

## The Tumbler Ridge Dinosaur Footprints (#1)

In 2000 two local boys fell off their inner tube while descending rapids in Flatbed Creek. Walking back upstream on bedrock, they correctly identified a dinosaur trackway. They contacted palaeontologist Rich McCrea, who confirmed their find (which is the longest known accessible trackway in BC) and taught members of the Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation how to look for further tracks.

Footprints have now been discovered in eight other canyons, in rock cuts, and in the alpine. Some of these are from an age (Turonian) in which no footprints have previously been found. Others are well preserved, and show unusual features such as dew claws and skin impressions. There is one pathological footprint, “the dinosaur with the broken toe”, and other natural footprint casts are made up of fossilized oyster shells.

In 2001 BC’s second dinosaur bone was discovered right alongside the boys’ original trackway, in the same layer of rock. In 2002 BC’s first dinosaur bonebed was discovered in a nearby canyon, and excavation began in 2003. This is Western Canada’s oldest dinosaur material.

The Tumbler Ridge dinosaur footprints fall into three groups:

**Theropods** - These meat-eating dinosaurs were built for speed. Their trackways are narrow and show three-toed prints that are often longer than they are wide, often with claws at the end of the toes.

**Ornithopods** - These herbivorous dinosaurs left wider trackways; their footprints are wider than they are long, with three fairly blunt toes, and they occasionally left tiny hand prints.

**Ankylosaurs** - These armoured dinosaurs walked on all fours; the hind feet had four toes, and the front footprint resembles a crescent moon, with five toes.

The best ways to enjoy the Tumbler Ridge dinosaur experience are:

- 1) Take a Museum Foundation tour to the Wolverine field site (1 hour) or the Cabin Pool field site (2 hours). Tours run from June through August. For details and booking, call 242-3466.
- 2) Visit the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery, which opened in 2009 and contains impressive displays of fossils.
- 3) Visit the Museum Foundation’s palaeontology displays in the Tumbler Ridge Community Centre.

The Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre (PRPRC), the first of its kind in the province, offers tours to these locations. The PRPRC is where the palaeontologists work on preparing dinosaur bones and other fossils, and where the museum’s collections are housed.

Time/Distance: 1-2 hours/3 km return  
Rating: Moderate 

### Directions to the Trailhead

From the town, take Mackenzie Way and turn left onto Highway 29. Drive 400 metres along the highway, and the parking lot is on the right.

### Trail Directions

Far more will be seen and learned in the company of a guide, but the site can be visited unaccompanied. The trail starts on the left of the large sign in the parking lot. After 1 km, a fork is reached. The right hand fork leads to the Cabin Pool and two dinosaur track sites. It descends to the creek level, where the rock slab with tracks is found.

When walking on the rock, please take care not to walk directly on the prints. Walk across at its

uppermost section, and then down the rock as close to the creek as possible. There are a few tracks on the smaller rocks above the main rock. Note two well preserved theropod tracks with dewclaw impressions at the upper (downstream) end of the main rock (this is not a short trackway, as both are left footprints). Towards the lower (upstream) end there are also many readily identifiable prints.

When water levels in Flatbed Creek are low, it is possible to wade through the creek just below Cabin Pool, (above the rapids) and head downstream for about 80 metres to the bedrock where the boys’ original ankylosaur trackway is visible. Look for faint hand (manus) prints in front of each of the deeper hindfoot (pes) prints. Some of these prints are getting faint, after being subjected to annual floods. There are 26 prints in all. Do not cross Flatbed Creek when creek levels are high, and be careful after heavy rainfall, as creek levels can rise quickly.

The Tumbler Ridge dinosaur material is of Cenomanian and Turonian Age, in rocks from the Upper Cretaceous Period. If you discover what you think may be a dinosaur footprint or bone, please do not remove it. Instead, please report your find to the PRPRC at (250) 242-DINO, or email prprc@pris.ca.

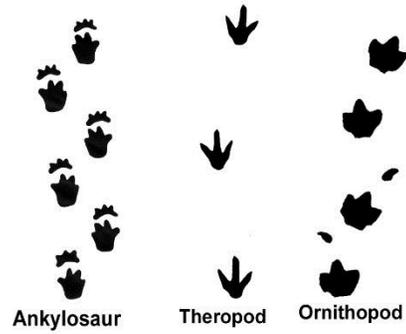
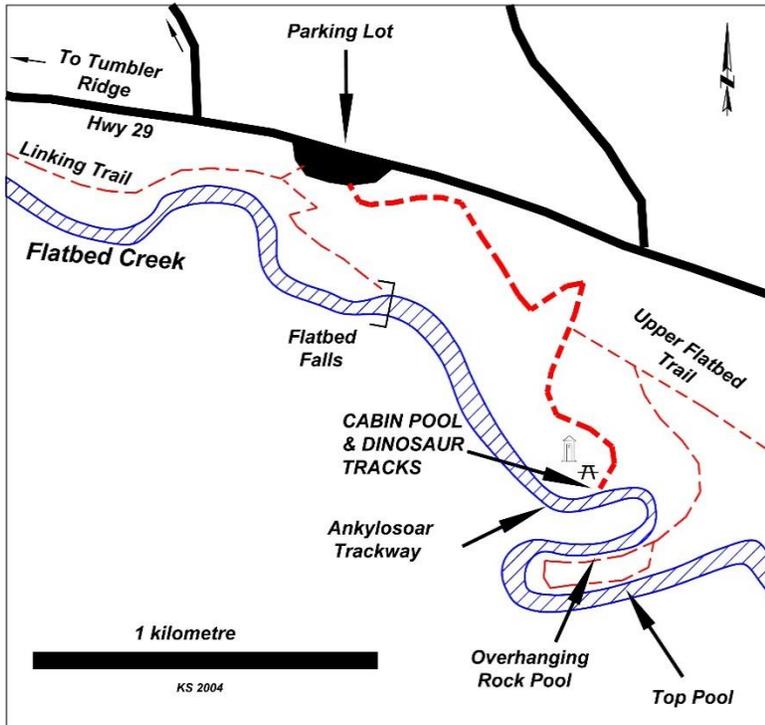
Produced by the Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation and the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society

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Scientific Advice by Rich McCrea*

*Graphics by Charles Helm and Kevin Sharman*

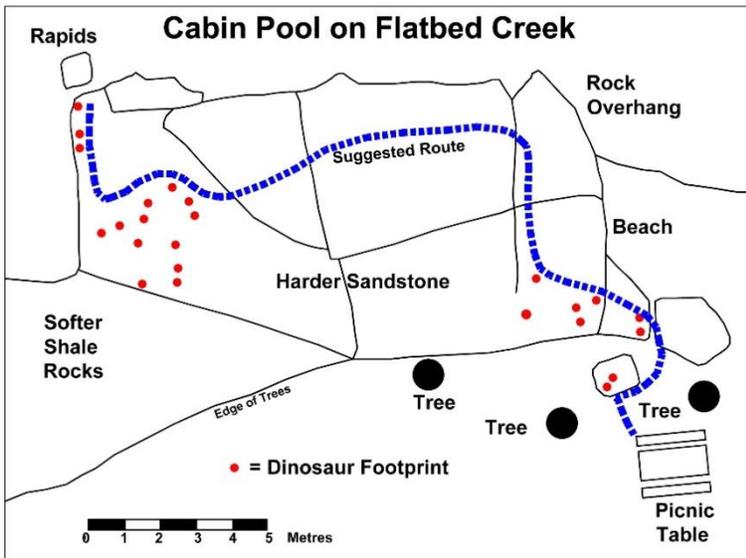
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Original trackway discovered in 2000

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Rating: Moderate ■

Time: 1 - 2 hours

