

SAILS, SHORES, AND SHIFTING SANDS

Saskatoon to Regina via Lake Diefenbaker

While Hwy #11 is the main thoroughfare between Saskatoon and Regina, an alternate route just to the west takes you through significantly different countryside including sand hills, wildlife refuges, three provincial parks, one of the world's largest earth-filled dams, impressive sand dunes, and southern Saskatchewan's largest lake. Most of this route is paved, with the exception of a few access roads.

From Saskatoon, begin by taking Hwy #219 south, known as the Chief Whitecap Trail. About 13 km south of the city, you come to Beaver Creek Conservation Area where Beaver Creek meets the South Saskatchewan River. Displays in the interpretive centre introduce you to the flora and fauna you might see while walking the 8 km of trails that wind through natural prairie, forested valley slopes, along the meandering creek, and beside the sandy riverbank.

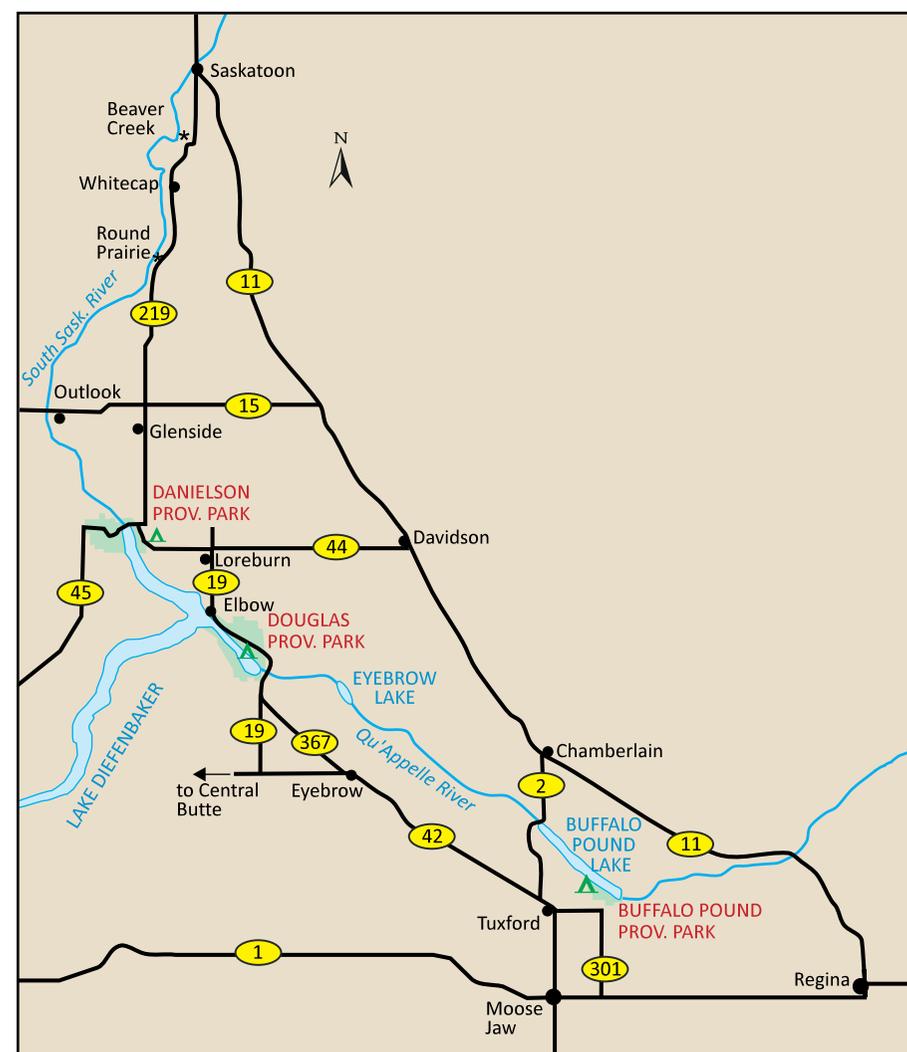


Chief Whitecap Trail.

South of Beaver Creek, the terrain is marked by hummocky sand hills with low shrubs and wooded coulees, and is mostly used for pasture. About 26 km south of Saskatoon, the highway passes through the Whitecap Dakota First Nation, famous for the Dakota Dunes Golf Links, rated among Canada's top golf courses.

Watch for the turn-off to the west to Round Prairie Cemetery, about 19 km south of Whitecap. The Round Prairie area was settled in the 1850s by Métis, and was one of the larger Métis settlements in Saskatchewan. All that remains today is the cemetery. Besides the historic significance of Round Prairie, the drive in also provides spectacular views over the South Saskatchewan River valley.

Hwy #219 crosses Hwy #15, passes beside the village of Glenside, then about 19 km farther south,



makes a sharp turn to the west, ending at the junction with Hwy #44 (N 51.28501 W 106.82378), just east of Gardiner Dam. To the west along Hwy #44, the road crosses Gardiner Dam, and provides access to the west side of Danielson Provincial Park, including the visitor centre. This area, which makes a worthwhile detour, is covered in more detail in the Circle Lake Diefenbaker chapter. To continue south towards Moose Jaw and Regina, turn south on Hwy #44 along Lake Diefenbaker's east shore.

After going south for about 3.5 km, Hwy #44 passes the entrance to Danielson Provincial Park's core area, with campgrounds, lake access, and hiking trails



Hiking trails in Danielson Provincial Park.



Peace Tower in Elbow Community Park.

(N 51.26004 W 106.80189). The access road to the campground goes right beside the trailhead for many of the walks through prairie grasslands, woodland coulees, and lakeshore. Choose among short strolls, loop trails, and a 12.5-km section of the Trans Canada Trail.

Shortly after leaving Danielson Provincial Park, Hwy #44 heads east. At the junction with Hwy #19 (N 51.24183 W 106.58586), turn south past Loreburn to Elbow on the shore of Lake Diefenbaker. The main access road into Elbow (Saskatchewan St.) passes beside the town's museum where you can see a fully furnished pioneer sod house. Keep going to the end of Saskatchewan St. and follow the signs to Elbow Harbor Recreation Site, just south of town (N 51.11258 W 106.60032).

For a short detour on the way, turn right at the first street after you cross



Elbow Harbor.

the railway tracks (just look for the grain elevator). Across the road from the elevator, Elbow Community Park features an urban orchard, and impressive Peace Tower crafted by acclaimed artist Joe Fafard.

The recreation site is home to the Elbow Harbor Marina, a protected cove that can accommodate large sailboats and yachts, and the Harbor Golf Club, a popular 18-hole grass green course with views over Lake Diefenbaker.

Douglas Provincial Park

A little south of Elbow, the highway runs through Douglas Provincial Park. The main access road into the park (N 51.03722 W 106.48069) leads to the core area with campgrounds, picnic sites, beach, boat launch, and other services. You can explore the sandy lakeside landscape along the 2-km Sunset Trail, or set out on the much longer Trans Canada Trail that runs the length of the park near Lake Diefenbaker.

Two interconnected hiking trails begin directly across the highway from the core area—the Juniper Trail (2.5-km loop) and the Cacti Trail (6-km loop), passing through hummocky terrain with a mix of aspen trees and semi-open grasslands. Many plants have adapted to the dry conditions, including pincushion and prickly pear cactus. The best walk, however, is the spur trail about halfway around the Cacti Trail, which leads to the active sand dunes (N 51.04618 W 106.45067). You can walk