



Canoe Trip #10

Wadin Bay (Lac La Ronge) - Hunter Bay (Lac La Ronge) - Nunn Lake - Big Whitemoose Lake - Whitemoose River - Churchill River - Iskwatikan Lake - Lac La Ronge - Wadin Bay

Length of Trip: 186 Kilometres (116 Miles)

Time Required to Complete Trip: 7 to 9 days

Number of Portages: 14 to 17 (depending on choice, and experience of paddlers)

Warning:

Water levels and canoeing conditions on many Saskatchewan rivers and lakes vary from time to time, causing changes in the appearance of the various landmarks described in this booklet, as well as causing hazards not described herein. It is the canoeist's responsibility to proceed with caution and alertness, using discretion and good judgement at all times. The information in this booklet is intended to be of general assistance only, and the Government of Saskatchewan assumes no responsibility for its use. Canoeists are reminded that they travel at their own risk at all times.

Access to Starting Point:

Cars can be parked, and canoes launched, at the Saskatchewan Government campground at Wadin Bay located 27 kilometres (17 miles) north of La Ronge on highway 102.

Alternate starting points are the Saskatchewan Government campground at English Bay on Lac la Ronge located 19 kilometres (12 miles) north of La Ronge or the Saskatchewan Government campground in the community of La Ronge.

Maps:

- 73-P/1 Cartier Lake
- 73-P/2 Hunter Bay
- 73-P/3 La Ronge
- 73-P/6 Nemeiben Lake
- 73-P/7 Stanley Mission
- 73-P/8 Nistowiak Lake
- Optional: Hydrographic Chart #6281 Lac la Ronge (If this map is used, maps 73-P/1,2,3 and 6 become optional).

About the Trip:

This canoe trip is a 'loop trip' which has the convenience of returning to its starting point.

At the beginning and end, this is a big lake trip with considerable exposure to wind and waves. Because of the changeability of the weather, ample extra time should be allowed to wait out bad weather which may make lakes unsafe to travel. Bigger canoes (5.2 to 5.5 metre - 17 to 18 foot) should be considered for use on this trip.

The most protected route between Wadin Bay and Hunter Bay, and between Wadin Bay and the northeast outlet of Lac La Ronge involves staying as close to the island filled north shore of the lake as feasible.

Optional Portage Number 1 may be used to avoid exposure around Moose Point and Nut Point.

The Whitemoose portion of the trip offers travel on a small stream with intermittent rapids, and on small relatively protected lakes.

Points of interest along the route include picturesque Nistowiak Falls and the rapids below the dam at the outlet of Lac La Ronge.

This canoe trip offers an opportunity to see typical pre-cambrian lake country with its interesting variety of rock exposures, trees, plants, animals and birds. Fishing is excellent throughout the trip with northern pike and walleye in all waters and lake trout in the larger lakes. Good natural sloping rock campsites are abundant, and occasional small sandy beaches will be found.

Because river current is negligible or non-existent in all but a few places, this trip could be made in reverse. For this reason, portage locations are given from both ends. However, the direction described, with downstream travel on the Whitemoose River, is recommended.

At times of extreme low water, the rapids on the Whitemoose River become too shallow for navigation, and all the portages indicated become necessary.

The Canoe Trip:

There are a variety of ways to cross Lac La Ronge to Hunter Bay or to its outlet in the northeast end of the lake. The most direct route is also the most exposed and should only be attempted under the most stable of good weather conditions. An alternative route across the island-filled northern portion of the lake is longer, but it offers more protection. Because of limited time, one might consider making up for lost time spent waiting on the weather by hiring a big boat to transport canoes and equipment across Lac La Ronge at the start and/or the end of the trip.

Portage Number 1 (Optional) - Anglo-Rouyn Portage:

Connecting northern and eastern portions of Wadin Bay with Ore Bay. Approximately 700 metres (765 yards) long and in good condition.

From the northeastern part of Wadin Bay, near the old Anglo-Rouyn Mine site, this portage starts as a break in the shoreline willows and grasses at the narrowest part of Williams Peninsula (Grid location 983272 - Map 73-P/6).

From the northern part of Ore Bay, near the old Anglo-Rouyn Mine site, this portage starts as a wide cut through willows and poplars at the narrowest part of Williams Peninsula (Grid location 987267 - Map 73-P/6).

From a cove on the northeast shore of Hunter Bay, there is a small stream flowing in from Nunn Lake (Grid location 373223 - Map 73-P/1). A fishing camp is located on the north shore a few hundred metres (yards) northwest of the mouth of the stream. There are a few shallow spots in the stream from Nunn Lake, but these should not present any problem.

There are a few good campsites near the narrows at the west end of Nunn Lake, but none were noted in the central part of the lake.

Portage Number 2:

Connecting Nunn Lake with a small nameless lake to the east. 635 metres (694 yards) long and in good condition.

From Nunn Lake, this portage starts at a break in the willows and poplars on the southeast shore of the lake (Grid location 445208 - Map 73-P/1).

From the small nameless lake, this portage starts in a cove on the northwest shore of the lake (Grid location 448206 - Map 73-P/1).

Portage Number 3:

Connecting the small nameless lake east of Nunn Lake with Few Lake. 420 metres (459 yards) long and in good condition.

From the small nameless lake, this portage starts at a break in the shoreline willows midway along the east shore of the lake (Grid location 455204 - Map 73-P/1).

From Few Lake, this portage starts at a break in the shoreline alders on the southwest shore (Grid location 459206 - Map 73-P/1).

Portage Number 4:

Connecting Few Lake with Lawson Lake. 230 metres (251 yards) long and in good condition.

From Few Lake, this portage starts at a grassy break in the shoreline vegetation in a cove on the southeast side of the lake (Grid location 466202 - Map 73-P/1).

From Lawson Lake, this portage starts from a grassy cove on the west shore of the lake (Grid location 467201 - Map 73-P/1).

A couple of rough campsites were noted on Lawson Lake.

Portage Number 5:

Connecting Lawson Lake with Big Whitemoose Lake. 1220 metres (1334 yards) long and in good condition.

From Lawson Lake, this portage starts from a small grassy, semi-hidden cove on the northeast shore of the lake (Grid location 486207 - Map 73-P/1).

From Big Whitemoose Lake, this portage starts at a rocky landing in a cove on the southwest shore of the lake (Grid location 497207 - Map 73-P/1).

There are a number of good campsites on Big Whitemoose Lake.

Portages on the Whitemoose River are in some cases variable. They are somewhat confusing because, in some places, they overlap trappers' winter trails which also avoid rapids and fast water because of thin ice. Varying water levels may dictate whether to line, portage or run some or any of the rapids. Under most water conditions, few of the rapids on the Whitemoose River are navigable.

NOTE: At the time of this review, water levels on the Whitemoose River were too low to permit assigning classes to any of the rapids. Most, with a few exceptions, would however be in the Class 2-3 range.

Morris Rapids occur within a few hundred metres (Yards) after leaving Big Whitemoose Lake. There are four sections to this rapid spread over a distance of two kilometres (One and one quarter mile).

Portage Number 6:

Past the first part of Morris Rapids. 85 metres (93 yards) long and in poor condition.

This portage starts on the left or west bank at a slight break in the shoreline vegetation (Grid location 508271 - Map 73-P/8) 20 metres (22 yards) above the start of the rapid. It ends at a grassy spot on the west bank 15 metres (16 yards) below the end of the rapid.

The second part of this rapid starts about 400 metres (437 yards) downstream from the end of the first section.

Portage Number 7:

Past the second part of Morris Rapids. 75 metres (82 yards) long and in poor condition.

This portage starts on the left or west bank at an inconspicuous break in the shoreline vegetation (Grid location 507275 - Map 73-P/8) 10 metres (11 yards) above the start of the rapid. It ends at a small break in the shoreline vegetation 10 metres (11 yards) below the end of the rapid.

A rough 600 metre (656 yard) portage trail exists which combines this and the next portage and bypasses the quiet stretch of river between rapid sections.

The third part of this rapid starts 200 metres (218 yards) downstream from the second section.

Portage Number 8:

Past the third part of Morris Rapids. 265 metres (290 yards) long and in poor to fair condition

This portage starts on the left or north bank. Its start is indistinct. Pull the canoes through any of a number of breaks in the shoreline brush (Grid location 506278 - Map 73-P/8) 30 to 50 metres (33 to 55 yards) above the start of the rapid until joining the trail which bypasses the second and third sections of the rapid. Follow this trail to a small grassy break in the shoreline vegetation situated 30 metres (33 yards) below the foot of the rapid.

The fourth part of this rapid starts 500 metres (547 yards) downstream from the third section.

Portage Number 9:

Past the fourth part of Morris Rapids. 210 metres (230 yards) long and in good condition.

This portage starts on the left or west bank on a rocky shelf (Grid location 507283 - Map 73-P/8) 30 metres (33 yards) above the start of the rapid. It ends at a small rocky shelf 30 metres (33 yards) below the foot of the rapid.

Shortly after leaving Portage Number 9, the river swings sharply to the northeast then sharply to the northwest. Half way between these swings, a fair campsite was noted on the left or north shore.

Two kilometres (One and one quarter mile) below Portage Number 9 there is short stretch of fast water which could become a shallow rapid at periods of low water. The next rapid occurs one and two third kilometre (One mile) below this fast water.

Portage Number 10:

Past a long stretch of Class 3+ rapid. 565 metres (618 yards) long and in fair to good condition.

This portage starts at an indistinct break in the shoreline vegetation on the right or north bank (Grid location 485301 - Map 73-P/8) 30 metres (33 yards) before the start of the rapid. It ends at a distinct grassy opening 50 metres (55 yards) below the rapid (Grid location 481302 - Map 73-P/8).

Those not wishing to make this one long portage may elect to launch their canoes after portaging 165 metres (180 yards) and cross a short quiet stretch of river to the start of a fair to good 325 metre (355 yard) portage along the left or south bank. This alternate starts at a grassy slope 30 metres (33 yards) above the start of the second part of this rapid. It ends at a shallow spot immediately below the rapid.

The river's course continues to the northwest a further one and two third kilometre (One mile) where its direction swings sharply to the northeast.

550 metres (601 yards) after this swing, the canoeist encounters the first part of Grant Rapids.

Portage Number 11:

Past the first part of Grant Rapids. 110 metres (120 yards) long and in poor to fair condition.

This portage starts at a distinct break in the shoreline vegetation on the left or north bank after descending some preliminary fast water (Grid location 472309 - Map 73-P/8) immediately at the head of the rapid, and back of a small islet. It ends at a grassy slope 15 metres (16 yards) below the foot of his Class 3+ rapid.

The second part of Grant Rapids follows in 500 metres (547 yards).

Portage Number 12:

Past the second part of Grant Rapids. 45 metres (49 yards) long and in only fair condition.

This portage starts on the left or north bank at a distinct sloping break in the shoreline vegetation (Grid location 474315 - Map 73-P/8) 15 metres (16 yards) above the start of this minor rapid. It ends at a slight break in the shoreline vegetation 10 metres (11 yards) below the foot of the rapid.

From the end of this portage, the river continues in a generally northeast direction for four and one quarter kilometres (Two and two third miles) to Little Whitemoose Lake.

The opening into Little Whitemoose Lake is obscured by an extensive bed of wild rice. There is a good campsite on the small island near the south shore of the lake. Two and one half kilometre (One and one half mile) downstream from the outlet of Little Whitemoose Lake, the canoeist encounters Reed Rapids. This rapid consists of two closely spaced sections. The first section is a minor one which can generally be run without problem.

Portage Number 13:

Past the second part of Reed Rapids. 55 metres (60 yards) long and in poor condition. This portage starts at an indistinct opening on a steep slope on the left or west bank immediately at the head of the rapid (Grid location 528355 - Map 73-P/8). It ends at a rocky slope at the foot of the rapid. At the time of the survey, a pole skid was in use for hauling large boats past this rapid. Lehman Rapid, the last Whitemoose River rapid before the Churchill, is encountered one and two third kilometre (One mile) below portage number 13.

Portage Number 14:

Past Lehman Rapid. 30 to 70 metres (33 to 77 yards) long and in fair to good condition. The longer distance applied at the time of the survey when a pole skid was in use for hauling large boats past this Class 3+ rapid. The shorter distance would apply at higher water levels. This portage starts at a rocky slope on the left or west bank immediately at the head of the rapid (Grid location 527366 - Map 73-P/8). It ends at a rocky slope immediately at the foot of the rapid. From this point, the canoe trip continues in a generally westerly direction on Drinking Lake to the area below Potter Rapids. Parts of the southern shore of Drinking Lake were denuded by a forest fire in the early 1980s. A beautiful campsite is located on a rocky point in the bay south of Potter Rapids (Grid location 462393 - Map 73-P/8).

Portage Number 15:

Connecting Drinking Lake with Nistowiak Lake. There are two options in travelling between Drinking Lake and Nistowiak Lake: portage 15A is shorter, goes right through an outfitter's camp and is only suitable for downstream travel (west to east) because of the swift current below Potter Rapids. Portage 15B is longer, no outfitter's camp is encountered and it can be used for travel both downstream and upstream. These portages by-pass a Class 4 rapid.

Portage Number 15A:

Connecting the western end of Drinking Lake with the southeast portion of Brown Bay on Nistowiak Lake. 110 metres (120 yards) long and in excellent condition. From Nistowiak Lake, the start of this portage is unmistakable as it starts at an outfitter's camp. Land at the dock and portage past the main lodge building to the dock below the rapids. Because of the current below Potter Rapids, the use of this portage by canoeists travelling upstream is not feasible unless an outboard motor is used.

Portage Number 15B:

Connecting the western end of Drinking Lake with the most easterly portion of Brown Bay on Nistowiak Lake. 230 metres (251 yards) long and in good condition. From the head of a narrow, northward extending, bay on the west end of Drinking Lake, this portage starts on the left or south bank immediately at the base of the fast water below the lower of two sets of rapids (Grid location 472405 - Map 73-P/8). The portage bypasses a small pond between the two rapids. At times of extremely low water, the narrow northward extending bay may be closed off by a shallow rocky section near its southern end (Grid location 471401 - Map 73-P/8). From the most easterly portion of Brown Bay, this portage starts in wet willows about 80 metres (87 yards) south of exposed rocks which mark the start of small rapids (Grid location 471407 - Map 73-P/8). This portage ends at the base of the fast water at the lower set of rapids. Care should be exercised in navigating the two narrows separating the head of portage number 15B and the main body of Nistowiak Lake because of the shallow reefs encountered. From this point, the route progresses in a generally southwest direction on Nistowiak Lake to the start of the portage past Nistowiak Falls (Grid location 402393 - Map 73-P/8).

Portage Number 16 - Nistowiak Falls Portage:

Connecting Nistowiak Lake to Iskwatikan Lake. 1000 metres (1093 yards) long and in excellent condition, though quite steep in spots. This portage bypasses a 12 metre (40 foot) fall, a 2 metre (6.5 foot) fall and numerous rapids and ledges in a narrow, winding gorge. From the south shore of Nistowiak Lake, this portage starts on bare rock a few metres (yards) to the west of the inflowing river (Grid location 402393 - Map 73-P/8). An outfitter's camp is situated at the start of this portage. From the north shore of Iskwatikan Lake, this portage starts from bare rock 15 metres (16 yards) to the west of the 2 metre (6.5 foot) falls located at the river outlet (Grid location 402385 - Map 73-P/8).

A short side trail roughly half way along this portage leads to a viewing point above the main fall. This sight is well worth the short side trip.

NOTE: Experienced canoeists travelling from Iskwatikan Lake to the Churchill River may consider portaging 20 metres (22 yards) past the upper fall and a descending by canoe through about 400 metres (437 yards) of minor Class 2 rapids to a landing point on the west shore 30 metres (33 yards) above the main fall (Grid location 401387 - Map 73-P/8). If this choice is made, thereby shortening the portage by one third for downstream travellers only, it is strongly recommended that paddlers unfamiliar with the area first visit and note details of the lower landing on foot, so that there is no chance whatsoever of overshooting this crucial landing.

From this point, the route progresses in a generally southwest direction on Iskwatikan Lake to the stream flowing in from Hale Lake.

A small Class 1 rapid separates Hale Lake from Stewart Bay on Iskwatikan Lake.

From Stewart Bay, this rapid can be paddled upstream on either side of the dividing islet. Should conditions not permit this, canoes can be pulled up through the shallow water near the shore, or carried over a short trail on the west, or right side to avoid the swiftest current.

From Hale Lake, canoeists should proceed cautiously. After descending the first part of the rapid, it is advisable to stop in the quiet cove below the islet and plan a course to avoid the rocks in the lower part of the rapid.

Portage Number 17 - Rapid River Portage:

Connecting Hale Lake with the northeast tip of Diefenbaker Bay of Lac La Ronge. 500 metres (547 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a Class 5 rapid.

Canoes and equipment may be loaded onto a small car, or buggy travelling on rails and hauled across this portage. This convenience is questionable in view of the heavy weight of the car, unless there is lots of manpower available.

From Hale Lake, this portage starts at a wooden dock on the southeast, or left bank just below the bottom of the rapid (Grid location 296327 - Map 73-P/7).

From the outlet of Lac La Ronge, this portage starts on the north, or left shore 200 metres (219 yards) beyond the dam at the outlet of the lake (Grid location 298321 Map 73-P/7). **WARNING:** Stay well clear of the current flowing through the gates of the dam.

From this point, the trip returns to Wadin Bay via a route through the northern islands of Lac La Ronge.

WRITTEN BY: Original script by Peter Gregg, reviewed in 1989 by Historic Trails Canoe Club.

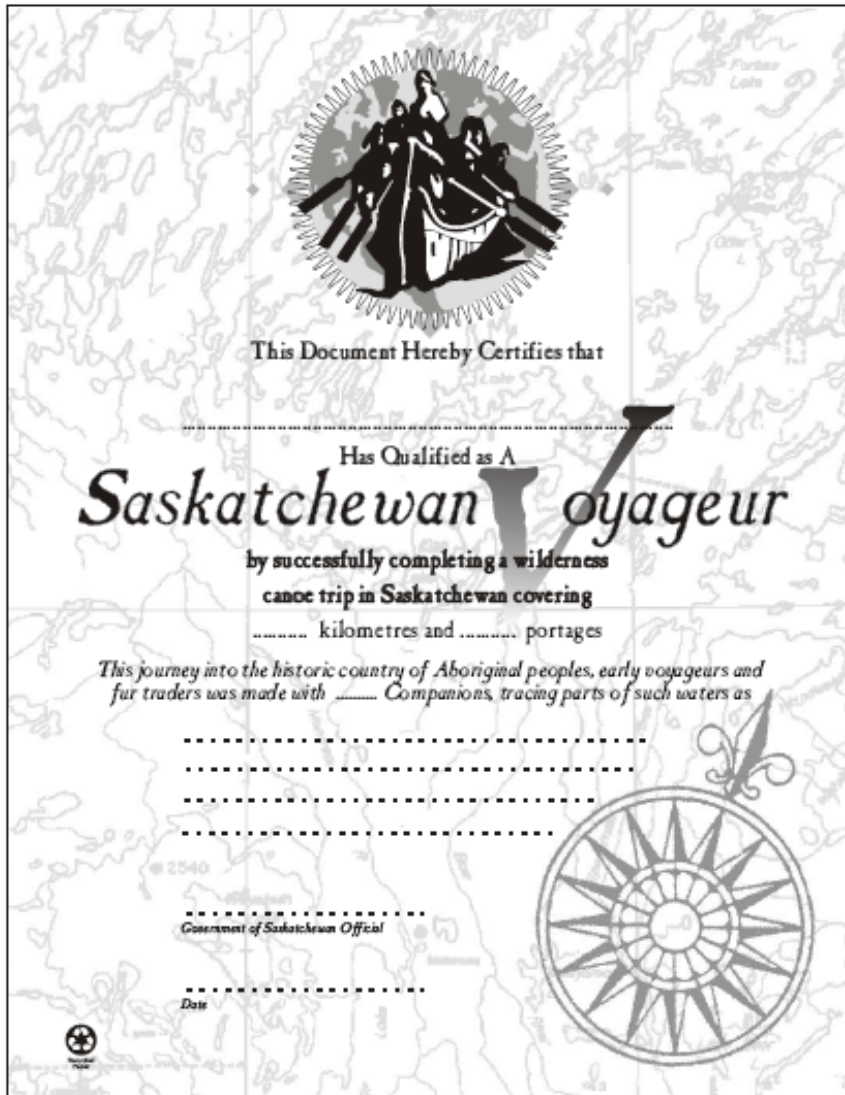
ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:

To minimize your impact on the environment while canoeing along Saskatchewan waterways, please keep in mind these safe and sensible practices:

Make every canoe trip a clean trip! Follow the pack in - pack out rule. When breaking camp, erase all evidence that you were there. Leave your campsite cleaner than you found it.

Consider the wildlife and their habitat: While portaging or camping, stay on the trails to prevent any disturbance to the wildlife and natural vegetation.

Fire Prevention: Forest fires along canoe routes are an ever present danger. It is vital that all campfires are kept small and are thoroughly extinguished with water after use. Never leave a fire until you are sure it is 'dead'.



Be sure to obtain an official Saskatchewan Voyageur Certificate upon completion of your canoe trip. Before you start out, check in at one of the registration points and then again immediately after your journey is over. You will then become an official Saskatchewan Voyageur receiving a certificate as a memento of your canoe experience in Saskatchewan.

Registration Points:

Ministry offices in La Ronge, Prince Albert, Green Lake, Beauval, Ile-a-la Crosse, Buffalo Narrows, La Loche, Weyakwin, Stony Rapids, Pinehouse, Southend, Wollaston Lake, Sandy Bay, Pelican Narrows, Creighton, Cumberland House, Saskatoon, Pierceland, Loon Lake; Meadow Lake Provincial Park, Narrow Hills Provincial Park and the Visitor Information Centre at La Ronge.



Ministry of
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Culture and Sport

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