



LORRAINE HJALTE / CALGARY HERALD

Feast on regional cuisine at the River Café (top) and visit Marv's for some carbonated ice cream.

## CALGARY

Continued from WP12

On your way out, drop into J. Webb Market wines. Thanks to privatization and a booming economy, this city has some of the best wine selection in Canada at some of the best prices. You'll find vino here you won't get anywhere else, so you might as well stock up.

**Afternoon** Head south to the city limits. From there, turn west on Highway 22X, driving past the world-famous equestrian facility Spruce Meadows. Turn south on Hwy. 22, and you are in rolling foothills and ranch country.

This scenic drive under Alberta's endless sky will take you through hills and grasslands, past herds of grazing cattle, frolicking sheep and pumpjacks drawing oil out of the ground. And always, the mountains shimmer blue and purple to the west.

About 35 minutes south of Calgary, at the junction of highways 22 and 7 and on the edge of Kananaskis country, you will reach the twin towns of Turner Valley and Black Diamond.

This is where the province's oil and gas industry began, with the 1914 discovery of the well that launched Calgary's first oil boom. Today, both communities are known for their quaint shops, artisan studios and authentic western spirit. A visit to **Marv's Classic Soda Shoppe** in Black Diamond (121 Centre Ave. W., 403-933-7001) is a must.

From here, head east on Hwy. 7 toward Okotoks and the Big Rock, which is a *really big* rock, about 16 tonnes and three storeys high, plunked down in the middle of the flat plain. It's what's known as a "glacial erratic," a chunk of quartzite that fell from the mountains around Jasper 400 km away. It was carried here on a river of ice during the last glacial age, about 12,000 years ago.

Big Rock is also the name of Calgary's popular microbrewery, and after stopping to take pictures of the bodacious boulder, you're probably ready for a Big Rock Grasshopper Ale. If so, drop by the **Bull Pen Pub** in Okotoks (35 Riverdale Dr., 403-938-9955) for a pint.

A quick jaunt down Hwy. 2 will get you to the quaint village of Nanton. Here you will find great little antique shops, cowboy kitsch, an old-fashioned candy store and the **Nanton Lancaster Society Air Museum** (403-464-2270). Check out the Second World War bomber and other airplane and war memorabilia.

From here, it's a quick 40-minute drive straight up Hwy. 2,

back to the city and a romantic, relaxing dinner.

**Evening** Over the past decade, a distinct regional cuisine has been emerging in Calgary, and you will find its purest expression at **River Cafe** on Prince's Island (403-261-7670), a short stroll over a footbridge from Eau Claire. The restaurant has an unbeatably scenic location, the most beautiful patio in the city and a charmingly rustic decor. Proprietor Sal Howell and chef Scott Pohorelic have made it their mission to search out local ingredients and local producers. Try the Red Fife perogies, elk carpaccio, braised pork belly or the daily steak offering.

This is a perfectly delicious blend of all the tastes of the region, a mix of old and new, high and low, urban and rural. In fact, it's a lot like Calgary itself.

■ Contact Tourism Calgary at [tourismcalgary.com](http://tourismcalgary.com) and Alberta Tourism at [travelalberta.com](http://travelalberta.com). For info on the Calgary Exhibitions and Stampede, July 6 to 15, go to [calgarystampede.com](http://calgarystampede.com).

Weekend Post

