

FARMLIVING

CURBING FOOD WASTE GLOBALLY

Former 4-Her Cassandra Chornoboy left a global youth summit in Australia with goals to advocate for food security and sustainability. | **Page 23**



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CLEARWATER LAKE

Explore Manitoba's caves and crevices

Prepare for an adventure among the moss-covered rock formations formed more than 400 million years ago

The forest path brings us to the rim of a rocky cliff overlooking the vivid blue waters of Clearwater Lake. We have to be careful where we step, since the flat-topped cliff suddenly drops into deep, narrow crevices.

Closer to shore, we gaze over a jumble of massive boulders, remnants from a cliff face that collapsed eons ago.

Near the base of a metal stairway next to the shoreline, we enter a hidden enchanted world of cramped passageways, dark cave openings, and rock formations that look like a giant had been playing with oversized Lego blocks. Bare multi-coloured rocks alternate with those cloaked in a thick layer of emerald green moss. Ferns and other moisture-loving plants thrive in the shady, damp environment.

It feels as if we're in some exotic tropical garden, yet we're in Manitoba, only a 40 kilometre drive from The Pas.

Unlike most big lakes fed by rivers and streams bringing silt and debris, Clearwater is fed by springs, making the water exceptionally clear. Although the lake is up to 39 metres deep in places, its translucence can play tricks.

Frequent visitors to the lake told us of the time that a paddle fell out of their boat and sank. Try as they might, the paddle was visible but far out of reach, short of diving down to fetch it.

The area is protected in Clearwater Lake Provincial Park. Visitor facilities spread out along the south shore include a swimming beach and two full-service campgrounds. Fishing is popular, especially for highly prized lake trout that thrive in the cold, deep water.

The caves self-guiding trail leads to the strange rock formations. The dolomite cliffs comprise sedimentary rock similar to limestone, only harder, formed some 400 million years ago when this area was part of a shallow sea. Since the last ice age, continual freezing and thawing have fractured the rock. With less resistance on the cliff face, the cracks closer to the edge widened into crevices, and some eventually collapsed.

Many fractures are so straight that they seem cut by some gigantic precision machine. Some cracks are barely wide enough for a toothpick, while you can easily walk through others.

The cave-like structures, caused by haphazardly falling rocks, provide shelter for various wildlife, such as squirrels, weasels, garter snakes and bears.

That's something to think about



ABOVE, BELOW: Narrow crevices and fractured rock formations keep visitors on their toes near the shore of Clearwater Lake, Man.

ROBIN & ARLENE KARPAN PHOTOS

TALES FROM THE ROAD



ARLENE & ROBIN KARPAN

in case you get curious about what lurks in those small, dark places.

Some boulders are covered in circular patterns called stromatolites, fossilized blue-green algae that grew in mounds on the ancient seabed. Others have wavy patterns, fossilized ripple marks giving us yet another glimpse into the primordial past.

Above all, this is a surprising and visually stunning gem, not something we expect to find hidden away on a forested lake shore.

To get there, head north of The Pas on Highway No. 10, east on Highway No. 287, then turn at the sign for the caves.

The trail is a fairly easy kilometre or so walk, taking you to the rim of the cliffs where you look down over the formations.

Seeing things up close means going to the bottom next to the lake shore and scrambling through the jumble of enormous boulders, which could be wet and slippery. The east end of the cliffs has a metal staircase that is part of the trail, and at the western end, you'll find a rope tied to trees that you hang onto while going up or down.

Be prepared with proper shoes, plenty of bug goop, and above all, a sense of adventure.

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