

NOT YOUR ORDINARY ROAD TRIP

FOUR WILD, BUT SPECTACULAR NWT DRIVING VACATIONS

NWT road trips offer spectacular subarctic and Arctic scenery; a chance to see wildlife up close; an introduction to the people and culture of the far north; an opportunity to explore a little-known part of Canada. Here's a sneak preview of four famous NWT wilderness routes.



The Deh Cho Connection



The Deh Cho Connection

Follow the beauty and history of the NWT

This circular route covers northern Alberta, the Northwest Territories and northeastern British Columbia via the Mackenzie, Liard and Alaska Highways. Allow a week or two for the trip, so you have time to appreciate the sites and communities, including two UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

LANDSCAPE & NATURE

The route includes a variety of natural regions – the Peace River Valley, the Canadian Rockies, the Mackenzie Mountain foothills, and the boreal forest and plains. Fishing rivers and waterfalls are a major attraction. Free-roaming wood bison lounge beside the highway in several places.

COMMUNITIES & CULTURE

Ten NWT communities are accessible from the Mackenzie Highway. You will meet South Slavey, Chipewyan and Metis in their home communities. There is one reservation located near Hay River. Traditional activities including drumming, hand games and Dene sports, can be enjoyed at community events.

TO CHECK OUT

- * Waterfalls along the Hay, Trout and Kakisa Rivers
- * Nahanni National Park Reserve (A UNESCO World Heritage Site)
- * Wood Buffalo National Park (UNESCO World Heritage Site)
- * Bison by the roadside.
- * The fishing fleet and the fish market in Hay River
- * The beautiful birchbark baskets at Acho Dene in Fort Liard

UNEXPECTED

- * The world's largest teepee. The 55-foot high structure was built at the Ehdaa National Historic Site, the traditional Dene meeting place on the flats overlooking the Mackenzie and Liard rivers at Fort Simpson. The site was visited in 1987 by Pope John Paul II
- * The Dehcho Bridge, a 1.1 km span of the Mackenzie River near Fort Providence, opened in 2012.
- * The tall trees in Fort Liard, known as the *Oasis of the North*, taller than any others along the route.
- * You can also drive to Wrigley, the very end of Highway 1. It is a scenic drive, but there's no hotel, restaurant or fuel services. Work on a northern extension of the road is under way.

SERVICES

The Deh Cho route is well serviced with pull offs, picnic sites, and campgrounds. Gas stations are located at communities, so fill up when you can. Larger centres have hotels, restaurants, campgrounds and a range of services.

Yellowknife

Take in the capital city and the NWT's version of cottage country

Head north on Highway 3 from the Deh Cho Connection. You travel through vast expanses of boreal forest, then switch to rocky lake-dotted Precambrian Shield at Frank's Channel at Great Slave Lake. The route is chip sealed all the way, with a few rough patches close to Yellowknife. Continuing east,

the Ingraham Trail extends 70 km through rugged wilderness and Yellowknife's "cottage country". There are several boat launches, each with picnic sites, and two campgrounds – great places for fishing and swimming. Seasonal cabins and year-round residences dot the area.

LANDSCAPE & NATURE

You may see bison north of Fort Providence, and there's a chance of spotting a wolf or fox. To catch a glimpse of massive Great Slave Lake, stop at the North Arm Territorial Park, near Behchoko. East of Yellowknife, the Ingraham Trail winds around rock outcroppings and shallow ponds and crosses the Yellowknife and Cameron rivers.

COMMUNITIES & CULTURE

Fort Providence, a South Slave community of close to 800 is in the south. Traditional moose hair tufting and porcupine quill artwork is available here. Unique fashion items are created at Dene Fur Clouds. Behchoko, in the Tlicho region, is the largest Indigenous community in the NWT. Many residents are involved in the wage economy, but some continue to hunt and trap. The City of Yellowknife, capital of the NWT, is known for its spectacular Aurora viewing, and its connection to the Canadian diamond industry.

TO CHECK OUT

- * Yellowknife's "Old Town" with an eclectic mixture of early mining history and popular pubs and restaurants.
- * Cameron Falls
- * Folk on the Rocks - one of the top festivals in Canada

- * The end of the road at Tibbet Lake. In winter, the ice road to the diamond mines starts here.
- * The world's best Northern Lights viewing in fall and winter

UNEXPECTED

- * Yellowknife's high-rise urban skyline, after driving through more than 300 km of wilderness.

SERVICES

Fort Providence offers dining, accommodation and fuel services. Behchoko, about 10 km off the main highway, has fuel, but hours may be limited. Yellowknife is a fully serviced city with restaurants, accommodations, attractions and events. Its 20,000 residents welcome nearly 100,000 visitors each year for fishing, hiking, biking, cultural and aurora tours.

The Dempster Highway Drive to the land of the midnight sun

This route stretches 740 km through some of the most beautiful and remote wilderness in North America. The route starts outside Dawson City, Yukon and ends at Inuvik, NWT. One of the "world's top drives" it opened in 1978. There are few services, so careful preparation is required. The route attracts RVs, personal vehicles, touring cyclists and motorcyclists. It is the only public highway in Canada that crosses the Arctic Circle.

LANDSCAPE AND NATURE

The Dempster winds through the Richardson Mountains, across river plateaus and along the edge of the Mackenzie River delta, one of the largest deltas in

the world. The area is home to grizzlies, caribou, wolves and a range of other wildlife, which can sometimes be viewed from the road.

COMMUNITIES & CULTURE

In the NWT, the Dempster Highway connects three communities: Fort McPherson, one of our oldest and most historic communities; Tsiigehtchic, a very small Gwich'in community at the confluence of the Mackenzie and Arctic Red Rivers; and Inuvik, the largest community in the Western Arctic and a tri-cultural community that includes Gwich'in, Inuvialuit, and residents from other parts of Canada and the world.

TO CHECK OUT:

- * The much-photographed sign that marks the Arctic Circle
- * The monument in Fort McPherson dedicated to the Lost Patrol
- * The igloo shaped church in Inuvik
- * Canada's most northerly community greenhouse in Inuvik

UNEXPECTED

- * Free ferries to cross three prominent northern rivers: the Mackenzie the Arctic Red and the Peel Rivers
- * Biggest, boldest community sign, at one of the NWT's smallest communities
- * Amazing fall colors (fall starts in late August) that rival Ontario or PEI

SERVICES

Most services are available in Dawson City and Inuvik, at the south and north ends of the Dempster Highway. There

is a hotel, restaurant and gas at Eagle Plains, a stop along the highway, and also at Fort McPherson. Campgrounds are at Dawson City, Tombstone Mountains, Engineer Creek, Eagle Plains, Fort McPherson, Campbell Lake and Inuvik.

The Inuvik Tuk Highway North America's first public highway to the Arctic Ocean

This road begins at the town of Inuvik, the terminus of the Dempster Highway. The road was officially opened in November 2017 and is the only all-season road that connects Canada to the Arctic Ocean. It replaces a seasonal ice road operated for approximately four months each year. This 138 km gravel road has no services.

LANDSCAPE & NATURE

The route winds through the Mackenzie Delta, crosses the tree line, skirts the Husky Lakes, crosses pingo dotted tundra and ends in Tuktoyaktuk. Depending on the time of year, it's possible to see a range of wildlife, from ptarmigan to grizzlies to caribou.

COMMUNITIES & CULTURE

There are no communities between Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk, commonly known as Tuk. This Inuvialuit community of 1,000 people is perched on the edge of the Arctic Ocean. Its name comes from the Inuvialuktun word meaning resembling a caribou, and it has the distinction of being the first community in Canada to revert to its traditional name. In the 1980s it was the main base for

oil and gas exploration in the Canadian Arctic. Cultural traditions continue – drum dancing, harvesting fish and wildlife for food and clothing, and drying fish on outdoor racks.

TO CHECK OUT

- * Pingos, rising out of the land and ocean. A pingo named Ibyuk, just south of Tuktoyaktuk, is the world's largest growing pingo. It is about 50 metres high and continues to grow at a rate of about two centimetres per year. Ibyuk is estimated to be more than 1,000 years old.
- * The Tuk community freezer, built into the ice core of a pingo.
- * A reconstructed sod house, similar to ones used by the Inuvialuit for centuries.

UNEXPECTED

- * In a treeless land, the tangle of driftwood scattered along the Arctic coastline. This wood comes from as far away as northern British Columbia, via the Mackenzie River and Arctic ocean currents.

SERVICES

There are limited services in Tuktoyaktuk, but the community is completing plans for a campground and a new hotel. There is a restaurant, several B&Bs, a tire repair centre and a grocery store.

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	CLIENT: GNWT Tourism	VERSION: A	REVISION: 2	DATE: Dec / 4 / 18	DESIGNER: BC
	NUMBER: 2018-11-29	SIZE: 2 page spread			
	NOTES: Maps Labelled				
UP HERE PUBLISHING LTD. / 4510-50 th Street / Yellowknife / Northwest Territories / Canada / X1A 1B9 / T. 867-766-6710 / www.uphere.ca					