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Canada's Wood Buffalo National Park named to World Heritage list



The UNESCO World Heritage Committee has approved the nomination of Canada's Wood Buffalo National Park to the World Heritage list. The decision was made at a recent meeting of the committee held in Florence, Italy. Twenty-seven other sites from 14 countries were also added to the list, bringing to 165 the number of cultural and national sites designated for protection and preservation.

Wood Buffalo National Park is Canada's largest national park located on the border between the Northwest Territories and Alberta. The 44 807 square-kilometre park contains many superlative natural phenomena including one of the world's finest inland deltas, the best examples of gypsum karst terrain in North America, extensive salt plains and large tracts of boreal ecosystems in their wilderness state.

The park also protects the largest free-roaming and self-regulating herd of bison left in existence. The 5 000 to 6 000 bison in the park are a last remnant of the more than 50 million bison that

dominated the central plain of North America prior to European settlement.

Of special interest are the large numbers of rare or endangered species of wildlife, including whooping cranes and peregrine falcons. There are also thousands of ducks, geese and other waterfowl, and large populations of muskrat and beaver.

While most of the park remains in its original wilderness state, there are areas with camping, picnicking, and boating facilities. Park naturalists provide slide talks and field activities such as bison creeps, caving trips and nature walks. Private outfitters are available to take visitors on overnight guided tours by hiking and boating in summer and skiing or travelling by dog sled in winter.

Wood Buffalo National Park is the eighth Canadian site to be named to the World Heritage list since its creation in 1978. Other Canadian sites already recognized by UNESCO as being of "outstanding universal value" are:

— **L'Anse aux Meadows National Park** near the top of Newfoundland's western peninsula is the site of the oldest known European settlement in North America and the only authenticated site of Norse settlement. Archaeologists believe the site



Wood Buffalo National Park protects the largest free-roaming herd of bison in existence.



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