



Canoe Trip #25

E.B. Campbell Hydroelectric Station - Saskatchewan River - Cumberland House

Length of Trip: 113 kilometres (70 miles)

Time Required to Complete Trip: 2 to 3 days

Number of Portages: No Portages

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, D. Gerbrandt Recreational Site (Grid location 097502 - Map 63- E/11), located by the E. B. Campbell hydroelectric station 75 kilometres (47 miles) northeast of Nipawin via highways 55 (paved) and 123 (paved).

It is not advisable to leave vehicles unsupervised for long periods of time at northern campgrounds. Safe parking of vehicles should be arranged with responsible local persons.

Maps:

- 63-E/11 Tobin Lake
- 63-E/14 New Channel
- 63-E/15 Old Channel
- 63-E/16 Cumberland House
- 63-L/1 Archibald Lake
- 63-L/2 Pine Bluff

NOTE: Map 63-E/15 is only required if travel via the "Old Channel" of the Saskatchewan River is contemplated.

About the Trip:

This safe, rapid-free trip takes the canoeist through a variety of scenery including the timbered shores of the Saskatchewan River, the willow and grass-bordered marshes of the lower Saskatchewan, and a portion of Cumberland Lake. The possibility of becoming temporarily disoriented in the myriad channels of the lower Saskatchewan is the main hazard of this trip.

Because of changing requirements of the E.B. Campbell Hydroelectric Station, the volume of water released below the dam can vary considerably. River travellers should haul their canoes well out of the water at night, as well as tie them to trees, to ensure that they will not be carried away in the event of a sharp rise in water level.

NOTE: The use of river water for drinking purposes is not recommended. However, should this become necessary, the water should be thoroughly boiled.

Canoeists can expect to see or hear a variety of wildlife on this trip; including coyotes, bears, ducks, geese and moose.

Fishing for northern pike, walleye and goldeye is good, although it is advised that consumption be limited as the fish in the Saskatchewan River system have exhibited traces of mercury contamination.

It is suggested that the canoeist not make this trip during the hunting season, after the end of August, unless he/she intends to hunt. However, despite this risk, one advantage of travel during the hunting season is that directions, or assistance, may be obtained from the many hunters and guides travelling the river at this time. For safety, if travelling during hunting season, wear brightly coloured clothing even if not intending to hunt.

The Canoe Trip:

After leaving the D. Gerbrandt campground the canoeist proceeds for 25 kilometres (15 1/2 miles) to the start of the 'Old Channel' of the Saskatchewan River (Grid location 295610 - Map 63-E/14). Because of the sand bars encountered this route is not advisable, except under high water conditions, even though it is less confusing than the 'New Channel' and 'Angling River' route.

Until 1875 the waters of the Saskatchewan River flowed eastward towards Manitoba via the 'Old Channel'.

During the spring break-up of that year, a huge ice jam blocked the river. This caused the waters to back up, flood and then cut the 'New Channel' to the west shore of Cumberland Lake.

Travel down the 'New Channel' is diverted into the Angling River by a sandbar blocking the entrance to the 'Steamboat Channel'. From this point on, the canoeist will probably find it impossible to accurately plot his progress in the many shifting channels of the Angling River complex. This fact need not be a matter of great concern however, for by following the main branches with the most noticeable volume and velocity of water, one is certain to eventually emerge on the southwest shore of Cumberland Lake.

Upon reaching the area 6 to 8 kilometres (3 3/4 to 5 miles) northwest of Dumbell Lake, which is shown as the 'Muskeg Lakes' on some maps, the shoreline becomes low and marshy, and there are few trees. The country then changes abruptly as the river bends sharply and heavy timber and higher banks are the rule. Many good natural campsites occur in this area, and several clusters of cabins used by moose and goose hunters are passed. The river then gradually widens, and willows and grasses dominate the shorelines. Cumberland Lake is large and extremely shallow. It can become very rough on windy days. Natives from Cumberland House, relying on outboard powered craft, have marked the deeper channels through the mud flats with poles driven into the muddy lake bottom. The marked channels are not necessarily reliable and, in the case of paddle powered canoes, can be largely ignored as such canoes can readily travel in less than 30 centimetres (12 inches) of water.

Cumberland House can be reached directly from Cumberland Lake but, unless the weather is very calm and likely to remain so, canoeists are advised to approach Cumberland House through the more sheltered Bigstone Cutoff and Bigstone River route. The Bigstone Cutoff, at the southwest corner of Cumberland Lake, is guarded by islands with sizeable trees on them.

Canoeists should watch for the junction of the Bigstone River where it enters the northeast shore of the Bigstone Cutoff (Grid location 744788 - Map 63-E/16). There is a conspicuous dock and landing at this confluence. The canoeist should proceed up the Bigstone River against a moderate current until the community of Cumberland House is reached. There are serious rapids in the Bigstone Cutoff two kilometres (1 1/4 mile) below its confluence with the Bigstone River (Grid location 757782 - Map 63-E/16). If the canoeist sights these rapids, he can be certain he has overshot the mouth of the Bigstone River.

Cumberland House, the end point of this trip, is the oldest continuously settled community in Saskatchewan. It is linked to Nipawin via highways 123 (paved and gravel) and 55 (paved). In addition, the community offers a variety of stores, hotel, Saskatchewan Government offices, R.C.M.P. detachment, radio and telephone communications, outfitters, an air strip and a float-plane base.

Canoeists interested in extending their trip a further 133 kilometres (83 miles) to The Pas, Manitoba should consult trip number 15 for details.

Saskatchewan River History:

The first whiteman to lay eyes on the Saskatchewan River, or "Kisiskatchewan" which in Cree means "the river that flows swiftly", was Henry Kelsey of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1691.

In 1741, after a hiatus of 50 years, La Verendrye and his sons explored the Saskatchewan River. He selected the site for Fort Pascoyac (present day The Pas, Manitoba) and one of his sons, Louis Joseph, reached as far upstream as the forks of the Saskatchewan River.

Traditionally, the Hudson's Bay Company waited at the Bay for the Indians to bring them their furs for trade; however, the Montreal peddlars, travelling the inland waterways, had established a string of posts which were effectively cutting off the Hudson's Bay Company's supply of furs. To meet this competition, Matthew Cocking, the factor at York House, reconnoitred the Saskatchewan River in 1772. In 1774 Samuel Hearne, the greatest of the Hudson's Bay Company explorers, founded the first inland post at Cumberland House. The post, which took its name from Prince Rupert, Duke of Cumberland, has become the oldest settlement in Saskatchewan. Hearne's choice of this strategic site quickly made Cumberland House a key location and, eight years later, the opposing North West Company also built a post at Cumberland House. Today a cairn erected at Cumberland House by the Historical Sites and Monuments Board of Canada commemorates the founding of this post.

A great many important traders and explorers in the early history of the Canadian northwest passed through Cumberland House on their way to the upper Saskatchewan River, or the Churchill and Arctic watersheds. The list of names includes: Chevalier de la Corne, Anthony Henday, Peter Pond, the Frobisher brothers, Jean Baptiste Cadotte, Charles Paterson, "Franceways" (Francois Sassevillet), Alexander Henry, Peter Fidler, Peter Pangman, Alexander Mackenzie, David Thompson, William McGillivray, Simon Fraser and Governor George Simpson.

The great sternwheeler river boats came to the Saskatchewan River at about the same time that the railroad was pushed through the southern part of the Canadian prairies. Before the superiority of railroad travel spelled their doom, these bulky craft transported most of the necessities of life for the early settlers along the Saskatchewan River. The largest riverboat was the 62 metre (202 foot) "Marquis" which was built in 1882. The "Saskatchewan", owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, made many trips on the river before she was wrecked in 1907. Today the remains of another sternwheeler, the "Northcote", are in the Cumberland House Historical Park.

Other points of historic interest include the old Hudson's Bay Company gunpowder house, which is also in the park, a 1890's school building and the local museum.

Cumberland House is the southern end of the voyageurs' route which led to the Athabasca and Peace River districts by way of the Sturgeon-Weir and Churchill Rivers.

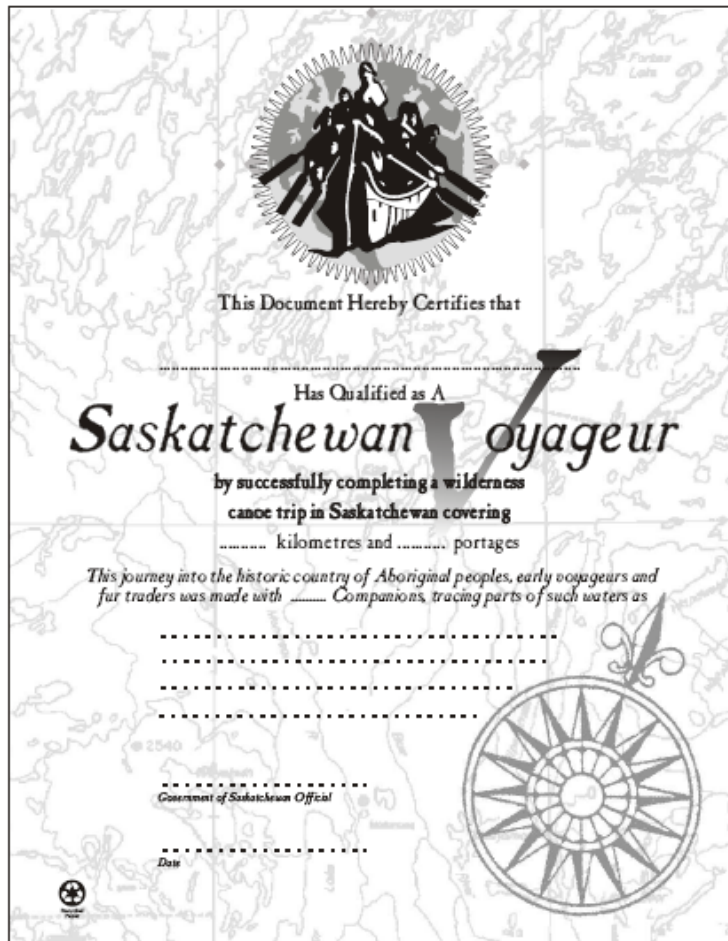
ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:

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
Tourism, Parks,
Culture and Sport**

For further information contact:
Toll Free: 1-800-205-7070
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