

NAHANNI NATIONAL PARK

TWO-WEEK NAHANNI CLASSIC CANOE ADVENTURE



WHITewater ABOUNDS FOR THE NAHANNI CANOEIST.
MELANIE SIEBERT PHOTO



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



TRIP DETAILS

Rabbitkettle Lake to Nahanni Butte: Approximately 335 kilometres (210 miles)

SKILL LEVEL

Intermediate paddler who is comfortable on Class III whitewater. A willingness to learn and a fitness level suited to paddling 3 to 7 hours per day.

RENDEZVOUS POINT

Fort Simpson Airport, NWT

DURATION

13 River Days

TRIP TYPE

Canoe

ITINERARY

DAY 1 – MAJESTIC MOUNTAIN & CANYON FLIGHT

This is the first day listed for your trip.

Your journey north from your home will be a refreshing departure. You will fly over the largest expanse of wilderness in the world with stunning views on cloudless days. Passing through quieter and friendlier airports you will begin to immerse yourself in the wilderness experience that is about to unfold.

Your trip leader will meet you at the airport. Lunch and a pre-trip orientation will take place at a local

inn with your fellow river travellers. There will be time for questions and to repack into our river bags. Items you do not wish to bring on the river can be stored at our base.

After loading our supplies and gear into the aircraft we begin one of the major highlights of the adventure – the upriver flight. As you fly over the majestic Nahanni Range and Ram Plateau, a visually-stunning panorama unfolds in front of our eyes. You want to be sure to have your camera on your lap. Past participants have stepped off the plane declaring that “if the trip finished now, I would have my money’s worth!”

DAY 2 – RABBITKETTLE HOTSPRINGS (GAHNJHTHAH MJE)

Waking on the shores of the Nahanni River, we will prepare for downriver travel. If Parks staff are available, we will take a guided 7-kilometre round trip hike to the tufa mounds.

DAY 3 & 4 – MOUNTAIN PEAKS

Our talented guides whip up the culinary delights for which we are famous before we begin the downriver trip. This portion of the river above Virginia Falls is a flat, meandering section that allows opportunity to brush up on techniques. The mountains and U-shaped valley created by the glaciers will dominate the scenery. Camping will be in the most choice spots between Rabbitkettle Lake and Virginia Falls.

DAY 5 – VIRGINIA FALLS (NÁLJCHO)

Virginia Falls (nearly twice the height of Niagara) will be the destination. We will camp there for two nights. This is the other spot within the National Park where planes may land and we may see other campers.

DAY 6 – HIKING

This is a day for exploring and photographing the area around Virginia Falls. The vast expanse of the falls captivates photographers and hikers with a tireless display of powerful drama. Keen and fit hikers may undertake an all-day expedition to the top of Sunblood Mountain for an excellent view of the surrounding area. Others can enjoy exploring the expansive area overlooking the brink of the falls.

DAY 7 – PAINTED CANYON

After breakfast, your guides will complete the portage of camp equipment. Participants are asked to portage their own pack 2 kilometres to the “put in” below the falls. Most of this portage is on a boardwalk and downhill. Lunch is served on the cobble beach below the Falls.

Following a safety talk, we load the canoes and begin our descent. Leaving the roar of the Falls behind us, we will ride high on the waves through the Painted Canyon. The excitement continues with our passage through the Figure Eight Rapids. We will find our camp close to the mouth of the Flat River.

Throughout your journey, our knowledgeable guides will be sharing cultural and ecological interpretation, allowing you to immerse yourself in the Nahanni culture.

DAY 8 – THE GATE & PULPIT ROCK

We drift past the confluence of the Flat River and then enter Third Canyon, the walls of which loom 1,200 metre above our heads. This 40-kilometre canyon is created by the river slicing through the mixed strata of shales, sandstones and limestones of the Funeral Range. We camp halfway through this canyon near The Gate, a 100 metre-wide gorge where the walls tower 460 metre above us. At the end of the day, you can sit back and enjoy the scenery in the comforts that are the hallmark of our journeys.

DAY 9 – DEADMAN VALLEY (DAHAHTH'I)

In the morning we do a short hike to the top of The Gate and are awarded a magnificent view of Third Canyon and Pulpit Rock. We then move on through Second Canyon and to the top of Deadmen Valley.



SLUICE BOX RAPIDS ABOVE VIRGINIA FALLS (WE DON'T RUN THIS!) NOEL HENRICKSON PHOTO

DAY 10 – INTO THE CANYON KINGDOM

After drifting by Headless Creek, we continue on to Sheaf Creek. Here R. M. Patterson and his partner Gordon Matthews wintered in 1928. We will then scout the rapids of George's Riffle. These big waves are at the western entrance to First Canyon. We will camp near its end at Lafferty's Canyon with views of some of the hundreds of caves in the area.

DAY 11 – LAFFERTY CANYON

We spend the day hiking up Lafferty Creek Canyon to experience the sculpted rock of the Chasm of Chills. On a warm day we will enjoy a swim in the pools!

DAY 12 – KRAUS' HOTSPRINGS (TULETSEĒ)

After the waves of Lafferty's Riffle, we take a quick dip in Kraus' Hot Springs before bidding farewell to the canyons and entering the braided channels of The Splits.

Here a broad valley is revealed and the surrounding mountains, ridge piled upon ridge, form a dramatic contrast to the enclosure of the canyons. Lush boreal forest bordered

by steep ridges form a "storybook" setting and provide a sanctuary to moose and bison.

DAY 13 – GREAT DENE WALL & NAHANNI BUTTE (TTHENÁÁGÓ)

Stopping in the village we will have an opportunity to see this traditional community (population approx. 120). Remote yet surprisingly modern, a stroll into town provides insight into a culture far removed from most of North America. We will then board a Nahanni Butte River Taxi and be shuttled 15 kilometres down to meet our shuttle van on the shores of the Liard River. We then travel by road to Fort Simpson. You will need to book accommodation for this final night in Fort Simpson. The group can meet for dinner (not included) at a restaurant in town for a final farewell meal and goodbye to your guides.

DAY 14 – HOMEWARD BOUND

This is the last date listed for your journey.

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 travellers have the same wilderness experience.

Under certain conditions (weather, forest fire, plane availability and upriver conditions), it may be necessary to make our upriver flight soon after arrival. On the other hand, we have occasionally found ourselves waiting for safe flying conditions.

In any event, we will have supper and find ourselves camped in Fort Simpson or on the shores of the Nahanni. If we are required to overnight in Fort Simpson you are welcome to camp or take a hotel room (at your own cost). Breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks are included from the pre-trip meeting until the final river meal. Please note: Any other meals off the river are your responsibility.



"SPA TREATMENTS" IN KRAUS HOTSPRINGS.
NOEL HENRICKSON PHOTO

A NOTE ON CANOEING

It is customary on the Nahanni River to sometimes employ the use of “Canyon Rigs” (catamaraning canoes) for some rapids to ensure greater stability. This decision is made “on site” by the guides based on a safety assessment of prevailing conditions.

**Note that wetsuits or dry suits are mandatory for this journey. Wetsuits are included in the expedition fee.*

“What sets a canoeing expedition apart is that it purifies you more rapidly and inescapably than any other. Travel 1,000 miles by train and you are a brute; pedal 500 miles on a bicycle and you remain basically a bourgeois; paddle 100 miles in a canoe and you are already a child of nature.” – Pierre Elliot Trudeau

SUGGESTED READING

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

Nahanni – River of Gold... River of Dreams by Neil Hartling

Nahanni – The River Guide by Peter Jowett & Neil Hartling

Nahanni by Dick Turner

Wings Over the North by Dick Turner

Dangerous River by R.M. Patterson

A Naturalist’s Guide to the Arctic by E.C. Pielou

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HIKING SUNBLOOD MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING
VIRGINIA FALLS. NOEL HENRICKSON PHOTO.

