



Canoe Trip #2

Otter Lake (Missinipe) - Stanley - Iskwatikan Lake - Hale Lake Lac La Ronge - La Ronge

Length of Trip: 120 to 145 kilometres (75 to 90 miles) depending upon route taken across Lac La Ronge

Time Required to Complete Trip: 5 to 7 days

Number of Portages: 5 to 8 depending upon route taken across Lac La Ronge

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 from the campground at Missinipe (Walker Bay) on Otter Lake 80 kilometres (50 Miles) north of La Ronge on Highway 102. Arrangements for the safe parking of vehicles may be made with one of the fishing camp outfitters at Missinipe. An alternate starting point for this trip is from below the rapids at the campground at Otter Rapids 88 kilometres (55 miles) north of La Ronge on Highway 102. Otter Lake forms part of the Churchill River system.

Accommodation, air-charter, food, gasoline and telephone services are available at Missinipe.

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: Hydrographic Chart #6281 Lac La Ronge

About the Trip:

The first part of this trip takes the canoeist along lakes of part of the Churchill River system. Early in the trip the historic community of Stanley Mission, site of the oldest church in Saskatchewan, is passed. 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.

Leaving the Churchill, the beautiful Nistowiak Falls offers a welcome pause while portaging to Iskwatikan Lake.

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.

The Canoe Trip:

After travelling generally southeast on Otter Lake, the canoeist comes to the first portage.

Portage Number 1 - Stony Mountain Portage:

Connecting the southeast end of Otter Lake with a small lake below Robertson Falls. Approximately 73 metres (80 yards) long and in excellent condition. This portage by-passes a 3 metre (10 foot) fall. From the Otter Lake side, this portage starts on the west shore of Eyinew Island about 45 metres (49 yards) above the head of the fall (Grid location 277563 - Map 73-P/10). The portage can be seen from the water and appears as a break in the spruce and birch of the shoreline.

From the small lake between Robertson and Twin Falls, the start of this portage is at an obvious landing about 10 metres (11 yards) to the east of the most easterly part of Robertson Falls.

Portage Number 2 - Mountain Portage:

Connecting the small lake between Robertson and Twin Falls to the northwest end of Mountain Lake. Approximately 275 metres (301 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 small cove along the

southeast shore about 45 metres (49 yards) west of a group of buildings belonging to an outfitter's camp. The portage shows as a break in the trees immediately east of two small islands (Grid location 280558 - Map 73-P/10).

From the northwest end of Mountain Lake, the start of this portage shows as a break in the shoreline vegetation about 400 metres (437 yards) southwest of the falls. 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 3 - 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 4 - Nistowiak Falls Portage:

Connecting Nistowiak Lake with Iskwatikan Lake. Approximately 1100 metres (1203 yards) long and in excellent condition. This portage by-passes some 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 5 - Rapid River Portage:

Connecting Hale Lake with the outlet of Lac La Ronge (Northeastern tip of Diefenbaker Bay).

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.

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 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 - 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).

Optional Portage Number 2 - English Bay Portage:

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

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).

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).

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

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

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

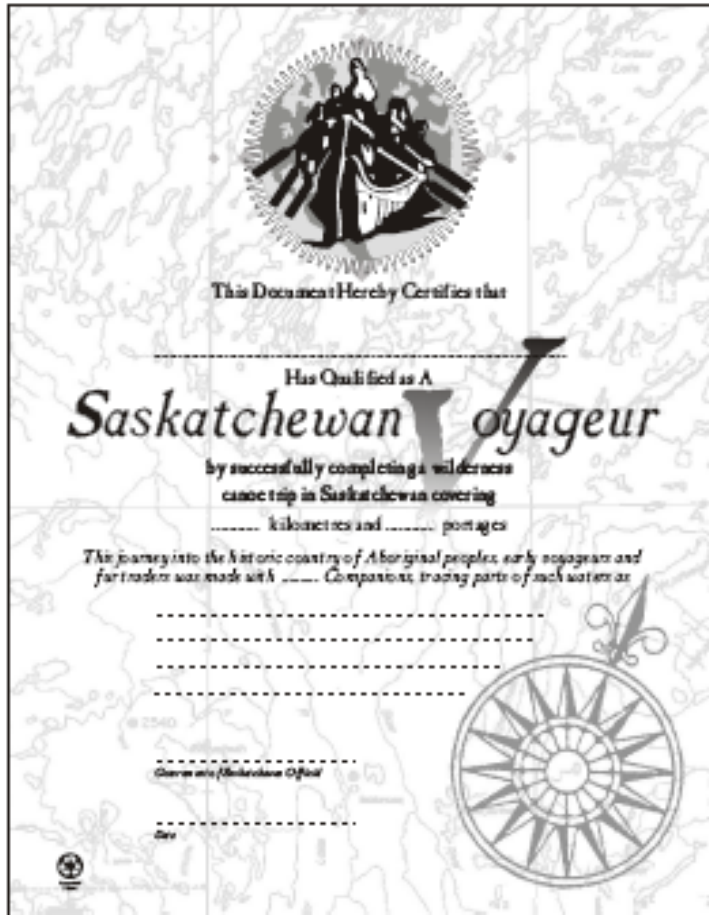
ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:

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-Croise, 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
Tourism, Parks,
Culture and Sport

For further information contact:

Toll Free: 1-800-205-7070

Fax: (306) 787-7000

Email: info.TPCS@gov.sk.ca

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