Seven Day Pre-Congress Tour Overview

7 Day, 6 Night Pre-Congress Tour

JULY 10-16, 2016

The 7 day Pre-Congress Tour runs from Sunday, July 10 to Saturday, July 16, 2016 with buses departing from Saskatoon, SK on the morning of July 10 from the Parktown Hotel.

The tour will showcase native rangelands, from the mixed grass prairies of southern Saskatchewan, to the foothills and majestic Rocky Mountains of Alberta. Stops on the tour include rangelands that are managed federally, provincially, and privately. Ample opportunity is given to explore the landscape and interact with managers. Along with different management strategies, participants will receive training on Canadian rangeland monitoring. Participants will be able to explore the “Canadian Western” with a night of cowboy music and poetry at the historic Reesor Ranch. And one cannot come to Canada and not see the Rocky Mountains. Participants spend two nights in Banff, Alberta, which includes a gondola ride up Sulphur Mountain. This tour covers a lot of ground, but showcases some of Canada’s most beautiful rangelands.

DAY 1 - JULY 10, 2016

On the first day of the tour you will learn about the federal and provincial pasture systems in Saskatchewan. The first stop is just south of Saskatoon at the Rudy Rosedale Pasture, one of 60 PFRA pastures in Saskatchewan that have been transitioning out of federal government control since 2012. Here the pasture manager will talk about the PFRA pasture system and how his particular pasture is managed. Your journey will continue south to Danielson Provincial Park, located on the northwest tip of Lake Diefenbaker. Here you will learn about irrigation in the area and the Gardiner Dam.

After lunch you will travel southwest to one of the largest and oldest provincially-managed pastures in the province, Matador Community Pasture, near Kyle, SK. At Matador tour participants will enjoy a horse-drawn wagon ride, a walking plant ID session, and have an opportunity to learn to rope western style.
Seven Day Pre-Congress Tour Overview

Day One wraps up with supper at the Semi-arid Prairie Agricultural Research Centre (SPARC) in Swift Current, SK. Established in 1920, SPARC is one of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s 19 research centres across Canada. It focuses on research of the dryland regions of the Canadian Prairies, and specifically on dryland farming systems. The research centre is comprised of 930 hectares of research land, with 140 ha being native grasslands.

Day 2 - July 11, 2016

Day 2 will kick off with a tour at the previous evening’s supper venue – the Semi-Arid Prairie Agricultural Research Centre. Then you will travel south to Grasslands National Park. Established in 1981, it is the only Canadian national park protecting a mixed-grass prairie ecosystem. On the West block one will find the town of Val Marie, as well as the Frenchman River Valley, and in the East block there are the badlands of Rock Creek as well as the Cretaceous-Paleogene boundary.

After lunch learn about the species at risk such as Plains bison, black-footed ferret and swift fox that have been re-introduced here to their natural habitat. There are also dinosaur remains, historical First Nations encampments, and pioneering artifacts and homesteads to be explored.
The afternoon and evening will be spent at the historic Reesor Ranch (www.reesorranch.ca) which has been operated by the Reesor family in the Cypress Hills for 111 years (since 1904). The ranch highlights early pioneering and ranching on the prairies. Fourth generation ranchers, Scott and Theresa Reesor, will provide supper followed by an evening of entertainment complete with a bonfire and cowboy poetry. Go for a horseback ride or take a walk to explore the history of this family-owned ranch.
Seven Day Pre-Congress Tour Overview

**DAY 3 - JULY 12, 2016**

Spend your morning at the Reesor Ranch with horseback riding and a stock dog demonstration by a former World Stock Dog Champion, Dale Montgomery whose dog Zip won the 2012 World Championship at the Calgary Stampede.

![Montgomery's border collie 'Zip'
Photo credit: Paper Moon Photography](image)

Participants will spend the afternoon learning near Elkwater, AB. Visit two benchmark sites and have hands-on experience from the developers of Canada’s “Range Health Assessment System”, Barry Adams (also a 2016 Congress Keynote Speaker) and Gerry Ehlert. This system is used to monitor native range on the Canadian Prairies. Your day will conclude with supper and a hotel stay at the Medicine Hat Lodge in Medicine Hat, AB.

**DAY 4 - JULY 13, 2016**

On Day 4 you will continue west into Alberta, travelling through the town of Hays to Travers Dam, with stops at oil and gas reclamation sites to learn about natural recovery versus seeding of native species on these sites.

In the afternoon you will visit Bar S Ranch, owned and operated by Clay and Avril Chattaway and their sons, Morgan and Scott. Bar S Ranch was established in 1900 west of Nanton, AB by Clay’s grandfather. Today the 20,000 ac ranch includes both cow-calf and yearling enterprises. The Chattaways were the 2015 recipients of the prestigious Environmental Stewardship Award which recognizes an operation that demonstrates leadership in environmental stewardship.

After the ranch tour, board the bus for a scenic drive through the foothills and into the Rocky Mountains to the town of Banff, Alberta where you will spend two nights.

![Clay Chattaway
Photo credit: Alberta Beef Producers](image)
Day 5 will start off with a gondola ride up Sulphur Mountain with an unscheduled afternoon for you to spend sight-seeing throughout Banff National Park.

Banff National Park is Canada’s first national park (and the world’s third national park) established in 1885, located in the majestic Canadian Rockies. It consists of over 6000 square kilometres of beautiful and diverse landscapes, from valleys and meadows to mountains and glaciers. Grizzly bears, cougars, elk, woodland caribou, wolverines, and lynxes are just some of the 53 species of mammals that call Banff their home. Banff National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, aiding in protection of approximately 20,000 kilometres of Canadian Rockies.

10 Things to do in Banff

1. Ride the Banff Gondola
2. Hike Parker Ridge Trail
3. Go on a River Rafting Excursion
4. Sight see along Bow Valley Parkway
5. Walk around Lake Minnewanka
6. Go through Tunnel Mountain Trail
7. Shop on Banff Avenue
8. Visit the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies
9. Take a dip in the Banff Hot Springs
10. Enjoy afternoon tea at Banff Springs Hotel

For more ideas, visit tripadvisor.ca
Day 6 - July 15, 2016

On Day 6 you will start making your way back east, stopping for a tour of the Quarter Circle X Ranch near Cochrane, Alberta. Located in the Jumping Pound watershed, take in the scenery - Rocky Mountains to the west and city skyscrapers to the east. Harvey and Margaret Buckley have owned and operated Quarter Circle X Ranch for more than 70 years. In 2014, the Buckley family placed a conservation easement on 800 acres of their property to protect it from urban development.

After lunch in Strathmore, Alberta the tour bus will head to the Mattheis Research Ranch, a Rangeland Research Institute managed by the University of Alberta. The Mattheis Ranch was donated to the University of Alberta by Edwin and Ruth Mattheis in 2010. At 12,300 ac, it is the largest gift of land ever made to a Canadian university. Approximately 800 head are rotationally grazed on the ranch each year from May to October. Managing landscapes with multiple uses - cattle production, conservation, oil and gas production – is part of the research addressed here.

The day will conclude with supper and hotel stay in Hanna, Alberta.
DAY 7 - JULY 16, 2016

On the last day of the tour, you will visit the Chinook Applied Research Association (CARA) near Oyen, Alberta. Established in 1979, CARA is a producer-directed association focused on applied research, demonstration and extension in east central Alberta in the areas of crops, livestock, soil and water. It is one of nine ARECA sites in the province of Alberta. CARA Manager, Dianne Westerlund will provide a tour complete with a visit to one of the Association’s producer cooperators, to learn about projects on drought management, invasive weed management, and extended winter grazing.

After lunch in Kindersley, Saskatchewan you will travel to the Bear Hills between Biggar and Rosetown, SK to tour the Craig family’s cow-calf operation. Leam and Crystal started out as grain farmers, but converted their operation to forage over 25 years ago. Today they run a 350 cow-calf commercial operation that retains it calves to sell as long yearlings. A phrase that seems to have affected Leam’s grazing management is “If you want more grass – plant another post!” The Craig operation uses high intensity, short duration grazing management in attempt to maximize pasture productivity and animal production. In 2015, Leam and Crystal were happy to transfer their operation to their son Nathan.

After touring the Craig’s, the tour bus will drive a little over an hour back to Saskatoon where the Congress will start the following day on Sunday, July 17th.