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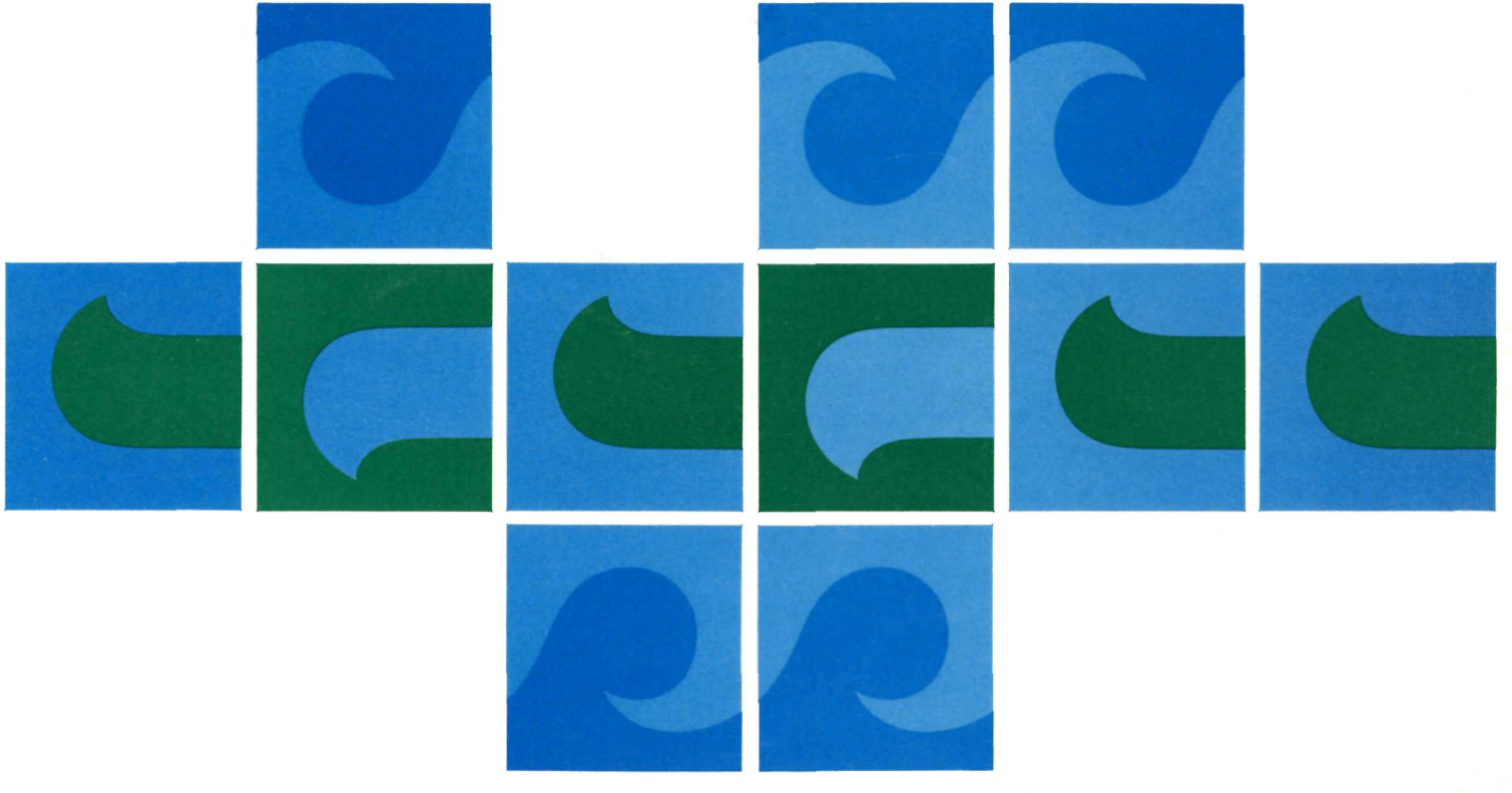
Wild Rivers:
Quebec North Shore



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This and all other reports in the Wild Rivers series will also be available in French.

Wild Rivers:
Quebec North Shore

Wild Rivers Survey,
Planning Division,
Parks Canada,
Ottawa, 1976

The Moisie River, one of the most beautiful rivers of the Quebec North Shore.

''It is difficult to find in life any event which so effectually condenses intense nervous sensation into the shortest possible space of time as does the work of shooting, or running an immense rapid. There is no toil, no heart breaking labour about it, but as much coolness, dexterity, and skill as man can throw into the work of hand, eye, and head; knowledge of when to strike and how to do it; knowledge of water and rock, and of the one hundred combinations which rock and water can assume – for these two things, rock and water, taken in the abstract, fail as completely to convey any idea of their fierce embracings in the throes of a rapid as the fire burning quietly in a drawing-room fireplace fails to convey the idea of a house wrapped and sheeted in flames''.

Sir William Francis Butler (1872)

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Foreword

Wild rivers are a priceless part of our natural heritage. These waterways, untouched by the march of man's technological progress, are the arteries of our land, and one of the main elements in its growth to nationhood.

From the copper-coloured waterfalls of the Labrador plateau, to the Canadian Shield's labyrinth of lakes and streams, to the glacial torrents cutting through the western mountains – wild rivers are all that remain unharnessed of those waterways which first made it possible for this huge and varied country to be explored and developed.

Long before Europeans laid eyes on them, these rivers served the native peoples as vital sources of both food and transportation. Later, the rivers were to carry the newly-arrived Europeans on other voyages of exploration and exploitation throughout the vast interior of the continent. And the settlers who followed travelled the same routes.

The waterways were the mainstay of the fur trade; they were the highways to the gold rushes. They did much to provide the economic nourishment through which Canada grew to its present stature.

With the advent of modern technology, some of our rivers were harnessed to serve our new found needs.

But thousands of miles of waterways, and the land they pass through, remain essentially untouched.

Today, Canadians are gradually rediscovering these fascinating wild rivers. They are seeing nature on its own terms – enjoying its works from the vantage of its own highways. They are recreating the adventures of the explorers; struggling over the same portages as the heavily-burdened "coureurs de bois"; running rapids which once hurtled "voyageurs" and their precious cargoes toward the markets of Montreal; gently floating down majestic rivers which once carried thousands of anxious prospectors toward the promise of gold.

Parks Canada is promoting these challenging voyages of discovery, which emrace both the past and the present. Wild rivers are important to Canadians as integral components of our founding heritages.

However, a good deal of down-to-earth information about the rivers and their habits is needed before anyone attempts to navigate them. It is for this reason that Parks Canada decided to carry out surveys of wild rivers all across the country. We are publishing the results of these surveys in the present series of booklets, in order to provide a practical guide for the modern "voyageur".

But there is one other very important point you must bear in mind. "Wild" really is the correct adjective to describe many of the rivers, and only experienced and well-equipped canoeists should enter these waters. You will find them a tremendous challenge. So it's up to you. Our land and our rivers are waiting for you to explore and rediscover them.

The Wild Rivers of **Quebec North Shore**

The rivers along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River estuary are still relatively untouched by man and offer a variety of canoeing and portaging experiences. Canoeists seeking the challenge of white water will prefer the Moisie and Romaine Rivers while intermediate canoeists can safely navigate the Manitou and Natashquan Rivers.

The North Shore rivers all begin high in the rugged Laurentian Uplands, and in their southerly course cut deep valleys. The river patterns alternate between calm pools and rushing torrents and end their course in spectacular waterfalls and rapids at the edge of the Laurentian Uplands.

River character and bordering landscapes are most diverse along the Manitou, but quite uniform along the Moisie. Two less diverse but more remote rivers are the Romaine and Natashquan Rivers. They lie within the Mécatina Plateau, an area of rugged but unvarying relief. The Romaine offers canoeists a challenging descent to the coast while the more remote but tamer Natashquan provides its travellers with a true wilderness experience.

Climate

Although summer temperatures are comfortable, ranging between thirteen and sixteen degrees Celsius, fog conditions and drizzle occur frequently, particularly during the spring and autumn. Monthly rainfall during the summer months is between eight and nine centimetres with measurable rainfall occurring on about 40 per cent of summer days.

Spring breakup is usually completed by the end of May. The river ice is the first to go out, followed by the thaw of headwater lakes.

Planning the trip

The end of July or August is probably the best time to canoe the North Shore rivers. During this time water levels are medium to low and extensive cobbles, gravel and sand bars will be exposed, providing many convenient campsites. Lower water levels also render more rapids runnable and make lining and portaging easier around impassable rapids.

In planning the schedule for a canoe trip in this region, you should expect to paddle between 16 to 25 kilometres per day. You should allot extra time and food for delays that may be caused by bad weather, and you may want to spend a few days on sightseeing.

If egress is to be by plane, such arrangements must be made before the trip begins. Be sure to check out with some responsible agency, the Quebec Police Force or the *Ministère du Tourisme, de la Chasse et de la Pêche* office in Sept-Iles, giving them your route and expected time of arrival. Don't forget to check in at the end of the trip!

Permits for fires and fishing may be required. Extreme caution should be exercised in the use of fire. Campfires should be built only on rock and sand, and extinguished completely. All non-burnable garbage should be packed out with you.

Equipment needed

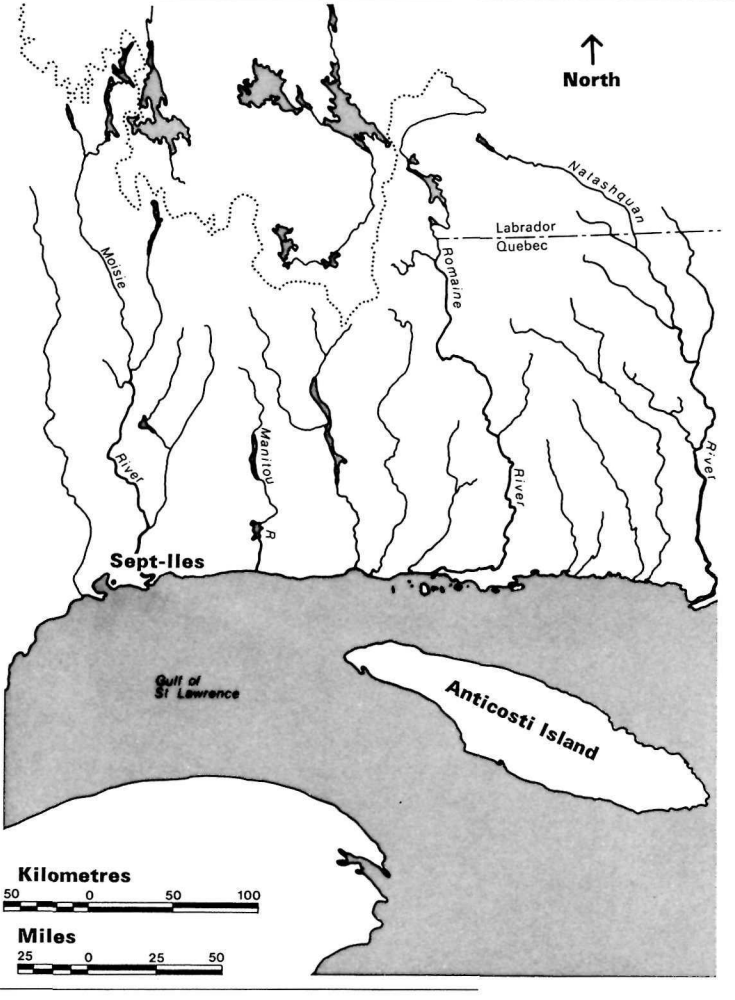
A sturdy canoe capable of handling well in rapids, and equipment for its repair are essential. Aluminium canoes were used throughout the surveys and proved most practical. Since lining and hauling are often necessary, you will need several pairs of running shoes or

other sturdy footwear, which can take the abuse of rocks and constant wetness.

Insects – including mosquitoes and black flies – are numerous particularly in June or July. Head nets and insect repellent are recommended.

In the more isolated regions an emergency survival kit is advised. The kit should contain high energy food rations, waterproofed matches, fish hooks and perhaps flares for signalling aircraft; if the kit is small, it could be worn on your belt. Firearms are never necessary.

Maps in the National Topographic Series are available from:
Canada Map Office
130 Bentley Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E9



1 Natashquan River

Natashquan River

Length
384 kilometres/7 to 10 portages
8 days

Date of Survey
August 1972, at medium water level

Access and egress

Access to the upper river is limited to floatplanes. Goose Bay, Labrador, is the closest point for departure, 192 kilometres from the starting point at the confluence of the Masquamanaga and Natashquan Rivers (Lat. 52°08'N., Long. 62°15'W.).

Churchill Falls, located about 216 kilometres from the fork, could also serve as a point of departure. Both towns are served by scheduled airline service, while Goose Bay is also accessible by coastal steamer. Landing in the upper Natashquan is problematic and sites will be determined by weather and water conditions.

For this survey, the river was inspected from the confluence of the Masquamanaga, and a landing made 18 kilometres below the fork. The landing proved difficult, as the river is only one half to one metre deep at this point, and has a current of one metre per second.

The town of Natashquan, 6½ kilometres from the river mouth, is serviced by regular coastal steamer. The boat trip to Sept-Iles takes approximately 18 hours.

Maps required

N.T.S. 1:250,000 scale
13D Lac Brulé
12M Lac de Morhiban
12N Natashquan
12K Musquare

About the river

Geography

The Natashquan River is one of the major systems draining from southern Labrador and the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence in Quebec. It rises in the vicinity of Lac Long and Lac Brulé just east of the Quebec-Labrador border and flows east and then south, entering the Gulf of St. Lawrence at the village of Point-Parent.

The headwaters of the Natashquan lie at an elevation of 600 metres above sea level in a hilly area where the water-sheds between Romaine, Natashquan, and Petit Mécatina rivers are difficult to distinguish.

Almost immediately, the river descends into a flat region of string bog and numerous lakes, before finally entering a well-defined valley. The river drops 213 metres in 42 kilometres and much of the course flows through shallow gorges through the bedrock, so passage of this stretch would involve numerous portages.

Below the Masquamanaga fork, the character of the Natashquan changes radically. The river has a gentle gradient and for the most part occupies a wide valley. A stretch of more than 160 kilometres is entirely without obstructions, while rapids indicated on the topographic maps in the lower half of the river are mostly trivial and the falls are easily portaged. At the medium flow levels encountered during the survey, only one rapid had to be portaged.

Flora

For most of its course, the Natashquan flows through dense spruce and birch forest typical of the region. Near the mouth of the river, coastal marshes or swamps replace the forest, but are screened from the canoeist's view by a strip of forest on either bank.

Aside from spruce, common tree species are birch, alder, poplar, and balsam. Tamarack occurs occasionally along the upper river; mountain ash appears first about 100 kilometres above the mouth and becomes frequent near the sea. Common shrubs include willow, wild rhododendron, raspberries and blueberries.

Fauna

Moose tracks were frequently spotted along the upper half of the route, but only a single animal was observed. A family of wolves was observed on the upper Natashquan near the confluence of the Katchkaosipou River. Beaver lodges were common in the first section, and the animals were heard on several occasions. Squirrels were common along the entire route.

Kingfishers and ducks were the main species of birds seen. A pair of grey owls and one hawk were observed. Many other species of wildlife are undoubtedly present, but their densities are low, owing to the dense forest and scarcity of open marshland.

Fish species present include Atlantic salmon, brook trout and northern pike. Salmon ascend as far as the Masquamanaga River in their spawning migration. Masquamanaga apparently means "place where the bears come to eat salmon".

The canoe trip

The following description of the first 100 kilometres is based on aerial reconnaissance of the uppermost Natashquan River.

Length
100 kilometres/300 metre drop

The aerial survey began in the flat area just below the headwaters of the Natashquan (Lat. 52°30'N.; Long. 63°20'W.) If it is decided to canoe the upper Natashquan, the long, calm and wide section of the river at 52°22'N. Lat. 62°45'W. Long. would serve as a landing site.

Just below the outlet of this calm stretch, a falls would require an easy portaged over exposed bedrock. This is followed by more rapids, some of which might be runnable, but others would appear to require lining or short portages.

The rapids continue with only short breaks, and appear to require frequent short portages. The forest is dense spruce, which might make portages difficult.

About 13 kilometres below the falls, the rapids become increasingly difficult, and appear to require portages of one kilometre. Within this stretch, most bars shown on the 1:250,000 topographic map probably represent impassable rapids.

Ten kilometres above the confluence of the Masquamanaga River, the rapids again become difficult, and a section indicated as a thin line on the map is an impassable gorge which might require a 1½-kilometre portage over rough terrain. The rapids continue to within 1½ kilometres of the fork, where smoother water begins.

Marked rapids on the Masquamanaga do not appear as difficult as those of the uppermost Natashquan.

Downstream of the confluence, the Natashquan has smooth water and occupies an interesting and scenic valley. Unfortunately, the river here is too shallow for floatplane landings.

With the exception of two marked rapids 10 kilometres below the fork, the river seems to present easy canoeing with a good current. About 6½ kilometres further down, the valley narrows. Just below this point a landing site was found and the canoe survey of the Natashquan began.

Quebec-Labrador boundary to East Natashquan confluence
286 kilometres/200 metre drop in elevation

The canoe survey began at a bend in the river about five kilometres north of the Labrador-Quebec boundary. At this point in its course, the Natashquan occupies a narrow V-shaped valley which is an attractive spot to begin a trip. Hills rise quite steeply, as much as 150 kilometres above the river.

The river is 90 metres wide, and has an average depth of one metre, with a current of about one metre a second. The river bed consists of cobbles and there are occasional cobble bars along the banks and in mid-stream.

The steep-sided valley continues for about 16 kilometres and rock domes and cliffs begin to appear toward the

Upper Natashquan River; south face of Mt. Michaoashini

lower end. Small islands occasionally split the river into winding channels where there are beaver lodges. A minor rapid indicated on the 1:50,000 topographic map is easily navigable.

Eight kilometres south of the Quebec border, the valley begins to open up and the river widens considerably. Depth is up to one metre and the current is one metre per second. Sand bars become frequent and offer excellent campsites during medium or low water levels.

A 120 degree bend in the river suddenly and dramatically reveals the sheer polished face of Machao-ashini ("big rock"). The granite dome rises 375 metres above the river and dominates the flat valley below. This spectacular sight is perhaps the most prominent landmark of the entire Natashquan trip.

At this point, the Natashquan Valley broadens to more than 1½ kilometres, and the river begins a series of interesting meanders, passing beneath Le Gros Teton, a symmetric rock dome.

The river narrows somewhat near the confluence of the Mistanipisipou River ("river with large flow"). For about 18 kilometres below the Mistanipisipou, the Natashquan Valley continues flat and open. Surrounding hills rise steeply above the river, frequently exposing rock faces.

Fifteen kilometres above the confluence of the East Natashquan, there is an abrupt change to a narrow V-shaped valley. The current increases somewhat, but the water remains smooth. The river banks become quite steep in this section and there are few campsites as the forest on the banks is very dense.

East Natashquan River to start of marked rapids

53 kilometres/40 metres drop in elevation

Downstream of the East Natashquan fork, the river widens considerably and the current resumes a slower pace. The bottom is sandy and the river depth averages about a ½ metre. Sandbars occur frequently, offering good campsites during low water. The river gradually broadens and the surrounding country becomes increasingly flat, before a sudden contraction of the river near the middle of the section.

Here, the current increases, while the river deepens and narrows, with cobbles replacing the sandy bottom of the previous stretch. Densely forested hills rise more steeply from the river and campsites are infrequent in this reach.

Marked Falls and Rapids
37 kilometres/50 metre drop in elevation

In this section, the picture presented by the topographic maps bear little resemblance to conditions encountered at medium – low water. On ten falls and rapids indicated on the 1:250,000 topographic sheet, only the two "falls" were impassable. One rapid requiring scouting, while the remaining seven were either trivial or non-existent.

The first rapid (indicated as a falls on this map) is a chute less than 30 metres wide cut through bedrock. The vertical drop is 2½ metres and the rapid is impassable. It can be bypassed by an easy 10 metre carry over the rock on the right bank. At high water, this portage might be much more complicated.

The second rapid (also indicated as a falls), follows about 1½ kilometres downstream. Known locally as the Rapides des Caches, it was the site of a long portage for early river travellers. Although a trail was not found, a portage of about 450 metres on the right bank is recommended. Below the Rapides des Caches, the river opens out around an island, and there is a superb campsite at the end of the portage.

The third rapid can be run, but could also be easily lined by less experienced canoeists. The fourth and fifth marked rapids are riffles, while the sixth and seventh were non-existent at the time of the survey.

From here, the Natashquan enters a stretch of braided channels with several small islands which offer good campsites. The river widens and becomes very shallow with a mixed bottom of cobbles and sand. Mountain ash makes its appearance for the first time in this stretch.

The river again narrows, simultaneously deepening and accelerating. Rock faces along the banks have been sculptured and polished by the river. There are no good campsites in this stretch.

At the start of the next marked rapids, the river again widens and splits into several channels around attractive islands. Hills rise quite steeply from the left bank to exposed rock faces. The three marked rapids did not materialize but the current continues to flow swiftly.

Long Steady
34 kilometres/6 metre drop in elevation

This long steady stretch of the Natashquan River is very much the same at one end as the other. The valley is wide and flat and hills rise steeply from the river on the right bank.

The end of the section is marked by an old Hydro-Quebec base camp which was apparently constructed during surveys of the hydro-electric potential at the Natashquan system. There are a large number of dilapidated wooden buildings and a luxuriant growth of wild raspberries, gooseberries, and crackerberries. A left turn in the river just beyond the camp, marks the beginning of the last section of the river.

First falls to mouth
54 kilometres/40 metre drop in elevation

The last 54 kilometres of the Natashquan include a series of beautiful falls interspersed by stretches of easy quiet water. Two private fishing clubs control salmon fishing rights to the entire stretch, but travellers have a right of temporary access to the river.

The first falls indicated on the map have a vertical drop of about three metres and are easily portaged on the right side. There is a campsite at the foot of the falls.

Below these falls is a rapid several hundred metres in length which ends in a long calm stretch. Canoes can be easily portaged over the rocks on the right bank. One and a half kilometres below this is another rapid which can be run with caution at medium – low water. This should be tried only by the experienced canoeist, as heavy surges and boils betray dangerous undercurrents.

After the rapid, the river again widens into a sandy-bottomed steady. The next two rapids indicated on the 1:250,000 scale map are non-existent at summer flow levels, as are several others shown only on the 1:50,000 scale map. Hills become lower, and by the time the next marked falls are reached, the countryside has almost no relief.

The second marked falls constitute the first real waterfall on the Natashquan. The river divides around several islands, creating one twin falls and another further downstream on the left channel. The portage appears to be on the left hand side of the upper twin

falls. A brief rapid must first be passed which requires lining and a short carry. The portage around the falls is quite difficult as the rocks are steep and slippery.

The falls, 5½ metres high, are impressive. A short calm stretch follows, with flat relief and very dense forest.

The next falls are the largest on the river. The total drop is 15 metres and the falls are more than 90 metres wide even at medium – low water. A portage can be made over the beautiful polished rocks, or along an excellent trail on the left bank. This trail, constructed by one of the fishing clubs, has a boardwalk. The falls spill into a large pool, with wide exposed sandbars and dune-like sand banks offering many campsites.

Three kilometres further downstream the fourth falls are reached. This is the site of a privately-owned fishing lodge. There is a private portage trail connecting with the lodge on the left bank, but the falls can also be portaged over the rocks on the right. The vertical drop is approximately five metres.

From the base of the falls, the river narrows and deepens considerably. The forest is dense and comes right to the banks, and there are no good campsites. Five kilometres downstream, the last falls are reached. They have a drop of three metres. There is another excellent portage trail on the left bank, which leads to a second large fishing camp. Below the falls, the river again widens and divides around several islands. Sand bars on either side provide excellent camping spots.

Eighteen kilometres downstream of the last falls, the village of Pointe-Parent is reached. The Gulf of St. Lawrence is usually too rough to permit canoeing the 6½ kilometres to the village of Natashquan, but a ride by truck can be obtained in Pointe-Parent. The river is subject to tidal influences at the mouth, and campers may find it necessary to obtain drinking water from a local resident.

2 Romaine River

Romaine River

L'Abbé Huard River to Havre-St.-Pierre

Length
130 kilometres/14 to 16 portages
4 or 5 days

Date of Survey
July, 1972

Access and egress

Access to the upper Romaine is by float plane which can be chartered at Havre-St.-Pierre, the termination point of the trip.

The town is located 19 kilometres each of the Romaine River mouth and is presently serviced by air and coastal ferry. An all-weather road joining the town with Sept-Iles and points west is under construction.

Maps required

N.T.S. 1:250,000
12L Havre-St.-Pierre

About the river

Geography

The headwaters of the Romaine River form the Quebec-Labrador boundary between the 52°'N and 52°45'N lines of latitude. The 400 kilometres of river is also the eastern boundary of the East Coast Boreal Forest Region and the Laurentian Boreal Highland Region, an area of transition between the highlands of the north coast and the plateaux of Labrador. The Romaine enters the Gulf of St. Lawrence at 63°45'W longitude, 50°15'N latitude, half way between Havre-St.-Pierre and Mingan.

In its upper reaches, the Romaine valley is shallow and surrounded by barren hills. Near the coast, extensive bogs occupy most of the territory between the sand terraces of the shore and the peaks visible from the river. Along the river itself, there are frequent and sudden drops making river navigation difficult and time-consuming.

The many rapids and falls offer magnificent scenery, but the overall landscape is far from aesthetically appealing. The valley is not spectacular; there are few escarpments and few panoramic views. The numerous rock outcrops offer some interest – particularly "Les Murailles" section.

Flora

The Romaine flows through a predominantly black spruce forest. Groves of white birch occur occasionally; other boreal hardwoods, trembling aspen and balsam poplar, are less conspicuous except in the immediate vicinity of the river. Common shrubs include willow, wild rhododendron and swamp laurel. Among the berry plants are: raspberry, gooseberry, crackerberry and blueberry.

Fauna

There is not an abundance of wildlife along the Romaine River. Moose and woodland caribou inhabit the area but their numbers are not large. Moose prefer the river valleys, lake margins and recently burned areas where secondary vegetation occurs while caribou favour the open plateau.

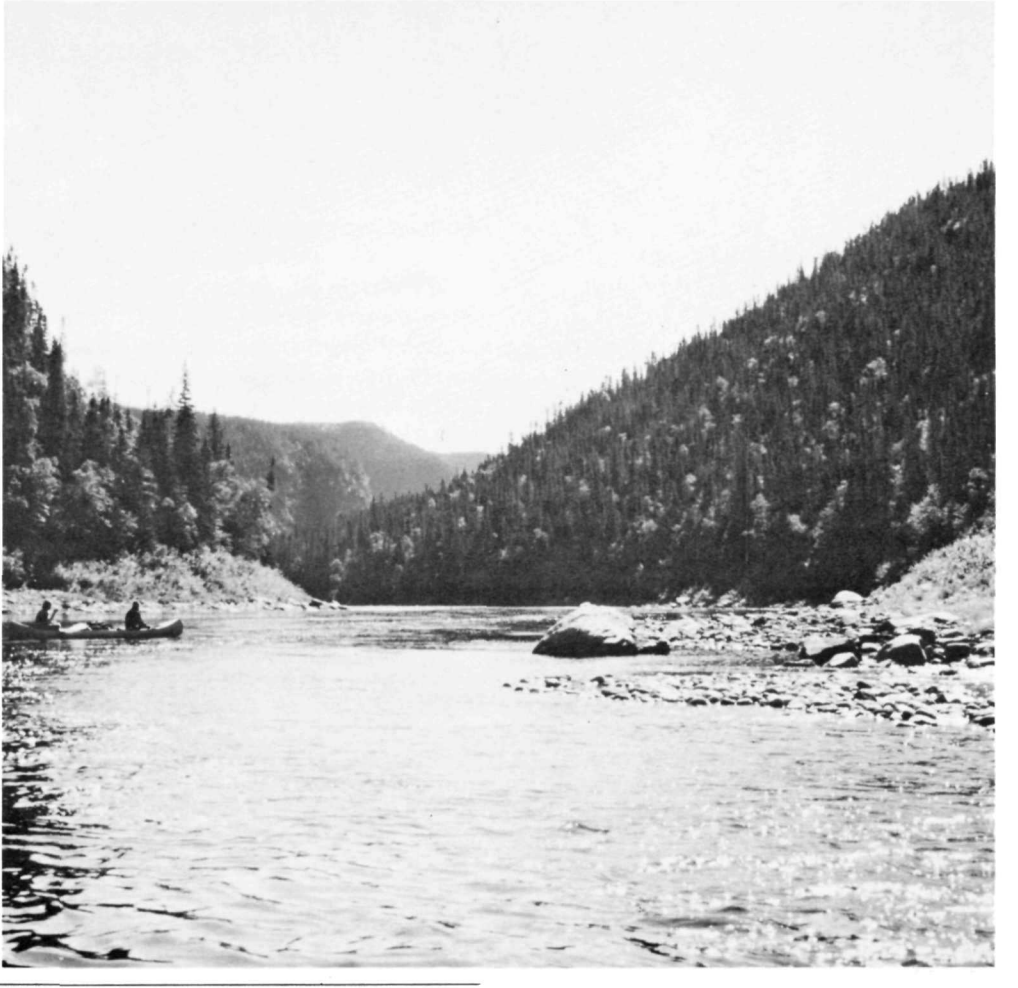
Fish species include Atlantic salmon, brook trout, and northern pike. Angling is best in the lower reaches of the river.

The canoe trip

L'Abbé Huard River to Bassin des Murailles

The canoe trip begins three kilometres south of the mouth of l'Abbé Huard River, below a 16-kilometre stretch of rapids. In the next 34 kilometres, the river varies from 60 to 100 metres in width and averages one metre in depth. The current, over a gradient of ½ metre a kilometre is between 1½ and five kilometres per hour. The valley sides are at first barely visible, but soon confine the river.

The first series of rapids occurs at a point 26 kilometres from the start of the trip. These are indicated by a nar-



The Romaine River; a long and difficult voyage

rowing of the river and the presence of boulders in the channel. This rapid can be run without difficulty, but the second, which follows shortly, should be scouted. The best route appears to be close to the left bank, avoiding the large boulders on the right. The drop is one metre in this rapid and the current is strong with large standing waves.

On the right is an almost vertical cliff. The next rapid, occurring shortly after, has a drop of two metres over 90 metres and must be portaged on the left.

Another easily-run rapid occurs 2½ kilometres further. The final rapid in this reach has a drop of one metre over a length of 150 metres. With careful manoeuvring it can be run. Through this part of the river, small waterfalls can be seen along the valley walls.

Eleven kilometres upstream from the mouth of the Southeast Romaine River, there begins a succession of rapids separated by pools of various sizes. The gradient is eight metres per kilometre, falling 54 metres over the 11 kilometre distance.

Three sets of rapids must be run and lined before a point where the river is divided into three channels by small islands. The middle channel begins with a two-metre waterfall, while the channel to the left, where most of the river flows, begins with a series of big waves before dropping over a two-metre ledge. The right channel is the longest and also the easiest to descend. At the beginning, a small portage must be made but the remainder can be partially lined and run.

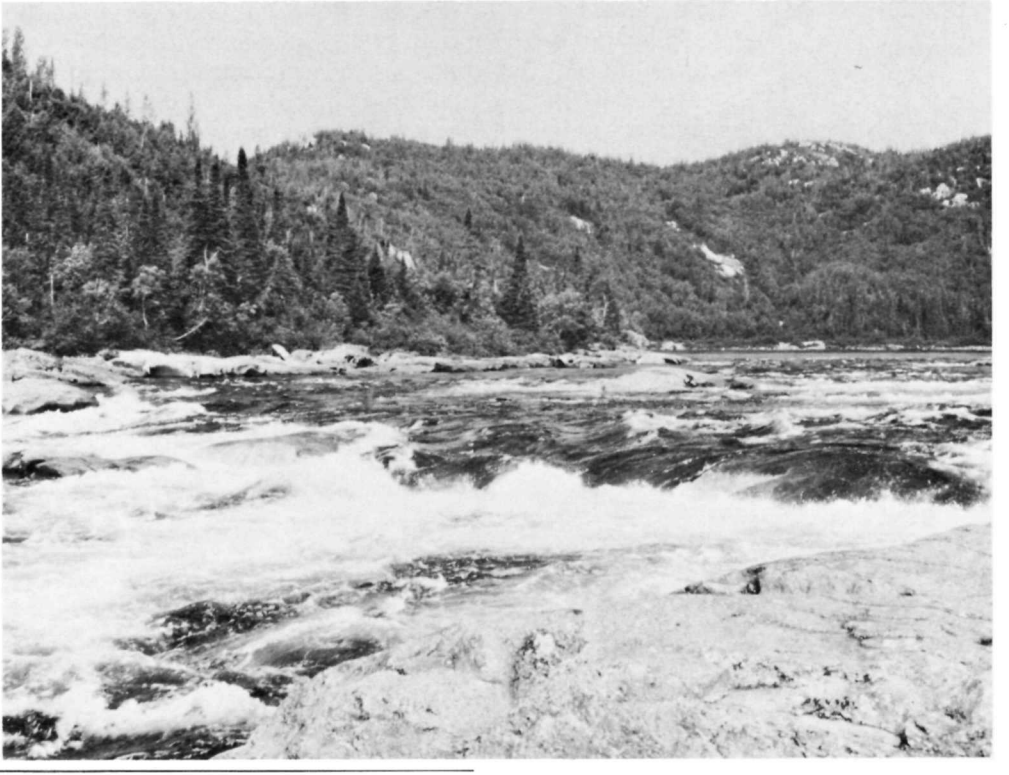
Past a small rapid, a three-metre waterfall is reached in a small canyon where the river narrows from 50 metres to 15 metres. A difficult 300-metre portage passes this on the left bank. Downstream, another short portage must be made around a one-metre drop that extends across the entire width of the river. A series of short rapids that require either lining or portaging precedes another three-metre waterfall. The difficult 1¼-kilometre portage around the falls leads to a wide and deep basin called 'Bassin des Murailles'.

Bassin des Murailles to Mingan Channel

At the end of Bassin des Murailles is a 60-metre rapid that can be easily lined on the left. Excellent camping sites can be found on gravel bars, and there are small sandy beaches in the bays on this reach.

No rapids are encountered in the next 19 kilometres. The gradient is 1/3 metre per kilometre and the velocity of the current is 1½ or three kilometres per hour. The surrounding landscape is not as prominent as the relief up river and has lost much of its scenic appeal. Suitable camping sites are very scarce.

Following the calm reach, the river drops 3½ metres per kilometre over the next 11 kilometres resulting in a number of rapids and waterfalls. Thin



Rapids above Bassin des Murailles

forest cover, little relief and many exposed rocks give the landscape a desolate appearance. The first three-metre waterfall is portaged for 150 metres on the right. A short paddle brings the canoeist to the second fall that is easily portaged on the right. One-half kilometre further the third fall is reached. This picturesque waterfall drops five metres in a series of short drops. It is possible to line the right bank to the top of the fall, where there is an easy 120 metre portage.

Three kilometres down river is another series of rapids and a narrowing of the river that required a 100-metre portage on the left. Paddling on the left side of the river leads to another rapid which is also portaged to the left. The drop of this rapid is three metres. Five kilometres of calm river precede "Grande Chute". The average plateau elevation varies in this reach between 110 and 200 metres. The topography appears flatter and the bogs are more noticeable.

Grande Chute is an impressive 30-metre waterfall, portaged on the right. The 200-metre trail is easy to follow at the beginning but becomes difficult when descending to the river. Below the waterfall a 150-metre rapid is encountered that is best portaged on the right for 245 metres. The river appears to be very deep between the fall and the rapid. Rock walls along this stretch of river limit campsites to the beginnings of both portages.

Over the next 35 kilometres the current is negligible as the river flows over a bed of clay and sand with a gradient of ½ metre per kilometre. The river is 100 metres wide and the banks are sandy and densely vegetated.

A beautiful site occurs where the river drops over a five-metre ledge extending across the entire river. From this point the river widens, the current is further reduced, and more beaches, gravel and sand bars become evident. When there is a headwind, paddling is difficult. A railway bridge, 15 kilometres from the river mouth, crosses a

small waterfall that is easily portaged for 50 metres on the left.

Below the bridge, terraces, gravel bars and beaches disappear and vegetation along the banks is very dense. One kilometre from the sea, the bridge of Highway 15 crosses, where the river narrows to 100 metres. There is a rapid here that may be run, although it should be scouted first. Between the bridge and the sea is a five-metre waterfall that is easily portaged for 30 metres on the right bank.

A magnificent sight awaits canoeists reaching the mouth of the river. Sand beaches line the shore and the rocky islands of the Mingan Archipelago extend from the river's mouth.

Near the mouth of the Romaine River

3 Manitou River

Manitou River

Lake Manitou to the St. Lawrence River

Length
80 kilometres/5 portages
6 to 8 days

Date of Survey
July, 1972

Access and egress

Access to Manitou Lake and the headwaters of the Manitou River is only by aircraft. A float plane can be chartered at Sept-Iles. A recently completed road along the north shore leads to Sept-Iles or Havre-St.-Pierre from the mouth of the Manitou River.

Maps required

N.T.S. 1:250,000
22-I Manitou Lake

About the trip

For 88 kilometres the Manitou River is essentially a series of lakes occurring from the head of Manitou Lake (65°15′ long. 51° lat.) to the end of Eudistes Lake, on the edges of the Laurentian Plateau Escarpment.

From here, the river drops quickly over a length of 24 kilometres and plunges over two spectacular waterfalls, before entering the Gulf of St. Lawrence at 65°15′ long. 50°15′ lat.

A variety of landscapes is encountered on a canoe trip from the headwaters to the sea. Near the upper reaches of the river are the glacial carved peaks surrounding Manitou Lake, followed by the cliffs of Canot Lake, the extensive panoramas of Eudistes Lake, and finally the rapids and falls near the coast.

To canoeists seeking the challenge of white water, this river trip could be a disappointment. Rapids are either impossible to navigate or too small to offer any excitement. The visual appeal is the major attraction during the journey. The varying relief, the falls, the sea, and of course wildlife in a natural setting, make this trip a memorable experience.

Flora

Black spruce is the predominant species of tree occupying the lowland area as well as the well-drained uplands. Other tree species include white spruce and balsam fir. In the immediate vicinity of the rivers, groves of white birch, trembling aspen and balsam poplar are conspicuous.

Wildlife indigenous to the North Shore are moose, caribou and smaller fur-bearing animals such as beaver, otter and marten. Waterfowl are most common around the headwater lakes.

History

The Manitou River has a history of warfare between the Montagnais and the Micmac Indians of the Gaspé region. According to legend, the 75-foot waterfall near the coast is the site of a battle in which a Micmac chief, about to be defeated in battle, grasped the Montagnais chief so that both plunged over the falls to their death. The falls thus became a sacred shrine and thereafter the name Manitou was given to the river.

Until 1918 the Manitou River was the centre of an extensive forest harvesting program. A small tug boat was transported by horse, up to Eudistes Lake. Later a forest fire protection organization was maintained on the territory. Fire-towers were erected and boats and equipment were installed at strategic points. Today, all that remains is the trail from the sea to Eudistes Lake, boat shelters and the beautiful covered bridge at the foot of the falls.

Fishing is a major attraction in Manitou Lake and Eudistes Lake where speckled trout are numerous. Catches of two- or three-kilogram speckled trout have been reported. Salmon may be caught below the falls near the mouth of the river. There is also excellent cod fishing in the gulf water at the mouth of the Manitou River.

The canoe trip

Manitou Lake to Eudistes Lake

Manitou Lake is elongated in a north-south direction having a length of 25 kilometres and an average width of 2½ kilometres. Steep-sloped hills rise abruptly 500 metres above the lake surface which is at an elevation of 150 metres.

The lake is fed by a number of streams which fall from both sides of the plateau, resulting in spectacular views through the forest. There is no evidence of pollution. Everywhere, the water is pure, transparent, and cold.

The lake's shoreline consists of vertical rock walls, or thickly forested steep slopes. Campsites, therefore, are very scarce with only suitable sites found at the inlet and outlet of the lake. Around the lake are some scattered small beaches which can accommodate one or two tents. However these beaches disappear at high water.

The Manitou River offers no challenge to the experienced canoeist

Wind direction is either in a north-south or south-north direction. As a result of the funnelling affect of the valley walls and the long reach, slight breezes can create white-capped waves which result in hazardous canoeing conditions.

Leaving Manitou Lake, the river flows for 10 kilometres to Canot Lake. Over this distance the river seldom exceeds 60 metres in width with the exception of a 2½ kilometre stretch where the river widens to one half kilometre. The river is clear and colourless flowing smoothly over a bed of mixed clay and sand.

Manitou River near Lake Canot

Campsites are difficult to find on Canot Lake due to dense shore vegetation. The only suitable place is found at the lake inlet, on the left, where there is a small sand beach.

Between Canot and Brulé lakes two sections of fast current occur three kilometres from the Canot Lake outlet. Here, current velocity increases and small navigable waves are created. The total length of this section is 2½ kilometres.

Along this reach, the forest is very dense and includes mainly alders on the bank, backed by balsam fir and black spruce. The valley narrows and the sides are at times vertical. Camping possibilities are limited.

In the next 16 kilometres to Brezel Lake, there is a series of widenings of the Manitou River, where each widening can be considered an elongated lake. The current along this section is almost negligible and the water remains clear and colourless. The valley widens again to 2½ kilometres with a gentle slope extending up to a river terrace on the left side of the valley. A dense vegetation of birch and alder occupies both banks.

Once past the outlet of Brezel Lake, the Manitou River narrows to around 60 metres and maintains this width to Eudistes Lake. There are no rapids and the current remains very slow. The banks are more open in this reach particularly on the right, where for the first time, a thin belt of flat land provides suitable campsites.

Eudistes Lake to the Gulf of St. Lawrence

Eudistes Lake is 10 kilometres long with a width varying from 1½ to five kilometres. The water is cold and clear, making it possible to see some five metres below the surface. The shoreline and islands are rocky and unsuitable for camping. As in Manitou Lake, wind can pose a problem for canoeists.

At the outlet of Eudistes Lake there is a three-metre waterfall which is followed by a series of rapids. Below the fall, the river is not more than 25 metres wide and flows swiftly within vertical banks. It is necessary to avoid this section by means of a complex portage route on the left bank.

The portage entails four separate walks and short paddles over three small lakes, for a total walking distance of just under three kilometres.

Rapids below Lake Eudistes

The first walk, which leads to the first of the three lakes, is ½ kilometre long and leads to a small lake with a sand shoreline. The trail was recently cleared but it is still difficult to traverse.

The second part of the portage is about 1¼ kilometres long with the more difficult part of the trail in the final ½ kilometre. The portage to the third lake is quite short and is indicated by a small grassy spot on the right shore. The entrance of the fourth and last portage trail is at the right side of the end of the last lake.

This portage is approximately 1½ kilometres long with a difficult walk occurring where the trail leads down to the Manitou River. The slope is steep and several trees obstruct the trail.

The trail extends to the end of the rapid where there is a small hut. If you wish to run the final part of the rapid, it is possible to enter the river above this point, where there is a calm eddy.

In the next 13 kilometres, the river gradient is 3½ metres per kilometre. The river is 40 metres wide and flows smoothly over a cobble rock bed. The banks are rocky and lined with bushes backed by balsam fir and white spruce. The valley has become noticeably narrower and small islands are found in the last part of this reach that are suitable for campsites. River water at this point is still potable.

In the final four kilometres the river drops from an elevation of 60 metres to sea level. From this point, the canoeist can either take the 6½ kilometre portage via the fire trails to the sea or continue on the river.

The fire trail is in excellent condition and is a pleasant walk. At the half-way point there is a junction where one trail leads to Eudistes Lake while the main trail, which was widened to accommodate snowmobiles, continues to the sea. Towards the end, the trail parallels the seashore at an elevation of 60 metres but the sea is hidden from view by thick foliage.

Eventually it leads to the house of the Manitou Club warden at the mouth of the Manitou River. In several places along the trail, there are old bridges built for use by snowmobiles. Some bridges are in very bad condition, but it is possible to cross them on foot.

The alternative route to the sea via the river first entails a 225 metre portage around a six-metre waterfall. The trail is in good condition and begins at a small hut on the right shore.

The river then veers to the left, where another series of rapids begins. The rapids can be lined at low water or portaged over a trail that has since overgrown. Following the portage, 1½ kilometres of calm water leads to an impressive 25-metre waterfall. On both sides, the banks are rocky but still support a dense forest and brush growth. The portage begins on the right, eight metres upstream from the head of the falls. The 275 metre walk is a difficult undertaking through extremely dense forest, over a creek and finally, over the large rock boulders of the bank.

The fall is spectacular. Created by an uplift, the river descends in several steps in two channels. Continuing past the waterfall and beneath a derelict wooden covered-bridge, the canoeist soon reaches the mouth of the Manitou River and the sea. The sea and beach are an awesome sight after the confinement of the river. The only man-made feature on the beach is the warden's house. The nearest village, Sheldrake is located 24 kilometres to the east.

4 Moisie River

Moisie River

Pekans River to the St. Lawrence River

Length
304 kilometres/14 to 16 portages
13 to 17 days

Date of Survey
July 1972

Access and egress

Access to the headwaters of the Moisie is by float plane from Sept-Iles or Labrador City. The lower Pekans River, a tributary of the Moisie, was chosen as a landing site for this survey, avoiding the shallow and rapid headwaters of the Moisie. The landing site on the Pekans was approximately 10 kilometres upstream of the river mouth.

Egress takes place at Moisie settlement at the mouth of the Moisie River. A road leads from Moisie to Sept-Iles, 20 kilometres to the west, where road, air and coastal ferry services are available.

Maps required

(N.T. S. 1:250,000 scale)
22J Sept-Iles
220 Lac Fouquet
23B Opocopa Lake

About the trip

Precautionary Note
The Moisie River is the most difficult and potentially dangerous river of the North Shore and should be attempted only by expert white water canoeists and kayakers. Because rapids are so numerous and complex, the level of information on rapids is purposefully minimal as it is assumed that people attempting this river will be sufficiently skilled to decide when and where to run, line, and portage.

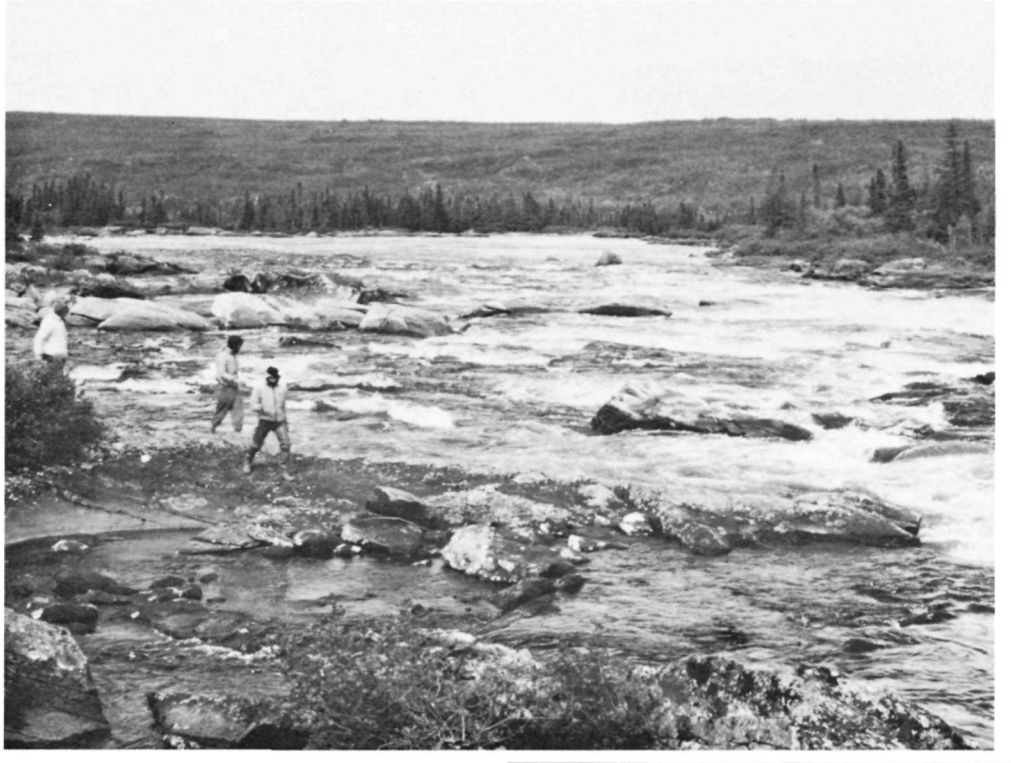
Geography
The river of largest volume along the Middle North Shore is the Moisie. Starting from the southwest of Opocopa Lake (56°30'N. lat., 60°35'W. long., elevation 215 metres) the Moisie River flows southward for 352 kilometres and reaches the sea at the village of Moisie, 20 kilometres east of Sept-Iles. The glacial valley through which the river flows is very deep and varies considerably in width. Along its course is an almost continuous succession of rugged cliffs, creating a memorable experience for the canoeist. The deep, and often steep sloped valley of the Moisie make this river among the most beautiful of the North Shore rivers. Except for the last 64 kilometres which have moderate visual interest, all the other reaches have magnificent landscapes.

Flora
Forest vegetation along the river is made up predominantly of white and black spruce, balsam fir, white birch, trembling aspen and a few jack pine. Smaller shrubs include willow and alder.

Fauna
The Moisie is one of the best salmon-producing rivers in eastern North America. It leads all salmon spawning rivers of the Middle North Shore in number and size of salmon as well as in length of ascendable water. The relatively uniform gradient of the river enables salmon to migrate upstream for considerable distances.

Large game common to the North Shore are moose and caribou. There are very few waterfowl nests along the river due to its swift current, but beaver can be seen occasionally.

The canoe trip

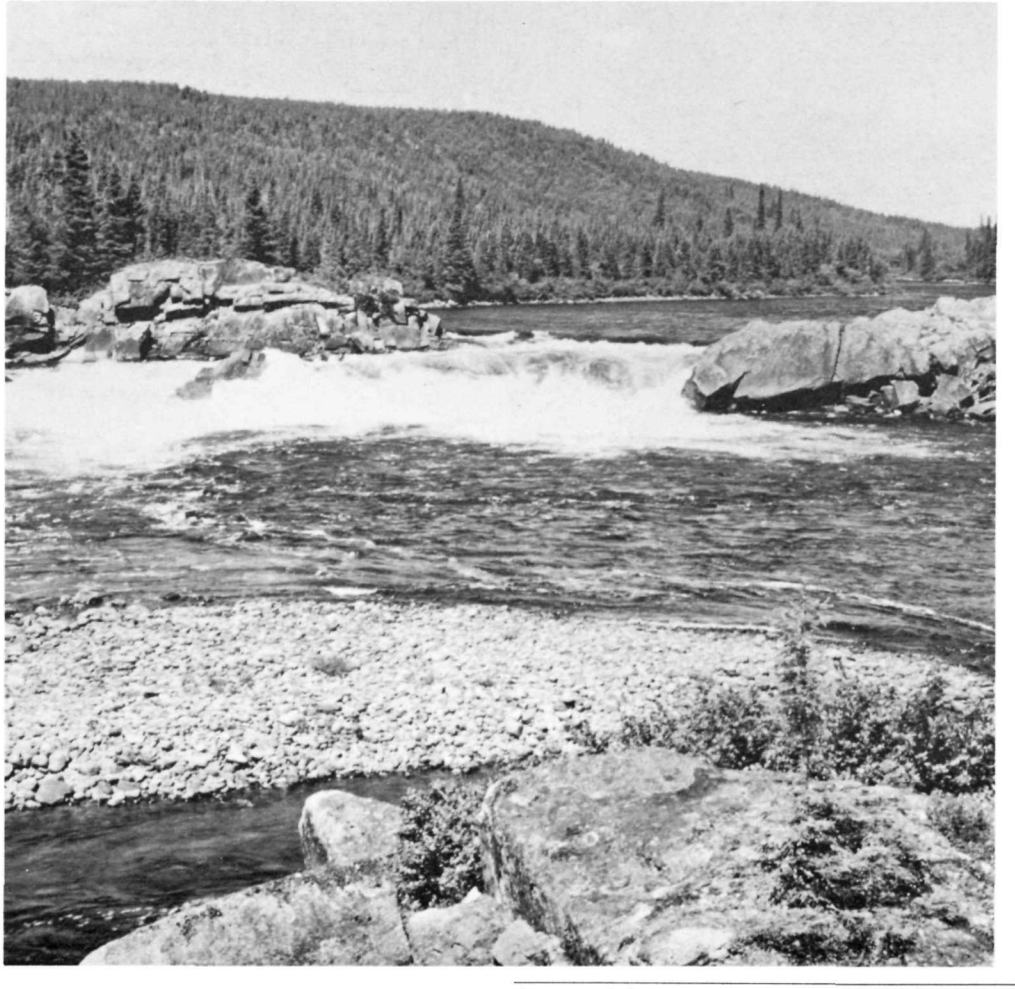


Sills and ledges abound in the Pekans River

Pekans River to the Pekans-Moisie confluence

Ten kilometres above the Pekans-Moisie confluence, one has a magnificent view of the surrounding countryside before the Pekans suddenly drops 140 metres to join the Moisie. An interesting feature within this 10 kilometre section is that it leads through a transition of taiga to black spruce and finally white birch.

Above the final 10 kilometres however, the Pekans is unappealing. The river averages 80 metres in width and flows within a wide and densely vegetated valley.



Experienced canoeists can expect to take three days to travel the final 10 kilometres of the Pekans River. Strong currents, rapids, ledges and two gorges are encountered. Most rapids are very long, cover the entire width of the river, and are difficult to scout and line.

There is no major navigational obstacle in the first gorge but in the second there is a 25-metre waterfall. The 1½-kilometre portage around this gorge extends to the mouth of the Pekans River.

A natural dam on the Moisie River

Moisie – Pekans confluence to the Taoti River

In the 10 kilometres of the Moisie River below its confluence with the Pekans River, there are many sections of fast water and rapids. Most of these rapids are characterized by ledges and therefore must be lined or portaged. The most difficult section occurs where the river narrows suddenly and plunges over a two-metre waterfall before entering a gorge eight metres wide and 30 metres long. The portage, beginning on the left, is difficult.

Following this rapid section, the river gradient decreases and, over the next 32 kilometres, there are few disruptions in the river's course. The first obstacle is a six-metre waterfall that is portaged on the right for 60 metres over flat rock.

Half a kilometre below the falls, there is a short rapid ending with a one-metre drop. This rapid is most easily lined on the right. The next rapid 1½ kilometres downstream, is 275 metres long and contains large waves and boulders. This rapid is best portaged since the number of boulders in the channel make lining too difficult and a run dangerous.

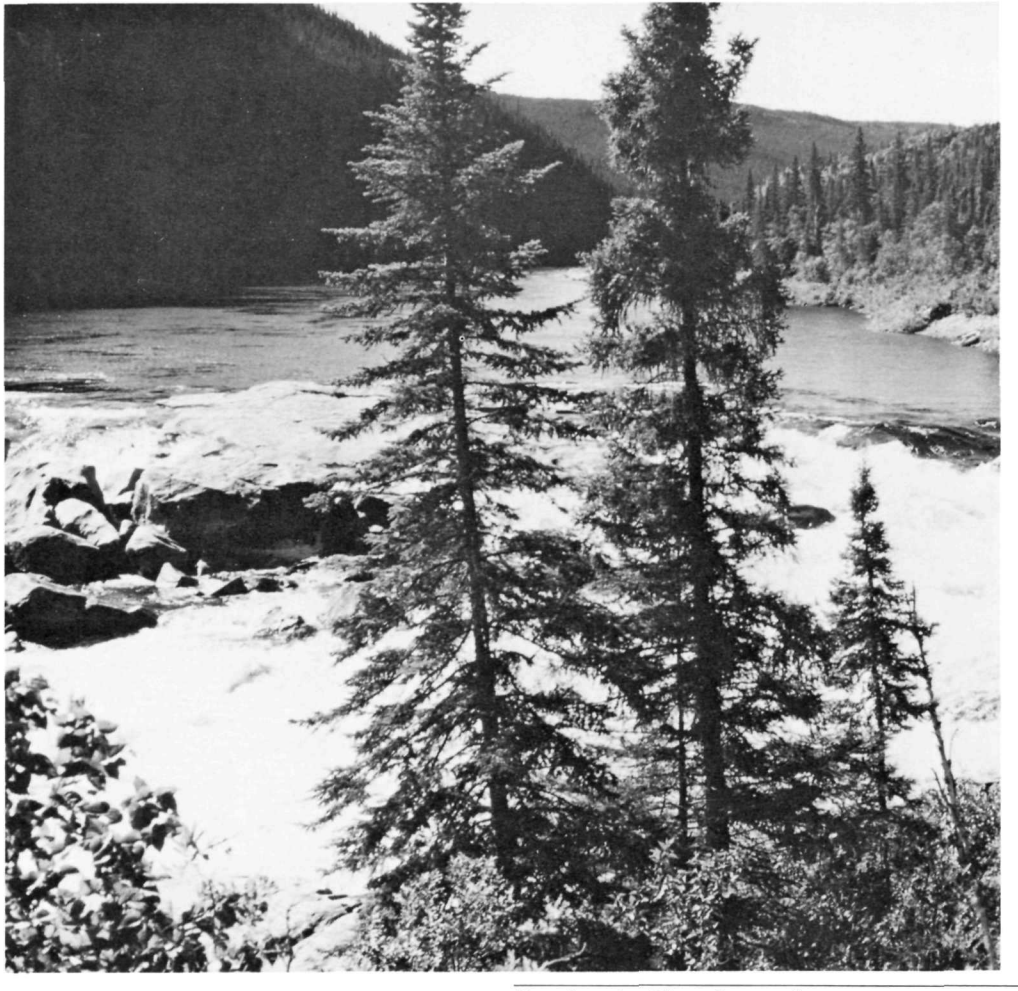
Two minor rapids are run before entering a 6½ kilometre stretch of rapids that ends at the mouth of the Taoti River. In this section the river drops 12 metres per kilometre. Of the eight rapids, three or four can be run while the remainder call for a combination of portaging and lining. Many of the rapids contain ledges that are difficult to see while on the river.

Toati River to Ouapetec River

From the mouth of the Taoti River the Moisie valley gradually narrows and confines the river. Surrounding hills rise 400 metres abruptly from the water edge creating a canyon-like appearance. The river also narrows from 150 metres to 60 metres while increasing in depth. Good campsites are scarce in the gorge area.

There are three major rapids in this reach. The first is almost 1½ kilometres in length and considerable manoeuvring is required before the channel becomes too congested with rocks. It then becomes necessary to line on the right shore. The rapids end with a small waterfall which is difficult to portage around.

The second rapid is shorter but navigable, although the run is very difficult. The final rapid is formed around a rock island and consists of two parts. Both



Nearing the River Caopacho

sections are difficult to run and lining may be the safer procedure.

Once out of this narrows the river widens, reaching a maximum width of about 200 metres after the mouth of the Caopacho River. From the Caopacho-Moisie confluence many islands appear along with numerous gravel and sand bars that offer good campsites.

Approximately 16 kilometres above the Joseph River, the Moisie narrows considerably as it enters a small and short canyon that is skirted by a portage trail.

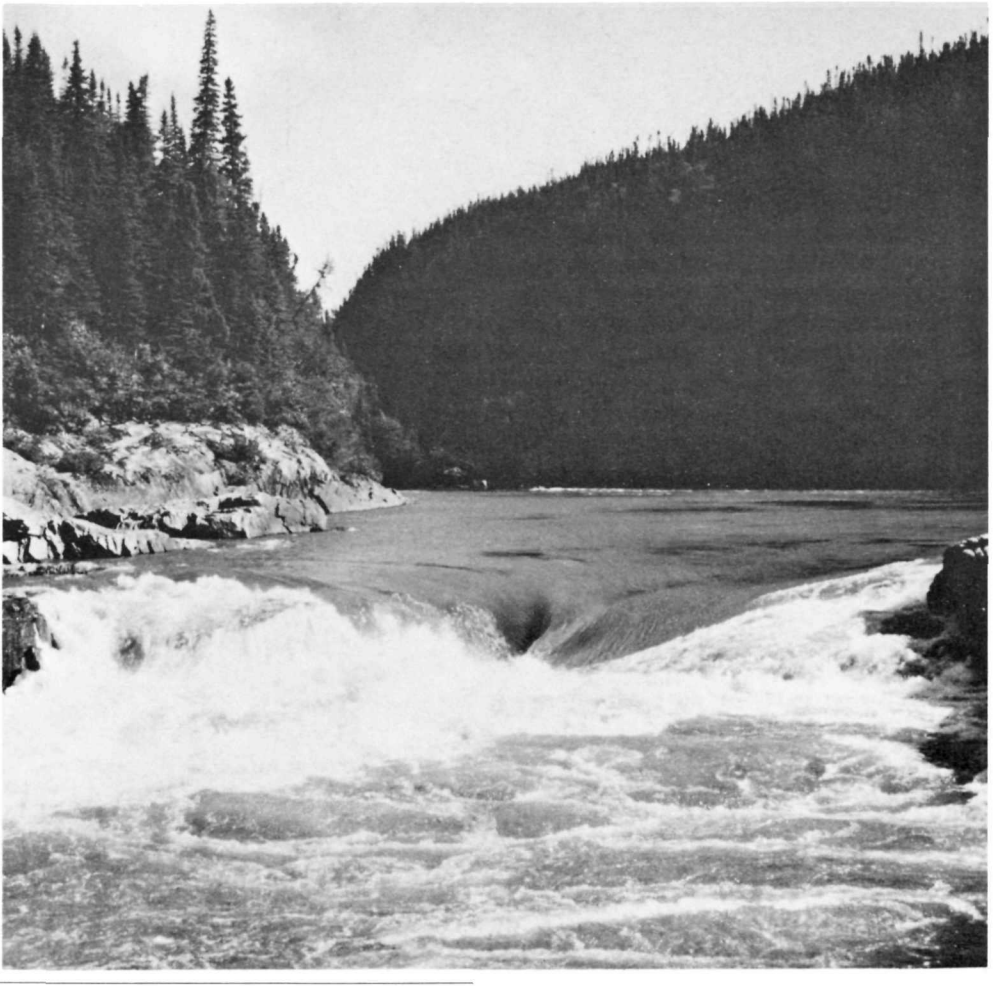
Below the canyon there are three rapids – the first is short and can be lined on either bank. The next two rapids, occurring before and after the Joseph River, are each 1½ kilometres long and are runnable, although some sections should be lined.

Ouapetec River to the Nipisso River

In the section of the Moisie between The Ouapetec River and the Nipisso River, a distance of approximately 60 kilometres the gradient of the river gradually diminishes and only one rapid is encountered. This occurs 10 kilometres above the Nipisso at a narrowing of the river channel. The short portage begins on the right at the end of a small sandy bay.

Following the portage, the river narrows to 25 metres and becomes very deep. The 100-metre rocky bands are nearly vertical with trees growing at mid-height. The river gradient at this point is ½ metre per kilometre.

These narrows extend for 2½ kilometres where upon the river extends to its normal width of 200 metres and is bounded by sand and gravel terraces five metres high.



The narrows near the mouth of the Nipisso River

Nipisso River to the St. Lawrence River

At the Moisie-Nipisso confluence a railway track and power line are seen on the left bank.

Below the Nipisso, high clay terraces appear for the first time limiting views to an occasional peak seen in the distance. Campsites are scarce and one must climb to the top of the terrace in order to find flat ground.

The final reach of rapids begin 19 kilometres below the Nipisso River. Throughout this length and for another 6½ kilometres the rail line parallels the river. The left bank has been considerably altered as a result of blasting operations during the construction of the railway line. Excavated material, including large boulders, has been deposited into the river lengthening some rapids and making others more difficult.

The first rapid is 150 metres long and is lined for the most part, the remainder may be run. The following rapid is portaged for 30 metres. The remaining three rapids are each approximately 90 metres long and they can be lined and run but with considerable difficulty.

From this last rapid there are no further navigational problems in the final 25 kilometres to the mouth of the Moisie River. In this distance cottages occur in increasing numbers along the right bank while the left bank, which is the property of "Adam's Camp" is in a natural state.

Nearing the mouth of the river the current is negligible and at times reverses at high tide.

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Eastern Canada

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