

Residents able to enjoy Badlands once again ? with restrictions

By Rob Paul

With Ontario's continuing reopening, one of Caledon's premier destinations is open to the public once again.

The Cheltenham Badlands are frequented by tourists and community members, among many of the reasons, because of the noteworthy Queenston shale which gives the land its red colour.

The transition into the reopen during the pandemic hasn't been too difficult for Credit Valley Conservation after dealing with a similar situation in 2020. The extra time has only allowed staff to be more prepared for the traffic this year.

"The opening of the Cheltenham Badlands was similar in nature to last year, it's just happening later in the 2021 season," said Evan Orme, CVC Superintendent. "CVC has followed direction from the province closely to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for visitors once the Badlands reopened. Staff have worked hard to maintain the trails and establish safety measures for everyone visiting the site. We've got a mandatory reservation system in place, which we implemented last year, so we were ready to reopen as the province moved into Step 1 of the three-step roadmap to reopen plan."

With many people looking for outdoor activities both because of the summer weather and due to indoor restrictions, the Badlands are quickly becoming a go-to spot again with the recent reopening.

"We're definitely seeing a lot of interest," he said. "Since we reopened on June 19, the park is seeing a lot of visitors who are anxious to get out and enjoy the outdoors. The Cheltenham Badlands is a small property with limited parking, so we have a mandatory reservation system in place to help manage traffic at the site. Our reservation system allows visitors to plan their visit by booking up to two weeks in advance. It also ensures we limit the number of people onsite at one time to keep physical distancing in place."

Due to the sudden return of people to the area, there is more concern over how roughly the environment could be impacted, but Orme says thanks to the online booking system they're able to have a good handle on things.

"Our reservation system means we can manage the number of people at the park at any given time," he said. "It allows us to create the conditions needed for safe physical distancing and to ensure everyone has an enjoyable experience. It also allows us to maintain a sustainable approach to park and trail management. Trails have been maintained in preparation for reopening. Following park rules and staying on the trails helps to minimize the impact on the surrounding natural area which includes sensitive plant and wildlife species. Practicing proper park etiquette helps to preserve these areas for future generations to enjoy."

To help maintain the Badlands and stop further erosion to the area, there are specific measures in place to protect the sensitive landscape.

Every dose administered brings us one step closer to the things we've missed, so please sign up to receive the vaccine when it's your turn."

Step Two of the reopening focuses on expanding the outdoor activities that are allowed and opening limited indoors services with small numbers.

The reopening includes: outdoor social gatherings and organized public events with up to 25 people; indoor social gatherings and organized public events with up to five people; essential and other select retail permitted at 50 per cent capacity; non-essential retail permitted at 25 per cent capacity; personal care services where face coverings can be worn at all times, and at 25 per cent capacity; outdoor dining with up to 6 people per table, with exceptions for larger households and other restrictions; indoor religious services,

rites, or ceremonies, including wedding services and funeral services permitted at up to 25 per cent capacity of the particular room; outdoor fitness classes limited to the number of people who can maintain three metres of physical distance; Outdoor concert venues, theatres and cinemas, with spectators permitted at 25 per cent capacity.

The Province has already surpassed Step Three vaccination targets, but must remain in Step Two for at least 21 days to allow recent vaccinations to reach their full effectiveness and to evaluate the impact of Step Two on key public health and health care indicators.

With Step Two underway, the Region of Peel has continued to see improved COVID numbers. As on June 28, there were 111,302 total cases in Peel?just 161 more cases since last week?and 813 deaths, with 7 seven more in the last week.

In Caledon, there's been four more cases in the last week bringing the Town's total to 4,438. The death toll hasn't increased; it remains at 20.

As for vaccinations, Peel's numbers are on par with the province. 77.3 per cent of adults have at least one dose with 34.3 per cent at two doses?66.1 per cent of the total population have one dose and 27.6 have two.

In total, the Region has administered 1,621,674 doses of the vaccine with 177,281 in the last seven-day cycle (June 20 to 27). 1,159,062 individuals in Peel have begun the vaccination process and 462,612 have completed it.

A large part of Peel's vaccination success has come from the Hockey Hub mass vaccination centre at the CAA Centre in Brampton. It's on track to deliver nearly 50,000 vaccinations to support the Region's fight against the Delta variant.

Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones recently visited the hub and praised the collaboration efforts seen from private organizations, public health, and the Government to get the Hockey Hub running.

?We are seeing improvements in province wide public health trends, but the race against the COVID-19 variants is imperative to the province's reopening plans,? said Jones. ?The teamwork shown between Peel Public Health, the Grey Bruce Health Unit, and the private organizations who came together to establish this hub and expand our vaccination capacity is truly commendable.?

The site opened in late May to the public and since then has delivered nearly 50,00 doses in 17 clinic days between May 26 and June 30. The materials from the clinic will be redeployed to other vaccine clinics in the region following the closure of the site.

For more information on vaccine clinic locations or to book a COVID-19 vaccine in Peel, visit peelregion.ca/coronavirus/vaccine/book-appointment/#clinics.