

We Are Now In Fort Saskatchewan

When I first heard the name Fort Saskatchewan, I assumed that the community had started out as a military fort, but I was wrong. It had been established in 1875 by the Northwest Mounted Police as a 34 cell guard house used to house prisoners who got a little too wild in the West. The community gets its name from its location on the North Saskatchewan River, 25 kilometers northeast of Alberta's capital city of Edmonton. Fort Saskatchewan was incorporated as a village in 1899, became a town in 1904, and a city in 1985.

In 1915, a new \$200,00 provincial jail had to be built to replace the original guard house, and over the next 70 years, more additions were made such as more cells and a stand-alone power plant. By 1973 the jail employed 220 locals and housed both male and female offenders. It was replaced in 1988 by a new provincial correctional center built south of Hwy 15 on 101 St. The original cell blocks were demolished back in 1994, but the Warden's House and one of the buildings from the complex remain standing today, as part of the historical site.

According to the information at the historical site, doing time in the early days of the goal, was considered hard time, since all offenders were expected to work to earn their keep. They worked the facilities farm, cut and piled wood, cleaned and maintained the prison buildings. Socializing or contact with the outside world was not allowed, but they were encouraged to attend church services, and further their education.

The 2012 census puts the population of Fort Saskatchewan at 20,475 residents, and most of them work in the trades or business/finance industry. The main heavy industries here are said to be companies such as Dow Chemical, Agrium and Shell, and Sherritt International. Large multinational retailers like Wal-mart, Home Depot, Safeway, Sobeys, etc also provide employment and shopping for residents. The city boasts numerous recreational facilities, and walking paths along the river provide pleasant places to relax, or get some exercise. There are also quite a few quality restaurants in town as well.

The climate here is about the same as Saskatoon: dry and cold in the winter with mostly sunny skies. The sun sets are spectacular, and I get a great view of them from my apartment! At this time of year the sun gets up just before nine in the morning and it is already set by five in the evening. Since the sun never gets very high in the sky, it feels like it is in your face all day when you are trying to drive. Most annoying at times! Once early summer comes though, the sun will have you up by four in the morning and will not set until around eleven or even midnight. I guess that kind of evens things out in a karmic sort of way.

I have no idea how long we will be enjoying this city, since my husband's occupation as a consultant involves ever changing plans and time lines, but I intend

to make the most of it. My New Years resolution was to try to go with the flow, so I am concentrating on finishing my book experiencing yet another new city, and perhaps visiting a few other places in Alberta while I am here. Over the last month I have traveled over seven thousand kilometers, adjusted to three time zones, acquired two addresses and a room mate; and discovered that elevators are not that scary, when you have a whole lot of stuff to carry up to an apartment on the fourth floor.

I have also come to the conclusion that while home is where the heart is, my heart just happens to be in so many places. It is back in Ontario with my children, parents, and siblings, small pieces remain in all the great places that I have explored; with the kind folks I have met. But the biggest part of my heart is with my soulmate, my husband. When we are together, we are home. Is it any wonder that I am such a restless gypsie? My new best friend is now my GPS, and Skype allows me to stay in touch with loved ones. For the time being.....I am in Fort Saskatchewan Alberta

May this month find all of you where your heart is, and going with the flow.

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