



Pickleball CANADA

RED DEER—COWBOYS, CULTURE & PICKLEBALL



By **Wayne Kerr**

Red Deer, Alberta, will be the home of the next Pickleball Canada National Championship, Aug. 10-15. When most people think of Alberta, they conjure up images of world-famous national parks, rodeos and cowboys.

Situated midway between Canada's most famous national parks—Banff and Jasper—Alberta's third largest city is, in fact, home to the Canadian Rodeo Finals. Yes, you'll likely see some cowboy hats and boots as you mosey through the pretty downtown streets or meander along the banks of Red Deer River as it winds through this city of just over 100,000 residents.



You might be surprised to learn that Red Deer has its own symphony orchestra. There are several museums, including historic Fort Normandeau and the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame. You can visit multiple art galleries, many of which feature local and indigenous artists. Take in a live performance at Ignition Theater or the Memorial Center. In the mood to laugh? Red Deer has its own improv troupe—Bull Skit Comedy.

Drop in for a cool one at Belly Hop Brewing or any one of a half dozen local breweries in the city. Shop at the Red Deer Public (Farmers) Market held every Saturday. Of course, Red Deer is home to some amazing local eateries and



restaurants. Perhaps grab lunch at the Red Boar Smokery or dinner at Tiffany's Steak and Lounge.

I spoke with Red Deer Pickleball Club President Brenda Feser and her husband, Dick, both members of the tournament organizing committee, about the upcoming six- day contest, which will feature upwards of 550 competitors, 250 volunteers and 150 umpires and officials.

The pair spoke excitedly about the amazing volunteer response from the club and community, the beautiful new 20-court facility, adding 80+ age categories to the tournament, and plans to feature para-pickleball events and/or demonstrations. They are thrilled to have enlisted the highly sought-after Gene Vollmin as Tournament Director.

The Fesers, the committee, and all the volunteers are working feverishly, preparing to host the competitors, who are expected to arrive from all across Canada. While the competition will undoubtedly be fierce, many new friendships will also be forged.

Come to Red Deer for the amazing pickleball, and while you are here, enjoy everything else this unique Western Canadian city has to offer! •

Wayne Kerr is a former tournament tennis player and coach who spent 25 years living in the U.S. before returning to Canada. Bitten by the bug, the writer/novelist is anxious to begin competing in pickleball tournaments when the pandemic ends.



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Our sport embraces and supports players of all
ages, abilities and interests; we foster social
connections and a sense of community.*