

DINOTOUR 2023

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Summary

Dinotour 2023 allows members of the general public to learn about palaeontology with some of the world's greatest dinosaur hunters, Dr. Philip J. Currie, Dr. Eva Koppelhus and Dr. Corwin Sullivan, from the University of Alberta. Proceeds generated from this tour support the work of the Dinosaur Research Institute (DRI), a non-profit charitable organization which finances dinosaur research in western Canada by graduate students and scientists. This tour features the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum in Wembley Alberta. Over 4 days, participants will experience different aspects of palaeontology:

- 1) studying the geology and natural history of the area while rafting down the Wapiti River
- 2) prospecting for fossils while hiking the Kleskun Hills Natural Area and Red Willow River Hadrosaur Quarry
- 3) excavating dinosaur fossils from the Pipestone Creek Bone Bed
- 4) searching for microfossils using microscopes and learning about the storage and display of fossils at the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum



Figure 1 Excavating Dinosaur Fossils under the supervision of Dr. Philip Currie. Photo courtesy of Travel Alberta.

Tour Description

Dinotour 2023 is scheduled for Friday July 7 to Monday July 10, 2023 (inclusive), departing from our hotel, the Holiday Inn Express in Grande Prairie. Due to the space limitations for some of the activities (e.g. only 6 guests can excavate dinosaur bones at once), the guests will be divided into 4 teams, with maximum 10 people per team. Each team cycles through the 4 different days of activities, coming together to share their experiences during the evening meal each night. The 4 days of activities are:

1. Tour the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum galleries, collections and preparation areas. Search for microfossils such as teeth, vertebrae and scales from dinosaurs, fish and reptiles using microscopes at the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum. Enjoy free time to explore the museum on your own.
2. Excavate dinosaur fossils from the Pipestone Creek Bone Bed under the supervision of staff from the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum.
3. Raft down the Wapiti River with experts from the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum.
4. Explore the Red Willow River Hadrosaur Quarry. Hike and explore the Kleskun Hill Natural Area.

To make it easier for our guests, the accommodation for the night before the tour (Thursday, July 6) and the final day of the tour (Monday, July 10) is included in the tour price. This helps avoid people arriving late or leaving early. All the meals and activities are included in the tour price. Free transportation to and from the Grande Prairie airport (as provided by the hotel) and free buffet breakfast at the hotel, also reduce the stress for our guests and the organizers.



Figure 2 Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum. Photo courtesy of Travel Alberta.

Organizing the Tour

Because the tour was scheduled for July 7-10, 2023, organization started in September 2022 to coordinate the activities with the museum, and book the hotels, restaurants and bus transport. Note that in some cases, charter buses must be booked more than one year in advance. The price was set in November, 2022 and registration brochure finalized. Because this is a fund-raising tour, the required profit was included while computing the price of the tour. All those on the waiting list and participants of previous Dinotours were then notified. Several people registered, paying their \$500. CDN down payment on the same day that they received the information. Full scale advertising started at the beginning of January, 2023.

The field guide is currently being revised, with the help of the other leaders.



Figure 3 Hiking Kleskun Hills with Dr. Philip Currie. Photo by Dr. Eva Koppelhus.

Advertising the Tour

A good website is essential to attract new participants. Even before the tour details were finalized, the Dinosaur Research Institute (DRI) website (www.dinosaurresearch.com) posted information about the upcoming tour (with the details “to be announced”). As a result, more than 40 people signed up to be informed of the details as soon as they became available. As soon as the price was finalized, the brochure and registration form (PDF fillable) was loaded onto the website (<https://dinosaurresearch.com/images/Dinotour2023TrifoldBrochure.pdf>). All those on the

mailing list plus participants in previous Dinotours were sent the registration form as soon as it was finalized. Then in early January, 2023, articles describing Dinotour 2023 were submitted to the newsletters of other palaeontological organizations (such as The Reservoir, the Alberta Palaeontological Society, BC Paleo Alliance, Western Interior Paleontological Society, Pterodactyl Roamin Club, Austin Paleontological Society) and to the magazine Prehistoric Times. The Travel Alberta website (<https://atis.travelalberta.com>) provided another venue to advertise (without cost) across Canada and internationally (USA, Australia, Europe). The brochure and registration form were made available to pick up at Alberta Palaeontological Society meetings and events such as Paleo 2023. A friend tweeted about Dinotour 2023 to her network of paleo followers. As of January 23, 12 people had already registered, coming from all across Canada and the USA. So far, most participants are teenage boys accompanied one parent. I anticipate the tour will fill before the June 1, 2023 deadline.

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