Return to Grand Pré

Cajuns will find national historic site
the heart of Acadia

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"Je reviens au berceau de l’Acadie." The return song of Congress Mandan Acadia literally means, "I'm returning to the cradle of Acadia." And what a spot signifies the cradle of Acadia, situated in the heart of what is now known as Nova Scotia, then Grand Pré.

The original Acadian village is gone, burned by the British in 1755 when Acadians were displaced from Grand Pré in a grand dérangement, a brutal exile involving thousands. The church that once stood in Grand Pré, destroyed during the exile, has been replaced by a replica. Yet, visitors can return to the site of the original settlement and feel a connection to the homestead of the Acadians.

Situated in an area which was a major center of Acadian activity from 1680 to 1755, Grand Pré National Historic Site commemorates the period of colonization and settlement of the area by Acadians as well as their deportation in 1755. Inside the memorial church, visitors can view artifacts of colonizing Acadians, such as pottery and utensils, as well as the roll call of Acadian prisoners being boarded on to ships for worldwide ports during the exile.

The grounds contain an authentic blacksmith shop, gardens, the original willow trees planted by Acadians and a statue of "Evangeline," the famous heroine of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem by the same name, about a young Grand Pré girl separated from her intended during the exile.

On one hand, the park inspires pride in Acadian heritage by visiting Cajuns. On the other, a tragic memory lingers over the land much like the mist coming off Minas Basin. If one stands near the decaying willow trees and some trees, for instance, the original Acadian dykes, built by colonists to hold back the massive tides, can be seen in the distance. These centuries-old dykes, resembling small levees, exist now on private property that boasts signs warning visitors to not trespass.

Equally sobering are the towns surrounding the park, municipalities with English names, English and Scottish culture and few Acadian references. Still, the park remains the soul of Acadia, perhaps because it was once the largest concentration of Acadians, perhaps for its famous poem and heroine.

Evangeline's Beach in Nova Scotia, just outside the Grand Pré National Historic Site, is the spot where Acadians were deported beginning in 1755.

When to go

The park is offering several special events during Congress Mondial Acadia. From July 21 to Aug. 15, the park will be open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. From July 20 to Aug. 7, Jonathan Fowler of Saint Mary's University will conduct an archeology field school, where amateur archeologists age 18 and older can join for one day, searching for artifacts and clues related to the life of the Acadians in Grand Pré before 1755. To date, Fowler's archeological digs at Grand Pré have unearthed thousands of artifacts and some of the remains at least one pre-Extermination Acadian building.

Traveling to Canada

- Legal tender is the Canadian dollar, which is divided into 100 cents like U.S. currency. Bills come in $5, $10, $20, $50 and 100 dollar denominations; some are 1, 5, 10, and 20 cents and 1 ("lonny") because of the loon on the local and 2 ("loonie") dollars. Most hotels, stores and restaurants will accept U.S. currency but they will give you a lower rate than banks or airports. Large hotels usually offer a rate that approaches those at the back. Banks are usually open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- Smoking has been banned in most government offices and some bars, restaurants and other public places. Some cities have banned smoking outdoor.
- The drinking age is 18. No open containers are allowed in vehicles and alcohol cannot be consumed in public spaces such as parks and beaches.
- The speed limits in Canada are posted in kilometers (Canada is on the metric system), but rental car speedometers will be in kilometers as well. Temperratures will be listed in Celsius as well.
- Nights will be cool, especially near the Bay of Fundy and the Atlantic seaboard. Bring sweaters and jackets and dress in layers. During the day temperatures will rise, so sunscreen and insect repellant may be necessary.
Fullerton High First In S.L.T.
Basketball Meet
And Pine Prairie Second
Baseball Outlook At Southwestern Is Very Promising

Grand Pré
Archeology at the Nova Scotia Museum, will talk about ecological differences between Acadian and Mi’kmaq settlements.
Other Grand Pré activities include:
- Thibodeau Family Reunion, Aug. 1.
- The Natural World of Grand Pré, Aug. 2 and Aug. 12.
- Gerroir Family Reunion, Aug. 3.
- Acadie in the 18th Century, Aug. 4.
- Old Maps and Modern Maps of Acadie, Aug. 5.
- Acadian Stories and Songs, Aug. 6.
- Mi’kmaq Day, Aug. 8.
- Louisiana Day: The Cajuns Come Home to Grand Pré and the Bahineaux, Greiner, Landry, Martin and Trahan Family Reunions, Aug. 9.
- 400 Years of Traditional Dances, Aug. 10.
- Children’s Day, Aug. 11.
- The Acadian Diaspora, Aug. 13.
- Mass and Closing Ceremonies, Aug. 15.

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