



Canoe Trip #11

La Ronge - Stroud Lake - Hunt Lake - Stanley - Nistowiak Lake - Iskwatikan Lake - La Ronge

Length of Trip: 170 kilometres (106 miles)

Time Required to Complete Trip: Six or more days, depending on route taken across Lac La Ronge

Number of Portages: 7 to 10

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:

Canoes can be launched from the Saskatchewan Government campground in La Ronge. Alternate launching sites which avoid the more open waters of Lac La Ronge are English Bay, approximately 19 kilometres (12 miles) north of La Ronge on Highway 102, or Wadin Bay, approximately 27 kilometres (17 miles) north of La Ronge on Highway 102. Arrangements for the safe parking of vehicles could, in all probability, be made with any of the fishing camp operators in La Ronge, English Bay or Wadin Bay. La Ronge airport receives regular scheduled flights from Prince Albert and Saskatoon. Charter float plane service, telephone, hotel, food and a wide range of services are also available at La Ronge.

Maps:

- 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

About the Trip:

The Lac La Ronge portion of this trip is across a large, island studded northern lake; much of the remainder of the trip covers smaller, equally beautiful lakes and narrow waterways, including the famous Four Portages route.

The trip takes the canoeist to the historic community of Stanley Mission, site of the oldest church in Saskatchewan. A wide variety of supplies is available at general stores in Stanley, as well as a telephone and road access via Highways 915 and 102. Other points of interest 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.

This trip is a loop, the direction of which could easily be reversed (i.e. - After crossing Lac La Ronge, start with portage number 7 and finish with portage number 1). In an emergency, it would also be possible to end the trip at Stanley and to be flown by charter aircraft or driven back to La Ronge. In this case, canoes could be picked up, or returned, at a later time.

The Canoe Trip:

There are a variety of ways to cross Lac La Ronge to Four Portages Bay in the northeast part 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. Alternative routes working up the west side and across the island-filled northern

portion of the lake are longer, but they offer more protection. Alternative starting points at either English Bay or Wadin Bay may have to be considered, but the best rule is to wait until the weather improves. 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. If, for reasons of safety or for variety of route, the canoeist decides to stay close to the northwest shore of Lac La Ronge, there are one, two or three additional, optional portages which make this longer but more sheltered course possible. Any, or all, of these optional portages may be made.

Optional Portage Number 1 - Nut Portage:

(Approximately 11 kilometres (7 miles) northeast of La Ronge).

Connecting Campbell Channel with Nut Bay. Approximately 100 metres (109 yards) long and in good condition.

From Campbell Channel, this portage starts at the narrowest, and lowest, portion of the peninsula (Grid location 896117 - Map 73-P/3).

From Nut Bay, this portage starts along the southeastern shore, and is easily seen (Grid location 896118 - Map 73-P/3).

Optional Portage Number 2 - English Bay Portage:

Connecting most westerly (Ewen Bay) part of Nut Bay with English Bay. Approximately 460 metres (503 yards) long and in fair to good condition.

From Ewen Bay, the trail starts as a clear break in the birch, alder and willow shoreline along the most westerly portion of the bay (Grid location 838164 - Map 73-P/3). From the southeast shore of English Bay, this portage starts as a small break in the willows, birch and spruce between two projecting rocky points (Grid location 835167 - Map 73-P/3).

Optional Portage Number 3 - 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).

Portage Number 1:

Connecting Four Portages Bay on Lac La Ronge with Leckie Lake. Approximately 475 metres (519 yards) long and in good condition. From Four Portages Bay, this portage starts at an obvious break in the shoreline vegetation at the north end of the bay (Grid location 183326 - Map 73-P/7). This landing may be wet during periods of high water on Lac La Ronge.

Highway 915 crosses this portage near its midpoint.

From Leckie Lake, this portage starts on the southeast shore of the lake (Grid location 179329 - Map 73-P/7).

Portage Number 2:

Connecting northwest shore of Leckie Lake with the east shore of Stroud Lake. Approximately 375 metres (408 yards) long and in good condition.

From Leckie Lake, this portage starts at a rocky outcrop in a cove on the northwest shore (Grid location 174339 - Map 73-P/7). From Stroud Lake, this portage starts as a grassy opening immediately south of a rocky outcropping on the east-central shore (Grid location 173341 - Map 73-P/7). A conspicuous spruce with the lower limbs trimmed away also marks the start of the portage. The trail forks with a short steep, and a longer less steep alternative.

Portage Number 3:

Connecting the north end of Stroud Lake with the south end of Hunt Lake. Approximately 300 metres (328 yards) long and in good condition, but steep in spots.

From the north end of Stroud Lake, this portage starts on the east, or right, side of a long narrow channel which extends about 800 metres (875 yards) north from the north end of the lake proper (Grid location 172348 - Map 73-P/7). Beaver activity may cause slight changes in the exact starting point of this portage. Watch for rocks in this narrow channel.

From the south end of Hunt Lake, the approach to this portage is through a fairly narrow, weedy channel (Grid location 175359 - Map 73-P/7) which contains some wild rice plants. This channel leads towards the low point in the tree line where a rocky brook flows into the head of the channel. The actual portage trail starts on the east, or left, side of this narrowing channel shortly before it narrows to a non-navigable rocky brook.

Portage Number 4:

Connecting the northeast end of Hunt Lake, Bradshaw Bay, with the south end of Chepakan Bay of Mountain Lake, a part of the Churchill River. Approximately 300 metres (328 yards) long and in good condition.

From Hunt Lake, this portage starts on the west, or left, side at the end of the narrow outlet channel at the northeastern end of Bradshaw Bay of Hunt Lake. Watch for rocks in this channel.

From Chepakan Bay, this portage starts at the south end of a very narrow winding channel passing for over 800 metres (875 yards) through a marshy area at the southeast end of the bay. The approach to this hard-to-find portage involves passing slightly to the west of a rocky point at the southernmost portion of Chepakan Bay and into a very narrow channel in the marsh. The canoeist must paddle through winding, weed-filled channels in a generally southeast direction. The actual portage starts on the west, or right, side of a channel about 25 metres (28 yards) from the entrance point of the small rocky brook flowing from Hunt Lake. At this point, no further water travel is possible. The portage starts at a muddy, grassy landing with rough steps leading up a steep slope.

The canoeist should now turn east, and then south past Amuchewas- pimewin Cliff (Also known as 'Shooting-Up Place') (Grid location 283420 - Map 73-P7) to the historic community of Stanley Mission, site of the oldest church in Saskatchewan. A wide variety of supplies is available at general stores in Stanley, as well as telephone communication and road access via Highways 915 and 102.

From Stanley, this trip continues in an east-northeast direction down the Churchill River for approximately five kilometres (three miles) to Stanley Rapids.

Portage Number 5 - Stanley Portage:

Connecting Mountain Lake to Drope Lake. Approximately 90 metres (98 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a Class 2 rapid.

NOTE TO CANOEISTS TRAVELLING DOWNSTREAM: On approaching Stanley Rapids, stay close to the north, or left shore and to the north side of the island dividing these rapids so as to avoid the Class 3 rapid on the south, or right side of the island.

From Mountain Lake, this portage starts inconspicuously in the grasses on the north side of the northernmost channel about 90 metres (98 yards) above the rapid (Grid location 333427 - Map 73-P/8). On the south side of this channel (north shore of the island), there is a shorter alternate portage trail with many crossed poles to facilitate the dragging of big boats around the rapid. Both trails are currently used. From Drope Lake, this portage starts on the north, or right side of the rapids, on the west side of the lake immediately north of the island dividing the rapids (Grid location 334427 - Map 73-P/8), and after paddling up through some fast water. Heavy boats may be hauled over the pole ramp on the north shore of the island dividing the rapids.

In Frog Narrows (Grid location 376415 - Map 73-P/8), connecting Drope and Nistowiak Lake, the current can vary from moderate to fast, depending on water levels. Special care should be taken when paddling this section because of the eddies and current boils in the river. If in doubt, the canoes could be lined along the shore.

Portage Number 6 - Nistowiak Falls Portage:

Connecting Nistowiak Lake to Iskwatikan Lake. Approximately 1100 metres (1203 yards) long and in excellent condition. This portage by-passes class 5 rapids, a 12 metre (40 foot) fall and a two metre (6 foot) fall.

From the south shore of Nistowiak Lake, this portage starts on the bare rock to the west of the inflowing waters of the Rapid River (Grid location 401393 - Map 73-P/8). An outfitter's camp is located at this site. From Iskwatikan Lake, the portage starts from the northern part of the lake on the southwest side of the outlet and the upper two metre (6 foot) fall (Grid location 402385 - Map 73-P/8).

A short side trail roughly half way along this long portage leads to a viewing point above the main falls. This is well worth seeing. **NOTE:** Experience canoeists travelling from Iskwatikan Lake to Nistowiak Lake may consider a 20 metre (22 yard) portage around the upper fall, and then descending for about 365 metres (400 yards) through minor rapids to a landing point on the west shore above the main 12 metre (40 foot) fall. If this choice is made, thereby shortening the long portage by one third (for downstream travellers only), it is strongly suggested that travellers unfamiliar with this area first walk and note details of the lower landing so that there is no chance whatsoever of overshooting this crucial landing.

A small Class 1 rapid separates Stewart Bay on Iskwatikan Lake from Hale 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 7 - Rapid River Portage:

Connecting Hale Lake with the outlet of Lac La Ronge. Approximately 500 metres (550 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.

From the outlet of Lac La Ronge, this portage starts on the north, or left shore approximately 200 metres (219 yards) beyond the dam at the outlet of the lake. **WARNING:** Stay well clear of the current flowing through the gates of the dam.

The remaining portion of the trip involves a large amount of travel over the exposed waters of Lac La Ronge. A route following the north and west shores of the lake affords the most protected passage among the numerous islands. Dangerous winds and waves can often be avoided by making crossings over open stretches of the lake in the very early morning or late evening when the wind usually drops.

If weather conditions make it impossible to reach the community of La Ronge, an alternate end point for the trip is the Saskatchewan Government campground at Wadin Bay located about 27 kilometres (17 miles) north of La Ronge on Highway 102.

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

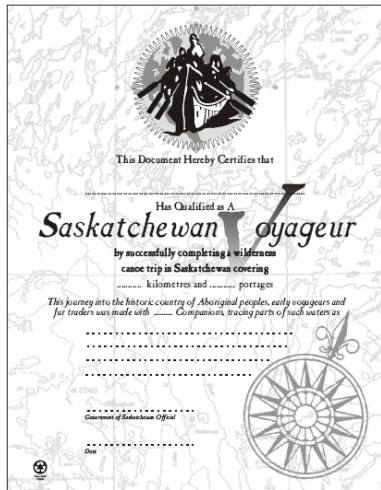
ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:

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

For further information contact:

Toll Free: 1-800-205-7070

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