



Your Trip

Muskox are one of the majestic species you can see on the Firth.

Photo: tylergarnham.com

Firth River – Ancient Mountains, Tundra Beauty, Wildlife, Hiking & Arctic Ocean

The most hiking on any guided river trip north of 60


About the River

A rafting journey down the Firth River in Ivvavik National Park is an enchanting, scenic passage from the British Mountains to the coastal tundra plains and the Arctic Ocean. Rafting over 11 river days, we journey 150 kilometres (94 miles) with an approximate elevation drop of 460 metres (1,500 feet). This is a land of contrasts: forest and tundra,

craggy peaks and alpine flowery meadows, wild coastline and ice-filled seas. The Porcupine Caribou Herd, grizzly bears, mountain sheep, muskox and wolves thrive in this arctic Eden, along with millions of migratory birds. The Firth features a long canyon stretch, Class III rapids and Inuvialuit cultural sites. It's a fly-in and fly-out rafting journey

that finishes at the Arctic Ocean.

Ivvavik National Park is the first national park in Canada created as the result of a First Nation land claim agreement. Its designation in 1984 was timely as a number of industrial developments were being proposed for the area. The last one – the Arctic Gas Pipeline – was rejected by the Government of Canada following the Berger Inquiry of 1977. In his report Justice Thomas Berger wrote: "The Northern Yukon is an arctic and sub-arctic wilderness of incredible beauty, a rich and varied ecosystem: nine million acres of land and animals... a place of contrasts, of an explosively productive but brief summer and of a long hard winter, of rugged mountains and stark plains. Its teeming marshes and shore lands give it a beauty equaled by few other places on Earth."

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 CANADIAN RIVER EXPEDITIONS

 Nahanni River Adventures

www.nahanni.com

About the Firth River

We fly west from Inuvik, NWT on a Twin Otter for about an hour into the mountainous upper Firth, near the border between Alaska and the Yukon. In summer much of the vegetation is in bloom and wildflowers carpet the tundra. Floating north, we move into open park-like terrain composed of rolling dry tundra and small spruce groves in valley bottoms. This area provides excellent walking and good opportunities to see not only caribou but also wolf, moose and grizzlies. Along with Vuntut National Park to the south and Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the west in Alaska, Ivavik National Park forms a core part of the range of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. This herd of over 160,000 barren-ground caribou migrates through this area to and from calving grounds on the coastal plains of Alaska and Yukon. After calving in early June, they congregate in dense herds and begin to migrate south again. The herd's crossing of the Firth River is a spectacle that is unsurpassed in North America. Occasionally our passage down the river coincides with this migration and we stop to watch this amazing sight. The river flows in a broad gravel bed before entering an exciting 40 kilometer long (25 mile) canyon, its walls dotted with nesting birds of prey. The Firth braids again when it reaches the coastal plain and then enters a lagoon fronted by a long shingle spit that offers protection from the Arctic Ocean. The Arctic coastline is rich with birdlife and marine mammals such as bearded and ringed seals and beluga and bowhead whales. The plane lands on Nunakuk Spit and flies us along the Beaufort Coast, over the



Navigating thr Firth river canyons..

Photo: tylergarnham.com

Mackenzie Delta, and back to Inuvik.

WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

Typically we enjoy good weather on the Firth, with clear skies and temperatures ranging from 10 to 30 °C (50 to 86 °F). But this is the Arctic, and weather changes can see temperatures plunge to near freezing. Rainfall and snow may occur. Pack ice on the Beaufort Sea can create ice fog that can affect flying conditions. Come prepared to be flexible and to encounter all kinds of weather.

WHAT ABOUT THE BUGS?

Days are often breezy on the Firth, which keeps the mosquitoes at bay. In the Arctic a bug jacket is mandatory in the event of calm days. We bring a

screened dining tent and toilet tent.

FISHING

Dolly Varden, char and Arctic grayling are both abundant on the Firth. If you plan to fish, you need to purchase a national park fishing licence in advance from the Parks Canada office in Inuvik.

HIKING

The 24-hour daylight allows for lots of hiking on most days. The trip generally includes two layover days for full days of hiking for those who wish.

PARKS CANADA SCIENCE TRIP

Ask for details for this partnership with Parks Canada with accompanying scientists and opportunities to join in with the research. From July 14th to 28th.



Your Trip

The Firth is one of the oldest rivers on the continent.

Photo: tylergarnham.com

Firth River - Rafting & Hiking the Arctic Slope

Itinerary

Day 0 MACKENZIE DELTA RENDEZVOUS

This is the first date listed for your trip.

The trip starts and ends in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. To get there, you fly to Whitehorse, Yukon or Yellowknife, NWT and connect with a flight to Inuvik, NWT in the Mackenzie Delta where this giant river flows into the Beaufort Sea. Trip participants meet the trip leader and two guides at the Arctic Chalet at 8 p.m., the night before the start of our journey. The Firth is in the Yukon, but Inuvik – in the northwest corner of the

Northwest Territories – is the closest town with a jet-serviced airport.

Day 1 MARGARET LAKE

We'll have some time for last minute errands in Inuvik in case you need to pick up something at the Northern Store or get a National Parks fishing license from Parks Canada. The flight into Inuvik National Park will leave Inuvik Airport around 10 a.m. We fly in a deHavilland Twin Otter aircraft, the workhorse aircraft of the North. The route takes us over the vast maze of the Mackenzie River Delta; one of the largest in the world, home to nesting swans, ducks and geese. As we reach the mountains we

Trip Details

Margaret Lake to Herschel Island in the traditional lands of the Inuvialuit

First Nation: Approximately 130 kilometre (80 miles) with an elevation drop of 410 metre (1345 feet)

Cost: \$11,575 or \$12,125 (Parks Canada Trip) + 5% GST + \$147.20 park fee

Duration: 12 river days

Trip Type: Raft


Skill Level

Raft: Beginner. The guides navigate with oars & paddling by participants is optional for those who want more activity

For more information, see the FAQ's at nahanni.com

Rendezvous Point:

Arctic Chalet B&B, Inuvik Northwest Territories

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 Nahanni River Adventures

Your Trip

Firth River - Rafting the Arctic Slope

Photo: Morton Asfeldt



Caribou from the Porcupine Caribu herd.

keep our eyes peeled for large mammals – caribou, muskox, moose, bears.

The hour-long flight to the river put-in takes us across north Yukon close to the border with Alaska and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Ivvavik was Canada's first national park created by a land claim. We land near Margaret Lake on "tundra tires." Guides will set up camp and inflate rafts while you explore your surroundings.

Day 2 BRITISH MOUNTAINS

At first, the winding river has a quiet nature. Low banks reveal unobstructed views up the valley and limestone crags rise from the river. Our rafts glide across deep clear pools full of grayling and char. The area is summer habitat for many migrating birds: phalaropes, sandpipers, plovers, jaegers, terns, buntings, longspurs and even robins. Caribou migration trails line the hillsides. Red fox and ptarmigan

are common. The open tundra was made for wildlife watching and hiking – we carry a spotting scope to take advantage of viewing opportunities.

Day 3 RAPIDS AND RIDGE HIKES

The culinary delights for which we are famous are once again whipped up by our talented guides. A few days into the journey, you begin to realize how this land has been used by indigenous cultures for thousands of years. Along much of the route, there are ancient signs of human use. The Inuit would leave the coast to travel inland and hunt caribou and moose and fish for char. When we pick a nice campsite – one with good wildlife viewing opportunities or perhaps a great fishing hole – we may find remains of old meat caches and stone rings.

Upcoming Trip Dates

Sunday June 30 – Saturday July 13, 2019

Sunday July 14 – Sunday July 28, 2019 - Parks Canada Trip

The following additional dates will be opened after the above dates fill:

Sunday June 16 – Saturday June 29, 2019

Wednesday June 26 – Tuesday July 9, 2019

Wednesday July 10 – Tuesday July 23, 2019

Day 4 & 5 ANCIENT MOUNTAINS

Downstream of Joe Creek the river enters a spectacular canyon that continues for 40 km. The landscape transforms as the limestone rock gives way to volcanics, mountains rise and vegetation changes. The middle part of our adventure takes us through the ancient, unglaciated and jagged British Mountains. The Firth winds among these stained, eroding peaks, alternating between quiet pools and exhilarating rapids. In places remnants remain of stone fences built by Inuit hunters to funnel caribou into enclosures.

Day 6 & 7 SHEEP CREEK

Just above the confluence of Sheep Creek we run some of the trip's bigger rapids. Partway through the canyon, we stop to camp. Ridges to the west beckon for hiking, and we take

Firth River - Rafting the Arctic Slope

some time to catch up on journaling, photography, and discovering the area's cultural and natural history.

Day 8 CARIBOU & FIRTH CANYON

Wildlife spotting is a non-stop activity as we watch for ten species of raptor, Dall sheep, wolves, bears and caribou. Sometimes we're fortunate to witness thousands of caribou from the 160,000-strong Porcupine Caribou Herd crossing the river and surrounding our camp. Soon the British Mountains merge into the Buckland Hills. The canyon walls are left behind and the Firth emerges onto the coastal plain. At the end of the day you will cozy up in your tent in the comforts that are the hallmarks of our journeys.

Day 9 ENGIGSTIACK; ANCIENT ANTHROPOLOGY

As the plains spill before us, a rocky knoll known as Engigstiack rises a few hundred yards from the river. Though just one hundred feet high, Engigstiack provides great views over the plain.

We climb this timeless hill, an important archaeological site where hunters have stood for 8,000 years gazing across the tundra.

Day 10 MUSKOX HABITAT

We float across the plain to reach a campsite at the head of the Firth delta. Here, vegetation is often draped in qiviut, the downy underhair of muskox, which is one of the world's most valuable wools,

and we have a good chance of seeing some of these hairy beasts in person!

Day 11 ARCTIC OCEAN & BEAUFORT SEA

River channels get smaller as we approach the ocean, so we may walk along the flowering tundra in order to lighten the rafts through the shallows. On our last night we camp on the beach of Nuneluk Spit, at the mouth of the Firth River delta. Here we'll enjoy the first campfire of the trip, thanks to plentiful driftwood. Ocean currents carry nutrient-rich waters along this coast, attracting birds, mammals, whales and other sea life.

Day 12 ARCTIC OCEAN FLIGHT

The Twin Otter will pick us up for a flight along the Arctic Ocean and coastal plains,



Hiking opportunities abound.

Suggested Reading

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

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

After the Ice Age – The Return of Life to Glaciated North America by E.C. Pielou

Herschel Island Qikiqtaruk: A Cultural and Natural History edited by Chris Burn

Canada's Western Arctic – Including the Dempster Highway by Western Arctic Handbook Committee

Firth River - Rafting the Arctic Slope



The landscape allows easy access to beautiful ridge hikes.

Photo: Terry Parker

back to Inuvik, where we will gather for a final dinner. Remember to book a hotel room for this night, and plan your flight no earlier than the next morning. (Accommodation and meal not included)

Day 13 HOME BOUND

This is the last date listed for your trip.

After goodbyes and a last look around Inuvik, we will head for home with a cargo of fond and spectacular memories.

Please note: The above is a tentative itinerary 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.

Please ensure that you have a warm winter jacket (think 'Puffy') as well as waterproof rain jacket and pants. We rent robust rain gear and rubber boots - more on our 'Details & Equipment list. Goretex is not a substitute for rain gear on this trip. Lifejackets are supplied.

Meals and pre- and post-trip accommodation in Inuvik are your responsibility – the cost is not included in the trip fee. We have attached a list of Inuvik hotels. Breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks are included from the Day 1

lunch until the final river meal. Any other

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