

# MOOSE PONDS AND MOUNT NAATS'IHCH'OH

## A SOUTH NAHANNI RIVER WHITEWATER CANOE EXPEDITION



Nahanni National Park Reserve named a "Must-See Place" by National Geographic!



THE STARTING POINT OF OUR JOURNEY IS THE HEADWATER OF THE SOUTH NAHANNI RIVER  
PHOTO: MELANIE SIEBERT

### TRIP DETAILS

This trip takes place on the traditional territory of the Sahtu and Naha Dene and explores the entirety of the Nahanni River beginning in the newly formed Naats'ihch'oh National Park Reserve at the foot of the stunning Mt. Naats'ihch'oh.

### SKILL LEVEL

Intermediate/Advanced

### RENDEZVOUS POINT

This journey starts in Fort Nelson, BC and ends in Fort Simpson, NT.

### DURATION

22 Days (19 River Days)

### TRIP TYPE

Canoe

## YOUR TRIP

A South Nahanni River whitewater canoe expedition from its source in the Moose Ponds is a must do for any experienced paddler/canoeist.

## ITINERARY

### DAY 1

Rendezvous at the Fort Nelson airport upon arrival of the inbound Central Mountain Air flight. Anyone who drove to Fort Nelson can leave their vehicles at the airport for the duration of the trip.

Following introductions we will load the van and canoe trailer. Our route to the headwaters of the Nahanni

River takes us through the northeast corner of the Rocky Mountains. The landscape has a rugged beauty of all its own.

We will make sightseeing stops at Stone Mountain and Muncho Lake Provincial Parks. From the van we are sure to see stone sheep and mountain caribou along the way.

We will camp for the night on the shores of Muncho Lake.

### DAY 2

Following breakfast your guides will organize a half day whitewater skills session starting on Muncho Lake and then proceeding down the exciting class II Trout River.



This will be a fun warm up and skills refresher for the Rock Gardens.

A short drive from the takeout is the Liard Hot Springs where we will enjoy a meal and a relaxing soak. Back on the road again we'll drive to Watson Lake and walk through the historic Sign Post Forest.

At Watson Lake, Yukon we drive north on the Robert Campbell Highway and then onto the Nahanni Range Road for our detour back into the NWT and our base on Flat Lake.

### DAYS 3-8

Weather permitting we will fly this morning into the Moose Ponds. Our flight takes us north along the divide between the Yukon and the NWT.

From the plane we will be amazed with the remarkable views of the Logan and Selwyn Ranges.

Our destination is the picturesque ponds at the base of Mount Naats'ihch'oh which provide a delightful venue for our first camp on the Nahanni River.

The Moose Ponds provides an opportunity to explore the alpine

country of the continental divide between the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

This land is rich in wildlife such as moose, caribou and trumpeter swans. An optional hike up Mount Wilson may be planned.

Leaving the Moose Ponds, we join the Nahanni flowing as a stream; just over a canoe length in width.

Over the next 40 kms the Nahanni swells to a formidable river, tumbling through the boulder strewn "Rock Gardens". This stretch offers some of the best whitewater canoeing in the country.

### DAYS 9-10

Paddling on, the down river view is blocked by the massif of the Ragged Range. Popular stops are the Island Lakes, Moore's cabin and Moore's Hot Spring.

Paddling through "The Gap" we pass the east flank of the soaring Vampire Peaks, shortly after we make a stop at Rabbitkettle Lake.

### DAYS 11-14

Planned activities include an interpretive hike led by a Nahanni National Park warden (subject to Park staff availability), to explore Rabbitkettle Hot Springs and Tufa Mounds.

The Tufa deposits are some of the largest in the world! We then begin down river canoeing to Virginia Falls. This easy flowing section of the river is dominated by U-shaped valleys which were scoured out by advancing cordilleran glaciers thousands of years ago.

In this section the river meanders 120 km (72 mi.) to Virginia Falls where we arrive on day 12. Everyone will appreciate a rest day at Virginia Falls. At over 90 m (300 ft.) Virginia Falls is twice the height of Niagara, and is the spectacular centerpiece of Nahanni National Park.

The options for these days are many – you can lounge in the group camp area, explore the falls with your camera, or strike off on an invigorating hike to the grassy summit of Sunblood Mountain. Virginia Falls is a fascinating place to discover.

FIRST CANYON OF THE NAHANNI RIVER TOWERS TO OVER 1000 METRES IN HEIGHT.  
NRA ARCHIVES





Following our layover day, we complete the 1.25 km portage around the Falls and reload our canoes. For the following week we will immerse ourselves in the spectacular scenery of the lower Nahanni River.

The lower Nahanni is canyon country and is often described as the Grand Canyon of the North.

Beginning with Painted Canyon, so named because of its brightly coloured walls, you will experience the thrill and excitement of this large volume whitewater section. On this night we will camp in the vicinity of the confluence with the Flat River.

## DAY 15

Downstream we enter Third Canyon with its imposing 1200 m walls formed as the Nahanni has carved its way through the Funeral Range. We will camp in the shadow of the Gate; where the river has sliced a narrow chasm on the apex of a hairpin meander.

An optional hike to the top of the Gate presents magnificent views of the river valley with imposing Pulpit Rock 460 m below.

## DAY 16

Today finds us completing the 35 km Third Canyon and continuing on through 2nd Canyon, (15 km) where the Nahanni has carved its route through the Headless Range and into Deadmen Valley.

This valley is known for the legends and lore made famous by the mysterious deaths of the McLeod Brothers.

Here the vista is noticeably different, as the valley opens up, with distant views of the Tlgotsho Plateau. Deadmen Valley offers an abundance of exploratory options. The massive Prairie Creek alluvial fan provides excellent camping, hiking and wildlife observations.

## DAYS 17-18

We start the morning with a run through the exhilarating waves of George's Riffle and on into First Canyon.

The imposing walls of First Canyon reach heights of over 1400 m. Groups often choose to simply drift the

length of this magnificent 26 km canyon, immersed in its splendour. The canyon walls are dotted with hundreds of caves. Close to its exit we will camp for the night at Lafferty's Canyon, with good hiking opportunities.

Day 18 will be a rest day with an optional hike up the Lafferty's side canyon.

## DAYS 19-20

Following breakfast, it's down to Kraus' Hot Spring for a soothing dip in its 32 C plus waters.

From here we bid farewell to the canyons and make our way to the Nahanni's Splits, a 70 km run through a maze of islands. Bison sightings are common here!

## DAY 21

Following breakfast, we will continue on to the Native village of Nahanni Butte. (Pop. approx. 120) Remote yet surprisingly modern, a stroll into town provides insight into a culture far removed from most of North America.



VIEWS WHILE HIKING SUNBLOOD MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING VIRGINIA FALLS. PHOTO: NOEL HENRICKSON

Following a snack from the village store we will board the Nahanni Butte River taxi for the 15 km ride to the Nahanni Butte Road Landing on the Liard River.

The awaiting Nahanni Wild shuttle van will take your group to Bannocklands, a beautiful inn on the banks of the Liard river.

There you will enjoy a celebratory meal where you will recount highlights from your journey; memories that will last a lifetime.

## DAY 22

After a leisurely morning, you will be transported to the Fort Simpson airport to begin your travels home. Please note:

The above is a tentative agenda and has been designed with much thought to capitalize on the most scenic and exciting parts of the river while making time on other sections.

Your guides will adjust the schedule to make the best use of river and weather conditions.

We adhere to the departure regulation system of the Park which works to ensure that all river travelers have the same wilderness experience.

Under certain conditions (weather, forest re, plane availability and upriver conditions) we may face a delay in flying into the river. Meals while en route to our float plane base are not included.

## SUGGESTED READING

*Your guides will carry a small reference library which include field reference books. Following are some books for winter reading:*

1. Plant Technology of BC
2. Spirit in the Grass: Chris Harris

## CONTACT US

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