

Eastern Parks

St. Malo Provincial Park



Introduction

St. Malo Provincial Park is one of southern Manitoba's recreational gems. It's a popular site for many families, friends and groups who come back year after year to take advantage of the park's natural setting, fun and pleasant atmosphere. Classified as a recreation park, it provides outdoor recreational opportunities and experiences in a natural setting. As a recreation park in Manitoba's system of park lands, St. Malo Provincial Park:

- accommodates a serviced campground and picnic areas
- provides beach and swimming opportunities
- serves as a day-use area capable of accommodating large groups



Chokecherries

History

Those who settled here in the late 1800s were welcomed by aspen/oak forest, tallgrass prairie and abundant wildlife. The Rat River, which originates in the Sandilands, flows into the present St. Malo reservoir and then proceeds westward to join the Red River. The area's main land transportation route was the Crow Wing Trail, an oxcart route that was used to move goods and provisions. From St. Boniface, it ran south through St. Pierre and west of St. Malo, eventually arriving at St. Paul, Minnesota.

Around 1875, the French Colonization Aid Society, which was established in St. Boniface and Montreal, was formed to encourage French-Canadians to settle on the prairies. The organization's plans included attracting Quebec residents. Its larger goal, however, was to bring back to Canada the French-Canadians employed in factories in Massachusetts. Immigrants from Massachusetts and Quebec established themselves in the Rat River Settlement area, which consisted of Otterburne and the parish of St. Pierre-Jolys. The parish of St. Malo, founded by Father Louis Malo in 1878, was also included in the Rat River Settlement. Over the years, with development of a north-south railway, highways and the establishment of businesses, St. Malo grew into a bustling town.

In 1958, due to growing concerns about the area's water supply, the Rat River dam was built by the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration to create the St. Malo reservoir. The reservoir was initially created to provide the Rat River downstream with a consistent flow of water to be



Reservoir water flowing
into Rat River

used by surrounding towns and farms. But before long, the community had found another use for it. In June 1961, the reservoir's northern shore was designated as St. Malo Provincial Park to provide camping and day-use facilities.



Poison ivy. Avoid touching any part of this plant!

Things to see and do



St. Malo beach

A brisk swim on a hot day is refreshing and invigorating. The absence of powerboats gives canoeists and boardsailors opportunities for calm waters and peaceful quiet that might not be found on other, more popular lakes. If water sports aren't on your agenda, bathe in the sun and watch the clouds roll by as you lie on the warm sand. The two beaches offer ample space, and the beach volleyball courts will encourage people to get on their feet and show off their skills. After a tough game on the court, stop at one of the many picnic tables and gather family and friends for a well-deserved meal. Or, if you forgot your lunch, take a short walk to the concession stands to satisfy your appetite.

Although the park is only about one kilometre from the town of St. Malo, the natural setting of the area would never betray this fact. Sunlight streams through the trails that are lined with trembling aspen, bur oak, balsam poplar, chokecherry and wild plum. These trails are popular for hiking and bicycling in summer, while snow converts them to cross-country ski trails in winter. All of the trails are suitable for novices, which means the whole family can take part in an afternoon excursion.

Regardless of the activity that you choose, you'll be thankful at the end of a summer day for the basic and modern campsites that can be found nestled in the forest or along the water's edge. Cooking supper over a firepit leads to fireside talks under a brilliant sky of stars. Campers' fires set against the black night are reminiscent of a prehistoric village setting; the aroma of smoke wafts through the campground and the occasional sound of laughter can be heard in the distance.

Clean, friendly and fun, St. Malo Provincial Park has been, and continues to be, the ideal spot for family or group functions. Amenities, natural setting and a wealth of community spirit make St. Malo a natural choice for a lazy summer day or an active summer vacation.



Saskatoon blossoms

Interpretation



Wild rose

With the introduction of its very own interpretation program in the summer of 2000, park visitors now have opportunities to better understand the park's importance to the community. Campfires, guided hikes, amphitheatre, family, and children's programs can help to develop people's understanding of the natural and cultural history of the park. This understanding affects them for years to come, and further grows into appreciation, and then protection. Whether the programs are about white-tailed deer, water conservation or tallgrass prairie, they are offered throughout the park in fun, interactive, and innovative ways.

In 2004, the new Tallgrass Parkland Self-guiding Trail was opened. This 1.6-km (return) trail introduces visitors to two of Manitoba's 12 natural regions—the Aspen/Oak Parkland and the endangered Tall Grass Prairie. Pick up a brochure at the trailhead and the campground office. Allow one hour for the hike.



Rosehips

Remember, a Park Vehicle Permit is required year-round.



Snowshoe hare

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