

Red Deer River

Drumheller to Dinosaur Provincial Park

Why Go

Great Badlands scenery and gentle river paddling.

Duration of Tour(s)

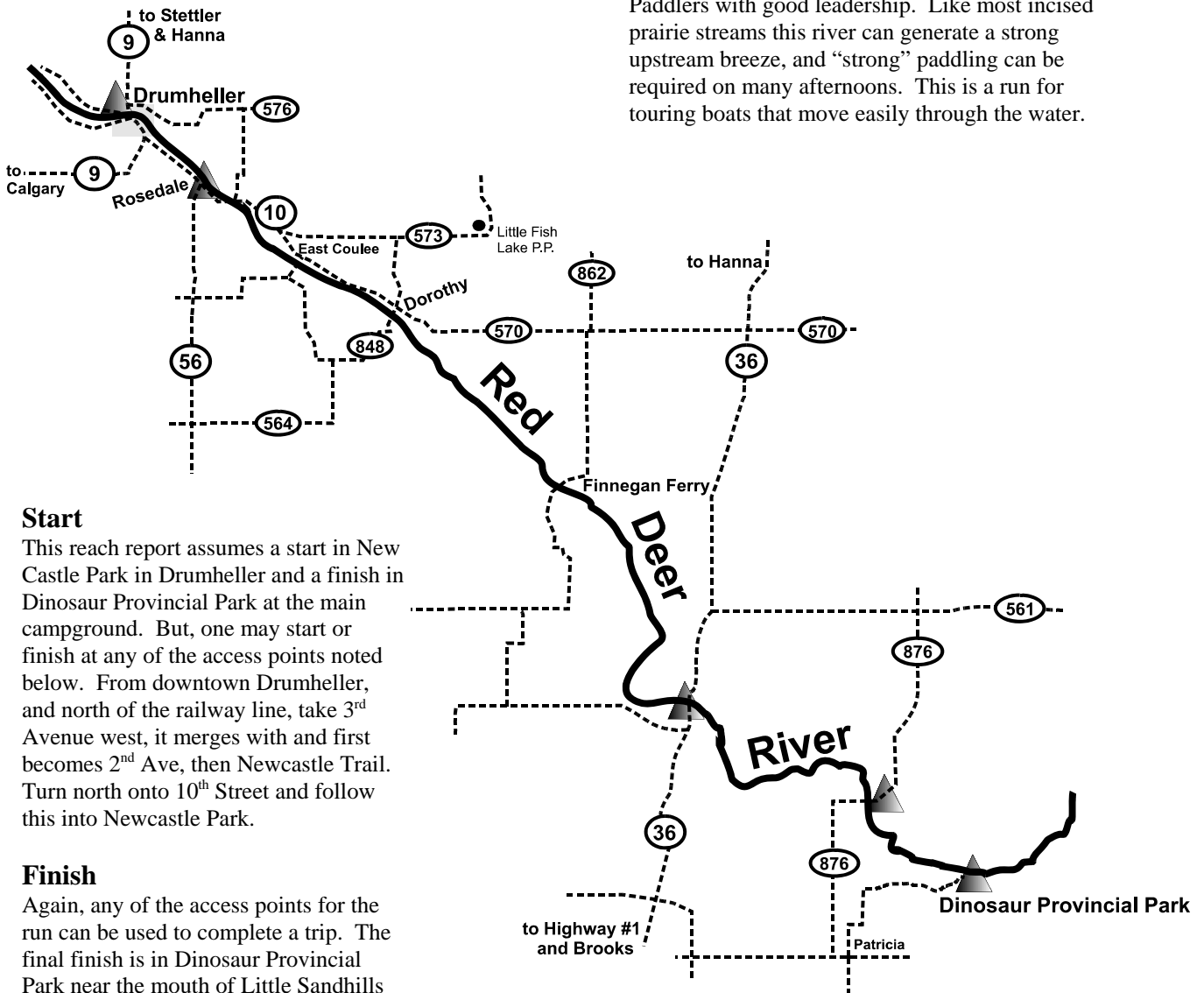
- * 145 km
- * 4-6 days, with both half and full day trips available.



near East Coulee

Classification

1. Rapids: Class 1
2. Skill of Paddlers: This a fine run for Novice River Paddlers with good leadership. Like most incised prairie streams this river can generate a strong upstream breeze, and “strong” paddling can be required on many afternoons. This is a run for touring boats that move easily through the water.



Start

This reach report assumes a start in New Castle Park in Drumheller and a finish in Dinosaur Provincial Park at the main campground. But, one may start or finish at any of the access points noted below. From downtown Drumheller, and north of the railway line, take 3rd Avenue west, it merges with and first becomes 2nd Ave, then Newcastle Trail. Turn north onto 10th Street and follow this into Newcastle Park.

Finish

Again, any of the access points for the run can be used to complete a trip. The final finish is in Dinosaur Provincial Park near the mouth of Little Sandhills creek, this is best accessed from the Day Use area.

Intermediate Access and Distances

Location	Elevation <i>metres</i>	km	km	km	Access / Bank Rapids / Class	MGRS	Gradients m/km
		down	up	between		datum	
Newcastle Park, Drumheller		145	0		right bank	UC 798 032	
River Grove Park / #9 Bridge		144	1	1	left bank	UC 809 031	
	678	142	3				
Rosedale, bridge & Rosebud River		135	10	8	right bank	UB 866 978	
#10 Highway Bridge		131	14		be wary of old bridge piers still in the river		
Willow Creek		126	19		left bank	UB 930 927	
East Coulee / #569 Bridge		119	26	16	right bank, upstream of bridge	UB 968 877	
Dorothy / #848 Bridge		107	38	12	left bank, upstream of bridge	VB 071 819	
Crawling Creek		98	47		right bank	VB 121 758	
Homestead Creek		89	56		left bank	VB 183 703	
Finnegan Ferry		80	65	27	either, be wary of the tow cable	VB 240 643	
Galarneau Creek		75	71		left bank	VB 284 616	
Abandoned Railway Bridge		70	75			VB 308 589	
Bullpound Creek		68	77		left bank	VB 319 575	
Douglas Island & Creek		52	93		right bank	VB 329 449	
Emerson/#36 Bridge & Campground		42	103	38	right bank, upstream of bridge	VB 368 410	
Three Owl Island		36	109			VB 413 372	
Matzhiwin Creek		31	114		right bank	VB 426 324	
#876 Bridge / campground / Steveville		14	131	28	left bank, downstream of bridge	VB 568 320	
Coyote Island		12	133			VB 572 310	
Onetree Creek		5	140		right bank	VB 596 250	
	632	2	143				0.3
Dinosaur Prov. Pk. / Little Sandhill Creek		0	145	14	right bank	VB 636 238	

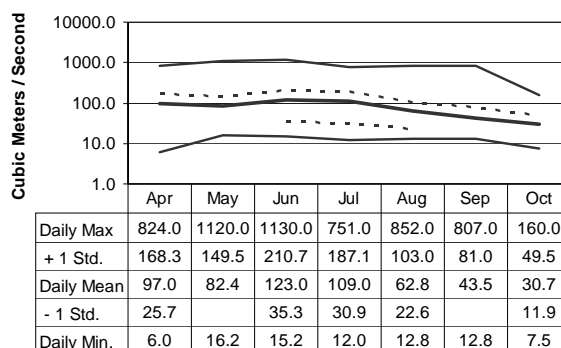
Gradient

This is a flat run that consistently drops approximately 0.3 m/km.

River Volume and Flow Rate

Best paddling on these reaches are with the Drumheller station reporting flows between 50 CMS and 150 cms. Some paddlers suggest this river can be run with as little as 20 cms, and record floods have exceeded 1100 cms. Flow velocity varies from approximately 3 km/hr at 100 cms to nearly 8 km/hr at 800 cms.

Red Deer River at Drumheller



1915 to 2003

Maps

1 - the ARCA *Lower Red Deer Map* is a must for this reach, and actually covers the river through to Estuary, Saskatchewan, on the South Saskatchewan. This map with an up-to-date Alberta Highways map is all you really need.

2 - NTS 1:250,000	NTS 1:50,000		
82 P Drumheller	82 P/1 Finnegan	82 P/7 Drumheller	82 P/8 Dorothy
72 L Medicine Hat	72 M/4 Pollockville	72 L/13 Wardlow	

Camping

1 - An established campground is available in Drumheller at River Grove Park (403.823.6655). Other established sites on or near the river can be found: Pinters Campground (403.823.5810) in Rosedale, Emerson/ #36 Bridge (403.362.2772), Steveston / #876 Bridge, and Dinosaur Provincial Park (403.378.4342).

2 - Wilderness camping is possible all along this reach, below the high water mark, and on the many mid-stream islands. Firewood is a problem and paddlers should depend on stoves, fuel and briquets from home for all cooking. Water in large quantities (5-10 L / person / day) should be carried and for those on extended day trips, water filters or other treatment must be carried. Potable water adjacent to the river is hard to find.

Wildlife

As one might expect wildlife on this run varies with how close the river is to the communities and highways that are along the stream. Like the other prairie rivers in Alberta one can expect to find both mule and whitetail deer in the river valley, antelope towards the lower portion of this run, coyotes, foxes, skunks and badgers. Bird life can be very abundant and is most visible in the early portion of the summer. The large hawks, falcons and great blue herons frequent the river valley all summer. Snakes, including rattlesnakes, can be found on this reach, and children must be warned and taught basic preventative behaviors. Dogs are best kept on leash.

Trip Notes

This is one of the most popular canoe trips in the province. Except during floods this is a slow-moving stream with few hazards. At normal flows bridge piers, old bridge piers (i.e. Highway #10), sandbars, the occasional boulder, and side channels with a fallen tree are about the only in-river hazards that one must keep an eye open for. The sun, heat, upstream breezes, and thunderstorms are generally larger concerns than the river. This is a stream for novice paddlers. Take your time for side hikes, relaxed paddling, lots of just floating, and enjoy the ever changing scenery.

Other Reaches

The runs below Dinosaur Provincial Park down to the confluence with the South Saskatchewan, and onto (7km) Estuary Ferry in Saskatchewan (189 km in total), or just 38 km to the next good access at the Jenner Ferry, are well documented in the ARCA map to the *Lower Red Deer River*. The upstream runs from Red Deer to Drumheller are all in the ARCA map to the *Middle Red Deer River*. The runs closer to Red Deer have a little more current and the Badland reaches begin at about McKenzie Crossing (highway #590).

Other Local Activities or Destinations

If car camping and plagued with inclement weather, there is still much to do in this area. First priorities would be visits to the Royal Tyrrell Museum just west of Drumheller, and the Museum Field Station in Dinosaur Provincial Park. These two facilities provide a world class study of dinosaurs and the palaeontological history of the area. Other activities can include visits to the Atlas Coal Mine at East Coulee, the Hoodoos along Highway #10 near Willow Creek.

Rentals and Shuttle Services

Taxi service in Drumheller seems to have deteriorated as of August 2009, and my one recent contact would only offer the possibility of shuttle service if an extra driver was available – check the yellow pages and give whoever is listed a try!