



Nááts'ihch'oh  
National Park Reserve

# THE BROKEN SKULL

RIVER

Trip Planner



Parks  
Canada

Parcs  
Canada

Canada

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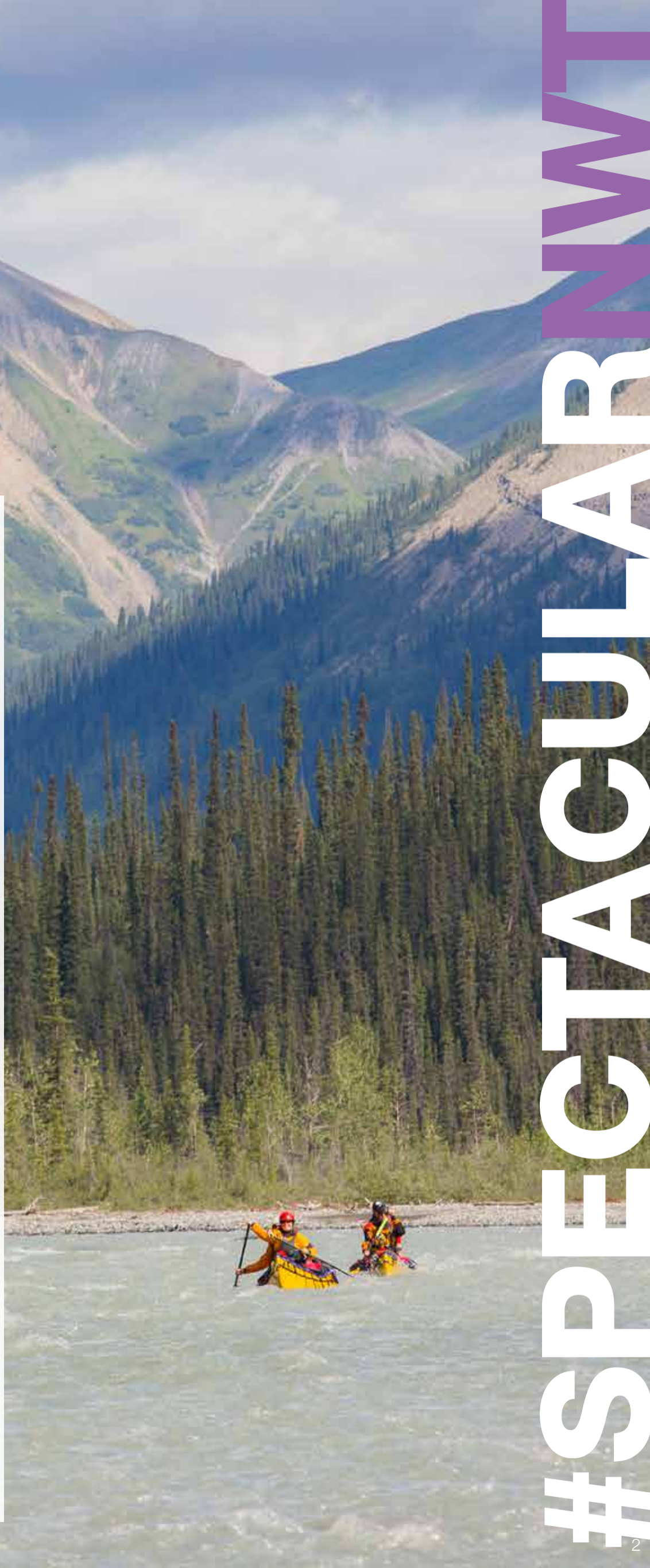
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# THE MOUNTAINS HAVE KEPT THE MUSIC

## Welcome to Our Home

*"It's almost like the mountains have kept the music. When you go up the river by boat you can feel the spirit of our ancestors and you can feel the powerful feeling from the mountains. It's so majestic. It's so overwhelming."*

*"...And we've had stories about our people where they dance their drum dances. There are rings where they've worn into the ground. There are places where they used to dance after a good celebration and a good kill, or maybe after they'd built their mooseskin boat and they would celebrate."*

*- Ethel Blondin-Andrew*

For generations of Dene and Métis people, Nááts'ihch'oh was and is a rich harvesting area. They still travel the land in the park, and welcome you to their home.



# NÁÁTS'IHCH'OH

THE MOUNTAIN THAT IS  
SHARP LIKE A PORCUPINE



## Mount Nááts'ihch'oh (Mount Wilson)

Nááts'ihch'oh is the name of this mountain in the Shúhtaot'ine (Mountain Dene) language. It refers to its unique shape - sharp and pointed like a porcupine quill.

The Shúhtaot'ine believe that Nááts'ihch'oh is a place of strong spiritual power, which can be bestowed on newborn children. Here, their ancestors would camp while travelling with moose skin boats to see Nááteho, the Nahanni prophet.

Nááts'ihch'oh is the name chosen for the National Park Reserve by the following Elders: Gabriel Horassi, David Yallee Senior, Maurice Mendo, Frederick Clement Senior, Frank Yallee, John Hotti, John B. Hetchinelle, James Bavard, Norman Andrew and Leon Andrew.

As we learn more about the park and its traditional place names, we will be adding these names to our maps and publications.

TWO PARKS

# ONE RIVER

- Mount Nááts'ihch'oh and the Moose Ponds

## Nááts'ihch'oh

- Gahnîhthah Mje (Rabbitkettle Lake)

- Nájljcho (Virginia Falls)

## Nahanni

- Nahanni Butte

### Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh

The Broken Skull River flows through two parks and two Dene territories. Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve is a gift to the people of Canada from the Shúhtaot'ine, the Mountain Dene people of the Sahtu region. Nahanni National Park Reserve is the traditional territory of the Dehcho First Nations.

The boundary between the parks is the border between the Sahtu and Dehcho regions of the Northwest Territories.

# #SHARETHECHAIR



## Red Chairs

Find the red chairs and snap a selfie to [#sharethechair](#).



# THE BROKEN SKULL RIVER

## Paddling the Broken Skull River

We don't know why you haven't paddled it yet. But we do know it's pure fun. Full of bouncy whitewater and epic scenery, the continuous whitewater is perfect for skilled paddlers going on their first northern river trip. Rapids range from class I to III; the majority of the river is I-II, with some long class II+ sections.

Plan 6-10 days to paddle the 150 kms from Divide Lake to Gahnjthah Mje (Rabbitkettle Lake) on the South Nahanni River. Longer trips are possible to Nájljcho (Virginia Falls) and Nahanni Butte. Contact us or consult the South Nahanni River Touring Guide for more information.

The best time to go is mid-June to mid-August. River difficulty increases in low water, with more class II+ to III rapids reported.

### National Topographic System Maps

105 P/01, 105 I/16, 105 I/09, 95 L/12, 95 L/05



YOUR

# STORIES

MATTER

## Getting To Know the Broken Skull

### **Nááts'ihch'oh is a brand new national park.**

If you go, please share your stories, photos, and GPS data with us. Your experiences will help us learn about the river and make this trip planner a better one.

### **Only one stretch of rapids is marked.**

You read that right. The National Topographic System Maps only show one stretch of rapids on the Broken Skull River, located on map 105 1/16.

### **But, the Broken Skull River is continuous whitewater.**

For experienced paddlers, you can read and run most of this class II+ river. But make no mistake, it is 108 kms of continuous class I-II+ whitewater with canyons, boulders, wood hazards, and super fun wave trains. There is one class III rapid (Thank You) on the creek that leads into the Broken Skull.

### **Use this guide to supplement the information on the 1:50 000 National Topographic Service maps.**

Canada's National Topographic System maps are available for print-on-demand from your favourite map printers. To make ordering easier, we have provided the map numbers for the 1:50 000 maps throughout this planner.





# START HERE



## Put in at Divide Lake

Air charters starting at \$2650\*

0 km

Divide Lake is the best place to access the Broken Skull River. Take a day to enjoy the lake, and hike up the ridge for a view overlooking the Broken Skull River Valley.

\*See page 29 for more information about air charter pricing.

**Divide Lake: 63°01.18'N, 128°10.63'W**

**National Topographic System Maps**

Divide Lake - 105 P/01



# DIVIDE LAKE

## CREEK

### **Divide Lake to Swallow Falls**

**0 - 2 km**

If you're lucky, you'll paddle from Divide Lake down a creek towards the Broken Skull River. If you're like us, you'll get your feet wet as you paddle and drag your boats 2 kms downstream. Next up? The portage around Swallow Falls.

#### **National Topographic System Maps**

Divide Lake - 105 P/01, 105 I/16

# SWALLOW

## FALLS

### Portage around Swallow Falls

#### 2 km

The lone portage on this trip is around beautiful Swallow Falls, unofficially named for the nearby cliff swallow colony. The 150m portage starts on river right at the confluence with another small creek on river left. Follow the game trails to the spacious landing below the falls. After the portage, prepare to paddle through a mini-canyon ending at Thank You Rapids.

**Portage Start:** 62°59.70'N, 128°10.73'W

**Portage End:** 62°59.66'N, 128°10.95'W

**National Topographic System Maps**

105 I/16

# THANK YOU

## RAPIDS



### Swallow Falls to Broken Skull River

#### 2 - 5 km

Between Swallow Falls and the confluence with the Broken Skull River, prepare for some tight manoeuvres in a mini canyon. Take some time to scout the Thank You Rapids near kilometre 3. If you make it through without denting your bow, you'll be saying, "Thank You." Most groups find this to be the most technical rapid on the river and choose to line or portage this class III section. Make your choice based on the skill level of your group. Remember, your trip has only begun and a damaged boat here could spell an early journey home.

**Thank You Rapids: 62°59.56'N, 128°11.18'W**

**Confluence with Broken Skull River: 62°59.22'N, 128°11.66'W**

**National Topographic System Maps**

105 I/16

# BOULDER

## DODGING



### **Broken Skull to White Wolf Creek**

**5 - 24 km**

No rapids are marked, but the class I-II whitewater continues. Ride the bouncy waves, wind through half-canyons, and dodge just enough boulders to keep you on your toes. Watch for a creek on river right with plenty of broken shale. This marks the lead-up to Pinball, a II+ rapid, which gets harder with low water. Be sure to scout ahead, as there are possibilities for pins in this section.

**White Wolf Creek: 62°48.99'N, -128°01.17'W**

**National Topographic System Maps**

105 I/16

# EPIC

## IEWS

### White Wolf Creek to the Hot Springs

24 - 36 km

As the river cuts through the mountains, you will paddle the only marked rapids along the route (and the second II+ rapid). The mountains are close to the river, and fallen boulders pepper the riverbed. Enter Landslide Alley, a class II+, higher volume boulder dodge. After the narrows the "Alley" calms down but the boulders continue.

**Hot Springs Gravel Bar: 62°45.31'N, 128°05.60'W**

**National Topographic System Maps**

105 I/16

# SOAK

## IN THE SCENERY

### Broken Skull Hot Springs

#### 36 km

Ready to relax in a perfect hot spring? Not too hot, not too cold, and only the scent of fresh mountain air. This is Broken Skull Hot Springs, just a 2.5 km hike from the Broken Skull River. Pull out river right on the large gravel bar, grab your GPS, and head through the brush and forest to the creek. Cross the creek and hike up to one of the best hot springs you could imagine.

Elders tasked us with learning more about the hot springs, so in 2017 we installed a wildlife camera and temperature gauge. Feel free to smile and wave to the camera - we delete all visitor photos. Last time we visited, there was a bear napping under a tufa ledge. This is a known bear hangout spot; make noise while hiking so that they can hear you.

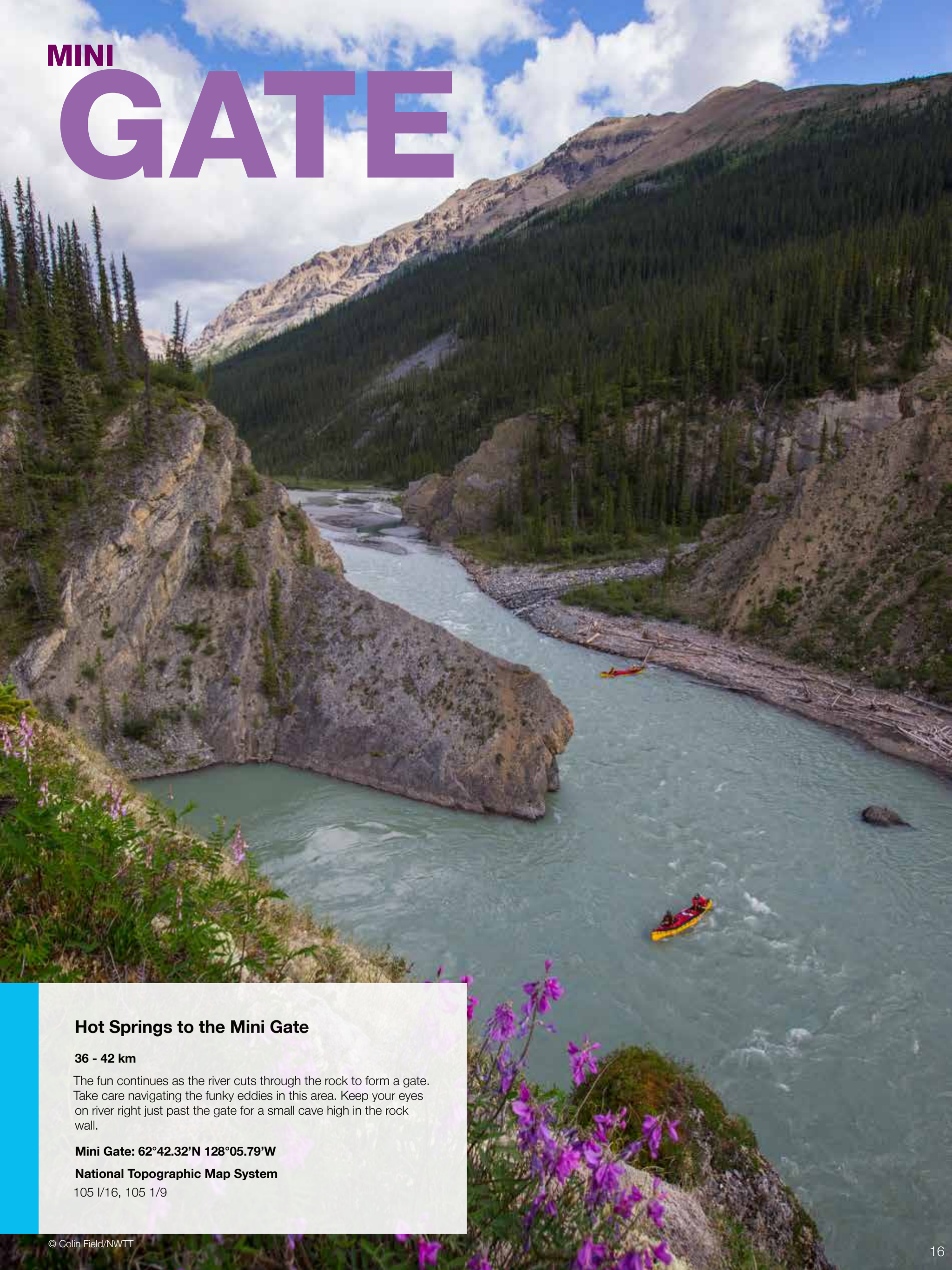
#### Sacred Ground

Hot springs are sacred to the Shúhtaot'ine. Places of healing, they can lose their power if they are not treated with respect. Someday the springs may be needed once again for healing, so follow the Elders' requests: tread softly and watch over the springs. Pay your respects by providing a gift offering (a small amount of tea or tobacco) as you cross the creek on your way to the hot springs.

**Gravel Bar: 62°45.31'N, 128°05.60'W**  
**Hot Springs: 62° 45.28'N, 128° 08.15'W**  
**National Topographic Map System**  
105 I/16



# MINI GATE



## Hot Springs to the Mini Gate

36 - 42 km

The fun continues as the river cuts through the rock to form a gate. Take care navigating the funky eddies in this area. Keep your eyes on river right just past the gate for a small cave high in the rock wall.

**Mini Gate:** 62°42.32'N 128°05.79'W

**National Topographic Map System**

105 I/16, 105 1/9



# TIME TO PLAY



## Mini Gate to Grizzly Bear Creek

**42 - 53 km**

The bouncy stuff just keeps going. If you like to play, keep your eyes peeled for surf waves. We found this one beside a small cave on river left. As for Grizzly Bear Creek, you won't find it named on maps - it's just what we called it in our river notes.

Heads up - there are not many campsites between Grizzly Bear Creek and the Nahanni park boundary.

**Cave: 62°41.09'N, 128°04.47'W**

**Grizzly Bear Creek: 62°37.86'N, 128°01.87'W**

**National Topographic Map System**

105 I/9



HOW FAR IS

# TUFA?

## Grizzly Bear Hot Springs

The moment you see it, you know it's special. Grizzly Bear hot springs is a delicate and beautiful spring located on a tributary of the Broken Skull River. Fragile wildflowers and tufa formations surround the spring.

*Please walk softly and visit carefully.*

From the Broken Skull River, Grizzly Bear Hot Springs is a long 10 km hike up a creek bed. Be prepared for multiple creek crossings and bad jokes about the hike being TOO FAR or TU-FA.

**Grizzly Bear Hot Springs: 62°40.28'N, 127°54.00'W**

**National Topographic System Maps:**

95 L/12

# GRIZZLY

BEAR LAKE



## Side Trip to Grizzly Bear Lake

For enthusiastic hikers, a side trip to Grizzly Bear Lake is the Nááts'ihch'oh destination. Plan 2-3 extra days to hike 14 km up Grizzly Bear Creek and over the mountain pass to the lake. Camp on the shore and spend your days exploring nearby peaks.

**Grizzly Bear Lake: 62°41.17'N, 127°49.23'W**

**National Topographic System Maps**

Grizzly Bear Lake - 95 L/12



# A FAR CRY

## Grizzly Bear Creek to Nahanni Boundary

**53 - 72 km**

In 1979, Chris Larkin got dropped off on a small lake near the Broken Skull River. He built a cabin, spent the winter, and paddled out the next spring. You can read about his adventure in his book, **A Far Cry** available as an e-book.

To see what's left of the cabin, grab your GPS and pull off the river at the Cabin Access Point listed below. It's a bushwack to the old cabin site on the hill between the lake and the river.

**Chris Larkin's Cabin: 62°33.47'N, 127°56.30'W**

**Cabin Access Point: 62°33.57'N, 127°57.93'W**

**Nahanni Boundary: 62°29.86'N, 127°53.83'W**

**National Topographic System Maps**

105 I/9, 95 L/12



**LAFFERTY'S**

# RIVAL

## **Nahanni Boundary to Black Wolf Creek**

**72 - 103 km**

Just across the Nahanni park boundary, we found a wave train to rival Lafferty's on the South Nahanni River. If you're looking for a fun spot to set up some photos, this is it. We found it easy to eddy out below a gravel bar river right and drag back up to the top to run it again.

Braided channels with wood hazards continue on this stretch of the river.

**Lafferty's Rival: 62°28.13'N, 127°50.94'W**

**Black Wolf Creek: 62°18.44'N, 127°39.02'W**

**National Topographic System Maps**

95 L/12, Black Wolf Mountain - 95 L/5



# SNEAK A PEEK

## Black Wolf Creek to South Nahanni River

103 - 108 km

This is your sneak peak at Black Wolf Creek, a technical creek for packrafters.

As the river fans out before joining the South Nahanni, stay alert for braids, mixing currents, and wood hazards. On the South Nahanni River, we recommend using the South Nahanni River Touring Guide to navigate. Order your copy from the Nahanni Park office.

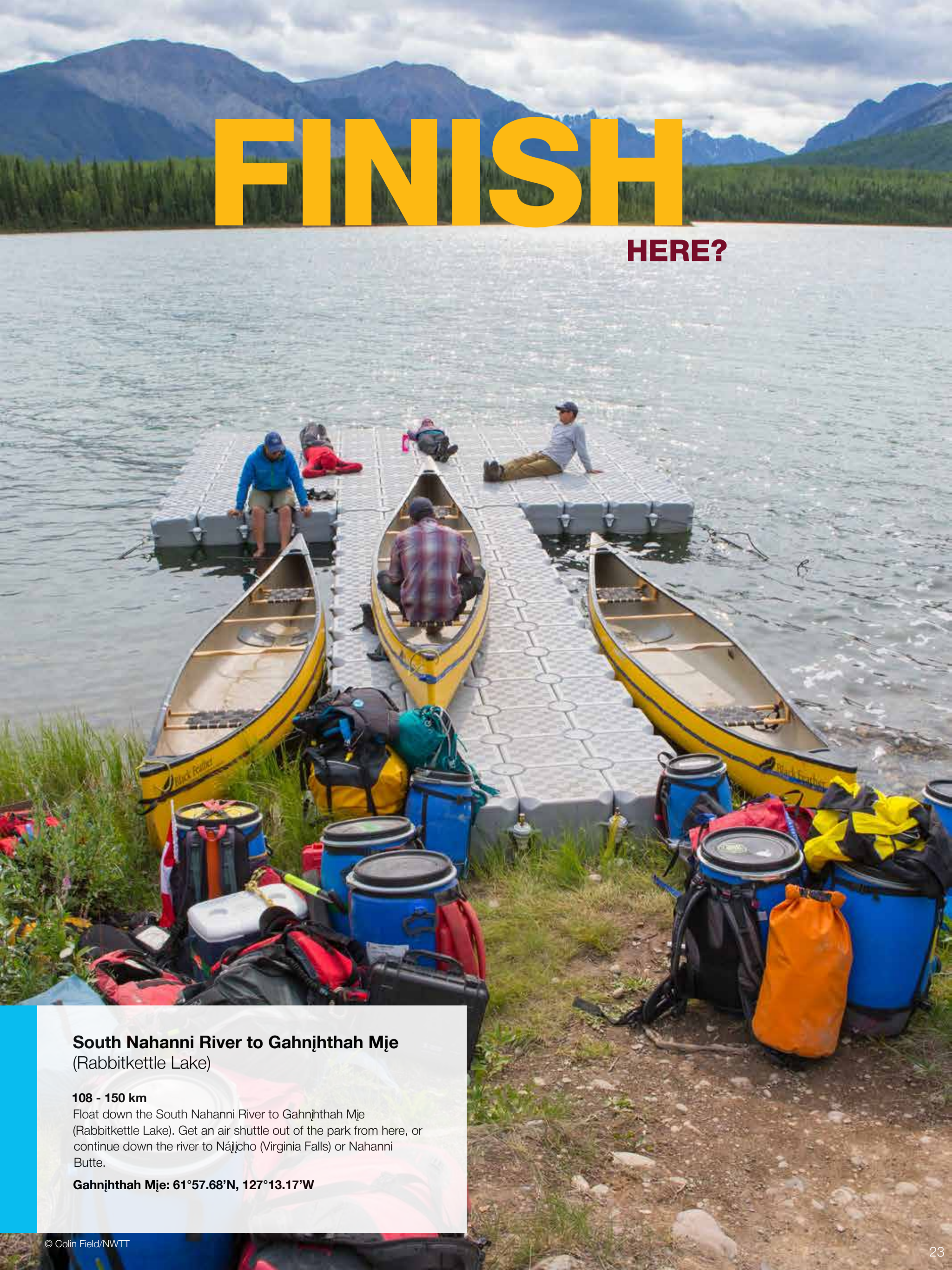
**Confluence with South Nahanni: 62°16.11'N, 127°39.01'W**

**National Topographic System Maps**

Black Wolf Mountain - 95 L/5

# FINISH

HERE?



## South Nahanni River to Gahnjthah Mje (Rabbitkettle Lake)

**108 - 150 km**

Float down the South Nahanni River to Gahnjthah Mje (Rabbitkettle Lake). Get an air shuttle out of the park from here, or continue down the river to Nájicho (Virginia Falls) or Nahanni Butte.

**Gahnjthah Mje: 61°57.68'N, 127°13.17'W**

# FLY HERE



## Getting Here by Plane

Fly commercially into Yellowknife, NT then onto Norman Wells, Tulita, or Fort Simpson. Alternatively, fly into Whitehorse, YK. Once in these neighbouring communities, charter an aircraft into the park.

Airlines with scheduled flights to Yellowknife and Whitehorse:

- Air Canada
- Air North
- Canadian North
- Condor
- First Air
- Northwestern Air
- WestJet

Airlines with scheduled flights to Norman Wells or Fort Simpson:

- North Wright Airways
- Canadian North
- First Air
- Air Tindi



# DRIVE

HERE



● Whitehorse

● Tulita

Nááts'ihch'oh  
Nahanni

● Watson  
Lake

● Fort Simpson

● Yellowknife

● Edmonton

● Vancouver

● Victoria

● Seattle

● Calgary

● Regina

● Winnipeg

● Ottawa

● Jackson

● Minneapolis

● Toronto

● Salt Lake City

● Chicago

● Denver

## Getting Here by Road

### Drive to Fort Simpson, NT, or Watson Lake, YK

Whether you take the Mackenzie Highway and Liard Highway to Fort Simpson, or the Alaska Highway to Watson Lake, you're in for an epic road trip. From there, connect with your charter flights into the park.

### Park Office

Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve's office is located in Tulita, NT. Nááts'ihch'oh is part of the traditional lands of the people of the Sahtu, and they chose Tulita as the park headquarters. The only road access is a winter ice road from Wrigley. But, if you're paddling the Mackenzie River, be sure to drop in and say hello!

GO TO

# TOWN



## Communities and Services

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**Tulita Pop: ~500**



Air access: year-round  
Road access: winter only

**Norman Wells Pop: ~700**



Air access: year-round  
Road access: winter only  
Canoe rentals

**Nahanni Butte Pop: ~100**



Air access: year-round by charter flight  
Road access: to the Liard River then river taxi

**Fort Simpson Pop: ~1200**



Air access: year-round  
Road access: year-round  
Canoe rentals

YUKON

**Watson Lake Pop: ~800**



Road access: year-round

## Guides and Outfitters

Guided trips starting at \$7,195.

Contact one of these outfitters for more information.

### **Blackfeather, The Wilderness Adventure Company**

1-888-849-7668  
Info@blackfeather.com  
www.blackfeather.com

### **Nahanni River Adventures**

1-800-297-6927  
Info@nahanni.com  
www.nahanni.com

### **Nahanni Wilderness Adventures**

1-888-897-5223  
adventures@nahanniwild.com  
www.nahanniwild.com

GO

# GUIDED



# FLOAT AWAY

## Air Charters

### Air charters to Divide Lake starting from \$2,650\*

Contact one of these companies to book an air shuttle to Divide Lake and the Broken Skull River. Take note: there are TWO Divide Lakes near Nááts'ihch'oh. You want the Divide Lake in the northeast part of the park — not the Divide Lake near Tungsten, NT. See "How to Book an Air Charter" for more details.

*\*Price based on two people with one canoe chartering a Cessna 185 aircraft at November 2015 fuel prices.*

#### North Wright Airways

Norman Wells, NT  
1-867-587-2288  
info@north-wrightairways.com  
www.north-wrightairways.com

#### Kluane Airways

Kelowna, BC  
1-250-860-4187  
info@kluaneairways.com  
www.kluaneairways.com

#### South Nahanni Airways

Fort Simpson, NT  
1-867-695-2007  
info@southnahanniairways.ca  
www.southnahanniairways.ca

#### Alpine Aviation

Whitehorse, YK  
1-867-668-7725  
alpineaviation@gmail.com  
www.alpineaviationyukon.com

#### Simpson Air

Fort Simpson, NT  
1-866-995-2505  
simpsonair@northwestel.net  
www.simpsonair.ca

#### Summit Air

Yellowknife, NT  
1.866.709.7717  
info@flysummitair.com  
https://flysummitair.com



BOOKING IS

**EASY**

### How to Book an Air Charter

Don't worry - booking an air charter is easier than you think. The pilots know the lakes and mountains, and they'll be able to let you know if your plan is a good one. They'll also help you figure out what type of plane you'll need to get you where you want to go. Book early for the best availability.

#### When you call, have this information ready:

- Date and time (if) you want to fly into the park
- Date and time (if) you want to fly out of the park
- Name of the lake/location where you want to be dropped off. For the Broken Skull trip, specify Divide Lake located at 63°01.18'N, 128°10.63'W. There is a different Divide Lake near the Little Nahanni River - this is not the lake you want.
- Name of the lake/location if you want to be picked up
- How many passengers you'll have
- Any special equipment you'll have (canoes, kayaks, etc.)
- Any special flightseeing route or added stops

The "**Air charters starting at**" prices listed in this guide are based on flying two people and lightweight camping gear in a Cessna 185 aircraft at November 2015 fuel prices. Prices will vary based on the size of your group, your equipment, the aircraft required, and fuel prices. Contact an air charter company for more information.

#### Flight delays are part of the adventure.

Weather can make flying in and out of the park tricky, and flights are regularly delayed. Your pilots have the experience to decide when it's safe to fly. Plan for a flight delay to be part of your adventure story, and bring extra food just in case.

# BOOK

YOUR TRIP

## Broken Skull Reservations

To make a Broken Skull River reservation, contact Nahanni National Park Reserve with this information:

- Type of trip (paddling)
- Trip itinerary (# days, route)
- Preferred trip dates
- Trip leader's contact information
- Group size (max 12)
- Air charter company

**If you are taking a guided trip,** the company you have booked with will make the necessary reservations and registrations.



# PLACES

TO GO

## Registration and Orientation

Broken Skull River paddlers must register with Nahanni National Park Reserve. When you register, we'll ask for this information:

- Group member names
- Communication details (satellite phone #, etc.)
- Emergency contact info
- Equipment descriptions (tents, canoes, kayaks)
- Trip itinerary and end date

As part of your orientation, we'll give you our latest wildlife, forest fire, and river conditions, as well as your de-registration form.

RIDE THE

# WAVES

## Nahanni Fees Apply

The Broken Skull River runs through Nááts'ihch'oh and Nahanni National Park Reserves. Although Nááts'ihch'oh does not have a fee system yet, fees apply for the Nahanni segment of your trip.

Northern Park Backcountry Excursions and Camping permits are an annual flat fee of **\$147.20** per person. These permits are also valid at Aulavik, Auyuittuq, Ivavik, Nahanni, Quttinirpaaq, Sirmilik, Tuktot Nogait and Vuntut National Parks.

For more information, contact Nahanni National Park Reserve at [nahanni.info@pc.gc.ca](mailto:nahanni.info@pc.gc.ca) or 1-867-695-7750.



IT'S JUST YOU

# OUT HERE



## Emergency Help

If you need urgent help, call our Duty Officer at **1-867-695-3732**, 24 hours a day, June 1 - September 30.

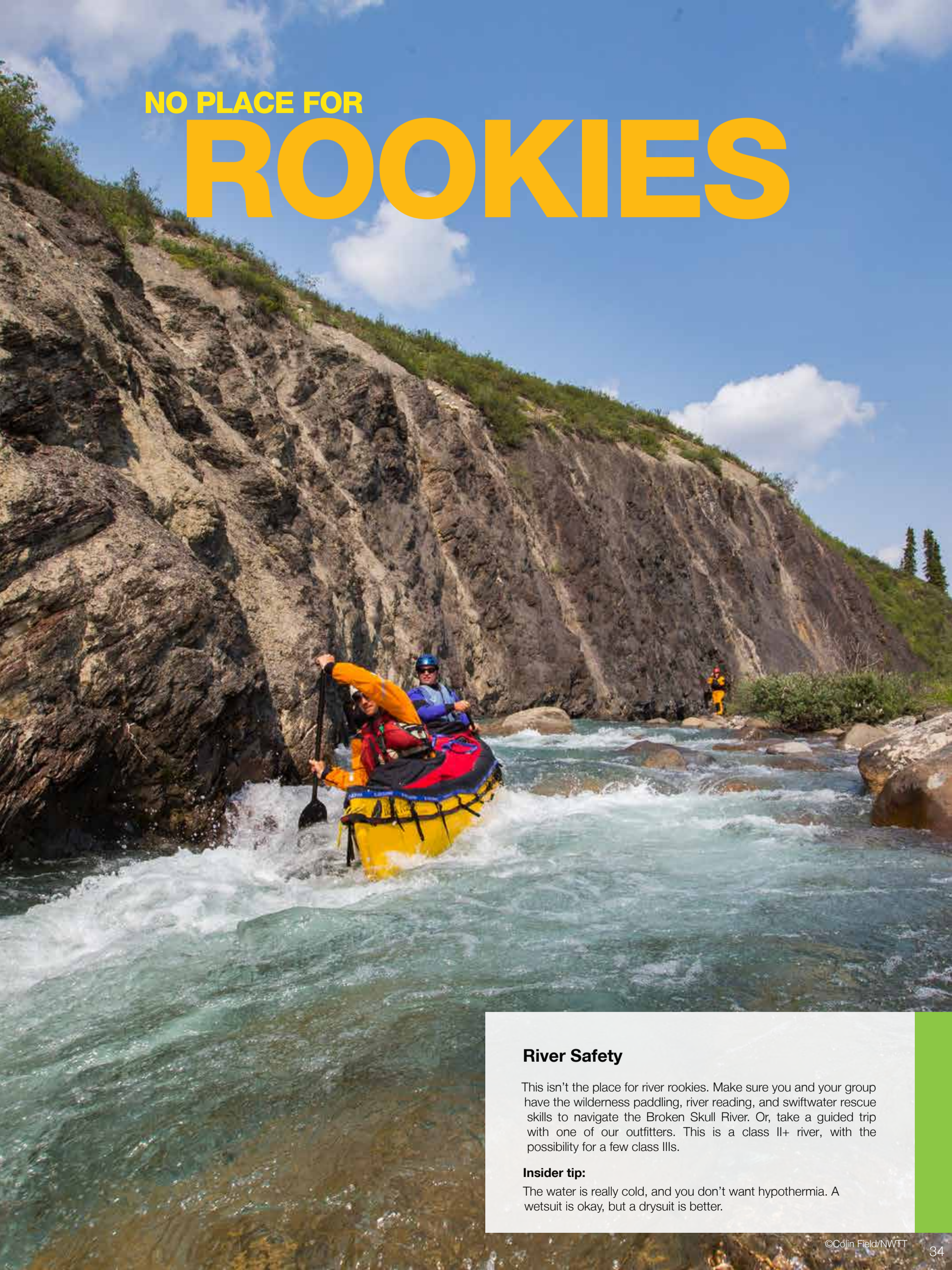
You are responsible for your own safety. Prepare to handle an emergency on your own. Bring a good first aid kit, and the skills to use it. Keep in mind, our resources are limited and we might not be able to rescue you right away due to flight delays.

## Satellite Phones, InReach, and SPOT Devices

Coverage can be limited in northern latitudes, canyons, and valleys. Know how to deal with your device's limitations. The Iridium satellite system currently has the most reliable coverage here.

NO PLACE FOR

# ROOKIES



## River Safety

This isn't the place for river rookies. Make sure you and your group have the wilderness paddling, river reading, and swiftwater rescue skills to navigate the Broken Skull River. Or, take a guided trip with one of our outfitters. This is a class II+ river, with the possibility for a few class IIIs.

### Insider tip:

The water is really cold, and you don't want hypothermia. A wetsuit is okay, but a drysuit is better.

# DREAM

HERE

## Choosing a Campsite

Nááts'ihch'oh has no established campsites; you choose where to camp. When choosing a site, please follow Leave No Trace principles:

- Travel and camp on durable surfaces. Durable surfaces include rock, gravel, or dry grasses.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary. If you do move rocks to secure your tent, please scatter them before you leave.
- Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.



WHERE THE  
**WILD**  
THINGS ARE

### **Respect Wildlife**

Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.

Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.

Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.

Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.

Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

# BEARS

LIVE HERE

## Bears

Yep. Black bears and grizzly bears live here, and they especially like the Broken Skull River valley and hot springs. For more information, read **You Are In Bear Country** or call us. If you're flying, check with your airline before packing bear spray or bangers.



# WHATEVER

## THE WEATHER

### Weather

Nááts'ihch'oh is in the mountains. It can snow at anytime, and rain storms can cause flash floods in canyons and steep valleys. Make your trip a fun one - be prepared for all conditions.

	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>And you can expect...</b>
Jun	-5°C	25°C	Frost, snow, blazing sun
Jul	0°C	30°C	Hot sun, afternoon rainstorms
Aug	0°C	30°C	Hot sun, rain, and frost
Sep	-5°C	20°C	Frost and snow

YOUR

# HEADLAMP

WILL BE LONELY

## Midnight Sun and the Northern Lights

You probably won't use your headlamp, but you'll want a mask for sleeping under the midnight sun.

If you really want to see the northern lights, or *aurora borealis*, plan your trip for August when the skies are darker.

	Sunrise	Sunset
Jun 21	4:40 am	12:30 am
Jul 21	5:30 am	11:45 pm
Aug 21	6:50 am	10:15 pm

TAKE ONLY

# PHOTOS



## Leave What You Find

Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts. Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.

Leave your campsite as pristine as you found it.



A large, dark metal kettle with a handle sits on a wooden firebox. The firebox is built over a campfire of sticks and wood, with flames visible. The scene is set in a mountainous landscape with rocky terrain and a cloudy sky.

COOKING AND

# CAMPFIRES

## Minimize Campfire Impacts

On your first few days on the river, you'll be struck by the beauty of the canyons, the mountains and the nearly non-existent driftwood supply. We ask that you bring a camp stove, instead of gathering wood at Divide Lake, as it is an alpine lake with limited wood.

Near the Divide Lake cabin, there is a wood supply that was harvested pre-park, but it is used by Sahtu Dene and Metis. (P.S. Our trees thank you for not bringing wood into the park - imagine the insects and diseases you almost brought could bring with you. Plus, it's illegal, so there's that too).

For campfires later in your trip, please use a firebox. Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry.

Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.

Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes. On big rivers, dispose of cool ashes in the river.

CRYSTAL CLEAR

# WATERS



## Drinking Water

It may look crystal clean, but it's a *really* long ride home if you get beaver fever (*Giardia*).

**Treat all your drinking water.**



KEEP IT

# PRETTY

## Dispose of Waste Properly

Pack it in, pack it out. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.

Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 15 to 20 cm deep at least 70 metres from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished. Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.

To wash, use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Dispose of strained dishwater in the river.

ARE YOU

# READY?

## Gear Checklist

### Camp Gear

- tarp
- tent
- water filter/purification system
- stove and fuel or firebox
- cooking pot
- rope
- trowel and toilet paper
- biodegradable soap
- food and lots of hot drinks
- other stuff you need or want
- leash if you're bringing your pet

### Personal Gear

- water bottle
- mug, bowl and spork
- knife
- toothbrush and toothpaste
- towel
- daypack
- sunscreen / sunglasses
- sleeping bag, pad, and mask
- wallet / cash
- contact phone numbers
- trip plan
- camera and spare batteries

### Safety Gear

- brain filled with experience
- satellite phone/InReach/SPOT
- headlamp/flashlight
- lighter/fire starting kit
- bear spray and bear bangers
- first aid kit
- extra food

### Navigation

- maps and waterproof case
- watch
- GPS and compass
- binoculars

### Repair Kit

- duct tape
- spare batteries
- silicon sealant
- needle and thread
- tent repair kit
- stove repair kit

### Personal Clothing

- warm hat
- sun hat
- rain gear with hood
- shorts: quick dry
- pants: wool or fleece
- jacket: fleece
- sweater: light wool
- shirt/t-shirt
- long underwear
- underwear and socks
- gloves or mittens
- camp shoes
- swimsuit
- bug hat, jacket, and repellent

### For Hikers

- backpack
- hiking boots
- blister kit
- trekking poles
- bear canisters

### For Paddlers

- repair kit
- paddles
- PFDs
- whistle, bailers, throw bags, and pin kits
- drysuit (best choice) or wetsuit
- canoe barrels/packs
- canoe/kayak/raft



# STORIES

TO TELL



Clockwise from the left, Lyn Elliott, David Lichty, Roger Estey, Taylor Pace, Andrew Pichora, and Colin Field. Colin's the photographer whose holding the Queen of Diamonds. It was the only photo with ALL of us in it. ©Colin Field/NWTT

## If Rivers Could Talk

Elder Leon Andrew tells us that Divide Lake was used as an access point when the Shúhtaot'ine traveled to reach the area they called Gaofáá (Rabbitkettle Hot Spring / Gahnjthah) where they gathered material for arrowheads.

In the 1960s a geologist ascending the river found a cracked moose skull. He submitted "Broken Skull River" to the Geographic Place Names Board, and...the rest is (modern) history:

### Lower Broken Skull

In 1979 Chris Larkin builds a cabin on Broken Skull Lake and descends the lower Broken Skull River in 1980.

In the 2000s, Parks Canada staff fly into Broken Skull Lake, and portage to the river, wanting to check out the section of river that was becoming part of Nahanni National Park Reserve.

### Broken Skull River

Before 2015, there were just two known groups who paddled the entire river. Mike Fischesser was the only guy we could reach who had paddled the river. In the early 1990s, he ran the Broken Skull River for his honeymoon and thought it was a first descent until he met a polio survivor who had done it the year before.

2015 - Nááts'įłh'oh National Park Reserve organizes a scout trip of six people, coordinated by Lyn Elliott. She is joined by: Colin Field of [www.colinfield.com](http://www.colinfield.com); David Lichty of Nahanni Wilderness Adventures; Roger Estey of Nahanni River Adventures; Andrew Pichora of Blackfeather the Wilderness Adventure Company; and Taylor Pace of Canoe North Adventures. Their trip from June 23 - July 3 opens up the Broken Skull River to modern adventurers. The first trip planner is subsequently developed.

2016 - The first guided groups travel the river and paddlers are drawn to the magnetism of this hidden gem. Guides declare it to be one of the best northern river they have paddled, as it is chock full of stunning scenery and great whitewater.

### Upper Broken Skull

2016 - Two Alaskan packrafters hike into "Bird Lake" and walk much of the upper Broken Skull before paddling the main Broken Skull run.

2017 - In June a group of packrafters from Wyoming start at MacMillian Pass, paddling and hiking their way to "Bird Lake". They paddle the upper stretch of the Broken Skull and become the first group to complete a packraft descent of it and Black Wolf Creek on their seven-river journey. (A Whitehorse group of packrafters completes the second descent of Blackwolf Creek one month later).

### Written from the Heart

Lyn, author of the 2015 Broken Skull trip planner, says: Here's the thing about working in a new national park - someone's gotta figure out what's there. I was lucky enough to make this my work, but you wouldn't be reading this without the incredible team that made it happen. Thanks to: David, Roger, Andrew, Colin and Taylor for paddling; Julie Warnock and Northwest Territories Tourism for getting Colin on the trip; Wendy Grater and Blackfeather for setting us up with canoes and letting Andrew join us; Neil Hartling at Nahanni River Adventures for sending Roger; David Hibbard at Nahanni Wilderness Adventures for lending us David; Canoe North Adventures for packing delicious food; Cam Zimmer and Laani Uunila from Parks Canada for thinking it was an okay idea to begin with; and Carolyn Wright at North Wright Airways for helping me book my very first float plane charter.

WANT

# HELP

PLANNING?



## Contact Us

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