



Canoe Trip #12

La Ronge - Lynx Lake - Sulphide Lake - Freda Lake - Stanley - Nistowiak Lake - Iskwatikan Lake - La Ronge

Length of Trip: 193 kilometres (120 miles)

Time Required to Complete Trip: 8 to 10 days

Number of Portages: 18 to 23 (depending on start and end points, and on individual choice)

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 in the community of La Ronge.

Alternate launching sites which avoid the more exposed portions of Lac La Ronge include the Saskatchewan Government campground at English Bay on Lac la Ronge located 19 kilometres (12 miles) north of La Ronge on highway 102 or the Saskatchewan Government campground at Wadin Bay located 27 kilometres (17 miles) north of La Ronge on highway 102.

Canoeists wishing to avoid Lac La Ronge entirely can launch canoes at Lynx Lake which is accessible by road approximately 43 kilometres (27 miles) north of La Ronge on highway 102. Canoeists opting for one of the alternate starting points could likely make arrangements for the safe parking of their vehicles at the Wadin Bay campground.

Maps:

- 73-P/3 La Ronge
- 73-P/6 Nemeiben Lake
- 73-P/7 Stanley
- 73-P/8 Nistowiak Lake
- 73-P/10 Otter Lake
- Optional: 73-P/9 Guncoat Bay
- Optional: Hydrographic Chart #6281 Lac La Ronge

About the Trip:

This medium length trip possesses the great advantage of being a loop. The first part is along the shores of Lac La Ronge where sweeping views of the open lake are the rule. Some exposure to this big lake is unavoidable unless the trip is started at Lynx Lake. There is no way to avoid travel on Lac La Ronge on the return portion of this loop unless the trip is cut short. Such hazards, however, can be minimized by hugging the shore as much as possible and avoiding travel when the weather is threatening.

For reasons of safety, and variety of scene, canoeists making a pleasure trip generally prefer to stay close to shore when on a big lake. To permit canoeists to stay close to the west shore of Lac La Ronge, details of optional portages number 1 and number 2 are included.

Upon leaving Lac La Ronge, the character of the trip changes completely and the canoeist is on small protected lakes and streams until the southeast part of Otter Lake is reached. From Otter Lake to Nistowiak Falls the canoeist is travelling on the fairly large lakes of the Churchill River system. These lakes are separated from each other by spectacular rapids and waterfalls.

The Churchill River portion of the trip covers a route rich in history for it is over this inland waterway that most of the great explorers of the Canadian Northwest passed. On Mountain Lake the historic community of Stanley Mission is passed. This is the 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 (gravel) and 102 (gravel and paved).

Other points of interest include picturesque Nistowiak Falls and the rapids below the dam at the outlet of Lac La Ronge.

Fishing for pike and walleye is good throughout the trip, and lake trout can be found in Lac La Ronge.

Numerous attractive natural campsites are to be found throughout this trip.

Normally this trip would be made in the direction described herein; however, except for a little upstream travel in a few places, this loop can be made with equal ease in reverse direction. For this reason portage

descriptions are given from both ends.

The Canoe Trip:

There are a variety of routes to follow from the community of La Ronge to the upper end of Wadin Bay where the Lynx River enters the lake.

Starting from La Ronge the canoeist travels in a northeasterly direction for about 11 kilometres (seven miles) to Nut Portage. This portage is optional. Making this portage shortens the route by less than 12 kilometres (7.5 miles); however, it permits the canoeist to avoid the exposed crossing at Nut Point and gives the opportunity for making the second optional portage to English Bay, if weather conditions or personal preference so dictate.

Portage Number 1 (Optional) - Nut Portage:

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).

Portage Number 2 (Optional) - English Bay Portage:

Connecting the most westerly (Ewen Bay) part of Nut Bay with English Bay. NOTE: On some maps the southern part of English Bay may be shown as Hornet 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).

Whether optional portages number 1 and number 2 are made or not, the objective at the start of this trip is to reach the northeast part of Wadin Bay and the Lynx River which leads to Lynx Lake.

Canoeists should enter the Lynx River from the north end of Wadin Bay.

Portage Number 3:

Around the lower rapids in the Lynx River. 232 metres (254 yards) long and in fair condition.

From the downstream, or Wadin Bay side, this portage starts on the west or left side nine metres (10 yards) below the base of impassable rocky rapids (Grid location 023320 - Map 73-P/7).

From the upstream approach, this portage starts on the southeast or right side of the river 45 metres (50 yards) above a beaver dam (Grid location 023323 - Map 73-P/7). At its midpoint, the portage trail is crossed by an old bush road.

Portage Number 4:

Around the upper rapids in the Lynx River. 82 metres (90 yards) long and in poor condition. The trail is very overgrown with brush.

From the downstream side, this portage starts opposite the base of the rapids on the west or left bank of the river (Grid location 017323 - Map 73-P/7).

From the upstream side, a short distance down the Lynx River, this portage starts on the west or right side at the end of a beaver dam immediately above the rapids and back of some fallen trees (Grid location 016324 - Map 73-P/7). NOTE: Do not take the more noticeable portage opening a short distance southwest of the beaver dam as this is the old 700 metre (765 yard) portage trail which bypasses both portage 3 and portage 4.

Portage Number 5:

Connecting Lynx Lake to Duck Lake. 161 metres (176 yards) long and in good condition.

From Lynx Lake, this portage starts on the east shore of a small bay (Grid location 031346 - Map 73-P/7).

From Duck Lake, this portage starts as a small break in the shoreline vegetation on the northwest shore of the lake (Grid location 032346 - Map 73-P/7).

Portage Number 6:

Connecting Duck Lake to Sulphide Lake. 401 metres (438 yards) long and in good condition. The trail is split into upper and lower alternates, with the lower portion being better.

From the Duck Lake side, this portage starts as a small break in the shoreline vegetation of a small cove on the northeast side of the lake (Grid location 042345).

From the Sulphide Lake side, this portage starts as a small break in the shoreline vegetation at the extreme southwest end of the lake (Grid location 045346 - Map 73-P/7).

Portage Number 7:

Connecting Sulphide Lake with a beaver pond below the first rapids in the Dog River. 138 metres (150 yards) long and in fair condition.

The Dog River is the outlet stream for Sulphide Lake, which it leaves from a narrow bay on the east shore.

It flows into Caribou Lake.

From Sulphide Lake, this portage starts on the northwest or left shore at the end of a narrow northeastward pointing bay on the side of the lake immediately above a beaver dam and rapids (Grid location 086361 - Map 73-P/7).

From the Dog River side, below the first rapids, this portage starts on the northwest or right shore at an indistinct opening in the shoreline vegetation (Grid location 087363 - Map 73-P/7).

Portage Number 8:

Connecting consecutive beaver ponds on the Dog River. 105 metres (115 yards) long and in fair condition. From the southwest or upstream side, this portage starts on the right or southeast side of a beaver dam at the outlet of the pond (Grid location 091366 - Map 73-P/7).

From the northeast or downstream, side this portage starts at the head of a beaver pond on the left or southeast side of the rapids in the inflowing stream (Grid location 092367 - Map 73-P/7). The trail has no definite start and the landing spot will depend on prevailing water levels.

Portage Number 9:

Connecting a beaver pond on the Dog River with a meandering arm flowing into the south end of Caribou Lake. 24 metres (26 yards) long and in fair condition.

From the beaver pond or west side, this portage starts on the right or east side of a beaver dam at the stream outlet (Grid location 092368 - Map 73-P/7).

From the meandering arm or east side, this portage starts on the left or south side of the inflowing waters (Grid location 093368 - Map 73-P/7).

Portage Number 10:

Connecting Caribou Lake with a small beaver pond on the outlet stream to the north. 204 metres (223 yards) long and in poor condition (Very rough footing).

From the northwest arm of Caribou Lake, this portage starts on the right or east side at a beaver dam (Grid location 111381 - Map 73-P/7).

From the small beaver pond, this portage starts on the left or east side of the inflowing stream at a rocky and steep landing at the base of the fast water (Grid location 112382 - Map 73-P/7).

Portage Number 11:

Connecting the small beaver pond with Freda Lake. 120 metres (131 yards) long and in fair condition.

From the small beaver pond, this portage starts at the right or east side of a beaver dam at the outlet of the pond.

From the Freda Lake side, this portage starts at a break in the shoreline vegetation at the southern tip of Freda Lake (Grid location 116384 - Map 73-P/7).

A cabin can be seen on the west shore of Freda Lake (Grid location 134407 - Map 73-P/7).

Portage Number 12:

Connecting the south and north portions of Freda Lake. This portage involves lifting or lining canoes a few metres (Yards) over rocks (Grid location 141414 - Map 73-P/7). Beaver sometimes erect a dam at this spot.

At lower water levels a shallow rocky area may be encountered in the narrows at the extreme east end of Freda Lake (Grid location 160424 - Map 73-P/7).

Portage Number 13:

Connecting the north end of Freda Lake with a small nameless lake. 190 metres (208 yards) long and in good condition.

From Freda Lake, at the northern end, after passing through the second narrows there is a small thumb shaped bay extending northward. The portage starts on the left or west side of a broken beaver dam on the outlet stream at the north end of this bay (Grid location 160427 - Map 73-P/7). If water levels permit, canoeists may drag their canoes over this dam and start the portage at the main dam thereby shortening the portage by 100 metres (110 yards).

From the small nameless lake, this portage starts at the south end of its south arm. It appears as a break in the shoreline vegetation immediately to the right or west of the stream entering from Freda Lake (Grid location 161429 - Map 73-P/7).

Portage Number 14:

Connecting the small nameless lake with Sim Lake. 155 metres (169 yards) long and in good condition.

From the small nameless lake, this portage starts on the north shore a short distance to the right or east of the outlet stream (Grid location 164435 - Map 73-P/7).

From Sim Lake, this portage starts at the tip of the southwestern arm of the lake slightly to the left or east of the inflowing stream (Grid location 165437 - Map 73-P/7).

Portage Number 15:

Connecting Sim Lake with McNichol Lake. 257 metres (281 yards) long and in good condition.

From Sim Lake, this portage starts at the northeast end of the lake about 90 metres (98 yards) to the right or east of the outlet stream (Grid location 198462 - Map 73-P/7).

From McNichol Lake, this portage starts on the left or east side at the south end of the stream flowing into the south end of McNichol Lake (Grid location 201465 - Map 73-P/7).

Between the northern end of portage number 15 and McNichol Lake proper, the small stream continues for a distance of one kilometre (2/3 mile). In this distance there are two fast spots which, depending upon water levels and direction of travel, may be either paddled or waded. There is also a beaver dam over which canoes will likely need to be hauled.

From McNichol Lake proceed northward to Smith Bay of Otter Lake and then to Stony Mountain Portage at the east end of Otter Lake.

Portage Number 16 - Stony Mountain Portage:

Connecting the southeast end of Otter Lake with a small lake below Robertson Falls. 73 metres (80 yards) long and in excellent condition. This portage by-passes a 3 metre (10 foot) fall.

From the southeast shore of Otter Lake, this portage starts on the west shore of Eyinew Island 45 metres (49 yards) above the head of the fall (Grid location 277563 - Map 73-P/10) and ends at a rock shelf at the foot of the fall. The portage can be seen from the water and appears as a break in the spruce and birch of the shoreline.

Portage Number 17- Mountain Portage:

Connecting the small lake between Robertson and Twin Falls to the northwest end of Mountain Lake. 278 metres (304 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a 6 metre (20 foot) fall.

From the small lake between Robertson and Twin Falls, this portage starts at a break in the trees immediately east of two small islands (Grid location 280558 - Map 73-P/10) in a small cove along the southeast shore 45 metres (49 yards) west of a group of buildings belonging to an outfitter's camp. It ends at a break in the shoreline vegetation 400 metres (437 yards) southwest of the fall. An outfitter's dock is located about midway between the falls and the portage.

The trip continues in a generally southeasterly direction past Amuchewaspimewin Cliff (Also known as 'Shooting-Up Place') (Grid location 283420 - Map 73-P/7) 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 18 - Stanley Portage:

Connecting Mountain Lake to Drope Lake. 92 metres (100 yards) long and in excellent condition. This portage by-passes a Class 2 rapid.

NOTE TO CANOEISTS: On approaching Stanley Rapids, stay close to the north, or left shore above 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 75 metres (82 yards) above the rapid (Grid location 333427 - Map 73-P/8).

From Drope Lake, this portage starts directly opposite a large rock situated in the fast water at the foot of the rapid.

On the south side of this channel (north shore of the island), there is a shorter alternate portage trail with rollers to facilitate the dragging of boats and canoes around the rapid. Both trails are currently used.

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.

Shortly after passing Frog Narrows the route leaves the Churchill River and proceeds up the Rapid River, past scenic Nistowiak Falls to Iskwatikan Lake.

Portage Number 19 - 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 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 20 - 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.

There are a variety of ways to cross Lac La Ronge from 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. 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 end 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 optional portages which make this longer but more sheltered course possible.

Any, or all, of these optional portages may be made (See portages number 1, number 2 and number 21).

Portage Number 21 (Optional) - Anglo-Rouyn Portage:

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

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 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).

If weather conditions make it impossible to reach the community of La Ronge, alternate end points could be the Saskatchewan Government campgrounds at Wadin Bay or English Bay.

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

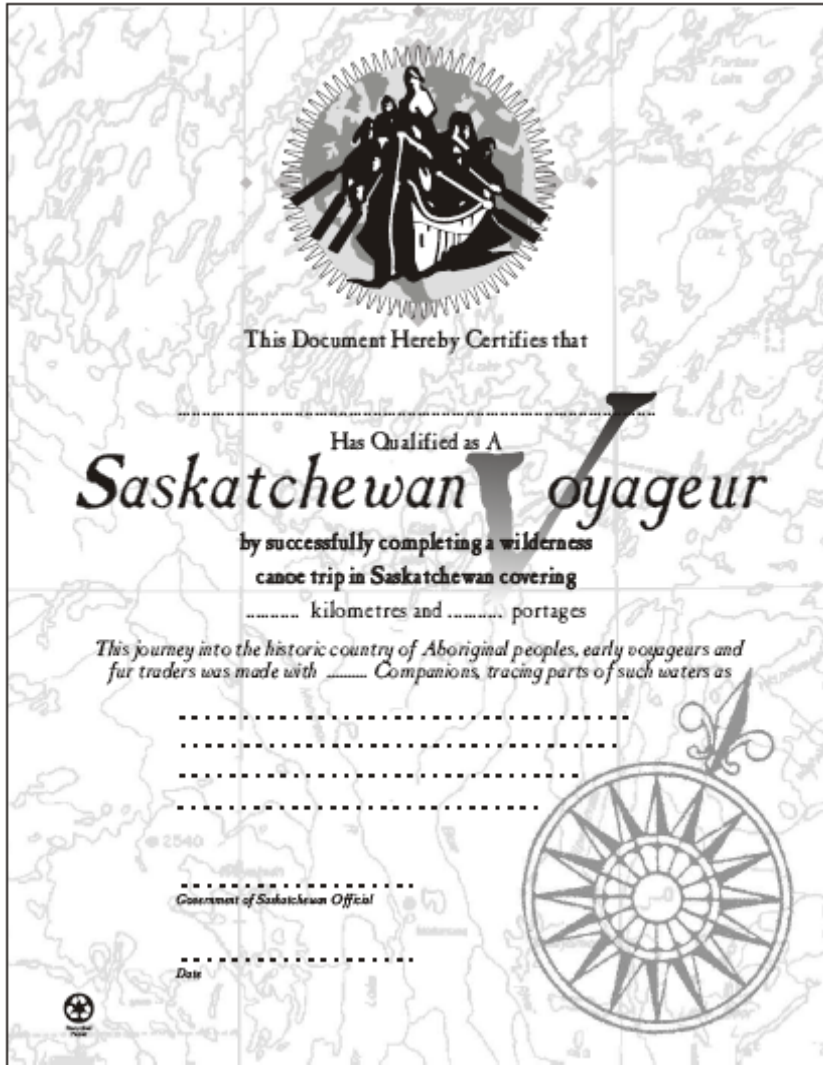
ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:

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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