



# Canoe Trip #16

## ***Nemeiban Lake - 6 Portages - Trout Lake - Churchill River - Otter Lake***

**Length of Trip:** 105 kilometres (65 miles)

**Time Required to Complete Trip:** 5 to 6 days

**Number of Portages:** 13 to 14

### **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 may be launched at the Saskatchewan Government campground at Nemeiben Lake. This campground is located at the end of a well marked, eight kilometre (5 mile) long, access road which branches off to the northwest from Highway 102 at a point 19 kilometres (12 miles) north of the community of La Ronge. Total road distance from La Ronge is 27 kilometres (17 miles). Arrangements for safe parking of vehicles during the canoe trip can be made with either the supervisor of the Government campground, or the operator of a private fishing camp located near the campground at the south end of Bell Bay on Nemeiben Lake.

### **Maps:**

- 73-P/6 Nemeiben Lake
- 73-P/10 Otter Lake
- 73-P/11 Kavanaugh Lake

### **About the Trip:**

This relatively short trip gives the modern voyageur big lake experience, exposure to the Churchill River, and familiarity with arrow, marshy waterways and small lakes. It is not recommended for beginners, but is very popular and well used by canoeists of intermediate skills. It is not an especially difficult trip, and all dangerous rapids can be readily portaged.

Because parts of this trip involve possible exposure to strong winds and waves on large lakes, ample extra time should be allowed to wait out bad weather which may make big lakes unsafe to travel.

Numerous attractive natural campsites occur all along the route. Fishing for northern pike and walleye is good in all waters. Lake trout occur in Nemeiben and Trout Lakes.

Normally this trip would be made in the direction described here. It is possible, however, to reverse the direction if so desired. A certain amount of upstream paddling would be encountered in some locations, but not enough to bother the determined canoeist. For those who wish to reverse the direction of the entire trip, and for those who may choose to simply travel part way and then return via the same route, portage descriptions are given from both directions.

### **The Canoe Trip:**

From the Government campground on Nemeiben Lake, the route follows a generally northerly direction up North and Bague Bays to the first of 'Six Portages' to the Churchill River (Grid location 788456 - Map 73-P/6). Frequent reference to map and compass is advised to avoid getting lost on this large lake.

### **Portage Number 1:**

Connecting Bague Bay of Nemeiben Lake with a small nameless lake. 305 metres (333 yards) long and in good condition, but wet at the west end.

From the Nemeiben Lake end, this portage starts from the west side of the northern part of Bague Bay immediately south of the inflowing stream (Grid location 788456 - Map 73-P/6).

From the small nameless lake, this portage starts about 30 metres (33 yards) to the right, or south, of the outlet stream at a distinct opening in the shoreline vegetation (Grid location 785454 - Map 73-P/6).

### **Portage Number 2:**

Connecting a small nameless lake with a beaver pond. 330 metres (361 yards) long and in poor condition. From the small nameless lake, this portage starts on the west, or left, shore about 100 metres (109 yards) from the marshy inflowing stream (Grid location 779473 - Map 73-P/6). From the beaver pond, this portage starts from the west, or right, side of a beaver dam at the south end of the pond. Two forks to the

left, near the bottom end of this portage, should be avoided as they lead to impassable marshy areas.

**Portage Number 3:**

Connecting the beaver pond along the shallow inflowing stream with a small nameless lake. 460 metres (503 yards) long and in generally good condition, but steep in spots and wet at the ends. From the beaver pond, this portage starts from the north end of an old man made channel at the north end of the pond. From the small nameless lake, this portage starts from a distinct opening in the shoreline vegetation at the extreme south end of the lake just east, or left, of a beaver dam.

**Portage Number 4:**

Connecting a small nameless lake with Little Crooked Lake. 455 metres (497 yards) long and in generally good condition, but steep in spots and wet at the ends.

From the small nameless lake, this portage starts at the end of a narrow man made channel at the extreme north end of the lake.

From Little Crooked Lake, this portage starts at a rocky cove on the southeast shore (Grid location 778499 - Map 73-P/6). The start of the trail shows as a green patch south of a sheer rock face.

**Portage Number 5:**

Connecting Little Crooked Lake with Rachkewich Lake. 491 metres (537 yards) long and in good condition. From Little Crooked Lake, this portage starts from the extreme north end of the lake at a distinct grassy opening in the shoreline vegetation.

From Rachkewich Lake, this portage starts from the extreme south end of the lake at a small sandy beach.

**Portage Number 6:**

Connecting Rachkewich Lake with Trout Lake. 600 metres (656 yards) long and in good condition, but steep in spots.

From Rachkewich Lake, this portage starts at a distinct opening in the shoreline vegetation about 150 metres (164 yards) to the west of the shallow outflowing stream. After descending the steep slope at the lower end of the trail, a narrow man-made channel is reached which leads to a small stream. If water levels do not permit launching the canoes at this point, an alternate newer trail which starts at a large pine tree on the left a few metres (yards) before reaching the man-made channel should be used. Turn left at the pine tree and follow this new trail for 45 metres (49 yards) along the valley edge, then turn right through willow thickets for 55 metres (60 yards) until the shallow stream channel is reached.

From Trout Lake, paddle and pole into the marshy, reed filled area at the south end of the bay until the hard to find inflowing channel becomes more clearly defined. Follow this meandering, narrowing channel as it eventually becomes only canoe width. Continue upstream along the narrow channel, hauling over old beaver dams and shallow rocky spots for a further distance of about one kilometre (2/3 mile) until finally a short, straight, man-made channel is found leading to the west. The actual portage (Number 6) starts at the western end of this small, 23 metre (25 yard) channel. During periods of extremely low water levels, alternate Portage Number 6A is recommended even though it is considerably longer.

**Portage Number 6A:**

Connecting Rachkewich Lake with Trout Lake. 1200 metres (1312 yards) long and in generally good condition but steep in spots. The last 270 metres (295 yards) at the Trout Lake end are only fair.

From Rachkewich Lake, this portage is the same as Portage 15 for the first 355 metres (388 yards). On reaching a distinct fork in the trail, follow the left trail until it reaches the marshy meadow of the valley floor. Proceed directly across this meadow until the shallow stream channel is reached.

From the Trout Lake end, at a point along the narrow channel (Approximate Grid location 763574 - Map 73-P/11), the canoeist must portage across the marshy meadow of the valley floor to a winter trail that angles up through the trees along the west side of the low valley and connects with Portage Number 15 near its midpoint.

The canoeist should now proceed northeast to the outlet of Trout Lake. There are three sets of rapids between Trout Lake and Stack Lake.

**Portage Number 7 - Trout Portage:**

Connecting Trout Lake with quiet waters below the first rapid. 145 metres (158 yards) long and in good condition, but rocky and steep in spots. This portage by-passes a class 4 rapid.

From Trout Lake, this portage starts on the east, or right, side of the outlet about 60 metres (66 yards) above dangerous rapids.

From the quiet waters below the rapid, this portage starts on the left bank about 30 metres (33 yards) from the base of the rapids. Within about 300 metres (328 yards) the next set of rapids is encountered. Most canoeists will run these rapids which should however first be surveyed from shore. If in doubt, the canoeist should take optional portage number 8.

**Portage Number 8 (Optional):**

Connecting consecutive sections of quiet water between rapids separating Trout and Stack Lakes. 110 metres (120 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a class 2 rapid.

From the upstream end, this portage starts at a poor landing on a big flattish rock on the right shore immediately above the rapid. The trail improves back of the landing.

From the downstream end, this portage starts on the left shore at the base of the rapid at a high rock exposure. This trail is mostly used by upstream canoeists, and there are some excellent campsites along it.

The next set of rapids occurs in about 600 metres (656 yards).

**Portage Number 9:**

Connecting quiet waters below the second rapids with Stack Lake. 90 metres (98 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a class 3 rapid.

This set of rapids is divided into two channels by a small island. From the quiet waters below the second set of rapids, this portage starts about 60 metres (66 yards) above the rapids on the right shore of the right, and larger, rapids.

From Stack Lake, this portage starts on sloping, bare rock about 30 metres (33 yards) below the base of the rapids on the left shore. The left channel has a Class 2 and a Class 1 rapid in it. For downstream travel only, these two rapids can usually be run after careful survey from shore.

The outlet of Stack Lake is divided by a number of small islands. The right-hand choice involves descending through moderate fast water which should present no problems to alert canoeists. If in doubt, canoeists can wade down the shallower channels on the left. The upstream canoeist should wade up the shallow channels on the right hand side.

500 metres (547 yards) below this rapid, the canoeist approaches Rock Trout Portage.

**Portage Number 10 - Rock Trout Portage:**

Connecting consecutive sections of quiet water between Stack and Mountney Lakes. 260 metres (284 yards) and in excellent condition. This portage by-passes a class 3 rapid.

Going downstream, this portage starts on the right, or east, shore at a sandy landing 15 metres (16 yards) above the start of the rapid.

Going upstream, this portage starts on a sloping rock shelf 30 metres (33 yards) below the end of the rapid.

Numerous excellent campsites are located along this portage.

500 metres (547 yards) below this portage, the canoeist encounters another set of rapids split by an island 140 metres (153 yards) wide. The right, or southern, course is the deepest and most easily run. Most canoeists will elect to run this rapid. An alternate is to make a short carry of a few metres (yards) over bare rock on the left channel. Going upstream, the canoeist should make a short carry of a few metres (yards) over bare rock on the right channel. At the outlet of Mountney Lake there are several minor rapids which most likely would require wading or lining for upstream travel.

**Portage Number 11:**

Connecting waters below the outlet of Mountney Lake with waters leading to Nipew (or Dead) Lake. 190 metres (207 yards) long and in good condition, but steep at the lower end. This portage by-passes a class 2 rapid.

This portage starts on the northeast, or left, shore in a cove 125 metres (136 yards) above the main rapid. A shorter 100 metre (109 yard) alternate starts immediately at the head of the rapid and, after climbing a steep embankment, joins up with the longer alternate.

Going upstream, this portage starts on the right bank at a steep embankment at the foot of the rapid.

There are intermittent minor rapids below the end of this portage which are not dangerous, and which can be run by the alert canoeist. Some wading or lining may be necessary at times of very low water, and for upstream travel.

After entering the west end of Nipew Lake, travel in a generally northeasterly direction to the narrows leading to Hayman Lake. there is considerable current in these narrows, leading to a class 1+ rapid (Grid location 058720 - map 73 P/10). Wading or lining would most likely be required for upstream travel. Be sure to select the most easterly outlet from Burgess Bay of Hayman Lake.

**Portage Number 12 - Great Devil Portage:**

Connecting Hayman Lake with quiet waters below Great Devil Rapids. 1090 metres (1192 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a Class 4 rapid.

NOTE. The first obvious trail on the east side of Burgess Bay IS NOT the portage trail, rather it is a five kilometre (three mile) winter road which by-passes both Great and Little Devil Rapids.

From Burgess Bay of Hayman Lake, this portage starts in a cove on the north or left side 60 metres (66 yards) above the rapid.

From the quiet waters below Great Devil Rapids, this portage starts in a cove 135 metres (148 yards) below the rapids on the right, or northwest, shore.

**Portage Number 13 - Little Devil Portage:**

Connecting quiet waters below Great Devil Rapids with Devil Lake. 840 metres (918 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a Class 2+ rapid.

From the quiet waters below Great Devil Rapids, this portage starts in a small cove on the north or left side 70 metres (77 yards) above the rapid.

From Devil Lake, this portage starts in a cove on the north, or right, shore immediately below the base of the rapids.

A shorter version of Little Devil Portage exists on the right, or south, shore. This involves two shorter portages as shown on map 73-P/10, but these have not been surveyed.

There is a Saskatchewan Government campground on the east shore of Devil Lake (Grid location 170680 - map 73 P/10), and road access to Otter Rapids and Missinipe.

**Portage Number 14 - Otter Rapids Portage:**

Connecting Devil Lake with Otter Lake. 565 metres (618 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a Class 3 rapid.

From the south end of Devil Lake, this portage starts on the east, or left, shore just after passing a prominent rock and immediately to the west of the Water Surveys building located at the head of the rapid.

From Otter Lake, this portage starts on the east, or right, side in a quiet cove at the base of the rapids. Below the cove there is considerable fast water.

Canoeists planning to end their trip at the bridge across Otter Rapids need only portage 350 metres (382 yards). There is an excellent Government campground at the point where the portage crosses Highway 102. Others will complete the portage and paddle on to Missinipe Townsite on Walker Bay at the west end of Otter Lake.

At Missinipe, the end point of this trip, there is a Saskatchewan Government campground. There are also several fishing camps, an air charter service and a small general store. Radio, airplane, telephone and highway communications are possible with La Ronge which is situated 80 kilometres (50 miles) to the south.

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

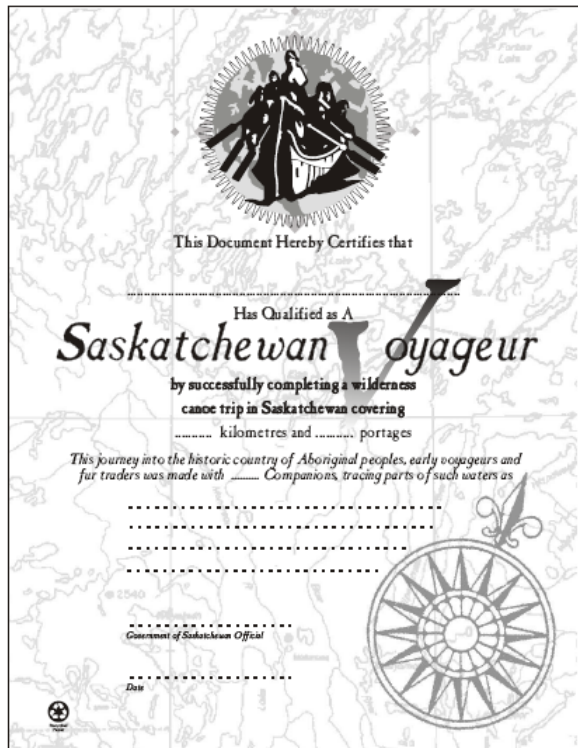
#### ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:

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.



#### For further information contact:

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