



Canoe Trip #14

Maligne Lake (Kilometre 275 Hanson Lake Road) - Sturgeon-Weir River - Amisk Lake - Denare Beach

Length of Trip: Approximately 85 Kilometres (53 miles)

Time Required to Complete Trip: 3 to 4 days

Number of Portages: 2 to 5 depending on experience of paddlers, and on route taken on Amisk Lake.

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 Maligne Lake near the highway bridge on the Hanson Lake Road (Kilometre 275 on Highway 106), or from the nearby Saskatchewan Government campground. Maligne Lake is approximately 55 kilometres (34 miles) west of Flin Flon, Manitoba by Saskatchewan Highway 106. Maligne Lake can also be reached from Prince Albert, Nipawin or La Ronge by Highway 106. Arrangements for safe parking of vehicles can likely be made with the outfitter's camp at Maligne Lake. If transportation from Denare Beach to Maligne Lake can be arranged (Approximately 75 kilometres (47 miles) by Highways 167 and 106), vehicles can likely be left conveniently at the hotel at Denare Beach, which is the end point of this trip.

Maps:

- 63-L/9 Denare Beach
- 63-L/10 Hanson Lake
- 63-L/15 Birch Portage

About the Trip:

This relatively easy river and lake trip traverses part of an historic canoe route travelled by most of the great explorers of the Canadian Northwest.

There is little exposure to wind and waves except for the crossing of the northern part of Amisk Lake. Much of this crossing is protected by islands. During windy weather, optional portage number 5 is recommended to avoid the open southern portion of the lake.

This trip can be recommended for canoeists of intermediate experience, or for novices with expert leadership.

Fishing for walleye and northern pike is good in all waters, and lake trout are found in Amisk Lake.

An abundance of good natural campsites occurs along the route.

Travel downstream on the Sturgeon-Weir River is preferable to upstream travel. However, this trip could be reversed for the velocity of the current in the Sturgeon-Weir River is not so great as to rule out upstream travel by paddle. A small outboard motor would permit upstream travel with complete ease.

Portage descriptions for this trip are given from both ends as an aid to possible upstream canoeists.

The Canoe Trip:

After launching canoes onto Maligne Lake, paddle to the vicinity of Leaf Rapids at the extreme south end of the lake.

There is a cable strung across the river at the start of the rapids.

Portage Number 1 - Leaf Rapids Portage:

Connecting Maligne Lake to quiet waters below Leaf Rapids. Approximately 200 metres (219 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a class 2 rapid.

From the south end of Maligne Lake, this portage starts on the east, or left, shore at a sloping rock 45 metres (49 yards) above the start of the rapids.

For upstream travel, this portage starts immediately below the rapids on the right, or east, shore at a grassy opening in the vegetation.

Approximately seven kilometres downstream from Leaf Rapids, the canoeist arrives at Scoop Rapids. Care should be taken to remain on the left, or east, shore on approaching this small waterfall.

Portage Number 2 - Scoop Rapids Portage:

Connecting quiet waters above and below Scoop Rapids. Approximately 65 metres (71 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a class 4 rapid.

From the north, or upstream end, this portage starts at an opening on the left, or east, shore about 20 metres (22 yards) above the start of the rapids.

From the south, or downstream end, this portage starts on the east, or right, bank in a small cove immediately below the main rapid and after paddling up a stretch of fast water.

The fishing below Scoop Rapids is good. The name originated from the fact that there existed a hole below the rapids from which a fish could usually be scooped out by the hungry traveller.

Approximately 21 kilometres (13 miles) below Scoop Rapids, the canoeist encounters Snake Rapids.

Portage Number 3 - Snake Rapids Portage:

Connecting quiet waters above and below Snake Rapids. Approximately 960 metres (1050 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a class 2 rapid. From the upstream end, this portage starts at a grassy break in the shoreline vegetation on the east, or right, shore approximately 600 metres above the start of the rapids (Grid location 580572 - Map 63-L/10). **WARNING:** If you can see the start of the rapids, you have missed the start of the portage.

From the downstream end, this portage starts from an open grassy area on the west, or left, shore of a small cove about 300 metres (328 yards) below the base of the rapids (Grid location 588568 - Map 63-L/10). Approximately two kilometres (1 1/4 mile) below Snake Rapids, there are minor rapids which should present no problem to the alert canoeist.

About ten kilometres below these minor rapids, the canoeist encounters Spruce Rapids.

Portage Number 4 - Spruce Rapids Portage:

Connecting quiet waters above and below Spruce Rapids. Approximately 250 metres (273 yards) long and in good condition. This portage by-passes a class 3 rapid.

From the upstream end, this portage starts on the east, or left, side of the river in a cove formed by a rocky islet at the start of the rapids.

From the downstream end, this portage starts at a grassy break in the shoreline vegetation on the right, or east, bank of the river about 40 metres (44 yards) below the base of the rapids.

About one kilometre (6/10) mile below Spruce Rapids, the canoeist can see a small Indian cemetery located on a high sand bank on the left, or east, shore. This cemetery is within the Amisk Lake Indian Reserve. During periods of high winds, when the lake is rough, the use of optional portage number 5 may save several kilometres (miles) of hard or even dangerous travel over the exposed southern portion of Amisk Lake.

Portage Number 5 - (Optional):

Connecting the open waters at the mouth of the Sturgeon-Weir River with Muskeg Bay of Amisk Lake. Approximately 600 metres (656 yards) long and in fair condition, but wet in spots.

From the area near the mouth of the Sturgeon-Weir River, this portage starts in a small bay approximately two kilometres (1 1/4 mile) east of river mouth (Grid location 704473 - Map 63-L/9). From Muskeg Bay, this portage starts at the south end of the western extension of Muskeg Bay (Grid location 704479 - Map 63-L/9). The start of the portage is hard to find as it is in a soft, open muskeg shoreline. The trail does not show much until the trees are reached about 30 metres (33 yards) back of the shoreline.

The route taken crossing the northern part of Amisk Lake depends largely on prevailing weather conditions. From the islands west of Crater Island on into East Channel, a course well protected by islands is possible.

On a clear day, look for the smelter smoke-stack in Flin Flon, Manitoba. This is visible to the northeast once the canoeist has passed the headland east of the mouth of the Sturgeon-Weir River. **NOTE:** Denare Beach on the northeast shore of Amisk Lake (Grid location 880619 - Map 63-L/9) is the end point of this trip. It is possible to continue on to Cumberland House by canoe - see Canoe Trip Number 44 for details. Denare Beach contains all the facilities one would expect in a small resort community. These include outfitter's camps, stores, radio and telephone communications. In addition, there is the Northern Gateway Museum where many fascinating historical relics of the old days of exploration and fur trading are housed. There is a Saskatchewan Government campground at Denare Beach and Government offices in nearby Creighton, Saskatchewan.

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

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:

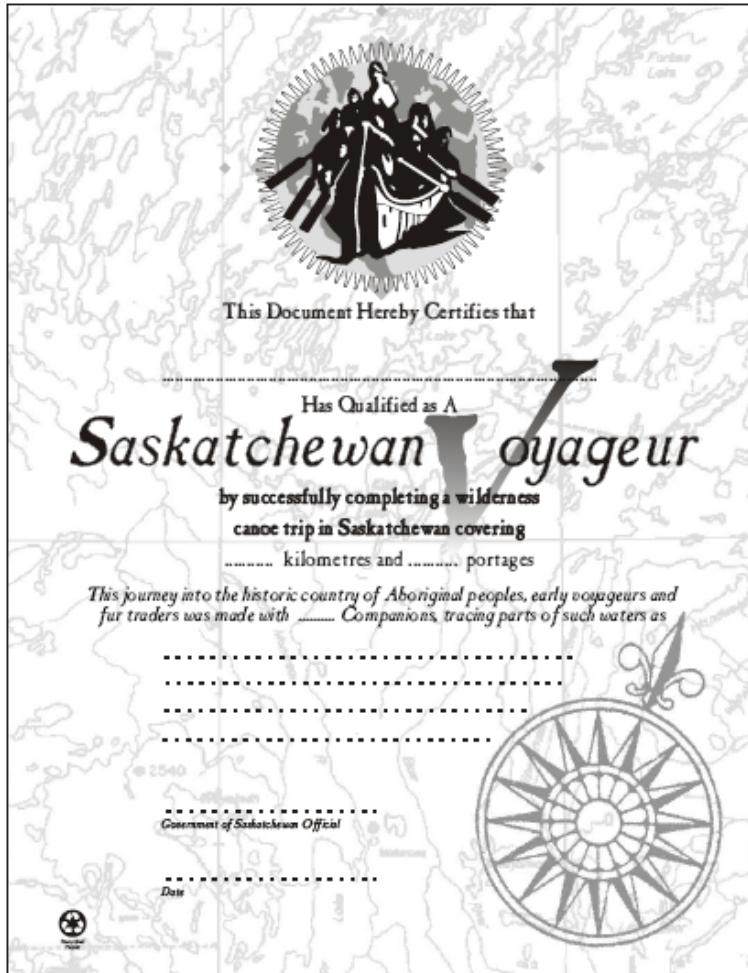
To minimize your impact on the environment while canoeing along Saskatchewan waterways, please keep in mind these safe and sensible practices:

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'.



The image shows a certificate form for the Saskatchewan Voyageur program. At the top, there is a circular emblem depicting a group of people in historical attire on a canoe. Below this, the text reads: "This Document Hereby Certifies that". A large, stylized number "7" is positioned to the right of the word "Voyageur". The main text states: "Has Qualified as A Saskatchewan Voyageur by successfully completing a wilderness canoe trip in Saskatchewan covering kilometres and portages". Below this, there is a line for the number of companions: "This journey into the historic country of Aboriginal peoples, early voyageurs and fur traders was made with Companions, tracing parts of such waters as". There are several dotted lines for additional information. At the bottom left, there is a line for the "Government of Saskatchewan Official" and a line for the "Date". On the right side, there is a large, detailed compass rose. The background of the form is a map of Saskatchewan.

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

Fax: (306) 787-7000

Email: info.TPCS@gov.sk.ca



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