



Canoe Trip #23

Pierce Lake to Lac Des Iles

Length of Trip: Approximately 35 kilometres (22 miles), Howe Bay on Pierce Lake to Highway bridge north of Goodsoil)

Time Required to Complete Trip: One to two days

Number of Portages: None

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 the presence of hazards not described herein. It is the canoeist's responsibility to proceed with caution and alertness, using discretion and good judgment 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:

Howe Bay on the southeast shore of Pierce Lake is the starting point and can be reached by driving northeast approximately 24 kilometres (15 miles) from Pierceland, Saskatchewan. There are privately operated resorts and also a campground on the sheltered shores of Howe Bay from where canoes may be launched.

Maps:

- 73-K Waterhen River

About the Trip:

This short, relatively easy trip traverses part of Meadow Lake Provincial Park. The canoeist will experience both travel along the shores of a sizeable lake and down portions of the Cold River with moderate but not dangerous rapids. This is not a wilderness trip because it borders areas of agricultural development at various points.

Shorelines are generally low, rocky, sandy or overgrown with aquatic vegetation. Islands are scarce; scenery is beautiful and fishing excellent. Pierce Lake contains pike, walleye, perch, whitefish and lake trout, as does Lac des Iles, except for lake trout.

For experienced canoeists who might wish to continue this canoe trip beyond its end point at the bridge north of Goodsoil, it should be pointed out that 275 metres (301 yards) below the bridge one encounters the first of a series of intermittent rapids which extend down the Waterhen River for approximately 16 to 18 kilometres (10 miles). These rapids are passable by canoe but not recommended for beginners. Experienced canoeists electing to traverse this rapid-filled stretch of the Waterhen River should be prepared to do some wading and some lining of canoes. There are no portage trails. Because of the sun's reflection on a generally east-flowing river these rapids are especially hard to judge on bright sunny mornings. Those deciding to run these rapids should do so during the afternoon or on an overcast day to minimize the blinding effect of the sun's reflection on the rapids ahead.

Completion of this 16 to 18 kilometre stretch of rapids brings the canoeist to the quiet waters of the Waterhen in the area northeast of Golden Ridge. This area is the recommended starting point for the Waterhen-Beaver River Canoe Trip No. 24. Completion of this stretch of rapids can link the two recommended canoe trips together into one longer continuous trip. Note: Do not be tempted to undertake the 16 to 18 kilometre stretch of rapids unless you are an experienced canoeist, prepared for some wading and a certain amount of damage to your canoe.

The Canoe Trip:

The east end of Pierce Lake narrows to a channel with moderate current leading to Lepine Lake. The shores are low and reed-bordered. This area abounds with water birds and muskrats.

The generally low, marshy shores of Lepine Lake present few good natural campsites. Best choices are along the north shore on flat spots well above the slope and back from the water's edge. There is a well used campsite at the east end of Lepine Lake on the north shore at the start of the outlet.

Shortly after leaving Lepine Lake the canoeist will encounter the first rapids. It is recommended that the cautious canoeist land and survey these rapids from the high banks of the north shore. Depending upon the canoeist's experience and prevailing water levels a descent through these rapids can be planned or a decision made to wade down through the shallower water close to shore guiding the canoe by hand.

There are several further sets of moderate rapids which will require a similar procedure. Confidence in one's judgement and canoeing skill is quickly gained in this way. None of these rapids could be considered truly dangerous and scrapes to the canoe bottom are the major risk.

It should be noted that there are some beautiful natural campsites on sand ridges overlooking the river between Lepine and Lac des Iles. There are also a wide choice of fine sand beach campsites on the north shore of Lac des Iles.

Strong winds can make Lac des Iles extremely rough. Under such conditions it may be advisable to portage across the peninsula near the east end of the lake thereby avoiding exposure to the big seas sweeping in from the west. There is no portage trail but the peninsula is semi-open and easy to traverse. The Waterhen River at the east end of Lac des Iles is wide, deep and slow-flowing. It becomes progressively shallower and swifter. Watch for rocks when approaching the end point of this trip which is the Highway bridge.

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

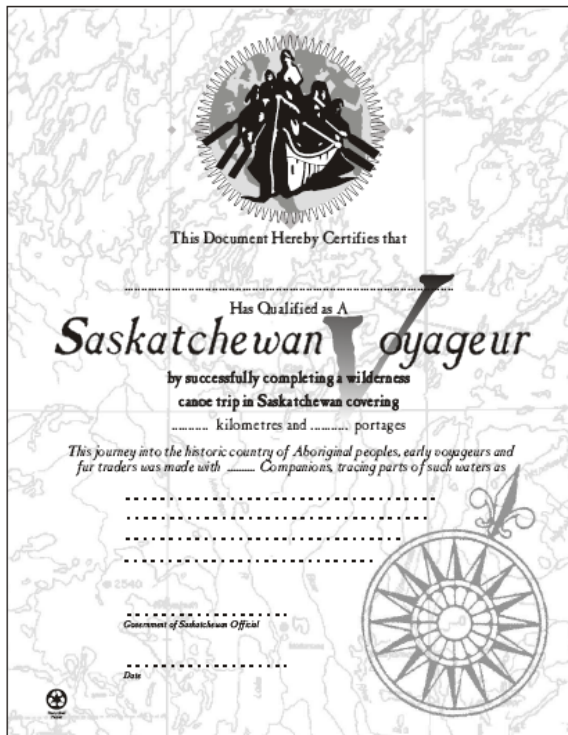
ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:

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

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