



# Canoe Trip #4

## ***Otter Lake - Mountain Lake - Hunt Lake - Stroud Lake - Lac La Ronge - La Ronge***

**Length of Trip:** 100 to 125 kilometres (62 to 78 miles) depending upon route taken across Lac La Ronge

**Time Required to Complete Trip:** 4 to 6 days

**Number of Portages:** 6 to 9 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/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. By making a side trip of only eight kilometres (five miles), round trip, the canoeist may visit 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. Leaving the picturesque Churchill River at Chepekan bay on Mountain Lake, the canoeist starts the famous Four Portages route leading to the northern shores of Lac La Ronge. This entails travel over smaller lakes and in part through narrow, marsh-bordered channels. The island studded northern portions of Lac La Ronge follow, and finally the canoeist comes into the open bays of the big lake country to the west and south.

The last portion of this trip involves a varying amount of travel on exposed portions of a large lake (Lac La Ronge). Dangerous winds and waves may sometimes be avoided by crossing exposed stretches in the early morning or late evening when the wind usually drops. If high winds persist, canoeists may be windbound on Lac La Ronge for several days.

From Four Portages Bay, the shortest route to the community of La Ronge is in a southwesterly direction across large open stretches of lake. This route is advisable only under stable, fine weather conditions. Longer alternative routes, hugging the north and west shorelines of Lac La Ronge to varying degrees, offer more protection from the wind. If bad weather persists, the possibility of terminating the canoe trip at one of the highway access points along the west shore of Wadin or English Bays should be kept in mind. This canoe trip offers an opportunity to see typical Pre-Cambrian lake country with its interesting variety of rock exposures, trees, plants, animals and birds.

Fishing is excellent throughout the trip with northern pike and walleye in all waters, and lake trout in Lac La Ronge. Good natural campsites are abundant, and occasional small sandy beaches will be found.

Because river current is negligible, 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.

**Portage Number 3:**

Connecting the south end of Chepakan Bay on Mountain Lake with Bradshaw Bay at the northeast end of Hunt Lake. Approximately 300 metres (328 yards) long and in good condition.

From Chepakan Bay, this portage starts at the south end of a very narrow winding channel passing for over 800 metres (875 yards) through a marshy area at the southeast end of the bay. The approach to this hard-to-find portage involves passing slightly to the west of a rocky point at the southernmost portion of Chepakan Bay and into a very narrow channel in the marsh. The canoeist must paddle through winding, weed-filled channels in a generally southeast direction. The actual portage starts on the west, or right, side of a channel about 25 metres (28 yards) from the entrance point of the small rocky brook flowing from Hunt Lake. At this point, no further water travel is possible. The portage starts at a muddy, grassy landing with rough steps leading up a steep slope.

From Hunt Lake, this portage starts on the west, or left, side at the end of the narrow outlet channel at the northeastern end of Bradshaw Bay of Hunt Lake. Watch for rocks in this channel.

**Portage Number 4:**

Connecting the south end of Hunt Lake with the north end of Stroud Lake. Approximately 300 metres (328 yards) and in good condition, but steep in spots.

From the south end of Hunt Lake, the approach to this portage is through a fairly narrow, weedy channel (Grid location 175359, Map 73 P/7) which contains some wild rice plants. This channel leads towards the low point in the tree line where a rocky brook flows into the head of the channel. The actual portage trail starts on the east, or left, side of this narrowing channel shortly before it narrows to a non-navigable rocky brook.

From the north end of Stroud Lake, this portage starts on the east, or right, side of a long narrow channel which extends about 800 metres (875 yards) north from the north end of the lake proper (Grid location 172348, Map 73 P/7). Beaver activity may cause slight changes in the exact starting point of this portage. Watch for rocks in this narrow channel.

**Portage Number 5:**

Connecting the east shore of Stroud Lake with the northwest shore of Leckie Lake. Approximately 375 metres (408 yards) long and in good condition.

From Stroud Lake, this portage starts as a grassy opening immediately south of a rocky outcropping on the east-central shore (Grid location 173341, Map 73 P/7). A conspicuous spruce with the lower limbs trimmed away also marks the start of the portage. The trail forks with a short steep, and a longer less steep alternative.

From Leckie Lake, this portage starts at a rocky outcrop in a cove on the northwest shore (Grid location 174339, Map 73 P/7).

**Portage Number 6:**

Connecting Leckie Lake with Four Portages Bay on Lac La Ronge. Approximately 475 metres (519 yards) long and in good condition.

From Leckie Lake, this portage starts on the southeast shore of the lake (Grid location 179329, Map 73 P/7).

Highway 915 crosses this portage near its midpoint.

From Four Portages Bay, this portage starts at an obvious break in the shoreline vegetation at the north end of the bay (Grid location 183326, Map 73 P/7). This landing may be wet during periods of high water on Lac La Ronge.

From Four Portages Bay it is possible to return to the community of La Ronge without further portaging by following a generally southwesterly course, taking advantage of protection offered by islands if needed. This is the shortest route.

Any, or all, of the three added optional portages may be made by canoeists who chose to return to La Ronge by a more sheltered and less direct route. These longer alternates might be made to avoid dangerous winds on the open lake, or simply to extend the trip and to see more country.

The first optional portage can be approached by travelling generally westward along the north shore. The canoeist can then portage from Ore Bay to Wadin Bay thereby avoiding exposure around Moose Point.

**Optional Portage Number 1, Anglo-Rouyn Portage:**

Connecting the Ore Bay with 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 western (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:**

Connecting Nut Bay with Campbell Channel. 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).

The end point of this trip is the community of La Ronge, approximately 11 kilometres (7 miles) northwest of Optional Portage Number 3. Canoeist may also choose to terminate the trip at either English Bay or Wadin Bay.

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

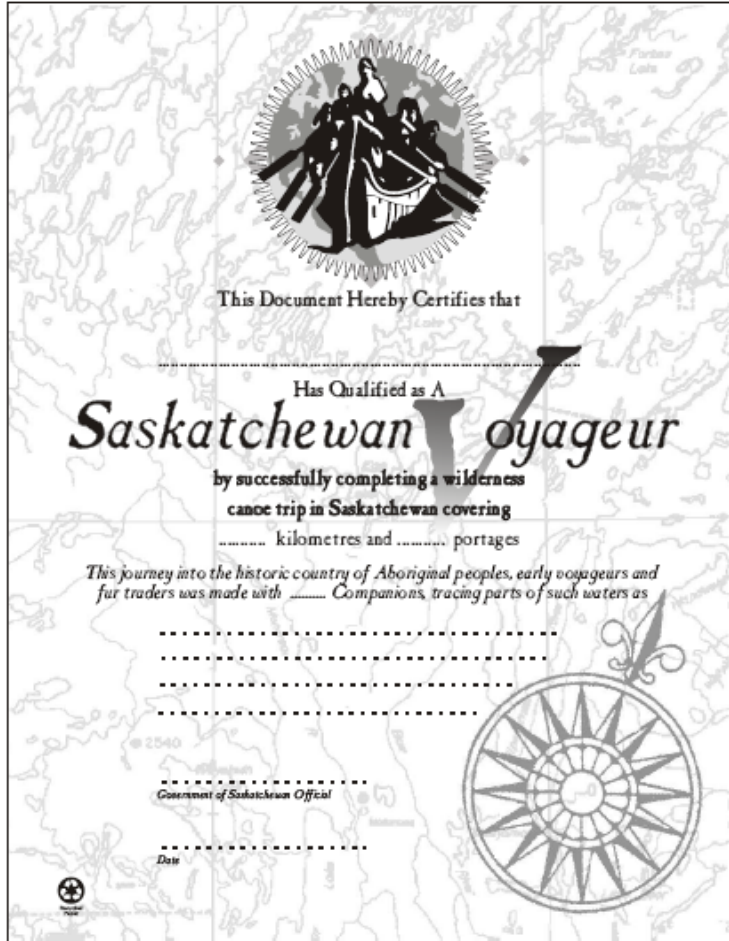
**ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:**

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.



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