

Eastend Auto Tour #2

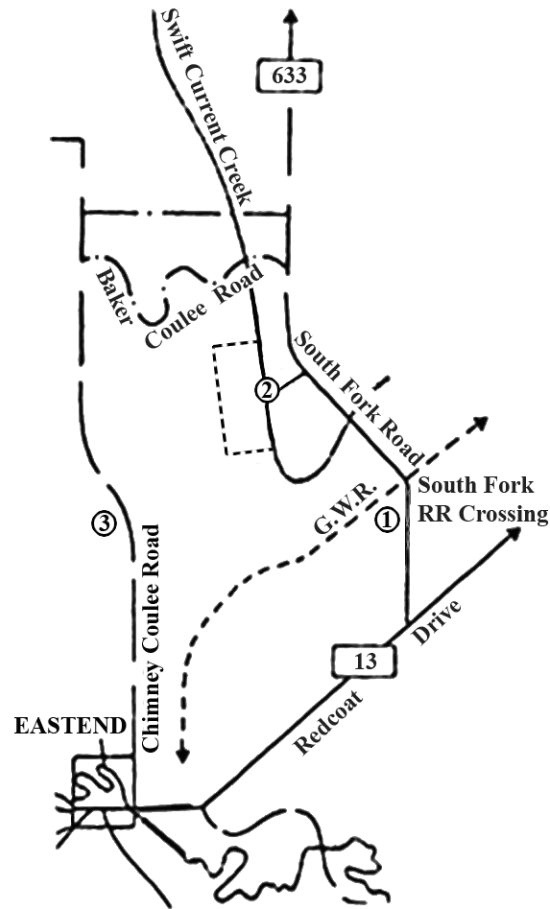
The Bench



From a beautiful regional park.....



To a coulee filled with wild western history



Bench Map

PLEASE NOTE:

The Town of Eastend is in no way responsible for the condition of the tours. Use at your own risk and discretion.

Some Pre-Trip Information

PLEASE NOTE:

- The Bench Auto Tour takes place on highway, gravel and dirt roads. Road conditions vary with the weather, and the tour is not recommended in wet conditions. Be especially careful in winter, sudden snowstorms can arise.
- Only leave the main road when the brochure mentions it is safe to do so. The prairie environment is very fragile and must be protected.
- The Bench and surrounding coulees are filled with wildlife such as whitetail and mule deer, antelope, coyotes, rabbits, and perhaps even moose. While best viewed at dusk and dawn, be sure to lower your speed to avoid a potential collision.

Let's Get Started...

GPS map datum: WGS84

To begin this roughly 40km journey, take Highway #13 east out of town. While traveling along the highway, you can spy the eastern range of the Cypress Hills to your left. They were originally named 'Mun-a-tuh-gow' or 'beautiful highlands' by the Cree Indians. When French fur traders explored the area, they mistook the Lodge pole Pine trees for Cypress trees and thus called the area "Montagne de Cypress" or 'Cypress Hills'.

After about 9km, **49°33.365/108°42.905** turn left (north) onto the South Fork Road (#633). Along the way you can notice a high peak to your left. It's named Anxiety Butte after an early party of surveyors who camped at the base on Dan Pollock's ranch. Dan Pollock was a retired NWMP sergeant who had been in the Riel Rebellion, commanded the guard at Riel's execution, and headed the Eastend detachment. Although distinguished, Pollock was regarded as a worrier.

This amused the survey party boss, and thus the peak was named Anxiety Butte. Once in the valley, you'll notice a small cluster of buildings to the left side of the road.

1. South Fork

49°35.614 / 108°43.136 This small cluster of buildings is all that remains of a former prairie town, South Fork. The town and railroad were built in 1914. The town was the site of a horrific train wreck in 1915. A locomotive hit a snow bank, sending it off the track in the process. A fireman was killed while the engineer was badly burned. After South Fork, continue your drive north to Pine Cree Regional Park.

2. Pine Cree Regional Park

49°36.744 / 108°45.249 Pine Cree is perhaps one of the prettiest parks in all of Saskatchewan. With a small gurgling creek running through a peaceful wooded valley, it's hard not to feel at home. Everett Barker founded the park in 1970 with funding from the Saskatchewan government, rural municipalities, and local towns.

Once in Pine Cree, be sure to shut the vehicle off and take a quick stroll along the creek. The creek is stocked with brook trout. The park offers camping sites, an outdoor kitchen, barbecues, and washrooms. It's the perfect place for a quick picnic. If you feel adventurous, a hike to the nearby hilltops could reveal teepee rings. The park is named after the local Cree Indians and the abundant pine trees in the area. There is also an old hermits cave in the park.

Once you're through exploring Pine Cree, continue your journey north. About 3 km's north of the park, **49°38.411 / 108°45.629** turn left (west) onto the

Baker Coulee Road. You'll notice the surrounding hills don't seem so high anymore, the reason being that you're now on the North Bench. The Bench is a large plateau that rises above the prairie. The area is known for its fickle weather. This area is also the source of the creek running through Pine Cree, Swift Current Creek. After traveling roughly 5 km's on the Baker Coulee Road you'll meet Chimney Coulee Road, **49°38.414 / 108°49.710** turn left (south). After 6.5 km's of driving you'll encounter Chimney Coulee, an area filled with history.

3. Chimney Coulee

49°34.259 / 108°48.362 There is a small parking lot located at Chimney Coulee, and you are allowed to explore the local area. A short walk will take you to an interpretive hut.

Chimney Coulee is named after the stone chimneys that were left as the last remnants from the Metis settlement. However, the Metis were by no means the first people here. Indians frequented the area and Issac Cowie established a Hudson Bay trading post here in 1871. In his first winter he traded for 750 grizzly bear hides and 1500 elk hides. The grizzly bears are now long gone from the area while elk are only found in relatively small numbers. While the trading was good, Cowie knew the situation would become tense. The whiskey trade was on the rise, causing trouble between the Assiniboine and Blackfoot tribes.

With no police force around, Cowie decided to leave his post in the spring. As he was riding out, he met nine Assiniboine Indians wanting to scavenge for goods. Although he warned them that the local Blackfoot was hostile, they continued along. Shortly after Issac heard gunfire and saw smoke rising from the coulee. Later that summer Metis

hunters found the post burnt to the ground and the bodies of nine scalped Assiniboine.

In 1873, 60 Metis families settled in the coulee. They even had a Roman Catholic Church. In 1876 the North West Mounted Police established a post in order to keep an eye on the Sioux Indians camped nearby. Sitting Bull had recently fled from the Battle of Little Big Horn, making for a tense situation. While his tribe was welcome, it was conditional on their good behavior. The problem was that the Sioux far outnumbered the small police force. If trouble arose the police would have had a tough time containing it. However, trouble never came. By 1887 the whiskey traders had been run out, the Riel Rebellion was over, and Sitting Bull had returned home. The post was moved closer to the White Mud River, where a small community eventually grew up (Eastend).

While the remnants of the old west may have left, the coulee wasn't empty for long. Corky Jones, well known in Eastend history for his history and palaeontology knowledge, ranched here from 1902 till 1918. Various settlers also made camp here while on their way to homesteads throughout the valley.

After Chimney Coulee, your tour is close to being finished. To return to town, continue south along Chimney Coulee Road.

Hope you enjoyed your tour!

