

Grain, Gold and Grizzlies

Farm Study Tour 2022



Date	Activity	Overnight
DAY 1 Thu, Jul 7 Meals on plane, then dinner in Victoria	<p>Flights depart various Australian capitals for same day (thanks to crossing the International Dateline) arrival into Vancouver. By mid-morning we clear customs and then transfer to our short connecting flight to Victoria, Vancouver Island.</p> <p>At around 500 km long and 100 km wide, Vancouver Island offers a wide and fantastic range of sights and activities and the island is also home to a thriving agricultural industry which benefits from a maritime climate of warm, dry summers, mild and wet winters and a long frost-free season.</p> <p>The best way to minimise the effects of jet-lag is to get plenty of exercise and sunshine as soon as possible after the flight. And there's no better way to do this than by enjoying a visit to the world famous Butchart Gardens on Vancouver Island. Then onto Victoria.</p>	CANADA Victoria, Vancouver Is
DAY 2 Fri, Jul 8 B,L	<p>Victoria is the capital of British Columbia, and sits on the craggy southern end of Vancouver Island. With abundant parkland, it's known for outdoor activities. The city's British colonial past shows in its Victorian architecture, including stately Craigdarroch Castle mansion. We enjoy guided touring of this beautiful location today, as well as visiting some farms, before some free time this afternoon and evening.</p>	Victoria
DAY 3 Sat, Jul 9 B,L,D	<p>A leisurely morning to take in the sights of this beautiful and unique portside capital at your own pace. Then board our chartered float plane for a spectacular flight and water-landing arrival into downtown Vancouver.</p> <p>We are met at the float plane terminal by our local Vancouver guide and bus. We then enjoy a guided city tour to help get our bearings before checking in to our hotel. Dinner tonight is at one of Vancouver's premier restaurants.</p>	Vancouver
DAY 4 Sun, Jul 10 B,L	<p>This morning we enjoy more touring to the north of Vancouver before lunch and a presentation on small crops farming in the hinterland. We return to Vancouver and a free afternoon and evening.</p>	Vancouver
DAY 5 Mon, Jul 11 B,L,D	<p>We board our charter coach this morning and visit the Viterra grain handling facility to discuss the Canadian grain scene as well as grain handling/storage logistics in a country faced with vast haulage distances (sound familiar?).</p> <p>We then continue east into British Columbia and the fertile and very scenic Fraser and Okanagan River valleys. Most of the annual agricultural revenue generated in the province of British Columbia comes from these two mighty river valleys. The Okanagan, centred on the town of Kelowna, is a region of particular beauty. We will visit farms in the region before arriving at Kelowna for overnight.</p>	Kelowna
DAY 6 Tue, Jul 12 B,L,D	<p>This morning we continue our journey eastward bound for Canada's stunning Rocky Mountains. Once again we will see a spectacular array of scenery as we travel across ranchlands, along rocky lakeshores, over high mountain passes into Alberta Province and through the remarkable tunnels that form part of the rich history of the Canadian Rockies.</p> <p>Today's highlights include Craigellachie, where the last spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway was driven, the climb over Rogers Pass, Kicking Horse Canyon, and, of course, the glaciers and snow-capped peaks of the Canadian Rockies. At the summit of Rogers Pass we visit the Discovery Centre to learn about the discovery of the pass and the amazing engineering feats and human endurance that went into the construction of this section of the transcontinental railway.</p> <p>We continue on to the beautiful town of Banff for overnight.</p>	Banff, Alberta

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DAY 7 Wed, Jul 13 B,L,D	<p>This morning we visit the nearby and majestic Moraine Lake and afterwards, the equally majestic Lake Louise to drink in its incomparable beauty. We also enjoy a very special high tea in the luxurious Fairview room of the Fairmont Chateau. There's time for a paddle on Lake Louise, or whatever else floats your boat, before returning to Banff for some free time.</p> <p>An option this afternoon is an unforgettable 30 minute chopper flight over the Mt Assiniboine Glacier region. The flights depart from Canmore, around 15 minutes east of Banff. Dubbed the 'Matterhorn of the Canadian Rockies' Mt Assiniboine rises majestically to 3611 metres along the Great Divide. The surrounding valleys, glaciers and icefalls are astounding.</p> <p>This evening we take a spectacular gondola ride to the top of Sulphur Mountain, overlooking Banff, where we will enjoy dinner.</p>	Banff
DAY 8 Thu, Jul 14 B,L,D	<p>Today we board our charter coach and travel north. We are travelling the Icefields Parkway – one of the most spectacular drives in the world. This is a wilderness habitat for elk, big horn sheep, moose, mountain goats and bear. Waterfalls, emerald lakes, alpine meadows and snow-capped peaks complete the scene as we wind along the shoulder of the Continental Divide.</p> <p>The Columbia Icefield covers nearly 325 square km. Melt water from the icefield feeds rivers emptying into three different oceans: North to the Arctic; East to the Atlantic; and, West to the Pacific.</p> <p>We continue onto Rocky Mountain House – nestled on the eastern foothills of the Rockies and the edge of the Great Plains – for overnight.</p>	Rocky Mountain House
DAY 9 Fri, Jul 15 B,L,D	<p>With our Canadian farm specialist on board, we set out from Rocky Mountain House this morning to meet with farmers and ranchers typical of the region. Over the next few days we will visit highly successful farming operations. We will also visit a Hutterite colony where very traditional lifestyles belie the sophistication of their large scale farming operations.</p> <p>Our general route takes us from Rocky Mountain House, through to Red Deer and onto Drumheller.</p> <p>Nearing Drumheller, we enter an area of amazing landscapes dubbed the "badlands". We will discover that this moniker does an injustice to the very good farms, and farmers, in the area.</p> <p>The unique soils and geology around Drumheller also create a unique window into the world of fossils, particularly dinosaurs. We visit The Royal Tyrrell Museum – a world-famous centre of palaeontological research – located on the outskirts of town. We also enjoy a BBQ tonight at a unique country pub – the Last Chance Saloon – located a short distance out of Drumheller.</p>	Drumheller
Day 10 Sat, Jul 16 B,L	<p>Some more farm visits this morning as we head towards Calgary – and it's Stampede time! Our hotel is in downtown Calgary.</p> <p>You can head out to the nearby Stampede Park (about a 5 minute light rail ride or a 20 min walk) to visit the many farming, livestock and handicraft exhibits or take in some of the live music on offer.</p> <p>We are also invited to visit The International Room within the Stampede grounds. Here you can meet with local – and very friendly – ranchers and farmers over a cool drink or cuppa.</p> <p>This evening we have tickets for the spectacular Stampede Variety Show.</p>	Calgary
Day 11 Sun, Jul 17 B	<p>It's free time in Calgary this morning – or out at Stampede Park. We have grandstand seats booked for 'Showdown Sunday' – the finals of the rodeo events contested by the best cowboys and cowgirls in the world – and for the biggest rodeo prize money in the world. Then it's a free evening.</p>	Calgary
Day 12 Mon, Jul 18 B,L,D	<p>Time to saddle up and head south this morning into even more magnificent farming and grazing country to the south of Calgary.</p>	Lethbridge

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Day 13 Tue, Jul 19 B,L,D	<p>We visit a farm and feedlot in the area as well as call into a unique exhibit – one of the world’s oldest, largest and best preserved buffalo jumps. The World Heritage listed (and quaintly named) Head-Smashed-In-Buffalo-Jump bears witness to a method of hunting practiced by native people of the North American plains for nearly 6000 years.</p> <p>This archaeological site preserves the remarkable history of the Plains People. Because of their excellent understanding of the regional topography and bison behaviour, the native people were able to hunt bison by stampeding them over a cliff. We will have dinner on the way back to Calgary for an evening flight to remote Whitehorse in the famous Canadian province of Yukon Territory. We are met by our Yukon and Alaska guide and bus-driver and transferred to our hotel.</p>	Whitehorse, Yukon Territory
Day 14 Wed, Jul 20 B,L,D	<p>Straddling the Yukon River, Whitehorse is the capital and largest city (28,000 pop’n) of Yukon Territory.</p> <p>Successful farming in this region takes passion and hard work to produce high quality products. Cooperative equipment, new farming techniques and funding have helped improve the viability of farms. The Yukon has a sub-arctic continental climate, with temperatures reaching as high as 30°C in the summer and as low as –50°C in the winter. The average frost-free period ranges from 93 to 21 days which varies substantially from year to year at any location.</p> <p>Long hours of daylight during the summer promote rapid growth and compensate, to some extent, for the cooler summer temperatures. Adequate heat units are the largest environmental/agricultural constraint. Rainfall ranges from about 200 mm to more than 400 mm.</p> <p>On the outskirts of Whitehorse we meet with some canine friends (and their handlers). We learn how a sled dog team is trained and how the dogs are worked. After lunch we visit the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Center – a great introduction to the natural and cultural history of the region.</p>	Whitehorse
Day 15 Thu, Jul 21 B,L,D	<p>This morning we meet with some very intrepid grain and hay growers before joining the Klondike Highway for our journey north to Dawson City. The Klondike Hwy loosely follows the original winter overland route to the Klondike goldfields, centred around Dawson City, and was first used in 1902.</p> <p>This scenic drive offers views of the Tintina Trench (geological fault) which extends from the Northern Rocky Mountain Trench in British Columbia, Five Finger Rapids and many spectacular lakes. Keep an eye out for moose, black bear, elk, caribou, fox and other wildlife.</p> <p>Late afternoon arrival into Dawson City, our home for the next two nights.</p>	Dawson City
Day 16 Fri, Jul 22 B	<p>Dawson City was the centre of the Klondike Gold Rush. In 1896 it was a quiet First Nations camp – two years later it was a thriving city of 40,000 people. By 1899, the gold rush had ended and the town’s population plummeted. The population dropped again after World War II when the Alaska Hwy bypassed it 480 km to the south.</p> <p>The current official population is around 1400 but it is a well-serviced community with modern facilities. The history of the town is well preserved with its original architecture and ‘olde world’ businesses, including Diamond Toothed Gerties Gambling Hall! Today we visit some of the local attractions including a chance to try your luck at panning for gold. Then it’s a free afternoon and evening.</p>	Dawson City
Day 17 Sat, Jul 23 B,L,D	<p>The Yukon has a grandeur and beauty only appreciated by experience. Few places on the planet have been so unchanged over the course of time. This morning we cross the Yukon River (by ferry) and travel the famous ‘Top of the World Highway’ where we cross into Alaska. We travel through magnificent valleys and open taiga forests and join the historic Taylor Hwy. This is a route through gold mining history.</p> <p>Communities such as Jack Wade and Chicken (originally named after Alaska’s state bird, the Ptarmigan, but early residents couldn’t spell it!), established almost overnight. Miners quickly wore a series of trails, later becoming the Taylor Hwy. We pick up the route of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline as we continue on to Delta Junction.</p> <p>Just out of Delta Junction we call in on Wrigley Farms, a 1700 acre operation with the only commercial wheat and barley flour mill in Alaska.</p>	UNITED STATES (Alaska) Delta Junction

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Day 18 Sun, Jul 24 B,L,D	<p>This morning we will visit Delta Meat and Sausage – a family owned processing and farming business priding themselves on using only Alaskan grown produce.</p> <p>We then continue south, along the spectacular Richardson Highway, to the port of Valdez, the southern terminus of the Trans-Alaska pipeline which brings oil from Prudhoe Bay on the Arctic Circle for distribution around the world.</p> <p>Valdez is also the gateway to Prince William Sound (PWS), 25,000 square kilometres of protected waterways, islands, fjords, as well as 10,000 glaciers. The region offers habitat for whales, porpoise, sea otters, sea lions and seals. Bear, deer, goats and sheep inhabit the mainland.</p>	Valdez
Day 19 Mon, Jul 25 B,L,D	<p>This morning we board the beautifully named 65 foot Lu-Lu Belle for a cruise across PWS to spot some of this wildlife in the protected bay. A highlight will be getting up close to the mighty Columbia Glacier, the second-largest tidewater glacier in North America and largest in Prince William Sound.</p> <p>The cruise will finish at Whittier on the other side of PWS where our coach re-joins us and will take us to a fantastic resort hotel, near Girdwood, for overnight.</p> <p>On the way, we will visit the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center, a sanctuary for the preservation of Alaskan native wildlife in a natural setting. The wildlife includes bison, elk, bears, musk ox, moose, wolves and reindeer (you won't come across many of them in the Australian bush!).</p>	Hotel Alyeska Girdwood
Day 20 Tue, Jul 26 B,L	<p>Some free time this morning to enjoy the ambience of Alaska's premier year-round resort destination.</p> <p>The resort is nestled in a lush valley surrounded by mountain peaks, hanging glaciers and spectacular ocean views. You can enjoy the Aerial Tram – a scenic ride from the Hotel Alyeska to the top of Mt Alyeska – and take in the frosty views of PWS, up to seven hanging glaciers and endless peaks deep into the Chugach Mountain range.</p> <p>We then take the short journey to Anchorage – with a population of over 300,000, Anchorage is home to around 40% of all Alaskans.</p> <p>We have a guided tour of the city on arrival before some free time for last minute shopping or your own exploration of town.</p>	Anchorage
Day 21 Wed, Jul 27 B,L,D	<p>We will have a morning tour to the Palmer region – the salad and vegetable bowl of Alaska. This is a place where world record monster size vegetables grow in the 24-hour daylight and grass and grain crops grow through to harvest in less than 100 days.</p> <p>We also visit a musk ox operation where we are introduced to these unique paleolithic ruminants. The non-profit Musk Ox Farm is dedicated to the domestication of the musk ox, an Ice Age mammal that once roamed the earth alongside sabre-tooth tigers and woolly mammoths. This once-endangered animal produces an annual harvest of qiviut, the finest wool in the world.</p> <p>Back to Anchorage for some free time before a farewell dinner this evening at the fantastic Bridge Seafood Restaurant. The restaurant sits on a small bridge over Ship Creek, a salmon stream in the heart of Anchorage. If the salmon are running there will be plenty of fisher-people on the banks of the creek and you may even see a bear or two from your table.</p> <p>If you haven't already tried Alaskan King Crab or Halibut (fish), now is the time to remedy that.</p>	Anchorage
Day 22 Thu, Jul 28 B	<p>Transfer to airport for homeward flights today – arriving Australia Saturday, July 30.</p> <p>Or you might be continuing your adventures with some independent travel plans. There are a number of bear viewing tours of (varying lengths and prices) which can be done from Anchorage and there is also an Anchorage to Fairbanks train journey (the Denali Star route) which is popular. If you are interested in staying on, we can provide more details on the better options available.</p>	