



ROYAL ALBERTA MUSEUM

ON THE GROUNDS

Everyone knows the Royal Alberta Museum has great artifacts within its galleries. However, most people probably are not aware that the Museum grounds are also home to unique treasures. Along with the scenic River Valley view and park setting, you will encounter fine art, local history and natural wonders outside the Museum's walls.

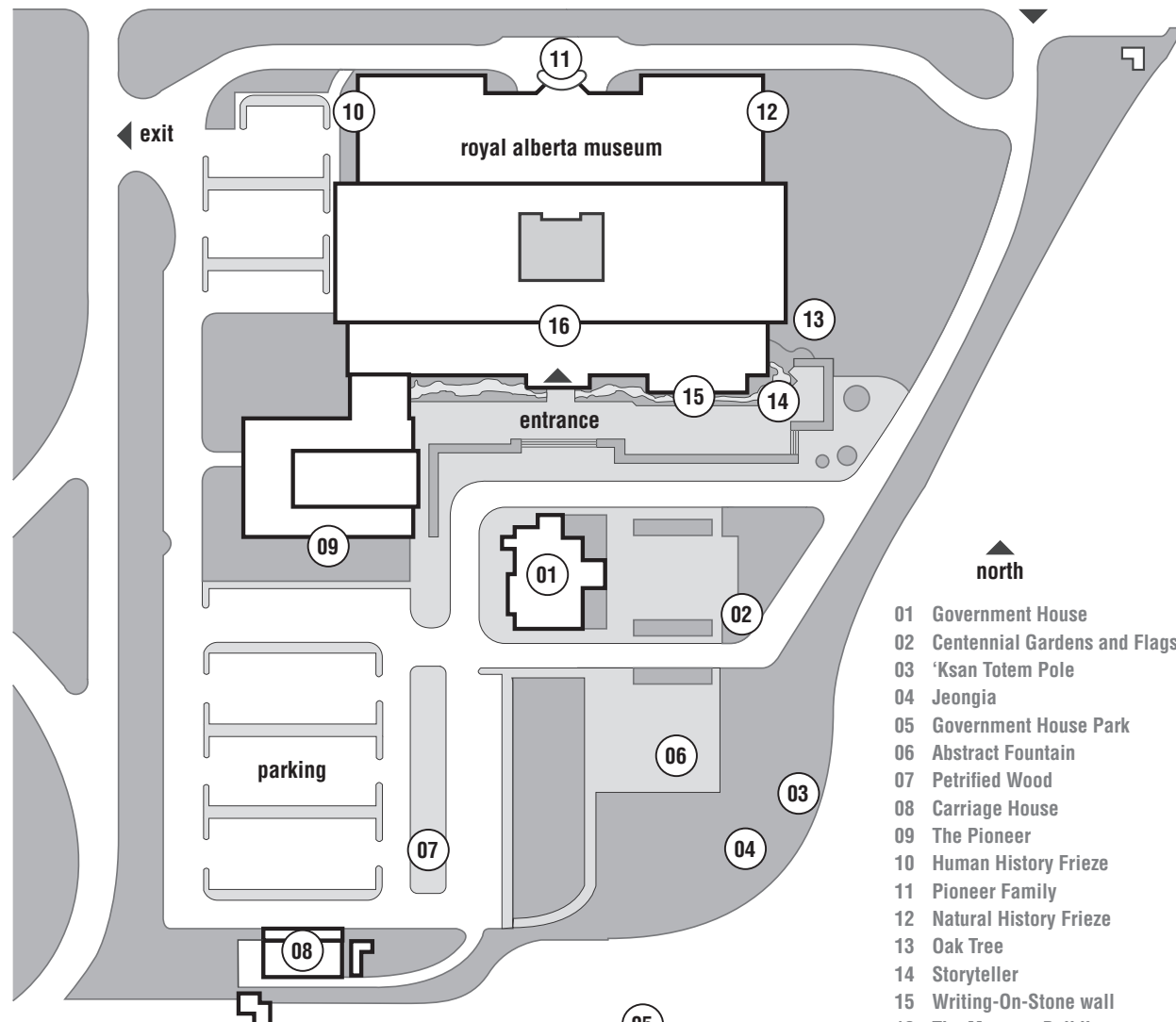
Start your self-guided tour as you exit the Museum. The building facing you as you walk down the front steps is your first stop. Other stops along the way are numbered on the enclosed map. Enjoy your walk around the Museum grounds!

Royal Alberta Museum
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102 avenue

entrance



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01 Government House

Completed in 1913, Government House was built as the official residence of the Province’s Lieutenant Governor. The three-storey sandstone edifice was designed in the Jacobean Revival style, characterized by bay windows, high gabled roofs with raised ends, and groups of rectangular windows. It served as the official residence for six Lieutenant Governors until its closure in 1938. A public auction disposed of all furnishings and contents.

Government House sat empty until 1942, when it was leased to Northwest Airlines. Northwest operated an aerial ferry service transporting personnel and supplies from Edmonton to the Alaska Highway construction project, and it used Government House as a residence for project employees. The House subsequently became a residence for U.S. airmen transporting fighter aircraft to the Soviet Union for use on the Eastern Front. From 1944 to 1950, Government House operated as a convalescent hospital for Second World War veterans, and from 1951 to 1964, it was a home for disabled veterans administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Control of Government House was returned to the Province in 1964. The House was renovated to accommodate caucus and other meetings and official functions. Additional renovations were completed in 1976.

Today, the Government of Alberta uses Government House for official functions, special conferences, government committee meetings and similar events.

02 Centennial Gardens and Flags

East of Government House, Centennial Plaza replaces the large flower bed and circular drive that once led to the House’s main entrance. Thirteen flags representing each of Canada’s ten provinces and three territories stand at the garden’s southeast corner.

03 ‘Ksan Totem Pole

Artists: Earl Muldoe, with Chester MacLean and Victor Mowat
Located on the southeast corner of the Museum grounds, this 11-metre-tall pole is representative of the Native Northwest Coast art style. It was carved by ‘Ksan master carver Earl Muldoe for Universiade ’83 (the World University Games) in Edmonton. Strongman anchors the pole. Above him sit the beaver, the raven with a frog in his beak, the bear clasping a salmon and the owl, the Universiade ’83 mascot.

04 Jeongia

The most recent addition to the site is a Korean pavilion, called a Jeongia. The 30th anniversary of the twinning of Alberta with the Korean province of Gangwon was marked in 2004. The Jeongia, a gift from the people of Gangwon, is made using traditional joinery methods, without screws or nails. It was built during the summer of 2005 by a crew of skilled Korean builders.

05 Government House Park

For more than 100 years, the park below the Museum’s grounds has been a favourite location for outdoor activities. In summer months these include picnics, walking, cycling and rollerblading. One interesting attraction is the 50-year-old laurel leaf willow near the Groat Road interchange; the twisted climbing tree has been well-loved by generations of children. In 1999, the Government House toboggan hill attracted Hollywood. The stately homes of neighbouring Glenora and the hill itself were featured in the film Snow Day.

06 Abstract Fountain

Artist: Ole Holmsten
Located south of the Museum, beyond Government House, is a concrete fountain with abstract sculpture entitled Futuristic. It is based on ancient Greek legends concerning human struggle in this world. The five-metre-tall sculpture with bronze relief symbolizes humanity’s reflections on the mysteries of the universe and the drama of our quest to find answers.

07 Petrified Wood

Petrified wood has been Alberta’s official stone since 1977. This outstanding example, located along the eastern edge of the Museum parking lot, is the stump of a tree that lived 65 million years ago. It was fossilized by a process known as permineralization. Dissolved silica penetrated the wood and was deposited in pores. This specimen was collected in 1966 from the McLeod River area, near Edson, Alberta.

08 Carriage House

Designated as an Alberta Historic Site, this stucco-clad coach house sits on the top of the River Valley southwest of Government House. It is constructed in the Tudor style and features dark half-timbering. The Carriage House originally had stables located just below the house as well as “accommodations for a Jersey herd.” Initially built to serve Government House, the house is now used as office space for the Alberta government.

09 The Pioneer

Artist: Harry Wolfarth
Located south of the former Provincial Archives building (now the southwest wing of the Museum), this welded steel and brazed bronze statue stands on a pedestal of fieldstones. It was dedicated as a gift to the people of Alberta by the German-Canadian Association to honour pioneer immigrants of Germanic descent.

10 Human History Frieze

Artist: Ole Holmsten
Located on the Museum’s northwest exterior wall, this frieze features five human figures that capture essential aspects of Alberta’s working spirit. From the left, they are: an Aboriginal man, a fur trader, an agriculture worker, an oil/chemical worker and a welder.

11 Pioneer Family

Artist: Ole Holmsten
This sculpture, located on the Museum’s north side, represents the fundamental building block of Albertan society - the family. The statue depicts a husband, wife and two children looking out over their new homestead

12 Natural History Frieze

Artist: Ole Holmsten
Located on the Museum’s northeast exterior wall, this frieze features four striking animals from Alberta’s rich natural heritage: a dinosaur, a mammoth, a bear and a bison.

13 Oak Tree

The Royal Alberta Museum is home to one of the largest oak trees in Edmonton. The story behind the tree is quite interesting. In 1965, 13-year-old Susan Stark needed an eye operation. To raise the money to pay for the surgery, Susan’s father decided to sell his magnificent oak tree. When news of the family’s situation became known, the Starks were flooded with offers of financial assistance from Edmontonians. Not wanting charity, Mr. Stark turned down these offers and continued to look for a buyer for the oak tree. Initially the family had to re-mortgage their house to pay for Susan’s treatment. Eventually, the Government of Alberta bought the tree and transplanted it on the Museum grounds in November of 1967.

14 Storyteller

Artist: Ole Holmsten
This sculpture, located at the east end of the main terrace, represents the role the Museum plays in the community – as educator and as entertainer. The statue was cast in bronze at the Modern Art Foundry in New York.

15 Writing-On-Stone Wall

Artist: Luke Lindoe
The wall, located to the east of the Museum entrance, incorporates replicas of petroglyph figures from Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park archaeological sites near Milk River in southern Alberta. Each figure is accurate in its details, although enlarged (in some instances by a factor of ten) from the original.

While the exact meaning of these drawings will likely never be known, some clearly depict battles, hunts and ceremonies. Others are expressions of ideas. The original petroglyphs are probably 300 to 400 years old, dating back to the time before the horse. The bottom tier of designs relates an actual story; the top gives us fleeting glimpses of a broader span of time and culture.

16 The Museum Building

The Royal Alberta Museum was built as Alberta’s tribute to Canada’s Centennial and officially opened on December 6, 1967. Since the Museum was a Centennial project, many of the materials used in its construction come from the various regions of Canada. Tyndall limestone from Manitoba was chosen for the interior vestibule and portions of the exterior walls. The stone contains fossil invertebrates that are approximately 445 million years old. Stone floors in the central lobby are made of black granite from Quebec, and the lobby walls are faced with Tweed pearl marble from Ontario.