heavy, wide military skis, it has grown into a large, active club for young and old of all abilities. Located three kilometers east of Fort Smith just off Highway 5, a network of 15 kilometers of groomed classic and skating trails winds through old growth forest with stunning views of the Slave River Rapids. The trails and world-class biathlon range have been the training ground for national team athletes and won the praise of Olympians Sharon Firth and Brendan Green.

Activities include biathlon, skiing and snowshoe programs for both recreational and competitive members. The popular annual Thebacha Loppet held on the first Saturday in March is the oldest ski tour in Western Canada. It follows an ancient 27-kilometer trail once used by aboriginal residents and the early explorers to portage the rapids.

The Nordic Centre offers a variety of services: a waxing facility, youth ski and biathlon pro-

grams and 15 kilometers of groomed skating and classic trails.

Popular social gatherings such as the annual Flaming Pumpkin Ski & Decadent Desserts are hosted at the Nordic Centre as well as the Polar Cup biathlon and Nordic Ski races.

**THE THEBACHA LOPPET**, which is held on the first Saturday of March, is the oldest classic ski tour in Western Canada. It began officially in 1973 although skiers had used the route since it was cleared for Centennial celebrations in 1967 when local residents walked all night from Fort Smith to Fort Fitzgerald on the summer solstice followed by people on horse back. Later that year on the winter solstice snowshoers repeated the journey with dog teams sweeping the trail.

**SPRING SKIING** is at its finest in March when the temperatures have warmed, the sun is bright and the snow is abundant. There are trails and distances for all skills and abilities. Skiers and snowshoers can choose to do the entire 30 kilometers from Fort Fitzgerald in Alberta to the Fort Smith Nordic Center on the NWT border or they can start from one of three trailheads; fifteen kilometers from Halfway, eight from Mountain and the Woodpecker loop is ideal for children and beginners, is three kilometers.

**IT'S A GREAT FAMILY EVENT** with everyone from Jackrabbits and grannies to national team members participating.

## THINKING ABOUT SKIING THE LOPPET?

### CHOOSE YOUR DISTANCE

- Fort Fitzgerald to Goose Island: 9.5 km
- Goose Island to Halfway/Pelican Rapids: 7.7 km
- Halfway/Pelican to Mountain Portage: 5.3 km
- Mountain Portage to the Fort Smith Ski Club: 5 km
- Total Distance Fort Fitzgerald to the Fort Smith Ski Club: 27.5 km

### WHAT YOU'LL EXPERIENCE:

- 27 km of Groomed Tracks
- Breathtaking views of the Slave River
- Warm fires at each aid station
- Snacks and drinks along the trail – lots of home made cookies!
- Chilli, soup and buns
- Après ski hot tub and sauna at the Fort Smith Rec Centre
- The famous tradition of the Potluck Loppet Dinner!

For more information:  
Fort Smith Ski Club  
PO Box 1226, Fort Smith, NT, XOE 0P0  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FortSmithSkiClub/>



# WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK

**CANADA'S LARGEST** national park, a stunning example of the northern boreal plains, is sprawled on Fort Smith's doorstep. With 44,807 square kilometres in Northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories, Wood Buffalo National Park is the size of Switzerland.

**BEAVER**, Slavey and Chipewyan Aboriginal people inhabited the Wood Buffalo region for more than 8,000 years, long before fur traders arrived in the early 1700s. The Beaver and Slavey left the area as the fur trade moved west, and the communities around the park are now mostly comprised of Cree, Chipewyan, Métis and non-Aboriginal people.

**WOOD BUFFALO** National Park was created in 1922 to protect the area's endangered wood bison, a herd that now totals more than 5,000. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983 because it has one of the largest free-roaming and self-regulating bison herds in the world, the last remaining natural nesting area for the endangered whooping crane, unique salt plains, some of the finest examples of gypsum karst landforms in North America and vast undisturbed expanses of boreal wilderness.

**ALSO IMPORTANT** is the Peace-Athabasca Delta, one of the largest inland freshwater deltas in the world. All four North American flyways for migratory birds

pass through this massive delta. The park is also home to many wildlife and bird species including black bears, wolves, moose, lynx, marten, wolverines, foxes, beavers, sandhill cranes, hawks, eagles and owls.

**THE PARK** has endless forests of spruce, jack pine, trembling aspen, birch and tamarack. Bison wander freely through the park and can often be seen along Highway 5 passing through Wood Buffalo. Red-sided garter snakes have their most northerly hibernation area in the park and emerge towards the end of April to mate before migrating to their summer feeding grounds.

**THE LAKES** are pure and clear and the largest karst terrain in the world reveals amazing sinkholes, underground rivers, caves and sunken valleys. On hot summer days, sheets of pure white salt, forced up from an ancient seabed, crystallize on the Salt Plain flats. The footprints of bison, bears, wolves, fox, moose, sandhill cranes and other wild animals can be seen almost everywhere.

**THE PARK'S** interpretive centre located in Town in the federal building features videos about the park, exhibits, maps, backcountry registration and other information.

**CONTACT** Wood Buffalo National Park and The Town of Fort Smith Visitor Centre at 867-872-7960. The Road, Trails and Events Hotline is 867-872-7962.

## TOP FIVE ACTIVITIES

1. Explore the salt-encrusted landscape of Canada's only salt plains. Bask in their beauty from the top of the escarpment or hike down the trail to discover saline springs, brilliant white salt mounds, and a diversity of salt-tolerant plants and animal tracks!
2. Bring the kids for some family-oriented fun! Summer festivals not to be missed include the Pine Lake Picnic in July and the Thebacha and Wood Buffalo Dark Sky Festival in August.
3. Discover the lunar landscape at Grosbeak Lake. Wander among the salt-eroded boulders left by glaciers long ago in this fascinating salt-encrusted ecosystem.
4. Dip your paddle during a wilderness canoe trip through the region's beautiful northern waterways. Take a side trip to historic Sweetgrass Station, a premium backcountry destination.
5. View the bountiful wildlife – WBNP is home to many animals including wood bison, black bears, moose, wolf, lynx and many bird species including the elusive whooping crane.



# SPEND A NIGHT IN THE PARK

## SWEETGRASS STATION

Located south of the Peace River on the edge of vast meadows within the Peace-Athabasca Delta, Sweetgrass Station is a perfect destination for a wilderness backcountry trip. It is a pristine and wild landscape where you will see the buffalo roam, hear the howl of the wolves that follow them and maybe even see a few. The trip begins with a canoe trip or motor boat up to the south bank of the Peace River, at a spot known locally as Sweetgrass Landing.

A 12-km hiking trail will lead you through the boreal forest where you will come across remnants of old bison corrals and two cabins. The corrals were built in the mid-1960s and used in the historical round-up of bison herds for anthrax vaccinations.

## PINE LAKE CAMPGROUND

Pine Lake, located 60 km south of Fort Smith, is one of the main recreation areas in WBNP and also where the self-registration campground is located. There are 19 non-serviced sites, three of which are pull-through and suitable for larger RV units. Each site is equipped with campfire pits or hibachis and a picnic table. Drinking water, firewood, outhouses and a playground can be found in the campground. The sites are close to the Pine Lake Day Use Area where you can spend the day at the beach! Pine Lake Campground is open from the May long weekend to the end of September.

## KETTLE POINT GROUP CAMP

This beautiful lakeside facility features a large, cozy log building, tenting area, beach, fire circle, firewood, picnic tables, an outhouse and a playground. The minimum group size is 8 people and reservations are required. Please call 867-872-7960 to make your reservation beginning April 1.

## PINE LAKE RENTAL CABINS

The Pine Lake Rental Cabins overlook beautiful Pine Lake. Enjoy the rustic style and cozy comfort of cottage living! The two log cabins are equipped with most everything you need except for bedding, food and water. Hiking, canoeing, swimming and dark sky gazing are all available nearby! Cabins can be reserved from the May long weekend to the end of September. To make a reservation please call 867-872-7960 beginning April 1.

## BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING

Wood Buffalo National Park is huge - a great way to really experience it is to get out into the backcountry. There are designated backcountry camping sites at Rainbow Lakes and Sweetgrass Station or you can take the less beaten path and find your own unique overnight destination. A backcountry camping permit is required and you must register/deregister with the staff at the WBNP Visitor Centre. Remember that your safety is your personal responsibility. Make sure you are well prepared for your chosen activity and route.

## WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK INFORMATION

Please remember to book your backcountry camping permit and get detailed itinerary and safety information from staff at Wood Buffalo National Park well in advance of your trip.

**Fort Smith Main Office & Visitor Information Centre**  
Phone: (867) 872 – 7960  
24-hour hotline: (867) 872 – 7962  
Email: wbnp.info@pc.gc.ca

**Fort Chipewyan Satellite Office**  
Phone: (780) 697 - 3662

**Hours of Operation**  
Visitor services are available from 9:00 am – 6:00 pm

**OPEN ALL YEAR ROUND**



# A SKY ALIVE WITH LIGHT

**THE NIGHT SKIES** over Fort Smith offer the most intense viewing of the Aurora Borealis - or northern lights - in the world. This is true thanks to the town's proximity to the auroral oval, a band of energy that rings the North Pole and makes this a key location for maximum aurora activity.

**ON CLEAR NIGHTS** when the northern lights are active, the skies around Fort Smith are awash with green, yellow, pink and sometimes red dancing lights. Since the aurora covers the whole sky, it feels like you are privy to a private light show. The lights brighten and dim, undulate and shimmer in a truly awe-inspiring manner.

**THE AURORA BOREALIS** streaks the sky year round, but they are difficult to see during the late spring and early summer because of the up to 20 hours of daylight we enjoy. The best time for aurora viewing is cool evenings from September through to the end of March.

**THERE ARE HUNDREDS** of stories and legends in many cultures linked to the northern lights. The Dene people say that you can bring them down and make them dance if you whistle. For many people, seeing them is a spiritual experience.

**THE AURORA PHENOMENON** is created when charged particles from the sun enter the earth's atmosphere. When the particles hit the earth's atmosphere, their energy turns into light and hence the northern lights.

**THE AURORA BOREALIS** is so visible in Fort Smith that an international scientific project established a cosmic activity monitoring station in town. But you really don't need any special equipment to see the northern lights. Just look up at the sky after dark on a clear night. If you're lucky, the aurora will dance for you.

## CAN WE REALLY GUARANTEE AN AURORA SIGHTING?

Yes, we can! Well, almost! Fort Smith is located in an area of 85-95 percent aurora activity? This means that on any clear night, you are almost guaranteed to see some level of aurora activity.

It's a short walk or drive away from the lights of town for a clear, dark sky from which to enjoy our spectacular aurora displays.

**Here are some conveniently located sites for aurora viewing:**

- Fort Smith Star Park located near the airport.
- Salt River Day Use Area in WBNP
- Fort Smith Ski Club
- Pine Lake Dark Sky Observation Site - Sky Circle
- Mountain Portage along the Slave River

## ON THE MONEY!

The above photograph of the Northern Lights was selected by the Bank of Canada for the commemorative \$10 Bill in celebration of Canada's 150th Anniversary! The image was taken 26 kilometres south of Fort Smith, in Wood Buffalo National Park. Local Parks Canada ecologist, John McKinnon, took the photo.





# THE DARKEST SKY

**THE SPECTACULAR AURORA BOREALIS** makes its home in the night skies above Wood Buffalo National Park. This vast oasis of astronomical exploration, almost entirely free of artificial lighting, was recently designated as a dark sky preserve by the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada – the largest in the world!

**COME EXPERIENCE** the deepest, darkest night skies North America has to offer at WBNP's dark sky observation sites. You will see the stars and constellation as you have never seen them before, and enjoy the most breathtaking views of the Aurora Borealis the world has to offer. Join us for star parties, observation events or our biggest star-themed event, our Dark Sky Festival which takes place in late August each year.

## THE DARK SKY FESTIVAL

The Thebacha and Wood Buffalo Dark Sky Festival takes place late August each summer in Fort Smith and Wood Buffalo National Park. The event is northern Canada's largest celebration of space and science and brings stargazers and science fans from all over to the World's largest dark sky preserve. The festival is a partnership between the Thebacha and Wood Buffalo Astronomical Society – Fort Smith's local stargazing group – and Wood Buffalo National Park.

Visitors will find an array of activities to excite their minds and awaken their curiosity. This family-friendly event features presentations

from scientists and experts, stargazing in the deep darkness of the northern sky, planetarium shows, themed hikes, rocket building and launching, workshops, crafts, games and so much more! Past presenters have included scientists, astronauts, and science personalities from Canada and the United States.

The festival is usually held on the 3rd weekend of August. Enjoy the in-town activities on Friday and then spend the weekend camping out at Pine Lake. For more information on the festival and to register, contact the Wood Buffalo National Park Visitor Information Centre at (867) 872-7960 or the Thebacha and Wood Buffalo Astronomical Society (867) 872-0243 or email to: [info@tawbas.ca](mailto:info@tawbas.ca)

## FORT SMITH STAR PARK

Visitors to Fort Smith are able to explore the night sky in northern Canada's only observatory. Located at the Fort Smith Star Park, the observatory's roll-off roof gives stargazers a clear view of our spectacular sky. The star park also includes reclined benches for viewing spectacular displays of the northern lights (Aurora Borealis) and seeking out stars and constellations. There is also, a small observing pad for your camera and tripod or other viewing equipment.

**COME EXPLORE** the stars and the northern lights in Wood Buffalo National Park, and take home memories that will last a lifetime.

## DISCOVER THE WONDERS OF SPACE AND SCIENCE

### Dark Sky Festival Events include:

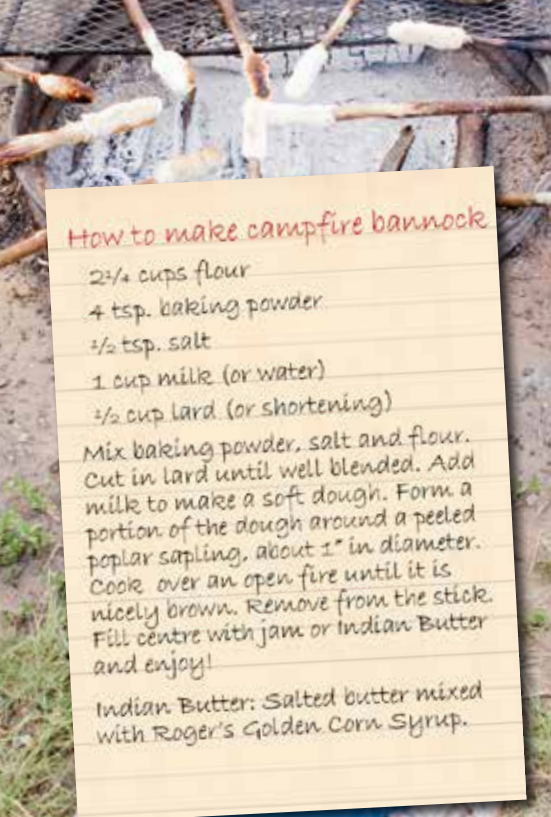
- Circus of Science demonstrations for kids!
- Science Academy – Build model rockets and more!
- Model rocket launches
- Stellar Seminars – Learn about space and science from exciting and engaging experts
- Workshops – Learn about aurora photography, telescopes and more!
- Wood Buffalo National Park Planetarium shows
- Glow Stick Jamboree
- Great food in a beautiful lakeside setting

### For more information or to register:

Visitor Information Centre:  
(867) 872-7960

Thebacha and Wood Buffalo  
Astronomical Society:  
(867) 872-0243

Email: [info@tawbas.ca](mailto:info@tawbas.ca)



# CAMPING

## QUEEN ELIZABETH TERRITORIAL PARK

This park is located about two kilometres from downtown on the way to the airport. It borders the Slave River, has walking trails and a live-in attendant. An open area has fire pits and wood for picnickers. There are also seventeen campsites in the jack pine forest for overnights with fire pits, wood and power. Facilities include bathrooms, showers, an RV pump-out station and a playground for children. The park is open May 15 - September 15. *Reservations are not required. Phone: 867-872-2607.*

## LITTLE BUFFALO RIVER FALLS TERRITORIAL PARK

This campground lies 50 kilometres west of Fort Smith on Highway 5. The park includes campsites, an interpretive trail, a kitchen shelter, picnic tables, fire pits, wood and outhouses. The boat launch to the Little Buffalo River is nearby. Interpretive signs explain how the area naturally regenerated itself after a forest fire burned over much of the land in 1981.

## THEBACHA CAMPGROUND

This year-round facility is perched on the bank of the Salt River, a 20-minute drive northwest of town. The turnoff is west on Highway 5, about 15 kilometres down the highway. The Métis Council's small camp has four cabins, a gazebo and an open hall that includes a kitchen. These facilities can be rented and must be booked through the Métis office at 25 Camsell Street in town. *Call 867-872-2643.*

## PINE LAKE CAMPGROUND

In Wood Buffalo National Park, this park has 15 rustic campsites with picnic tables, hibachis and firewood. Located in spruce forest, they are minutes away from the lake which features good swimming and a grassy picnic area. Self-registration sites operate on a first-come-first-serve basis. Kettle Point Group Camp can be reserved for larger groups. *Phone 867-872-7960 for more information. Day use visitors are welcome at Pine Lake and both territorial parks.*

## BEFORE YOU SET OUT...

All outdoor activities involve some degree of risk. Unstable landscapes, insects, wildlife and adverse weather conditions are all potential hazards that hikers and campers may encounter.

Please make sure that you are well-prepared for your chosen activity and route.

### Safety Tips:

- If you are going on a day hike, let someone know where you are going and when you plan on being back.
- Feel free to call the Visitor Information Centre to let them know your plans: (867) 872-3065
- Make sure to bring adequate food and water with you for your hike.
- If you plan to venture off the trail system, make sure you have a compass and a map of the area.
- Carry bear deterrents and bug spray.
- Do not approach bison. They are at their most dangerous during the rutting season from mid - July to September.

## BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING

For those who prefer a more rustic approach to camping there is no shortage of backcountry near Fort Smith. Rainbow Lakes is just one popular destination for those seeking wilderness adventures. Consult with Parks Canada staff at the Visitor Information Centre in town prior to your departure. Don't forget to register your backcountry camping trip while you're at the Visitor Centre!



# EXCURSIONS

**FORT SMITH** is a modern town surrounded by pristine wilderness and countless lakes to the northeast. This makes it a good base for guided and self-guided fly-out excursions, whether you want to paddle lakes in search of tranquility and wildlife or cast out a line. Pick a lake, any lake, to explore and fish for your supper of lake trout, northern pike or pickerel. Local air charters can drop you off and pick you up at pre-determined spots, or opt for guided and self-guided packages with local outfitters.

## CANOEING AND HIKING

Fort Smith wildlife biologist Alex Hall, of Canoe Arctic Inc., has been leading fly-in canoe trips along the Thelon River basin and surrounding area for more than 30 years. Trips in June, July and August bring paddlers to the most remote rivers in the world to see herds of caribou and muskoxen, white tundra wolves, grizzlies, moose and birds.

## FISHING

Visitors can fly out to North Star Resort or Alcantara Outfitting's camp northeast of Fort Smith to fish for trout, northern pike and whitefish or enjoy canoeing, hiking and bird watching. Lynx Lake Tundra Lodge is located at the headwaters of the Thelon River system, where visitors can fish for trophy class lake trout, northern pike and Arctic grayling.

**RELIANCE AIRWAYS** and Loon Air Inc. operate at the Four Mile Lake floatplane base, about 10 kilometres southeast of Fort Smith. Northwestern Air Lease offers scheduled passenger and cargo service between Fort Smith, Edmonton and Yellowknife. Its fleet includes a Turbo Otter, Beaver and Cessnas on floats, wheels and skis. These planes can be chartered for flightseeing in Wood Buffalo National Park and for fly-out excursions.

## THE ULTIMATE EXCURSION

Fort Smith is the most practical and cost effective access point to the largest wilderness left in North America - the storied Arctic Barren Lands of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

There, on the Canadian Shield, canoeists from all over North America and Europe paddle the most remote rivers left on the planet.

Some of Canada's most legendary rivers are all easily accessed from Fort Smith. Local businesses offer air charter and licensed guiding and outfitting services.

Access these amazing rivers:

- Thelon River
- Back River
- Dubawnt River
- Snowdrift River

Fort Smith is also a great jumping off point to access numerous lakes in the Barren Lands, areas above the tree line and endless options for backcountry adventure and fly in fishing.

## INTO THE WILD

A place can be beautiful, but if it isn't wild it can never be exciting. With close to a half million roadless square miles, the Barren Lands are the most exciting place left on this earth, as big and wild and remote as you can get.

*Fort Smith Outfitter Alex Hall from his book "Discovering Eden"*



# EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

## FEBRUARY

**AURORA COLLEGE WEEK** - An annual event with contests, live music, tours of Aurora College, Thebacha campus, and an outdoor barbecue. Snow or shine! The whole community is welcome.

**ICE & SNOW RACES** - Snowmobile, ATVs, motorbikes and side-by-sides races! They host ice racing, drag racing and cross country that include kids and ladies' classes!

## MARCH

**WOOD BUFFALO FROLICS** - This is a four-day carnival celebrating spring's impending arrival. It includes dog racing, snowmobile racing, a talent show, northern games and competitions, the Mad Trapper's old time dance and activities for children. The "Muffaloose" mascot makes his annual appearance.

**THEBACHA LOPPET** - A cross-country skiing event sponsored by the local ski club. Participants follow a 27-kilometre groomed portion of the Trans Canada Trail between Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Smith. Held on the first Saturday in March.

**THE ANNUAL ICE FISHING DERBY** - Held annually in mid-late March. This is an excellent time to experience winter camping in Canada's North. The derby is held at a location two hours outside of town by snowmobile. Pickerel, trout and northern pike are caught during the weekend event

and prizes are awarded in many categories. It is a chance to do some winter camping.

## JUNE

**SPRING STOCK** - An annual gathering of local and regional musicians. This all day outdoor music event is family friendly and sure to provide lots of fun for everyone.

**THE AURORA OPEN GOLF TOURNAMENT** This event kicks off the golfing season with a 36-hole event at Pelican Rapids Golf and Country Club, sponsored by Aurora College. It offers prizes in a number of categories.

**NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY** - June 21 is National Aboriginal Day and a territorial holiday. It celebrates the Aboriginal culture and history of the area with a variety of events organized by the Salt River and Smith's Landing First Nations, the Town of Fort Smith, and the Metis Association. It's also the longest day of the year so get ready to experience the midnight sun!

**TREATY LAND ENTITLEMENT DAYS CELEBRATION** - Hosted by the Salt River First Nation this event has all the key ingredients to make it a memorable Northern cultural event: A community feast, music, entertainment and a major traditional men's hand games tournament.

## JULY

**CANADA DAY** - July 1st is a big celebration and a grand event in Fort Smith. Join the

community in cheering on the annual parade to Conibear Park, where activities such as live music, family-friendly games, and concessions continue throughout the afternoon. Save your appetite – local officials serve up dinner at an evening fish fry.

**PINE LAKE PICNIC** - It's all about old fashioned fun at the Pine Lake Picnic. Take part in or cheer on your fellow picnickers at the corn-husking competition, tug-of-war, potato-sack race, canoe races, and Dene hand games; while you enjoy a meal of roasted corn, hot dogs and watermelon! For more information go to: [www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/nt/woodbuffalo](http://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/nt/woodbuffalo)

## AUGUST

**THE MERCHANT CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT** - This two-day event is held at the Pelican Rapids Golf and Country Club. Business people and guests from Fort Smith and nearby communities take part each year.

**SLAVE RIVER PADDLEFEST** - World-class big water paddling, 24-hour daylight, warm water and good friends – what's not to love! Paddlefest includes instructional clinics, river trips, and fun, friendly competitions. There are events for kayaks, canoes, voyageur canoes, kids and adults. The Slave River offers every type of paddling imaginable: from flatwater canoeing around beautiful islands to wild Whitewater. For more information: [www.slaveriverpaddlefest.ca](http://www.slaveriverpaddlefest.ca)



# HAVING FUN IN FORT SMITH!

**SUMMER SPLASH ARTS FESTIVAL** - This is a regional festival with a week-long focus on the arts! It includes multiple workshops in visual, performing and culinary arts. Throughout the week there are many Meet-the-Artist events, demonstrations and exhibits. For more information, go to: [www.nlmcc.ca](http://www.nlmcc.ca)

**MUSIC FESTIVALS** - Throughout the summer musicians perform at Riverside Park and venues around town during events organized by the Fort Smith Music Society.

**THEBACHA & WOOD BUFFALO DARK SKY FESTIVAL** - This event takes place in the world's largest Dark Sky Preserve, Wood Buffalo National Park. Invite family and friends to join us for an exciting 4-day journey of exploring the wonders of our universe and the sciences that makes it all work. Exciting science based workshops such as aurora photography, rocket making for the kids and an evening star party are highlights of the weekend! For more information: [www.tawbas.ca](http://www.tawbas.ca)

## SEPTEMBER

**THE TERRY FOX RUN** - This is held in mid-September at locations across Canada, including Fort Smith. The run raises money for the Canadian Cancer Society. Run, walk, bike or blade the 5- to 10-kilometre route to support the cause.

## NOVEMBER

**REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE** - This is held on November 11 at the Community

Recreation Centre. The service includes hymns and readings, followed by a march to the cenotaph site where wreaths are laid. Later, the local Royal Canadian Legion hosts a hot lunch and refreshments.

**MAX ARTS AND CRAFTS CHRISTMAS SALE** - With a focus on locally made, hand-crafted arts and crafts you can find gems for all your loved ones among them outstanding works of photography, jewellery, quilting, weaving, and other fine arts and crafts.

## DECEMBER

**TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY** - Fort Smith lights up for Christmas with a tree lighting ceremony and colourful displays on local homes and businesses.

**ANNUAL COMMUNITY CHOIR CONCERT** Hear Christmas carols and hymns at their most grand during the Fort Smith Community Choir Annual Concert at St. Joseph Cathedral.

**BREAKFAST WITH SANTA** - Meet Santa at the Northern Life Museum and Cultural Centre's pancake breakfast.

**NEW YEAR'S EVE FIREWORKS** - Join the town in ringing in a new year with an all out spectacular firework display next to the Slave River.

*Please check the Town of Fort Smith website for all the latest events: [www.fortsmith.ca](http://www.fortsmith.ca)*

## FORT SMITH LOVES A CELEBRATION

Fort Smith celebrates in a big way with a number of exciting and unique aspects to their events:

- The Muffaloose is a local legend of a rare animal, a cross between a moose and a buffalo! You can see the Muffaloose at our annual spring carnival, the Wood Buffalo Frolics!
- The Santa Claus Float travels the streets of Town every night in December with Santa and Mrs. Claus waving at children peeking out their windows at the sound of holiday music coming up the street!
- Spend some time with Santa! This is one place where you can do more than sit on Santa's lap. You can skate, ski, swim and even visit Santa at the airport!
- Great food! Almost all of Fort Smith's festivals and events centre around amazing food including bannock on a stick, deep fried bannock, moose or bison stew, fresh picked berries like saskatoons and cranberries, as well as locally grown vegetables!



# NORTHERN LIFE MUSEUM

**STEP BACK IN TIME** and immerse yourself in the history of the South Slave. The Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre is where the history of the area is kept and the stories are told. The permanent exhibit takes you from traditional life on the land to the fur trade, the shipyards of the early 20th century, the Roman Catholic Mission, the Canol project and on to the creation of Fort Smith.

**THE NORTHERN LIFE MUSEUM** holds what is considered to be one of the best collections of northern native and early white settlement material in Canada. The collection is comprised of over 17,000 artifacts including traditional work of the Inuit, Inuvialuit, Dene and Métis, as well as mission, trade, pioneer and portage items. Displays include a reconstructed trapper's cabin, trading post, natural diorama, beautiful beadwork and clothing, birch bark canoe and a hands-on exhibit of the fur trade. The natural history exhibit offers the opportunity to view specimens

such as the endangered whooping crane, birds of prey and wood bison at close range.

**EXPERIENCE FIRST HAND** the way of life of indigenous people through an outdoor Aboriginal Cultural Centre. This life sized village will give you a peek into the aboriginal way of life with iconic items such as the tipi. Through guided programs you will learn aboriginal games and the way of life in days gone by.

**MAKE YOUR NEXT EVENT** a memorable experience through a unique venue by bringing a cultural element to your next gathering. Combined with catering partners the Museum will meet your needs by incorporating indigenous and local menu items.

**TAKE HOME A PIECE OF HISTORY** from the gift shop which features aboriginal and local art. From birch bark baskets to native tanned moccasins, you will find the perfect souvenir to remind you of your exceptional journey to the North.

## NLMCC TOURS AND PROGRAMS

- **BEHIND THE SCENE TOURS** - Please call us to arrange small group tours of the hidden collection. Let us cater the tour to your special interest.
- **EDUCATIONAL TOURS** - Offered to larger groups and school classes. Moose, bison, and other animals of the region, plants and their uses, early Fort Smith life, are just some examples of the fun programs we offer.
- **NORTHERN GAMES** - You may be lucky enough to visit our museum while traditional Dene games are being practiced.
- **ELDERS AND STORYTELLING** - Sprinkled throughout the year - an evening with one of our elders.
- **GUIDED TOURS** - Private tours are available by appointment! We can focus a tour around your interests and your schedule! From small private families to large organized groups we are happy to make your experience memorable. Call us to book your tour today!

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit us at: [www.nlmcc.ca](http://www.nlmcc.ca) / email: [admin@nlmcc.ca](mailto:admin@nlmcc.ca)  
phone: (867)872-2859 / fax: (867)872-5808

Tours, educational programming and rental available.  
"Giving Our Past a Future."



## PLANNING YOUR TRIP

**FORT SMITH'S WEB SITE** ([www.fortsmith.ca](http://www.fortsmith.ca)) is packed with activity ideas and useful details for planning your trip, including maps and a description of highlights along the road to Fort Smith. The Visitor Information Centre, located in the Wood Buffalo National Park office, should be your first stop when you arrive in town.

### ON THE ROAD

Mackenzie Highway 35 through northern Alberta, becomes NWT Highway 1 at the 60<sup>th</sup> Parallel, the border between the two jurisdictions where there is an information centre open May 15 - September 15. Just south of Hay River, Highway 5 takes you directly to Fort Smith. Highway 5 is paved except for a short section through Wood Buffalo National Park that is well-maintained gravel. Frontier Coach Lines has two buses each week between Hay River and Fort

Smith. Phone 867-874-2566 for bus schedules and fares.

### THE WINTER ROAD

A winter road is available mid-December to mid-March from Fort McMurray to Fort Chipewyan in northern Alberta. Then a 228-kilometre road travels through Wood Buffalo National Park into Fort Smith. There are several ice bridges to cross and the trip from Fort McMurray will take about six hours. It is important to check on the condition of the road before heading out. Call the park office Winter Road Hotline at 867-872-7962 in Fort Smith or call the Municipality of Wood Buffalo in Fort McMurray at 1-800-973-9663.

### IN THE AIR

Northwestern Air Lease flies from Edmonton to Fort Smith six days a week and offers

scheduled service to and from Yellowknife six days a week. They also offer scheduled flights from Hay River, Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan and High Level.

**FORT SMITH** is the most practical and cost effective access point to the largest wilderness left in North America - the storied Arctic Barren Lands of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. There, on the Canadian Shield, canoeists from all over North America and Europe paddle the most remote rivers left on the planet. Legendary rivers such as the Thelon, Back, Dubawnt, and Snowdrift are all easily accessed from Fort Smith. Local businesses offer air charter and licensed guiding and outfitting services.

*Bring your sense of adventure and a keen interest in meeting new people and exploring new places. You're all set.*

## FORT SMITH VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

P.O. Box 147 Fort Smith, NT X0E 0P0 Canada Phone: 867-872-3065

The Wood Buffalo National Park Visitor Reception Centre is in downtown Fort Smith. Phone 867-872-7960 or write:

### WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK

P.O. Box 750 Fort Smith, NT X0E 0P0 Canada [www.pc.gc.ca/buffalo](http://www.pc.gc.ca/buffalo)

# UNEXPECTED.

**LEARN** about our history as a “Gateway to the North” at Mission Historic Park and the Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre.

**FOLLOW** the mighty Slave River on the Thebacha Loppet, the oldest cross-country ski loppet in Western Canada.

**DINE** at one of our restaurants, a pizzeria, a cafe, a bakery, an ice cream parlour or a health food bistro.

# UNFORGETTABLE.

**WALK** barefoot on Canada's only Salt Plains in Wood Buffalo National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

**TEST** your skill in world-class, whitewater rapids (or be a spectator)! Bring your camera.

**WATCH** the Northern Lights dance across the night sky. This is one of the best places in the world to view this natural wonder.

## AND SO MUCH MORE IN FORT SMITH...

# EXPLORER'S GUIDE



*Wood Bison can be seen along the highway throughout the year. Careful when you're driving - they always get the right-of-way!*

For more information, please contact:



**TOWN OF FORT SMITH**  
P.O. Box 147, Fort Smith, NT X0E 0P0 Canada  
Phone: (867) 872-8400 / Fax: (867) 872-8401  
[townoffortsmith@fortsmith.ca](mailto:townoffortsmith@fortsmith.ca)



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