



Peace River Paddling Guide

Researched and Written by Teresa Griffith

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**The condition of a river is always changing. This guide is meant as a rough guide only.
Please use all caution when paddling. You paddle at your own risk.**

Author's Forward

In the summer of 2010, I had the unique opportunity and responsibility of paddling 800 km on the Peace River in order to write this guide for GeoTourism Canada. I planned to do it in two sections: the northern reach, from the town of Peace River to Fort Vermilion first, and later in the season, the upstream portion, from Hudson's Hope to Peace River. On July 8, with 10 days of food, I set out in a 17-foot Prijon Kodiak kayak to paddle to Fort Vermilion. I am an experienced kayaker but I had never taken on a trip so long, solo. Excitement and nerves filled my stomach the morning my trip began; as I paddled, the nerves faded, but the excitement didn't. I also felt incredibly lucky to be doing this as my job.

It was an incredible experience! I enjoyed the solitude and serenity of paddling and camping every day. The valley and river are beautiful, and striking scenery met me with every bend. By day five, I was noticing some pain in my right shoulder, from overcompensating in wind and steering too aggressively. I had to learn patience and had to let the current carry me a little off-course if necessary – to surrender to it, so to speak. I improved my stroke technique and was more mindful of my every move in order to save my joints any additional stress. My shoulder was not in very much pain, but I knew I had to be careful. I wasn't ready to give up yet. By the afternoon of day six, after bucking a strong headwind and

sitting out an intense thunderstorm, both shoulders were unhappy. On the morning of day seven, my shoulders started feeling better, but I nevertheless decided to end my trip at Tompkins Landing, in order to prevent any serious damage. I'd done 300 km of solo kayaking in six and a half days.

A few weeks later, I picked up where I left off, paddling from Tompkins to Fort Vermilion, experiencing what some said were the lowest water levels on the Peace in 70 years. The ferry at Tompkins was moored on the east side and considered out-of-order due to the shallow water. I dodged gravel bars continually and even saw the river bed in some places – where the steep shores met the river nearly perpendicularly, the river bottom was exposed. It slowed me down, but I successfully reached Fort Vermilion; my heart sang when I saw that picturesque and historic village on the bank!

A month later, in mid-September, a friend and I canoed from Hudson's Hope to the town of Peace River (375 km). Water levels fluctuated wildly, and we had warm days, cool days, and crisp nights. We cruised over boulders lying deep in crystal clear waters – a new experience for me, as the waters had always been quite opaque before. We saw spectacular cliffs and beautiful creek-valleys. We ran aground and portaged after picking the wrong channel in one spot. We reached new lows in personal hygiene, as it was warmer to just keep the clothes on (including toques) than wash our hair. We had a spectacular adventure!

I did my best to make waypoints, notes, photos and

observations along the way. In order to make notes while on the water, I used a small audio recorder. I spoke into it, describing what I saw or wanted to make a note of, often while getting a GPS waypoint. I made notes in the evenings, pored over maps and renamed waypoints. It wasn't always possible while paddling to go all the way to shore to take a waypoint for a possible campsite, but waypoints in the river combined with my description should enable anyone to find those unique spots. After collecting and poring over the data, notes, and the memories, this paddling guide was born. I hope it opens doors for you to enjoy the beauty of this wilderness river as I did.



Peace River Paddling Guide

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following people and agencies for their help in answering specific questions for the guide. Every one of them freely gave of their time, knowledge and stories, and I appreciate it very much.

Dr. Murray Gingras, Associate Professor of Geology, University of Alberta

Elinor Morrissey, Hudson's Hope Museum

All the staff at the Peace River Museum, Archives and Mackenzie Centre

All the staff at the Fort Vermilion Lean-To Museum and Archives

All the staff at the High Level Municipal Library

Everyone at GeoTourism Canada

Kim Salter, Notikewin Provincial Park

Doug Greenfield and Greg Donaldson re: Kieyho Park

Scott O'Greysik, Peace River Boating Association

Darren Griffith, Redscape Computer Services

Lindsay Bunn, ASRD Forest Health Technician, Peace River, AB

Stephanie Haight, Forest Health Specialist, Dawson Creek, BC

Energy Resources Conservation Board of Alberta

Arlene, Bear Flats Campground

Aldon Armstrong, Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement

Trevor Dorie, Peace River River Rats



Carolyn Kristensen
Kate Morrison
Marshall Rolling
Marilee Toews
Kenny and Teresa Tupper
Cheryl Welke
Al Yasinski

About the Author

Teresa Griffith is a renaissance woman and owner/operator of Flow North Paddling Company. Her interest in history, geology, and geography come together in this guide, creating an informative resource for all river users — everything you need to know to take a trip on the beautiful Peace River.



Peace River Paddling Guide

Introduction to the Guide

A Joyous Escape

My paddle glides into the water
Smoothly, silently,
And propels me just a little farther.
The air is still and the water like polished glass.
I cannot hear a sound,
Except a gentle gurgle from a stray current.
The river carries me invariably
Toward my destination,
But I feel I won't be ready to leave her loveliness,
Peace, and solitude
When I get there.
Every moment a perfect one,
Every stroke a meditation,
I discover trust and joy
On the waters of the Peace.

-T. Griffith

The Peace River. Before settlers and pioneers, the First Nations people and intrepid fur traders plied the swift waters of the Peace for hunting and trading. The first white men to see its shores were men of the Northwest Company, and the first trading post was



established by Charles Boyer in 1788 near the mouth of the Boyer River, 7 km downstream from present-day Fort Vermilion. For Sir Alexander Mackenzie, it was a vital path to the Pacific; he and his crew of 9 men went upstream from Fort Chipewyan in the fall of 1792 all the way to a spot near the mouth of the Smoky River, Fort Fork, where they wintered. The following year, they pushed upstream through the waters of the Peace as far as possible on their way to the west coast. They reached tidal waters after a mere 72 days of travelling – canoeing, portaging, and canoeing some more – and returned to Fort Fork only 32 days later, covering the reach from the rapids near Hudson's Hope, BC to Fort Fork in just 3 days! This guide will take you from Hudson's Hope, BC to Fort Vermilion, AB, for a journey of 812 km in 24 days, all downstream.

Character of the River

The Peace River, or Unjaga as it was called in Alexander Mackenzie's time, was the freeway before there was pavement. Although you and I might feel like it's "the long way," it was by far the quickest way to cross this vast country of ours before there were roads and rails. Bushwacking is difficult and slow, and as you walk, you must carry everything you need, up and down slopes, around swamps, and then, when you meet them, across creeks and rivers. It's easier to take the river, even upstream. Although, in winding across the land, they might go twice the distance, rivers provide a path of less resistance when compared to thick bush.

Peace River Paddling Guide

The Peace River is an old one; it has carved its way out of bedrock and glacial till for thousands of years. On its western reaches, the banks are generally 200 m high, but at Fort Vermilion, they are only 70 m. You'll see some spectacular cliffs and eroded hills, many loaded with fossils. Remember, take pictures of what you find and make a note of where, but never remove a fossil from the site you found it. If it's particularly spectacular, notify the palaeontologists at the Royal Tyrell Museum of your find.

Altogether, you'll paddle through bedrock formations from the upper and lower Cretaceous period, specifically the Albian (lower, or early Cretaceous) and Cenomanian (upper Cretaceous), 93 to 112 million years ago. The oldest rocks are those near Hudson's Hope, and for about the first 130 km of your trip, the rocks will get younger. A few kilometres after Dunvegan, the bedrock will start getting older again, i.e. the river incises into older rock. The layers are not as clear and tidy as a layer cake, but this is true in general. Much of the bedrock is marine shale, from dark grey to light grey, or siltstone, and later on, you will start to see more sandstone, conglomerate rock, and concretions – huge round rocks found within sandstone bedrock.

A river is constantly changing. The conditions I describe in this guide could be quite different from those you encounter. Gravel and sandbars gradually move and change. The river doesn't freeze over completely, but in parts of the river that do (the river generally remains open year-round upstream of Taylor, BC, a result of the dams upstream) ice can scour the banks and push piles of gravel

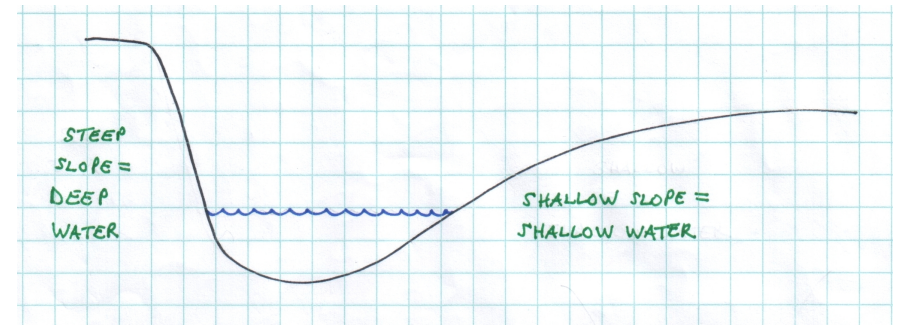


during breakup. If water levels are high, you may not see many gravel bars, but if they are low, you'll see and dodge plenty of them. Water levels can increase due to water released from the dams upstream as well as rainwater, snowmelt, and storm surges. A downpour hundreds of kilometres away can affect the river level if it happens anywhere within the watershed of the river. A paddler must always be vigilant of changing conditions, both in water level and weather.

Whenever you stop and get out of your boat, even just for a quick break, make sure you tie it up to something – a large rock, a tree, a clump of shrubs – or even make a pile of rocks to weigh the rope down if nothing else. It is good to pull the boat out of the water, but it isn't necessary. It **IS** necessary to tie it to something that won't move. **Consider this the most important thing you do** when you get out of your boat. The waterline can change vastly overnight, and the variation is more extreme the closer you are to the two dams. It's common for the water to go up or down by 4 feet (1.2 m), and can even change 10 feet (3 m), within the first 150 km of Hudson's Hope. One long-time resident along the river (near Carcajou) said he's seen the water come up 10-12 feet in ~10 hours because of the dams and rain combined. Many careless paddlers have awoken to find their canoe gone, carried away by rising waters. On most reaches of the Peace, this will mean a steep climb and a *very* long walk to get help. Even at lunch, leaving your canoe unattended and untied is foolhardy; a passing jet boat's wake could be enough to dislodge it.

Peace River Paddling Guide

Like all rivers, the speed and character of the current changes with the overall volume of water that is flowing. Higher water levels mean faster water in general. The current also changes as you encounter widening or narrowing sections, deepening or shallowing. Surface waves will often help you guess what's going on underneath, but wind can make it trickier. The river is nearly



always deepest along the outside of a curve, as rocks and sand tend to get deposited on the inside of the curve by boundary layer cross currents, called secondary flow, that roll them along the bottom of the riverbed and up the shallow slope toward the shore (see guide #7 for more information). The Peace also tends to build up gravel bars and islands right in the middle. The deepest channels are usually along the steepest shore – just imagine that the shore extends its visible slope down into the water. The result is that to find the fastest, deepest water, you often have to take the longest path around a curve, but if water levels are low, it's worth it. **Always be alert** as this is a general rule and there are exceptions. Always respect the power of the current.



Jet Boat Races

Recreation on the Peace River is enjoyed by many people, especially near the population centres along the river. As such, you'll have to share the river. Most power boaters are quite polite in slowing down, giving canoes/kayaks space, and some even stop to chat.

The Peace River Jet Boat Races are generally held on a Saturday and Sunday in July each year. If possible, plan to paddle the section of the river between Dunvegan and the DMI bridge north of Peace River on a weekday (guides 10, 11, 12 and part of 13). If you plan to follow this field guide precisely, if you start in Hudson's Hope on a Sunday or Monday, you'll be safe, otherwise, you may have to:

- adjust your campsite locations by paddling more or less some days,
- spend an extra day in camp somewhere, or
- paddle very early or late in the day to avoid the jet boat traffic.

As you plan your trip, there are several ways you can find out when the races are:

- call the Peace River Tourist Information Centre at 780-624-2044
- check the Peace River Boating Association page on Facebook
- check the town of Peace River's website (www.peaceriver.ca)

You should take care **not** to interfere with the jet boat races; the boats can reach speeds up to 190 km/h and the boat traffic

would **not** be safe.

In 2011, the Outlaw Eagle Manufacturing World Jet Boat Marathon is taking place in Canada. The Peace River portion is scheduled for July 3 & 4, 2011. On July 3, the boats will be racing a circuit from Deer Island (near the Smoky River confluence) to a point north of the bridges. The races start at 1 pm, so begin at sunrise if you must paddle this section on July 3, 2011. On July 4, the race is between Peace River downtown and Watino, on the Smoky River, so you could probably start your trip north (guide #13) on that day (use the boat launch near 84 Ave if it's too hectic at River Front Park).

You have a unique opportunity to paddle a river that has been affected by industry. Hydroelectric dams create an unnatural environment, yet it is still beautiful and rugged. If BC Hydro's plans for a third dam at Site C are approved, the river will change again. This guide takes you through the section of the river that will be flooded if/when the dam construction begins – from Hudson's Hope to the Moberly River confluence about 78 km downstream. Once the construction begins, some areas will be off-limits, and once the river is flooded behind the dam – a process estimated to take only 1 to 2 months – those areas will never be the same. Much of Bear Flat will be flooded, for example, and “the Gates” will be much less dramatic underwater. The Peace Canyon, historical “Ne Parle Pas” rapids, homesteads, trappers' cabins, whole native villages and much of the Parsnip and Finlay Rivers are lost forever at the bottom of the reservoirs of the dams already built.

Using This Guide

Paddling is such an incredible way to enjoy nature, reconnect with your loved ones, and experience true peace and quiet in our otherwise hectic lives. Before you can get away, however, some planning is required, and the more you do, the smoother your trip will go. This guide is meant to help you plan, provide information and advice, and give practical suggestions for anyone wishing to paddle the Peace River. It is by no means comprehensive. Descriptions of gravel or sand bars should not be taken to be overly precise, as these structures are always shifting and changing. This guide was written in 2010.

The following information is given for each guide:

Name of River Section	Starting Point to Ending Point
Paddling Time	estimated from the distance, using speeds of 5 km/h to 10 km/h
Paddling Distance	estimated distance of the most likely, most direct paddling path
Rapids (Class number)	class of rapids, if any
Portage	distance and difficulty of portages, if any
Typical speed of current on this section	taken from a GPS unit while drifting
Mobile (cellular) telephone access	if cell phones are likely to work, and where the best signal might be found
Appeal to Families & Children	one sentence summary of the highlights in this section as they relate to families
Appeal to People with passion for topic	one sentence summary of the highlights in this section

Scenic Appeal of River Section	how beautiful this section is, 1 to 5 stars (★★★★★)
Possible as a day-trip?	“Yes” if there is road access at both start and end points, otherwise, “No.”
NTS maps required for this section	list of 1:250,000 maps required (with 1:50,000 in brackets)

In the written portion of this guide, I generally refer to things as “river left” and “river right” meaning on the left or right shore as you go downstream. I may also refer to things as upstream or downstream, and use cardinal points. I indicate most locations by using approximate kilometre distance marks, starting from Hudson’s Hope for guides 1-12 and thereafter, starting from the town of Peace River. The distances were obtained by measuring the path on the river using Google Earth. I then marked 10-km intervals on my paper topo maps. From there, I estimate or measure the other distances in between. I’ve marked the maps in the guide in the same manner, for consistency.

You’ll find a list of possible campsites after the main description, along with a list of emergency road access. This latter section is meant to give you an idea of how you could get off the water in an emergency – walking up a rough road, even a bumpy quad trail, is easier than bushwacking. If you have a cell signal or a sat phone, you could also direct someone to pick you up using these roads, but again, not all roads/trails have been test-driven and I cannot guarantee they will be passable.

Before you depart, you may like to check the current water

flow. The Alberta Government maintains water monitoring stations throughout the province, and this is the link to the real-time data: <http://www.environment.alberta.ca/apps/basins/default.aspx>

GPS waypoints can be downloaded in gpx format to enable you load them into your GPS device. You can then see them on the display and use the various functions of the unit, such as distance and bearing to waypoint. The waypoints are given in the order they are encountered (downstream), and named as “D##P##” meaning day-number point-number. Some waypoints were taken standing on the very spot, and others were taken from the river to show where you can see a certain cliff or alongside a possible campsite. If you are only downloading the waypoints for certain guides, you may want to download those preceding and following the section you intend to paddle, just in case. For example, load the waypoints for guides 9-13 into your GPS unit if you plan on paddling guides 10-12.

Other notes

Remember when you drive into BC to move your watch one hour back. Although *technically* the boundary between the time zones is farther northwest, Fort St. John and Hudson's Hope are one hour behind Alberta.

Interesting websites:

- Regarding river channel and island formation (fluvial geomorphology): <http://geofroth.posterous.com/a-way-to-think->

Peace River Paddling Guide

[about-channel-patterns](#)

- Biography of Alexander Mackenzie:

<http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=36643>

Safety and Wilderness Camping

Safety

Always keep safety in mind. Even as you plan your trip and pack your gear, think about safety in everything. Imagine the worst thing that could happen and then plan for it. Once you have a plan, you can forget about it happening and have fun.

Make sure all your safety gear is in good working order. Go through everything and make sure it's serviceable before you reach the water's edge. Standing on shore with your boat loaded is not the best time to discover that your first aid kit has been raided by the kids and doesn't have anything but large triangular bandages left in it.

Transport Canada requires that you have:

- a personal flotation device for each person
- a sound signalling device (I recommend a whistle on each PFD)



- at least 15 metres of buoyant rope (make sure there is NO risk of entanglement if you should capsize. Throw bags are good for this.)
- a bailer or manual pump capable of pumping water over the side of the boat
- a paddle
- a light if paddling at night or in times of reduced visibility, such as fog

The above applies to human-powered craft less than 6 m (~20') in length. For more information, please visit Transport Canada's website: <http://tc.gc.ca/eng/marinesafety/menu.htm>

Make sure you are not attempting to paddle outside of your skill level. Although this is a class I river, it is best if you have experience paddling on moving water before attempting this trip.

Hazards & Precautions

Hazard: Drowning

Precaution:

Always wear your personal flotation device (PFD) when on the water or near the water's edge. Make sure it fits properly and wear it snug.

Never try to stand up in a deep current. Don't even try to put your feet down to see how deep it is – undercurrents can pull you

down and drown you. Float on your back, keep your feet up and pointed downstream, and swim for shore. Only try to stand up when you can feel the bottom with your bottom.

Ropes can be a significant tangling and drowning hazard. Make sure they are kept bundled or stowed so they won't uncoil if you capsize. Throw bags are good for this.

Always pitch your tent as high above the water as possible to avoid rising water and potential panic in the night.

Hazard: Injury

Precaution:

Always think before acting when paddling or setting up camp and keep your actions careful and deliberate. Bring a well-stocked first aid kit in a waterproof container and learn first aid before you go. Know the signs for heatstroke and hypothermia.

Create a "second aid kit." This includes things like reusable warming gel-packs, pain killers or other medication, tensor bandages, and extra matches. Be extra careful around your campfire and/or cookstove to avoid burns. Take a GPS tracker such as a SPOT device or satellite phone so that you can request help if needed.

Hazard: Illness

Precaution:

Make sure you are healthy before you start your trip. For example, don't start a trip if you feel a flu coming on. Bring all

prescription medications in waterproof containers packed in several places (don't put all your eggs in one dry-bag)! To avoid getting giardia (beaver fever), never drink untreated water and make sure to follow the directions on your water treatment system carefully. Bring extra water treatment tablets in case. Be sure to drink enough water to avoid dehydration.

Hazard: Getting separated from your boat

Precaution:

Prevent capsizes by:

- never paddling beyond your ability
- being alert to changing conditions when paddling (ie. upcoming gravel bar or rapids)
- communicating clearly with your partner when embarking and disembarking, and help your paddle partner get in or out of the canoe/kayak.

Prevent your boat from floating away by always tying it up to a good anchor (tree, large driftwood or rock) whenever you get out of it, even for a short break.

In case you do capsize and lose your boat or some of your gear:

- Always have the following items on you (in a pocket or attached to your PFD): matches/lighter/flint, SPOT GPS or Sat phone (in waterproof bag if necessary), multi-tool or army knife, and water treatment tablets.
- Always know where you are. Keep track of your progress on your map. Even if you lose your map, you should know where

the nearest town or road is.

- Always wear shoes while in the boat, so that if you have to walk out, you can.
- Never pack difficult-to-replace things with you (like a passport). If you must bring it, keep it on you at all times.
- Never pack **all** your food in one place.

Hazard: Getting lost

Precaution:

Make sure you have maps, such as 1:250,000 NTS topo maps, for the areas you are paddling (in addition to the maps in this guide). This will also help you find the nearest road access if you need to get help. Keep track of where you are as you paddle. You should know how to read a topo map; when the topo lines are close together, the slope is steep, when spaced apart, it is gradual. Creeks are clearly seen on a topo map by the valley they create as they incise (erode) their way to the main river. Ideally, you should know how to use a map and compass to navigate yourself to a desired destination through the bush if necessary — if you cannot, always follow a landmark, like a creek or road. At minimum, you should know how to read a map and find your location on it using GPS coordinates (assuming you bring a GPS along). Always bring more than enough spare batteries for your GPS. Leave the details of your trip with a responsible person, so that if you are overdue, that person will call the RCMP to initiate a search and rescue operation.

Hazard: Forest Fire

Precaution:

If you make a campfire, always do so on a non-flammable surface such as rock or sand, not the forest floor. Build your fire along the river (not in the trees) and keep it as small as possible for your purpose (warmth, light, cooking, etc). Be aware of what the forest fire hazard rating is before you leave on your trip, and also use common sense – if the duff (leaves, twigs, decaying organic matter) on the forest floor is very dry, be extra vigilant of where sparks land or don't build a fire at all. Chronic lack of rain and/or hot weather can raise the fire hazard rating to extreme levels in just a few days.

Be absolutely sure that your fire is out. If the duff is a little dry, chase any sparks that travel and douse them if necessary. When extinguishing your campfire, pour water on it, stir it with a stick and then pour more water on it. Make sure the coals are cold.

If you see a forest fire or smell smoke while on shore, stay calm. If it appears the fire is definitely headed your way, get all your gear into your boat and get on the water as quickly as possible. The middle of the river is probably the safest place, or you may decide to cross to the opposite side of the river. If the fire appears to be downstream, prepare a wet cloth or towel to breathe through before getting in your canoe. If you are experiencing thick smoke, breathe through a damp piece of cloth. If there is active fire fighting taking place, follow the instructions any fire fighters give you. If you see aircraft flying low, do your best to signal them by waving your arms or using a signalling mirror.

Hazard: Bear Encounter or Attack

Precaution:

Your priority in bear country is to **avoid an encounter altogether**. Set your tent up away from where you cook your food and tie up your boat. Make sure all food is stowed each night and don't bring any food or other smelly items (like deodorant or toothpaste) into the tent. If you spill food on your clothes, wipe it off immediately and if you are worried it will smell, change clothes and wash the soiled item or put it in a bag and leave it in the boat. **Bears are attracted to campsites primarily because of smells.** Keep all your food in bear-proof containers, thick-walled dry bags or blue barrels. Pasta and rice, which has little smell, can go in thick-walled dry bags while chocolate, produce, smelly wrappers, garbage or baggies should all go in a bear-proof container. I recommend the “Backpacker's Cache” made of black PVC plastic. You can hang your food from a tree limb, put it inside kayak hatches, or simply keep it on shore.

Keep bear spray and/or bangers in your tent at night and make sure you know how to use them. You may also want to mark your territory by sprinkling household ammonia around your tent to keep animals at bay. Besides smelling like super-potent urine, ammonia is one of the only smells bears won't associate with food. One sure-fire technique to prevent bears from messing with your gear is to cover it with a spare tarp and then place a couple of small containers filled with ammonia under the edge. The ammonia vapours will fill the airspace under the tarp and any curious bears

who get a whiff of that will head for the hills!

Be sure to make plenty of noise whenever you come ashore. Announce your intentions out loud to let the bears know you are there, giving them time to run away before you get close. Try loudly projecting “hello bears! I'm coming up the hill now, so if there's anybody there, you can run and hide now...” Learn how to tell the difference between Black and Grizzly bears.

If you see a bear (and it sees you), stay calm. See if it is agitated or just surprised. Determine what type of bear it is. Try not to corner it – always give it a way out. Speak to the bear, avoid eye contact, make yourself larger than you appear, and slowly, calmly, back away. If it charges you, stand your ground. You may need to become more aggressive or defiant or use your bear spray or bear bangers. Most attacks are defensive, but if it becomes predatory, you should change your strategy. For black bears, try to get away or keep fighting – show you are not easy prey. For grizzlies, it is better to lie down and play dead.

Any bears you see swimming are no threat; they cannot and will not attack you while swimming. That doesn't mean you should approach them. Give them space (and take lots of pictures).

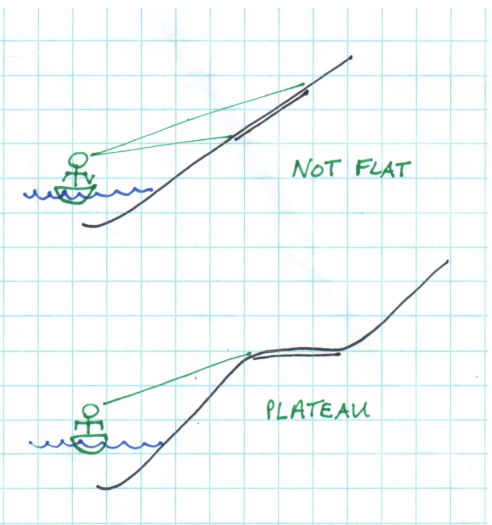
Backcountry Camping

This is a wilderness river. It is recommended that you have experience wilderness camping prior to your trip. You may want to

read some books on wilderness camping, such as *Song of the Paddle* by Bill Mason.

Remember the three basic human needs: food, shelter, and clothing. Bring only the essentials, and once you've checked it all over and packed it, try it out in your boat. Will it all fit, with enough freeboard (space above the waterline on the boat)? If not, reduce it down until it fits. See the Comprehensive Trip Packing List here: <http://flownorth.ca/what-we-offer/planning-your-paddling-trip/> Find small, light items whenever possible. Take the minimum of clothing, but at least one full change of clothes. You can't go wrong with extra socks or underwear. Hygiene items should be few and small; you aren't going to win a beauty pageant!

When looking for a good camping spot, remember that it should be high enough above the water to be safe, and as flat as possible. If you can see the patch of ground you want to put your tent on from the water, it probably isn't flat! If you can see a ridge, it is probably flat beyond. There are a few



places along the river where there are no suitable camping spots for several kilometres, and I have indicated this in the guide.

Most islands provide possible campsites, although I use the word “campsites” loosely. They are not campsites in the sense of public, maintained locales; they are simply places you can camp. Generally, sandy or gravelly islands start out with a gravel bar preceding them (upstream) which gradually gets higher and the slope increases until the downstream end of the island is very steep (sand or mud) with flat campsites on top if you can climb to them. Therefore, about one-third of the way along most islands is the ideal spot to set up camp – before the slope gets too steep or high. The disadvantage to camping on a slope that is too gradual is that you'll walk a mile before you get to bed, going back and forth to and from the tent location, the kitchen location, and the boat. Maybe this doesn't seem like a problem, but if the water level goes down, you'll have to carry your boat a hundred feet or more over rocks to find water again. So, camping on a shallow bank is possible but not ideal. Look for a shore with a little more slope to it, and flat space on top. Be careful when working near the shore not to drop anything in the water, or somewhere it might roll into the water.

You can camp adjacent to private land, as no one owns the water and the shore immediately along it. Just the same, if a private landowner asks you to leave, it is best to do so. Most camp sites recommended in this guide are parks or crown land, and the landowners of all end-point sites have given permission for users of this guide to camp at that site.

Leave No Trace

Always abide by the Leave No Trace principles:

- **Plan Ahead and Prepare.** A well-planned trip is more likely to leave no trace than an ill-prepared one.
- **Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces.** Always minimize trampling of vegetation when camping.
- **Dispose of Waste Properly.** Dig a cathole (toilet) 15-20 cm (6-8”) deep and 10-15 cm (4-6”) in diameter at least 60 m (70 adult paces, or 200 feet) from the river. Bury your toilet paper (or use leaves) and fill the cathole with the original dirt when you are finished.
- **Leave What You Find.** It is illegal to remove cultural artifacts, and highly discouraged to remove rocks, fossils, flowers, etc. Do not build fire rings or crude furniture.
- **Minimize Campfire Impacts.** Don't build a fire when the fire hazard is high. Keep your fire small and don't cut trees, limbs, or bark. Gather wood smaller than your wrist from a wide area. Read more here: <http://www.leavenotrace.ca/principle-minimize-campfire-impacts>
- **Respect Wildlife.** Watch wildlife from afar and remember you are a visitor in their home.
- **Be Considerate of Other Visitors.** If you encounter others, be respectful. Keep noise levels down. Keep your pet under control and stoop and scoop.

Essentially, when you leave your lunch spot or campsite, there should be no evidence that you were there. No garbage, no piles of firewood, no damaged trees, no artificial clearings. Using a cookstove reduces your impact greatly – you won't need to make a fire at all, but if you want one, you can make a small one, just for lingering around. Read more about the Leave No Trace principles here: <http://www.leavenotrace.ca>

Also, when possible, avoid landing/launching your boat in marshy or soft areas. Always leave wildlife alone, and in particular, do not disturb nesting birds you may see along the shore. If you have to go to the bathroom, always do so on shore, never directly into the river.

When walking about, try to use existing trails or walk on surfaces that are most resistant to erosion (rock instead of soil).

Meals and Snacks

Food is a very personal thing. Most of us can endure a lot of physical discomfort or rugged conditions as long as the food is good. Here are some ideas for meal planning.

The basics. Pasta and rice work well for supper, and many soup mixes or flavour packets are easy to pack and will keep for a long time. Add some fish (caught or packaged or smoked), beef jerky, pepperoni, or dried hamburger and you've got supper. For breakfast, oatmeal or granola work well, with powdered milk or rice milk on shorter trips. Lunch is the tricky one – if you don't want to

stop and make a fire or set up a stove, it has to be tasty and filling without requiring cooking. Cheese keeps a long time without refrigeration, although it will sweat. Soft tortillas are good – they keep a long time and you don't have to worry about squishing them (unlike bread). Bring along lots of trail mix for snacks while paddling. The following fresh foods travel well: potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, turnips, apples, oranges and eggs (packed carefully). You can dehydrate foods to make your own meals and snacks. You can bring frozen foods along (in thermal bags) on 2-3 day trips and use them once they have thawed.

Flavour, flavour, flavour. Use dehydrated vegetables, spices, sugar and salt to add flavour to your basic food.

Temperature control. Use insulated bags to keep foods cool, such as cheese or cucumbers (short trips). Open the insulated bag in the evening to allow a complete air exchange with the cool air. You may be able to use bags of cold water to keep things cool as well.

Packaging. Avoid canned items as they take up a lot of space and you have to very thoroughly clean them and then pack the cans/jars out with you. Dried foods are good, but double-bag them to make sure they stay dry. Fish can be purchased in bags instead of cans. Beef jerky is an obvious choice. When packing, measure and re-package foods to minimize the packaging and space they take up.

Water. Do not bring bottled water for anything longer than a day trip. Buy water purification tablets or a filtration system and follow the instructions given. Bring extra bottles for processing the

water to make sure you always have lots available, so you do not get dehydrated. Consider bringing electrolytes, such as Gatorade juice crystals, if you will be paddling hard on hot days. Generally, a person requires 2-4 L of water per day (depending on body size and fluid loss).

Snacks. Store-bought or home-made trail mixes work well, along with dehydrated apples, apricots, bananas, and any other fruit you care to dry! Nuts, raisins, figs, crackers, carrots, granola bars, pepperoni, cheese, and many other common snacks are great, especially if you re-package them. Be especially careful to keep track of where the snack food is to avoid bear encounters. If you aren't careful, you might accidentally bring a granola bar into the tent in your pocket.

Fancy menus. You can bring ingredients such as flour, baking powder, graham wafers, etc., and try your hand at bannock, fruit cobbler or any other food you make at home. You can bake on an open fire or stove using cast-iron pans or other cookers. You are only limited by your preparation time, imagination, and the volume/weight capacity of your boat. There are many books on camp cooking, so I refer you to them if you want a fancier menu.

Images

All photos in this section are by Darren Griffith.

All illustrations by Teresa Griffith.

Peace River Guide

Map 10

Hines
Creek

Fort
Dunvegan

Green
(Verte)
Island

Leith
(Little
Burnt)
River

Elk Island
Park

Saddle
(Burnt)
River

Long
Island

Camp
Island

280 km

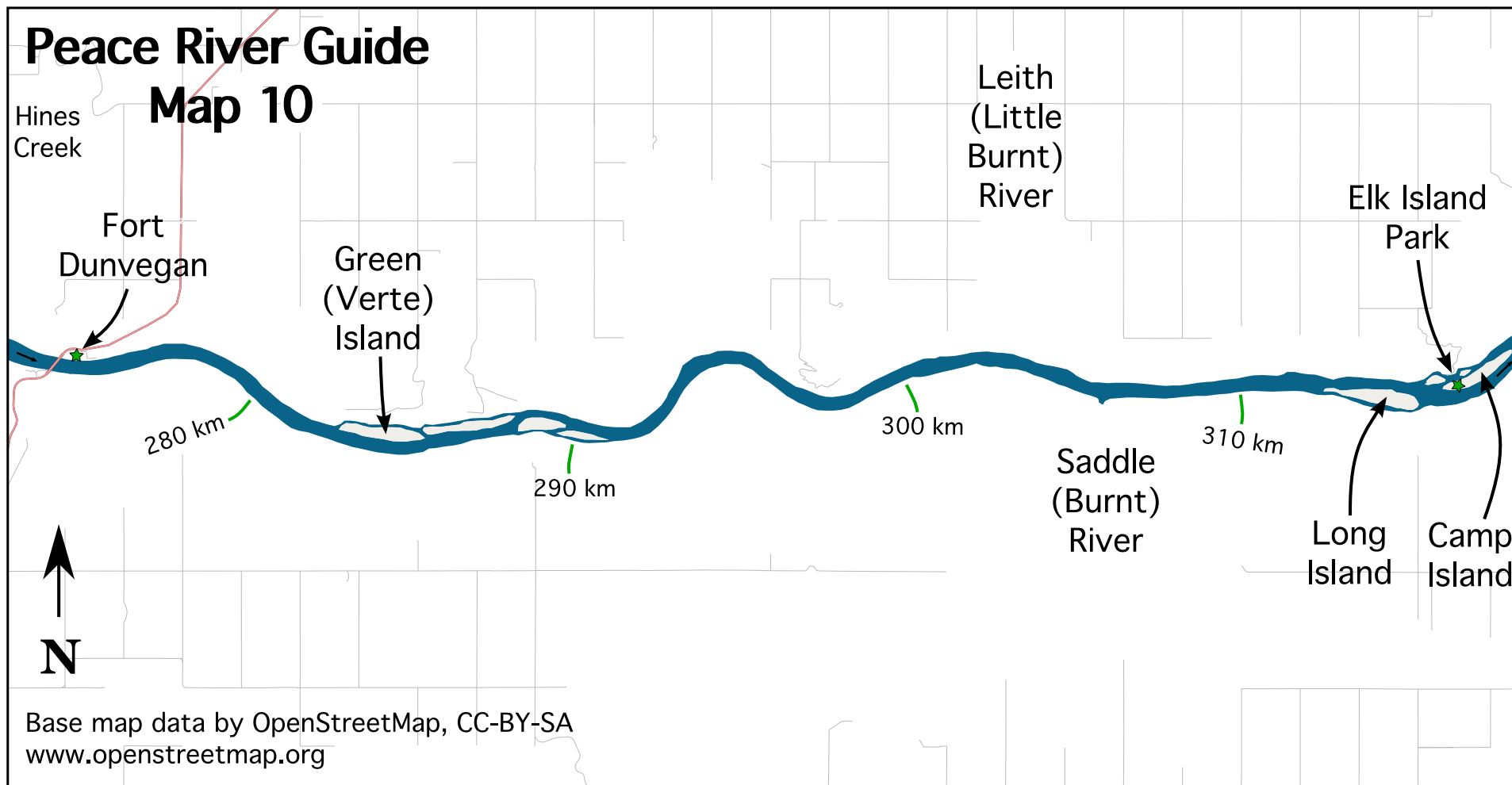
290 km

300 km

310 km



Base map data by OpenStreetMap, CC-BY-SA
www.openstreetmap.org



Guide 10

Fort Dunvegan to Camp Island

Name of River Section	Fort Dunvegan to Camp Island
Paddling Time	4 – 8.5 hrs
Paddling Distance	42 km (274 – 316 km)
Rapids (Class number)	Class I – no rapids
Portage	none
Typical speed of current on this section	4 – 6 km/hr
Mobile (cellular) telephone access	none
Appeal to Families & Children	Paddle this picturesque section as a day trip or part of a longer expedition.
Appeal to People with passion for topic	Enjoy a nice balance of curves and islands, straights and river valleys ending with ideal island camping.
Scenic Appeal of River Section	★★★★
Possible as a day-trip?	Yes
NTS maps required for this section	83 M, 83 N (83 M/15, M/16, N/13)

You'll paddle an easterly course today as you leave the historic Dunvegan area and head for Camp Island. The river valley starts to widen now, as it will continue to do all the way to the town of Peace River.

Caution: Jet boat races are sometimes held on the river

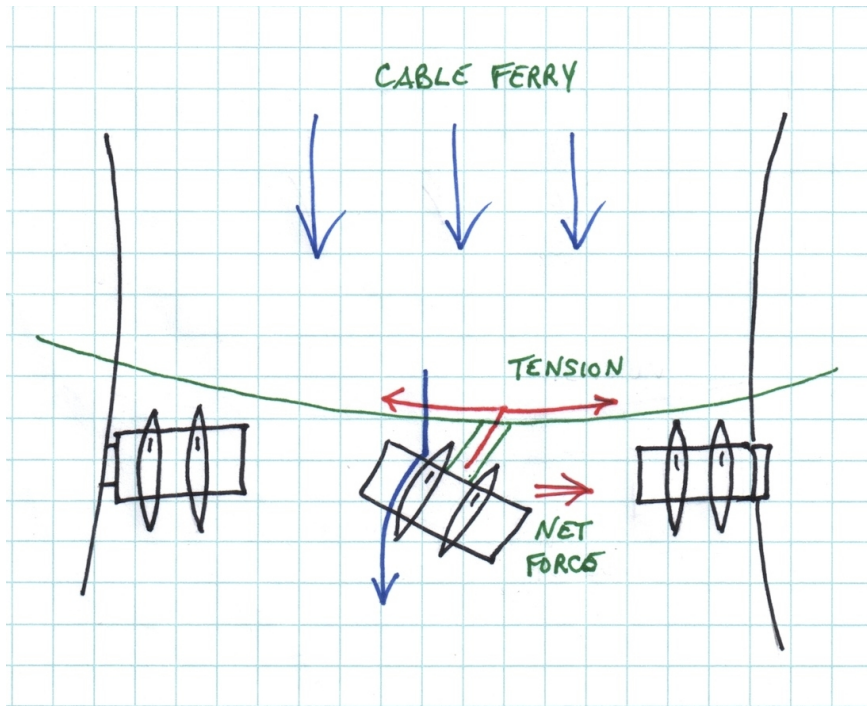
Peace River Paddling Guide

between Dunvegan and Peace River! Find out if they are taking place before you start out — it is not safe to paddle near these jet boats during the race! Speak to the visitor centre's staff to confirm the races are not being held today.

As you depart Fort Dunvegan, watch along the left shore for the market gardens. This valley and south-facing flat create a microclimate that is ideal for gardening — a fact that explorers realized early on. Produce was grown to feed over a hundred people at one time — NW Company employees, missionaries and their families.

Even after Fort Dunvegan's importance as a fur trade site diminished, it remained a good site for gardening and for crossing the river, with a cable ferry serving pioneers as early as 1909. Cable ferries operate by stringing a thick steel cable across the river and anchoring it on each shore using a “dead man” anchor. The ferry is





then attached to this cable directly or by using a second cable and pulley. To cross the river, the ferry angles its pontoons into the current, thereby using the force of the current to push the ferry, not unlike a sailboat tacking in the wind. See illustration above. The following story comes from *Waterhole and the Land North of the Peace*, published by the Waterhole Old Timers Association:

“In 1932, by luck and quick action, disaster was averted on the cable ferry that operated at Dunvegan. A group of people from the Odd Fellows Lodge in Spirit River had invited the fellowship from Fairview to come over for a social evening. The party broke up around

midnight and the six cars carrying Fairviewers returned via the ferry. This is how Oscar Johnson remembered it: 'After midnight, the party broke up and the Fairview cortege started for home. The ferryman at Dunvegan, Alex Holmquist, was expecting us and so was all prepared to take us across the Peace River which was in high water with driftwood coming down all the time. Soon the six cars with their passengers were loaded, filling the ferry to capacity. Gradually, we all edged out into the current, when suddenly a huge floating tree, which could not be avoided in the semi-darkness hit the upstream apron of the ferry, forcing it down under the water. Immediately the current started flowing over the ferry which was now sloping against the river. The water came higher and higher and all feared for the safety of the occupants, as by now there was about three feet of water all over. However, as the ferry gradually sunk deeper, the added pressure of the current became too much for the cable holding us in place. Then the 'Dead man' to which the cross river cable was anchored, gave way and freed the ferry, allowing it to drift with the current. Immediately it rose to the surface and was carried down stream.

Soon Green Island came into view and we managed to navigate close enough to allow most of the passengers to jump off into the shallower water and wade to shore.

In fact, all went except the ferryman who had been previously knocked overboard and drowned and Chas Ware and myself. We continued on down the river till we came to a point south of Whitelaw, where we managed to get close enough to snub a cable around some trees near the water and thus anchor the ferry and its load of cars...”

Green Island (originally named in French, Île Verte) is the first island you will pass today, on your left after about 10 km of paddling. There is a nice camping spot near its upstream end (D10P01). Shortly after passing it, the Peace River Wildland Provincial Park, a reserve of land to protect forest and grassland wildlife habitats, begins on river right. It follows the river off and on all the way to the Smoky River confluence south of the town of Peace River, comprising a total of 24,563 hectares.

As you enter the curve at 294 km, the valley continues to be very scenic and becomes very steep on the right – too steep for trees – with a 12'-15' high bank on the left with camping spots few and far between. The next possible campsite is around 300 km on river left, near the creek mouth (D10P02). We found some wild mint in this area, so you might like to stop here for lunch and see if you can find any for tea. Look among the shrubs along the top of the bank (~6' high bank), after the main part of the gravel bar, where the bank starts to look more muddy. Wild mint is a small shrub with leaves that look very much like domestic mint and little clusters of



pale purple flowers growing along the main stem. Crushing a leaf with your fingers will release the familiar smell immediately!

Around 305-306 km, you will see two small rivers joining from opposite sides – the Saddle (Burnt) River from the right and the Leith (Little Burnt) River from the left. By 1910 when the Dominion Land Survey came through this area, the Saddle (Burnt) River was already well-known as the Burnt River, or even earlier known as, by George M. Dawson, the french Rivière Brûlé. To avoid confusion with another Burnt River farther north in Alberta, the name was changed to Saddle River, since the river originates in the Saddle hills. The Little Burnt River was named due to its mirror

confluence with the Burnt River, but it too was renamed, this time after an early fur trader at Dunvegan. However, since locally both rivers were still being referred to by their original names, the decision was made in 1948 to recognize the old names.

The Burnt River is dried up for most of the year, only flowing enough for a canoe for about a week or so in spring. It has steep banks and a landslide once created a 5 km (3 mile) long lake 20 m (67 feet) deep.

The river maintains a fairly straight course until Long Island which you'll pass on the left. It's not too hard to guess how that island got its name! As you come along side it, you'll be able to see Camp Island, the destination for today, directly ahead. The



Peace River Paddling Guide

suggested camp area is tucked into the trees a little, but really, there are many good spots on this cow-mowed island. There is a campground, Elk Island Campground, operated by the Municipal District of Peace No. 135, on the left shore, beyond the dried-up island channel. If you feel like a walk, there is a well-travelled truck trail/road that will lead you to it (waypoint D10P04 is where road goes up to campground). Camping is free in this very basic campground with fire pits, firewood, outhouses, a playground and a water well. As you look for a spot to camp, watch where you walk or you might step in some of the pioneer's last resort for fire-starting: cow patties.

START – Fort Dunvegan

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Rycroft, AB, T0H 3A0
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Fairview, AB
County or Municipal District	Municipal District of Fairview (Dunvegan Provincial Park)
Nearest Primary Highway	2
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	Follow Hwy 2 to Dunvegan Provincial Park exit on the north side of the Peace River. For direct river access, turn right on road before Visitor Centre and follow it to the river.
Parking Instructions at Site	Park in main parking lot near Visitor Centre
Ownership of Site	Province of Alberta
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Officially open April 1 to mid-October
UTM Coordinates of Starting Point	11U Easting 0399979 Northing 6198578
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Starting Point	55° 55.332' N 118° 36.035' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	5 m
Altitude of Site in meters	346 m



Describe Terrain from River to Site	Gravel beach, then walk gradual slope up road or climb up bank near buildings on a steep trail.
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END – Camp Island

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Eaglesham, AB, T0H 1H0
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Fairview, AB
County or Municipal District	Municipal District of Peace, Number 135
Nearest Primary Highway	2
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	Turn south off Hwy 2 onto Range Rd 11 for 18.6 km (11.5 miles). Turn left and go 1.6 km (1 mile). Turn right and follow the road for about 2.8 km (1.7 miles). Turn right to circle the campground and go another approx 800 m; turn right to access the dry boat launch and a trail that leads right to the river, near Camp Island coordinates.
Parking Instructions at Site	Park anywhere on the grass that seems suitable
Ownership of Site	Crown
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Year round
UTM Coordinates of Ending Point	11U Easting 04382238 Northing 6196999
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Ending Point	55° 54.867' N 117° 59.287' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	5 m
Altitude of Site in meters	327 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Climb medium-steep bank to plateau of island

Waypoints

D10P01 (possible campsite, Green Island): 55° 54.119' N 118° 28.474' W / 11U Easting 0407806 Northing 6196153 / elev 338 m

D10P02 (possible campsite): 55° 55.045' N 118° 14.146' W / 11U

Easting 0422766 Northing 6197578 / elev 332 m

D10P03 (end point): 55° 54.867' N 117° 59.287' W / 11U Easting 04382238 Northing 6196999 / elev 327 m

D10P04 (Elk Island Park): 55° 55.108' N 117° 59.115' W / 11U Easting 0438423 Northing 6197444 / elev 328 m

Possible Campsites

- Green Island, about 283 km, river left, upstream end of the island near D10P01
- Around 298 km, river left, just after the mud/gravel of the creek mouth, up on top of the bank (D10P02)
- Along Long Island, river right, near the upstream end.

Emergency Road Access

There is a road on river left at the upstream end of Green Island, and another at 288 km also from the left, near the end of all the islands/gravel bars in this area. Ten kilometres later, at 298 km, there is another road on the left. There is road access at Camp Island by following the trail to Elk Island Park, or by walking to waypoint D10P04. Once in the campground, stay to the right to reach the road leading up the valley.

Bibliography

Waterhole and the Land North of the Peace, published by the Waterhole Old Timers Association.

Alberta Wayside Wildflowers, Linda Kershaw, published by Lone Pine, p. 102

Alberta Geographical Place Names

<http://www.albertasource.ca/Placenames/>

Images

The Dunvegan Ferry circa 1935 (Glenbow Archives photo NA-3145-5)

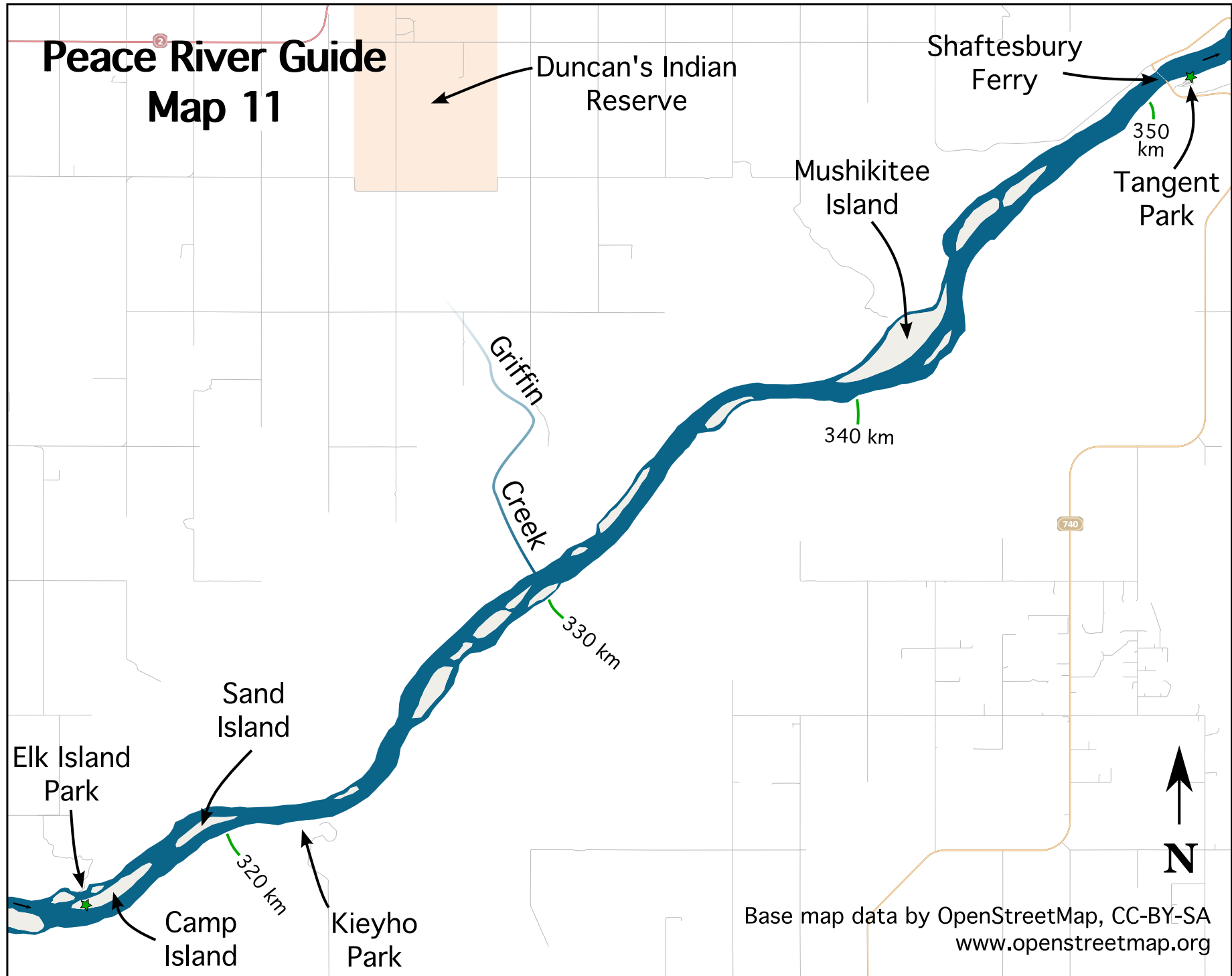
Illustration of how a cable ferry works (by Teresa Griffith)

The curve of the river around 293 km (Photo by Carolyn Kristensen)

Approaching Long Island (Photo by Teresa Griffith)

Peace River Guide

Map 11



Guide 11

Camp Island to Tangent Park

Name of River Section	Camp Island to Tangent Park
Paddling Time	3.5 – 7 hrs
Paddling Distance	36 km (316 - 352 km)
Rapids (Class number)	Class I – no rapids
Portage	none
Typical speed of current on this section	4 – 6 km/hr
Mobile (cellular) telephone access	Patchy at Tangent
Appeal to Families & Children	This is an excellent river trip for families that don't want to be too far from civilization or paddle too much in one day.
Appeal to People with passion for topic	Since there isn't too much paddling today, explore some interesting sites along this section.
Scenic Appeal of River Section	★★★★
Possible as a day-trip?	Yes
NTS maps required for this section	83 N, 84 C (83 N/13, 84 C/4)

Caution: Jet boat races are sometimes scheduled between Fort Dunvegan and Peace River! Find out if they are taking place before you start out — it is not safe to paddle near these jet boats during the race! Check the town of Peace River's

website (www.peaceriver.ca), or visitor information centre at 780-624-2044.

The river turns northeast today, and you'll be treated to beautiful islands and an expanding river valley as you paddle to the Shaftesbury Ferry crossing and the lovely Tangent Park Campground. You'll leave the true wilderness behind after 30 km of paddling today and for the last 6 km, you'll float past cabins and cottages.

Right after departing Camp Island, you'll see a low, sand-dune island in the middle of the river – you'll probably pass it on the left. Alexander Mackenzie mentions this island in his journals; one day after departing Fort Fork, they camped on a sand island, and this would seem to be the only sand island he could have been referring to. There is tall grass and vegetation growing on it now, since the river is dam-controlled and no longer floods in spring, and its a favourite spot for deer. The current is a bit constricted as you round the island, so expect some waves.

Once the river turns due east, you'll pass Kieyho Park on the right (D11P01). It was one of 12 parks, among Pratt's Landing, Many Islands and Cotillion, funded by the provincial and federal governments in the early 90's to promote tourism on the river. It's now an unmaintained campground and river access point. Watch for a sign part way up the bank on the right. Pull over and explore awhile here; you'll find a trail leading up the bank to a unique stone cabin, built in 1993 from river rocks by a Mennonite man, David



Donaldson, now in his sixties, who delights in building things the old way. Prisoners from the Peace River Correctional Centre were used to help with the heavy labour. The cabin has a wood stove, and on a drizzly day, I'd choose this as my camping spot!

The name Kieyho has an interesting story behind it. This area was originally called North Eaglesham Park, for the nearby village of Eaglesham. Eagle Park was suggested as an alternative name, because there were many eagles nesting in the area. This not being a very interesting name, the park's creators decided to find out the Cree word for "eagle." They asked some Cree elders who said it was "kieyho" (and spelled it out), because it is the sound an eagle makes. The Plains Cree word for eagle is "kihew" and the Woodland Cree word is "mikisew." Even though the name "Kieyho" might seem to be misspelled, don't forget that Cree was never a written language to begin with, and now it has its own alphabet which looks completely different from ours.

As you depart or pass Kieyho Park, you'll pass a sickle-shaped island fitted into the curve on river left – the island channel is quite dried up – with some gravel bars alongside. Stay right to find the deepest water. As you turn north, watch your GPS, in UTM mode, to see the Northing change from 6199999 to 6200000 and U change to V. Look at your topo map, ahead a little, for a dashed line signifying a pipeline crossing. This one is natural gas, about 91 cm (36") in diameter.

All along river right is the continuation of the Peace River

Wildlands Provincial Park. This protected area isn't exactly untouched; like so much of Alberta's wilderness, there are cutlines for seismic tests, which you can see on your topo map as perfectly straight dashed lines crisscrossing the park. Since oil companies don't share information, each company cuts its own lines and does their own tests, using the compression waves from the seismic charges to "see" into the earth, similar to how sonar can see through pitch-black water. This is how oil and gas formations are found and evaluated for how much of the raw resource is present. Exploration companies have strict guidelines they must adhere to in order to work in protected areas such as this one.

Right after the pipeline crossing, around 326 km, a cluster of islands and gravel bars begins on the right. On the 1:250,000 topo maps, it shows as 5 islands, with the fifth one tucked in very close to the shore. You'll paddle past these lovely islands for about 5 km, and as the island group ends, look for the Griffin Creek valley on the left, with a gravel bar at its mouth (approx. 331 km). You're likely to see a boat or two docked there; this is the river access for Peace Valley Guest Ranch (D11P02).

Peace Valley Guest Ranch is owned by Bob and Lois Allen and this beautiful property along the north shore of the river has been in Bob's family for over half a century. In 1990, they decided to open a guest ranch, which enables visitors to see the two-storey log cabin built in 1919. They have several smaller, newer guest cabins, and paddlers are most welcome to stop in for a visit – just

be warned that it is a working ranch, and there might not always be someone around to make you coffee. If you would like to stay there, please contact Bob or Lois ahead of time at (780) 338-2183 or by E-mail: pvguestranch@yahoo.com. Look for the way up to the cabins near the boat landing.

Prior to the Allen's, the ranch house was used by hunters only, and before that, it was said to be a brothel and there are rumours of ghosts. The house was originally built by Vyvien Merle (Ben) Ployart for his young bride, Jennie May Sharp. In the 1920's, the ranch was a stopping place for the steamboat *D.A. Thomas* as well as a post office for the region.

Griffin Creek is named after Thomas Griffin, a settler who arrived in the Peace River area in 1904. He grew wheat and barley and was known for promoting the area as prime agricultural land.

Within about 3 km of passing Griffin Creek, as you come to the beginning of an island on your left, watch your GPS again as



you pass from 55° 59' N to 56° 00' N (and switch topo maps). On the 1:250,000 topo maps, around 336 km, there is a small island marked, but this is in fact larger than indicated. The next island you will encounter is the large Mushikitee Island. Mackenzie noted in his journals that mushikitee means “big” in Knisteneaux (Cree).



Staying to the right of this island, you'll find yourself in a lovely channel between this island and the narrow one on the right, and then more islands and

channels after the 344 km mark. We stayed generally to the right, but it looks like there is a channel to the left of the large island that starts around 344 km. Be very alert for gravel bars and shallow areas for these last 9 km.

By the time you're at 348 km, you've left the wilderness and will soon hear traffic from two nearby secondary highways. You'll see several cottages and cabins on river left, marked as "Early Gardens" on maps.

The name Early Gardens comes from the market gardening operation of a settler, J. B. Early, who moved here from Washington State in 1916. Early divided his land between two farming operations – pasture for a registered herd of Jersey cows and Belgian horses, and irrigated gardens to grow vegetables (such as sweet corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, and many others) and flowers. In

addition to being well-known for helping bring dairies (milk processing) to this region, he was famous for his flowers: carnations, hollyhocks, giant delphiniums, petunias and over 175 varieties of gladiolus. The steamboat *D.A. Thomas* sold tickets for sightseeing excursions up the river during the 1920's to see the Early Gardens. The actual gardens were ~1 km upstream of the cottages.

As you paddle past the cottages, look ahead for the Shaftesbury Ferry operating at Blakely Landing. Originally served by a private ferry, started in 1951 by local farmer Everett Blakely, the local people petitioned the government to take over the ferry operation, which it did in 1978 when the government built a regulation ferry. The ferry is pushed by a tugboat, but uses the same pontoon angling techniques as other ferries. It is operated by La Prairie Group. Without this ferry, people living in communities south of the river would have to travel about 100 km around to get to the town of Peace River. In winter, the ferry is pulled up on shore and an ice bridge is maintained. Local people have to go the long way when this crossing is unusable, at least twice a year – when the ice is too thin due to spring break up or in fall when it hasn't formed well enough yet. Some people are concerned that if BC Hydro's Site C dam is built, the ice won't form a very good ice bridge at all.

As you paddle toward the ferry crossing (centered at D11P03), try to get a sense of how fast the ferry crosses, so that when you are closer, you can time your passage so you don't

interfere. Smaller boats are always supposed to give way to larger boats, and this includes the ferry. This is complicated by the current – it will keep pushing you toward the ferry, so you need to be careful. The ferry operator may not be on the lookout for canoes.



The ferry only crosses on demand, so it won't necessarily cross on a regular pattern. Since the campground is on river right after the ferry, stay to this side, and try to pass the ferry's dock a few minutes after it heads for the opposite shore. Be careful of the ferry's wake. Make sure to smile and wave at any waiting vehicles as you paddle by! Once you've set up camp, you can ride the ferry as a passenger, across and back, if you'd like – it operates from 7 am to 11 pm.

A large wooden sign for the Tangent Park Campground,

facing the river just downstream of the ferry crossing, might make you think that this is where you should stop paddling – don't! You will find the trail that leads up to the campground about 500 m farther downstream, at the end-point coordinates of this guide (waypoint D11P04), so paddle as close to those coordinates as possible. Watch for a gravel bar along the river's edge here. Once you find the trail, it is only 300 m or so to the campsites, with a short section of the trail that is fairly steep. Be extra careful of bears along this trail. You'll find a grassy clearing at first, which you can camp at, or you can walk farther up the bank where you'll see a ball diamond. The camp sites, main office, and **showers with hot water** are to the right (west) of the ball diamond. There are also the usual camping amenities and lovely walking trails. Campsites for tenters cost \$10 (price in 2010).

START – Camp Island

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Eaglesham, AB, T0H 1H0
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Fairview, AB
County or Municipal District	Municipal District of Peace, Number 135
Nearest Primary Highway	2
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	Turn south off Hwy 2 onto Range Rd 11 for 18.6 km (11.5 miles). Turn left and go 1.6 km (1 mile). Turn right and follow the road for about 2.8 km (1.7 miles). Turn right to circle the campground and go another approx 800 m; turn right to access the dry boat launch and a trail that leads right to the river, near Camp Island coordinates.

Parking Instructions at Site	Park anywhere on the grass that seems suitable
Ownership of Site	Crown
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Year round
UTM Coordinates of Starting Point	11U Easting 04382238 Northing 6196999
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Starting Point	55° 54.867' N 117° 59.287' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	5 m
Altitude of Site in meters	327 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Climb medium-steep bank to plateau of island

END – Tangent Park

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Grimshaw, AB, T0H 1W0
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Grimshaw, AB
County or Municipal District	Birch Hills County
Nearest Primary Highway	2
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	Approx 2.3 km south of Grimshaw, turn off Hwy 2 at the sign for Shaftesbury Ferry, secondary Hwy 684. Follow this road for 11 km, and turn right at the T intersection. Follow this road, Hwy 740 for 5.2 km, then turn left to the ferry. Cross ferry. You can put your boat in near the ferry dock. To reach the campground, continue on Hwy 740 for about 250 m, then turn left. River access is at the far east end of the campground – go north at the ball diamond.
Parking Instructions at Site	Normal campground parking
Ownership of Site	Lease on crown land
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Officially open April - October
UTM Coordinates of Ending Point	11V Easting 0465299 Northing 6216828
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Ending Point	56° 5.719' N 117° 33.467' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	5 m
Altitude of Site in meters	322 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Trail starts out gradual but then gets quite steep for a short ways. It leads directly to the campground.

Peace River Paddling Guide

Waypoints

D11P01 (Kieyho): 55° 56.123' N 117° 54.686' W / 11U Easting 0443062 Northing 6199263

D11P02 (Guest ranch): 55° 59.302' N 117° 48.456' W / 11U Easting 0449617 Northing 6205079

D11P03 (Shaftesbury ferry): 56° 5.666' N 117° 34.084' W / 11V Easting 0464658 Northing 6216735

D11P04 (end point): 56° 5.719' N 117° 33.467' W / 11V Easting 0465299 Northing 6216828 / elev 322 m

Possible Campsites

- Kieyho Park, around 321 km, river right. It has a stone cabin with wood stove, and other possible camp sites. Waypoint D11P01 is in the middle of the river, so the park is to the right. No fire pits, firewood or other amenities provided.
- Peace Valley Guest Ranch. Look for boat(s) docked near the mouth of Griffin Creek, then follow the road/trail just upstream of the creek, up the hill to the cabins. It is somewhat steep, but no more than 400 m to walk (a quarter mile).
- Mushikitee Island, on the west (upstream) end (river left). There is said to be a clearing here, surrounded by balsam poplar and white spruce that was an old encampment used by voyageurs.
- It is quite easy to find a camping spot between 338 – 345 km on any of the islands in this area.



Emergency Road Access

Kieyho Park on river right, at approx. 321 km, has a road leading up the valley and eventually to the community of Eaglesham. Neither the park nor the road is maintained, and if it has been raining, it'll be a mess. On river right, around 329 km, there is a dashed line on topo maps, indicating a trail of some sort leading from a spot between the second and third main islands of the island grouping in this area. This may or may not be easy to find; it does not have easy river access. Much better access is found at the Peace Valley Guest Ranch at 331 km (river left). Also, there appears to be a road or trail which reaches the left shore on the far side of Mushikitee Island, about one-quarter of the way down it.

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Tangent:

<http://www.discoverthepeacecountry.com/htmlpages/tangent.html>

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Images

(Colour photos by Teresa Griffith)

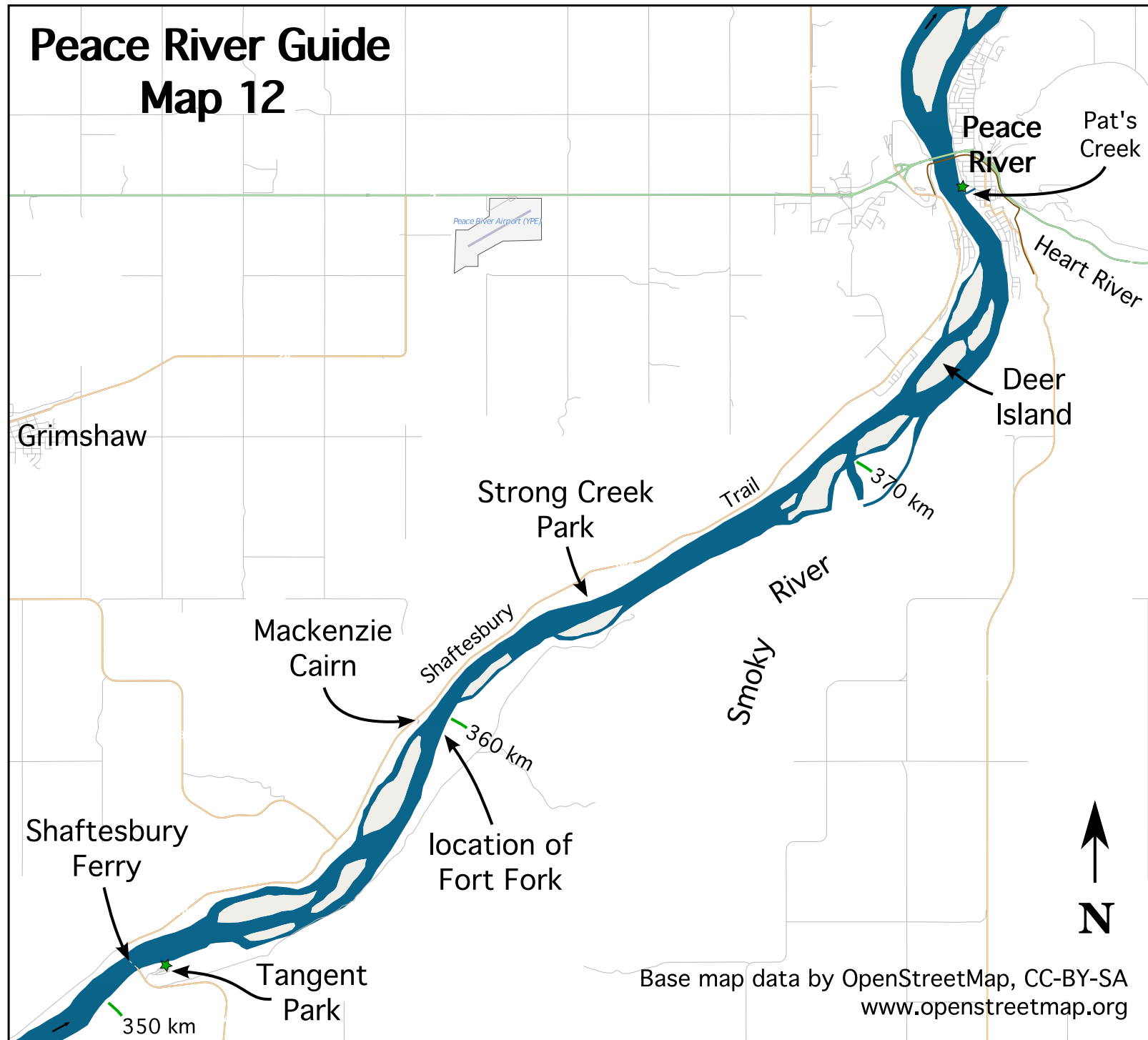
Mushikitee Island in the fall

The Shaftesbury Ferry's powerhouse is a red tugboat.

J.B. Early showing tomatoes ready for sale. (Glenbow Archives ND-3-5324a)

Peace River Guide

Map 12



Guide 12

Tangent Park to the Town of Peace River

Name of River Section	Tangent Park to the Town of Peace River
Paddling Time	2.5 – 5 hrs
Paddling Distance	24 km (352 - 376 km)
Rapids (Class number)	Class I – no rapids
Portage	none
Typical speed of current on this section	4 – 6 km/hr
Mobile (cellular) telephone access	Patchy at Tangent, good in Peace River
Appeal to Families & Children	This stretch makes a nice, short paddle for families with children of all ages!
Appeal to People with passion for topic	If you've been on the water for more than a week, reward yourself with a really great coffee or supper!
Scenic Appeal of River Section	★★★★
Possible as a day-trip?	Yes
NTS maps required for this section	84 C (C/3, C/4)

Caution: Jet boat races are sometimes scheduled between Fort Dunvegan and Peace River! Find out if they are taking place before you start out — it is not safe to paddle near these jet boats during the race! Check the town of Peace River's

website (www.peaceriver.ca), or visitor information centre at 780-624-2044. If the races are going on, I recommend you start your paddling very early (at sunrise), or hitchhike from the ferry to Peace River.

Today, the Peace River takes you past historic sites, houses and cottages, the beautiful Smoky River confluence, and scenic cliffs. With only 25 km to paddle, you can laze around the campsite, or get on the water early and enjoy some of the luxuries of town life in Peace River – go for a fancy coffee, visit a restaurant, do a little shopping or visit the museum – all within walking distance of the landing. Take advantage of the shower facilities at Tangent Park so that you don't scare anyone!

Be careful as you paddle today — there are several shallow areas in this section of the river. After winding your way through the first several islands, at about 359 km, you'll pass the first historic site of the day. On river right is the location of Fort Fork and on the left, the Mackenzie Cairn (D12P01). The bank is quite steep to climb so if you climb it, be very careful. This stone cairn and interpretive sign commemorate Mackenzie's historic journey to the Pacific Ocean, which started in the spring of 1793 when he left Fort Fork. The fort consisted of four buildings: two warehouses, a house for Mackenzie, and another for his crew. Unfortunately, nothing remains of the fort, however, a tin lantern and stone fireplace that were excavated at the site can be seen at the Peace River Museum, Archives and Mackenzie Centre – a museum worth

visiting.

Starting in the Early Gardens area, the left (north) river shore is divided into narrow lots and numbered, in the style of old settlements in Quebec which allow each landowner a small portion of riverside access. European and Métis settlers came to this area in the second half of the 19th century, not long after fur trading companies such as the Hudson's Bay Company, the Northwest Company and the XY Company established posts. This area along river left was named the Shaftesbury Settlement by Rev. John Gough Brick who established the first Anglican mission here in 1886.

As you continue around the curve, look ahead on the left shore for a large, white building. This is the Peace River Correctional Centre. It is a government of Alberta facility and it's located on the site of the St. Augustine Mission, established in 1889 by Roman Catholic Oblate Missionaries. It was a very successful mission with a church, farm and school with the main teacher, Father Joseph Vincent Le Treste, fluent in Cree, Dunne-za and French, enabling him to teach the native children in their own tongues. Unfortunately, the church, built in 1892, and cemetery are inside the Correctional Centre's grounds, so it is not easy to visit them.

Around 363-4 km, you'll see a small island tucked into the right shore, and opposite the centre of this island is a gem of a campsite, Strong Creek Park, named such because the water had a

strong, salty taste. This park has a large wooden sign facing the river, behind which is a large, grassy day-use area, and to the left (west) of which are 18 campsites. Camping is free, although basic; fire pits and outhouses are available, but no showers. There is a playground uphill from the day-use area. If you want to stop here, look for a trail going through the trees about 40 m to the right (downstream) of the large sign (land at D12P02).

Just before the first island at the Smoky River mouth, on river left and up the bank is the location of Peace River's first airport. It's not known when the airport was established, but it was closed in April 1938 after a pilot from "United Air Transport Limited" nearly died in a crash landing. The company was owned by Grant



McConachie, one of Wop May's first students at his Edmonton flying school. Wop picked out a new location for the airport – where it is today.

The Smoky River confluence was one of the most important sites in the days of the fur trade. It is like a major intersection of freeways; fur traders used both the Smoky and the Peace rivers. There were many trading forts in this area between the years 1792-1821 – some only lasting a year before being moved to a better location, sometimes just across the river. Read more about the fur trading posts in GeoTourism Canada's other field guides (see list below). Be careful as you paddle through this area as there are gravel bars, converging currents and often powerboats going up and down the Smoky River.

Watch the water clarity change as the Smoky waters join the Peace. The river isn't named for its "smoky" waters however; it got its name from coal deposits along the shore which smouldered. The water has a slight oily slick on the surface near the confluence; this could be natural or a result of industrial activity upstream on the Smoky River. Natural causes include the breakdown of organic matter (plant or animal) and certain bacteria.

After you pass the main mouth of the Smoky River (D12P03), you'll have a decision to make – you can go either way around this last island, Deer Island. The safer route is to the right, taking the outside of the curve. But, you can also go left, since there is a channel between Deer Island and the dried-up island on the left

shore. This way is quite narrow and about half a kilometre shorter, but I don't recommend it because this channel can be choked with gravel bars, and if you meet a jet boat, there won't be much room to let each other by. By now, you may have seen a powerboat or two. Whichever way you choose, be alert to gravel bars as they are common here.

As you round the curve, you'll see houses high up on the right bank and low beige cliffs. Just downstream of the Smoky



confluence, outcrops of bedrock from the Cretaceous Peace River Formation start to show on both sides of the river. Notice the layering in the right bank's sandstone and signs of erosion, both

recent and in the past – a threat the town is continuously under. The current steadily undercuts the banks and ice floes scrape at it each spring. Erosion also occurs from water flowing down the slope of the hills, and the net result is erosion in the form of landslides, slumps, and drunken forests (see guide #22). Paddle a little farther, and you'll get your first view of the Peace River bridges.

The east (right) bank is steeped in history, with the Grouard Trail ending in downtown Peace River, where fur trading warehouses, stores, the telegraph office, and the Diamond P store (owned by the Peace River Trading and Land Co., created in 1911) sprung up to serve natives, fur traders and pioneers alike. There were boat builders on both shores – the Beulah Boat company had a boat-building yard on the east shore just south of the



Heart River, and large steamboats such as the *S.S. Grenfell* (in 1912), *S.S. Northland Call* (in 1915), and the impressive *D.A. Thomas* (1916) were built on the west shore, near the large gravelled area that the jet boaters use to launch their boats. There is insufficient room in this guide to discuss the history properly; read GeoTourism Canada's related guides and visit the museum to learn more.

There are two places to come ashore – one on the left, at the large gravel boat launching area used by the powerboats, and the one I recommend more so, the right shore at Riverfront Park (D12P04). As you approach downtown, aim for the large grey condo building close to the river, and watch on the right for two small river mouths you must go past: the Heart River and Pat's Creek. The first, Heart River, flows in a beautiful valley south-

east of the town of Peace River. The second, Pat's Creek was named after Pat Wesley, a Métis man who lived in a cabin along the creek. He unfortunately contracted smallpox, and the Anglican Reverend's wife, risking infection, cared for him in his last days. To show his appreciation of her kindness, Wesley willed five acres of prime real estate to the Anglican Church. He is buried by the church. This creek used to flow right through downtown, causing floods and havoc each year, but in 1980 it was redirected through a culvert, which you can see if you look carefully along the right bank.

You can land your boat anywhere after Pat's Creek. If you watch, you can land on a rocky area instead of mud. There is a short walk up to a gravel vehicle turnaround, and over the berm, Riverfront Park and Peace River's metropolitan downtown await you – it will seem busy and bustling after 11 days of wilderness! If you are staying overnight, there are several hotels within walking distance. You might particularly like Third Mission Heritage Suites. It is about a block from Riverfront Park, just above the bank from Pat's Creek culvert, in a historical building. It was built in 1918 at the St. Augustine mission and moved to its present location in 1958 when it became an apartment building. It was recently completely restored, and the suites boast fireplaces, in-floor heating, laundry facilities, internet access, and fully equipped kitchens. And toilets that flush! For reservations, call (780) 624-3883 or 1-866-624-3883 or email bookings@thirdmission.ca. Browse their website at www.thirdmission.ca.

If you plan on continuing your trip, you may be wondering about where to store your canoe. You can arrange to leave your canoe at Belle Petroleum Centre, about 3 blocks (600 m) north of Riverfront Park. Call (780) 624-8318 or (888) 602-5546 or email events@bpcentre.ca **ahead of time** to take care of it.

There are two campsites within the town of Peace River – the Lion's and Pine Ridge, both on river left – however neither one has river access. I suggest you take a break from camping, get a hotel downtown, and store your boat for the night.

Additional Notes

If you are doing this portion as a day trip, it is easier to start at the Shaftesbury Ferry crossing instead of the Tangent Park river access point.

START – Tangent Park

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Grimshaw, AB, T0H 1W0
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Grimshaw, AB
County or Municipal District	Birch Hills County
Nearest Primary Highway	2
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	Approx 2.3 km south of Grimshaw, turn off Hwy 2 at the sign for Shaftesbury Ferry, secondary Hwy 684. Follow this road for 11 km, and turn right at the T intersection. Follow this road, Hwy 740 for 5.2 km, then turn left to the ferry. Cross ferry. You can put your boat in near the ferry dock. To reach the

	campground, continue on Hwy 740 for about 250 m, then turn left. River access is at the far east end of the campground – go north at the ball diamond.
Parking Instructions at Site	Normal campground parking
Ownership of Site	Lease on crown land
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Officially open April - October
UTM Coordinates of Ending Point	11V Easting 0465299 Northing 6216828
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Ending Point	56° 5.719' N 117° 33.467' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	5 m
Altitude of Site in meters	322 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Trail starts out gradual but then gets quite steep for a short ways. It leads directly to the campground.

END – Town of Peace River

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Peace River, AB, T8S1S4
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Peace River, AB
County or Municipal District	Town of Peace River
Nearest Primary Highway	2
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	Exit Hwy 2 towards downtown. Follow signs for boat launch. The road over the berm is to the left (SE) of the gazebo.
Parking Instructions at Site	Small parking lots near the gazebo
Ownership of Site	Town of Peace River
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Year round
UTM Coordinates of Starting Point	11V Easting 0481543 Northing 6232175
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Starting Point	56° 14.046' N 117° 17.864' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	6 m
Altitude of Site in meters	310 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Gradual slope up to gravel turn-around, then steep slope up the grassy berm, or stay on gravel. Once you're over the berm, you're downtown!

Peace River Paddling Guide

Waypoints

D12P01 (Fort Fork): 56° 8.194' N 117° 28.234' W / 11V Easting 0470755 Northing 6221379

D12P02 (Strong Creek): 56° 9.605' N 117° 25.125' W / 11V Easting 0473992 Northing 6223976

D12P03 (Smoky River mouth): 56° 11.253' N 117° 20.073' W / 11V Easting 0479236 Northing 6227004

D12P04 (end point): 56° 14.046' N 117° 17.864' W / 11V Easting 0481543 Northing 6232175 / elev 310 m

Possible Campsites

- The first island you pass, at 353 km, has camping potential (river left).
- Strong Creek Park, 363-4 km, river left (D12P02)

Emergency Road Access

Shaftesbury Trail follows the river on the left all day, so if you need assistance, that will be the fastest way.

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<http://www.umaine.edu/waterresearch/FieldGuide/onthewater.htm>

Images

(Colour photos by Teresa Griffith)

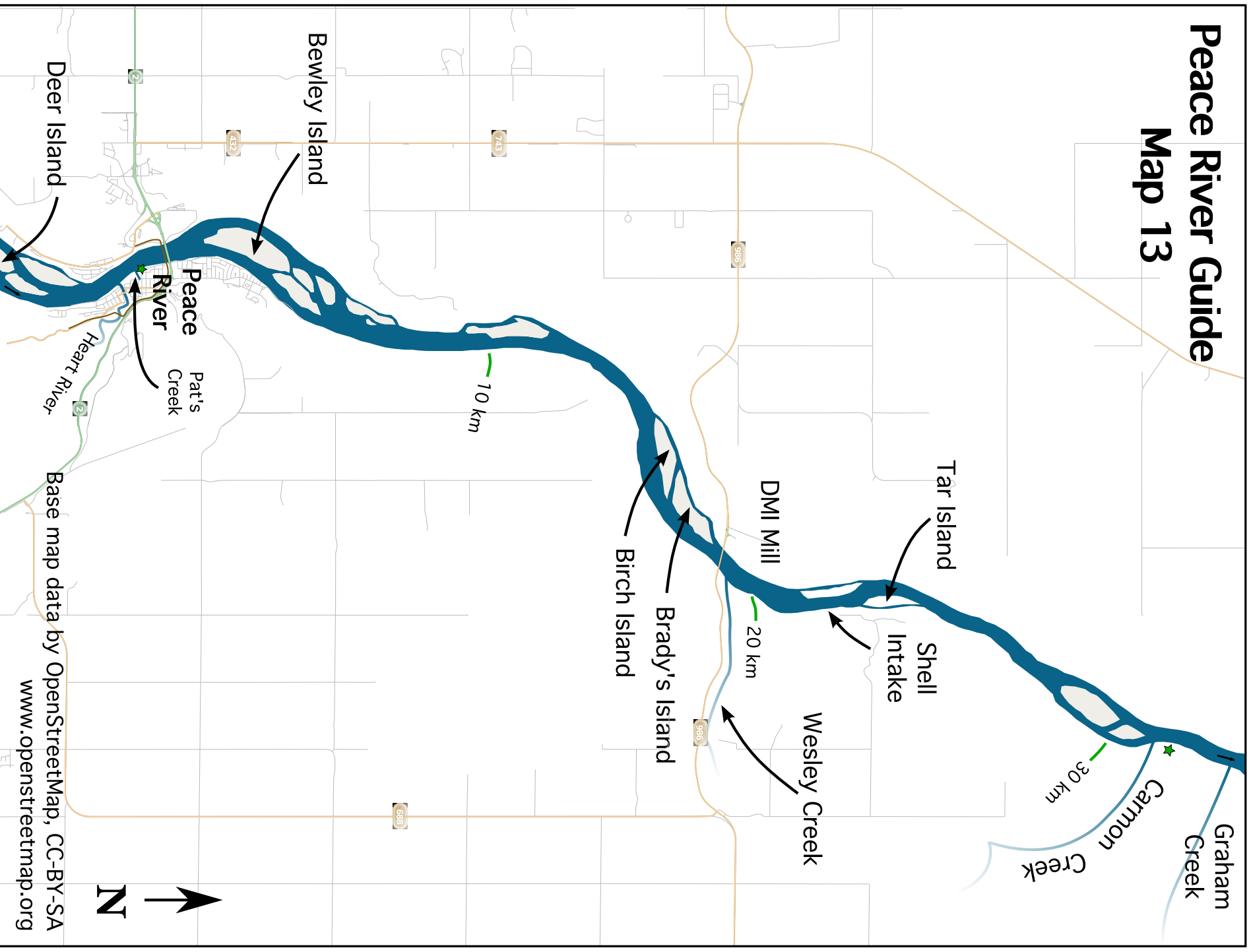
Approaching the Smoky River confluence

Erosion along the shore

Two steamboats docked downtown. Photo is taken from part way
up the east hill. Notice the rail bridge. c.1918-1930 (Peace River
Museum, Archives and Mackenzie Centre, photo AAGE00020062)

Peace River Guide

Map 13



Guide 13

The Town of Peace River to Graham's Flat

Name of River Section	Town of Peace River to Graham's Flat	
Paddling Time	3 – 6 hrs	
Paddling Distance	32 km (0 – 32 km)	[376 – 408 km]
Rapids (Class number)	Class I – no rapids	
Portage	none	
Typical speed of current on this section	2-5 km/hr	
Mobile (cellular) telephone access	only in Peace River	
Appeal to Families & Children	This section makes the first half of an excellent 2-day paddle with a great campsite to look forward to.	
Appeal to People with passion for topic	Paddle under bridges and past sheer cliffs as you leave the city behind and find some serenity at a hidden-gem campsite.	
Scenic Appeal of River Section	★★★★★	
Possible as a day-trip?	No	
NTS maps required for this section	83 C (C/3, C/6)	

Caution: Jet boat races are sometimes scheduled between Fort Dunvegan and Peace River! Find out if they are taking place before you start out — it is not safe to paddle near these jet boats during the race! Check the town of Peace River's

Peace River Paddling Guide

website (www.peaceriver.ca), or visitor information centre at 780-624-2044. If the races are going on, I recommend you start your paddling very early (at sunrise), or hitchhike from the ferry to Peace River.

Prepare for an adventure! Today's paddling will take you under three bridges, past historic sites, oil/gas wells, picturesque cliffs and lovely islands. You only have 30 km to paddle today, giving you time for one last coffee-house visit before you head into the wilderness.

To start with, you'll paddle under the rail bridge and the highway bridge. The rail bridge was built by the Canadian Bridge Company of Walkerville, Ontario, by 250 men, who constructed it from February 1917 to November 1918. It is 529 metres (1,736 feet) long with five concrete abutments in the water. At that time, the steamboat *D.A. Thomas* was the queen of the river, so the bridge was built with it in mind – the centre section was made to allow its smokestacks to pass under, however, at high water, the stacks had to be folded down. The rail bridge provided an essential link in transportation needed for the Peace region, and the town boomed when it was completed.

Until the highway bridge was built decades later, people had to cross the river via ferry or share the rail bridge. The ferry was installed in 1909, bringing freight, horse-drawn wagons, and later, automobiles across, which explains why the settlement was known as Peace River Crossing for many years. Once the rail bridge was





the offices at the grain elevator on the east bank (near where the grey condo building is now). There were many oil and gas wells drilled in the vicinity of the river, some of which were abandoned and had to be capped and cleaned up by a government/industry task force in the early part of the 21st century. Read more about this in tomorrow's guide (#14).

One of Peace River's residential areas, on river right downstream of the bridges, is situated on a large flat. Part of this flat was named “moccasin flat” – where travellers coming from Fort Vermilion switched from moccasins to shoes. It was the culture of the fur traders to clean up and change clothes

built, people also crossed that way, giving right-of-way to train locomotives. Sometimes, cars had to back up to allow a train across. How we take for granted that blue metal bridge! It wasn't built until 1968, fifty years after the rail bridge. Steer clear of the many bridge abutments as you paddle under these two bridges. Waypoint D13P01 is between the two bridges, in the center of the river.

Near the west end of the rail bridge, one of the earliest gas wells was drilled here. Victory Oil Company Number 1 was drilled in 1918. The only commercial use was in 1937 when a small pipeline brought gas across the river (under the rail bridge) to heat

before arriving at a town – not a bad idea at all! This and other flats north of the town of Peace River are named; please visit the Peace River Museum, Archives and Mackenzie Centre to learn more about the stories behind the names.

After passing under the bridges, you will go around Bewley Island. It's unfortunate that better records were not kept in the past — even the museum staff could not say who the island was named after. All we know is that the name was recorded by surveyor J.S. Galletly in 1912. You can choose to go left or right around the



island, although the deeper channel is to the left. Be very mindful of gravel bars as you pass three-quarters of the way around this large island – the topographic maps show many, and they are right. Keep an eye out for deer along both shores downstream of the bridges.

There are some spectacular cliffs along the river valley here, such as the vertical sandstone along river left along Bewley Island. Have you noticed that the rocks in the valley have looked different since the Smoky River confluence? You can now see the Peace River Formation (bedrock), which is the layer underlying the Shaftesbury Formation. Farther downstream, up high on the right shore, there is a particular rock face I've named "castle rock" around 10 km. At 13 km, look for a capped oil well, originally

drilled by the Peace River Oil Company, close to the river on the left shore (D13P02), and then as you paddle around the right bend, you'll see Birch Island and after it, Brady's Island. Beware of a gravel bar alongside the downstream end of Birch Island. Soon, the DMI bridge will be in view.

Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd. owns the bleach kraft pulp mill located on river left just after the bridge. While construction on both the mill and the bridge started in 1988, the mill, which produces 480,000 tonnes of kraft pulp annually, was finished in 1990 and the bridge was completed in 1991. It is 734 metres (2,408 feet) long. Take a close look at the four concrete abutments as you paddle under the bridge. You may notice that they are not simply perpendicular to the bridge deck above; they are angled to create the smallest cross-section to the current of the river (D13P03).

Be aware that the river can get wavy after passing under the DMI bridge. Fill up your water bottles now and stay in the centre or to the right to avoid the water outlets from the mill. Just after the bridge, Wesley Creek flows in on the right shore, named after Pat Wesley (see guide #12).

The building complex on the right around 22 km is the Shell intake water pump station, which withdraws water from the river to supply Shell operations to the east – don't paddle too close to the intake. There's a nice spot for lunch, rockhounding, or camping just downstream of it on the right, at Tar Island, where tar was first

noted by Dominion geologist R.G. McConnell in 1893. The tar was used by settlers in the early 1900's on roofs in Peace River. The Tar Island Oil Company drilled the first well in the region in 1915 near the tar seepage.

Around 24-25 km, on river right is Glasier's Flats, named after the farmer who homesteaded there. On one particularly difficult trip upriver from Fort Vermilion in May 1948, Ben Peters tells the story of walking to Peace River from these flats because the barge loaded with cattle could not make any more headway against the strong spring runoff. He fought through flooded areas, creeks, thick bush through the night for about 18 km, and then about 6 km along a trail to get to the Peace River HBC office to tell them the cattle needed feed and the boat, fuel.

On 1:250,000 topo maps, there is a small island indicated at about 26 km, and it looks like it's somewhat in the middle of the river. In reality, it is near the right shore, so you will just float by it. The next island is more centered, however, and you can choose which side to take. There are some interesting currents after this island. Whichever way you choose to go, after passing this island, make your way to river right, as today's camp site at Graham's Flat is drawing near. The flat was named after Liza Graham who settled in this area with Smokey Deemil in the 1920's; they lived off the land as trappers. The flat is also seen labelled as Smoky Flat (sic) on some maps.

Carmon Creek, the first of two creeks joining the Peace from

the right in this area, named after an early settler, was at one time called "Rat Root Creek."

After the island, keep a close eye out for the trail leading up to Graham's Flat. It was originally a River Rats recreation site, but the Rats are no longer active. On 1:50,000 topo maps, it appears as a small white (agricultural) area between two creeks, Carmon Creek and (unlabelled) Graham Creek, but on 1:250,000, there are no clues it's there. Watch for a small creek, and within about 800 m you'll see some orange flagging tape tied to the trees, a large sheet of plywood (the faded sign, if it's still there), and a narrow trail leading up. When I saw the site, it was a bit overgrown, but worth stopping at. Make plenty of noise as you ascend the trail to scare



any bears away. There are a couple of fire pits on a low shelf with camping potential, and then farther up the trail, a large clearing with a surprise – a beautiful octagonal shelter! There are also decaying picnic tables and outhouses – don't use them. But use the shelter if you wish, and enjoy the clearing and the gorgeous view of the river.

START – Town of Peace River

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Peace River, AB, T8S1S4
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Peace River, AB
County or Municipal District	Town of Peace River
Nearest Primary Highway	2
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	Exit Hwy 2 towards downtown. Follow signs for boat launch. The road over the berm is to the left (SE) of the gazebo.
Parking Instructions at Site	Small parking lots near the gazebo
Ownership of Site	Town of Peace River
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Year round
UTM Coordinates of Starting Point	11V Easting 0481543 Northing 6232175
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Starting Point	56° 14.046' N 117° 17.864' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	6 m
Altitude of Site in meters	310 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Gradual slope up to gravel turn-around, then steep slope up the grassy berm, or stay on gravel. Once you're over the berm, you're downtown!

END – Graham's Flat

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Peace River, AB T8S 1S4
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Peace River, AB
County or Municipal District	Northern Sunrise County
Nearest Primary Highway	986
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	N/A
Parking Instructions at Site	N/A
Ownership of Site	Crown
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Year round
UTM Coordinates of Ending Point	11V Easting 0493149 Northing 6257395
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Ending Point	56° 27.660' N 117° 6.670' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	5 m
Altitude of Site in meters	301 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	A short steep walk up to an extensive flat

Waypoints

D13P01 (between bridges): 56° 14.372' N 117° 18.247' W / 11V Easting 0481151 Northing 6232782

D13P02 (oil well): 56° 20.293' N 117° 15.591' W / 11V Easting 0483935 Northing 6243752

D13P03 (DMI bridge): 56° 21.621' N 117° 11.115' W / 11V Easting 0488554 Northing 6246202

D13P04 (end point): 56° 27.660' N 117° 6.670' W / 11V Easting 0493149 Northing 6257395 / elev 301 m

Possible Campsites

- Along Tar Island, river right.
- Go around the island at 28 km to the **right**. Along the side of the island, river left, about half way down, there are some nice camp possibilities.

Emergency Road Access

There are several places of access, most notably the DMI bridge where secondary Hwy 986 crosses the river. Around 22 km, on river right, there is a road leading to the Shell Intake buildings.

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Alberta Forestry, Lands, and Wildlife Survey document, "Recreation Sites in the Lower Peace River Valley." 1990, Edmonton.

Images

(Colour photos by Teresa Griffith)

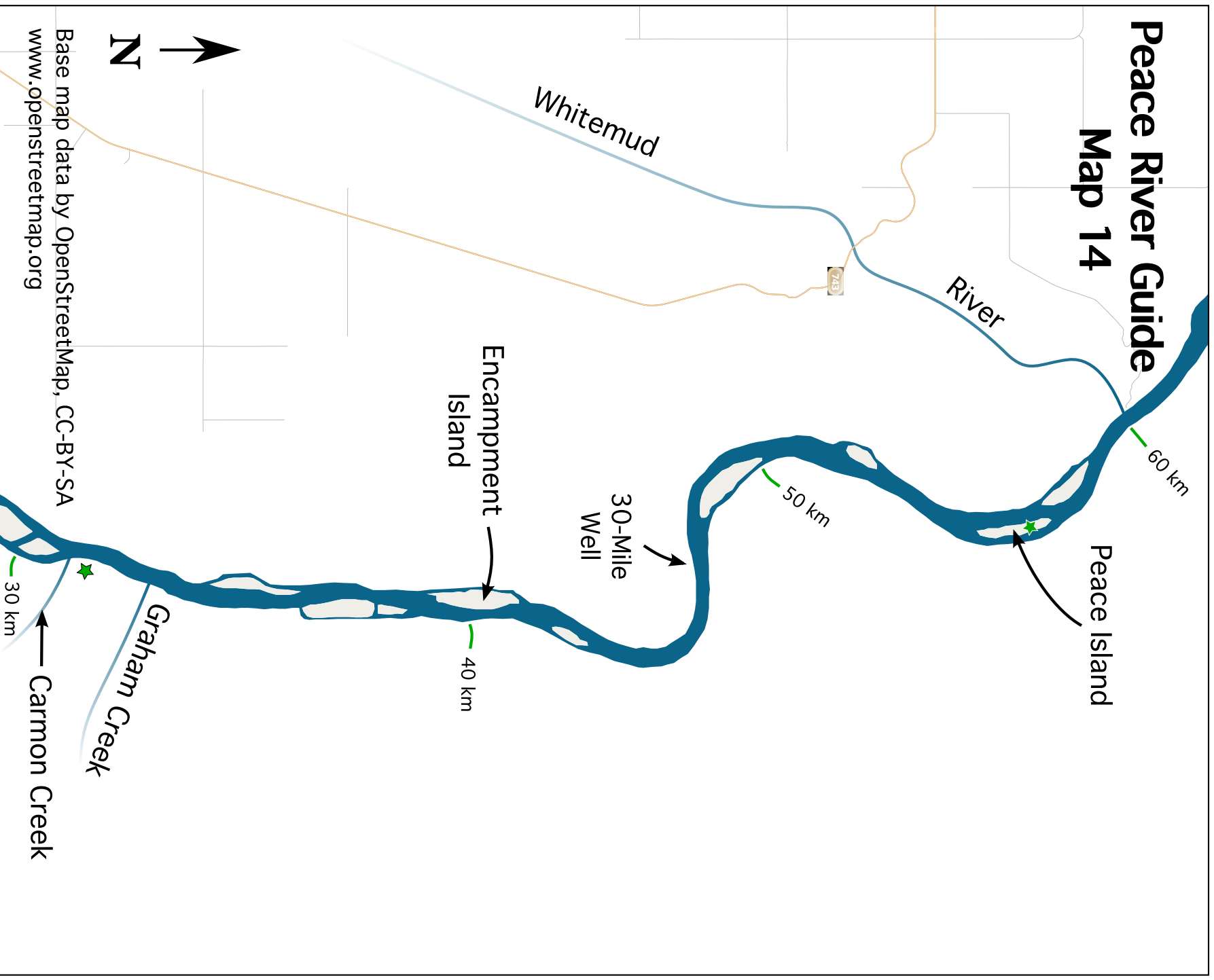
The Peace River Ferry c.1911-1916 (Peace River Museum, Archives and Mackenzie Centre, PRMA-MC 80.1123.005)

The "castle rock"

View of the River Rats rec site from the water

Peace River Guide

Map 14



Guide 14

Graham's Flat to Peace Island

Name of River Section	Graham's Flat to Peace Island	
Paddling Time	3 – 6 hrs	
Paddling Distance	25 km (32 – 57 km)	[408 – 433 km]
Rapids (Class number)	Class I – no rapids	
Portage	none	
Typical speed of current on this section	2 – 6 km/h	
Mobile (cellular) telephone access	none	
Appeal to Families & Children	This section is a great sequel to yesterday, with breathtaking scenery and a chance to romp the hillsides and explore a safe, abandoned well site.	
Appeal to People with passion for topic	Amazing cliffs and valleys greet you along bends in the river, and you get to take time out to explore an abandoned well site.	
Scenic Appeal of River Section	★★★★★	
Possible as a day-trip?	No	
NTS maps required for this section	84 C (C/6, C/11)	

Today's paddling is a nice mix of straight and curvy, island and gravel bar dodging, and an interesting site to explore. The valley alternates between steep tree-covered slopes and fantastic sandstone cliffs.

Peace River Paddling Guide



Just after you depart, you'll see Graham Creek on the right, named after Liza Graham (see guide #13).

You'll paddle by a flat for about 2 km on river left, until reaching the first island.

The first reach of the river today will take you almost due north, weaving around islands and sandbars as you go. Always be alert, but in particular, there are gravel bar markings (dots) on the 1:250,000 topo map that are hard to see due to the dark bank that marks the border between municipal districts. I found a large one (visible on the 1:50,000 map) around 43 km on river right, before the first bend in the river of the day.



The island centered at 40 km is Encampment Island. A few historical sources mention a fur trading fort, Encampment Island Fort, established by the Northwest Company, but details are hard to find. It was built between 1804 and 1806, was open for just a few years, and fur trader Daniel Harmon mentioned it.

The bend at 45 km is a beautiful one, rimmed with high steep cliffs. Don't miss the amazing vertical cliffs with fascinating erosion patterns on river right, quite high up, at about 46 km. I jokingly refer to the markings as “alien hieroglyphics.” This is simply an erosion pattern in the exposed Cretaceous bedrock — most likely part of the Dunvegan Formation. The rock below the cliffs is fine grained quartzose sandstone of the Peace River Formation (see photo on previous page).

Just a little farther downstream, at 47 km on river left, is one of the oil industry's most notorious sites. Thirty-Mile Well, also nicknamed “The Well from Hell” and “Old Salty” is the most notorious of all the wells drilled along the river. It was drilled in 1916 by Peace River Petroleum Company. It blew out as it was being drilled, and for – what must be a record – **87 years** it burned more-or-less continuously as a huge torch, belched sour gas and salty-hydrogen water. After two attempts at drilling relief wells failed, it was finally properly extinguished and capped by Trican Well Service, working with the Alberta Energy Resources Conservation Board, in 2003.

You can clearly see where 30-Mile Well burned for all those



years. From the water, at waypoint D14P01, look for a large clearing with dead trees on the left bank. If you'd like to explore, you can look for a deer trail or just bushwack your way to the dead-tree clearing, which is centered on D14P02. I explored the area quite thoroughly and did not see any sign of the capped well. I did see lots of ghostly white, broken stumps of the trees that must have been killed by saltwater. There is an amazing view from here, and I'd highly recommend you climb the hill to see it.

I also found a few gooseberry bushes with delicious berries in this clearing. North American gooseberries are *Ribes hirtellum*; they grow on bushes usually less than 1 m tall. The leaves are three-lobed like the leaf on the Canadian flag, but with rounded tips. The

stalks are prickly and the berries are round and grape-like, with a green or red skin (depending on ripeness). They have “longitudinal” lines on them that run from their “north pole” or stem to their “south pole.” They are ripe in late June and July, and are quite tart when not fully ripe (see photo on next page).

After rounding the curve to the right, passing “49-km Island,” you'll see the high bank switch sides, so that the same white sandstone that was on the left cliffs is not on the right. Dodge islands and gravel bars for the next 8 km. Generally stay to the right; be alert for gravel bars.

The large island on the left bend (~57 km) just before the Whitemud River is Peace Island, the end point for this guide (D14P04). An entrepreneur from Peace River, Dave Brochu, runs the lovely island resort there, complete with cabins, showers, steak dinners, hiking trails, etc. It costs \$5 to pitch your tent, or \$15 for a tenting spot and a shower. You can also have steak dinner if you like – a nice change from the dehydrated menu you’ve probably been surviving on! Reservations are not required for the steak dinner, but you’ll have to call ahead to reserve one of the cabins (780-624-4295).

Additional Notes

To complete a 2-day trip, paddle beyond Peace Island for approximately 3 more kilometres to the road access at Whitemud River (river left). Look for some cottages and a dock.

Peace River Paddling Guide

START – Graham's Flat

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Peace River, AB T8S 1S4
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Peace River, AB
County or Municipal District	Northern Sunrise County
Nearest Primary Highway	986
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	N/A
Parking Instructions at Site	N/A
Ownership of Site	Crown
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Year round
UTM Coordinates of Ending Point	11V Easting 0493149 Northing 6257395
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Ending Point	56° 27.660' N 117° 6.670' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	5 m
Altitude of Site in meters	301 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	A short steep walk up to an extensive flat.

END – Peace Island

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Deadwood, AB, T0H1A0
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Peace River, AB
County or Municipal District	County of Northern Lights
Nearest Primary Highway	35
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	N/A
Parking Instructions at Site	N/A
Ownership of Site	Crown
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Year round
UTM Coordinates of Starting Point	11V Easting 0492366 Northing 6277984
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Starting Point	56° 38.758' N 117° 7.469' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	6 m
Altitude of Site in meters	298 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Gradual slope



Waypoints

D14P01 (view of well clearing): 56° 34.688' N 117° 6.820' W / 11V
Easting 0493017 Northing 6270434 / elev 297 m

D14P02 (well clearing): 56° 34.540' N 117° 6.852' W / 11V 11V
Easting 0492984 Northing 6270159 / elev 313 m

D14P03 (possible campsite): 56° 34.788' N 117° 8.322' W / 11V
Easting 0491480 Northing 6270620 / elev 296 m

D14P04 (end point): 56° 38.758' N 117° 7.469' W / 11V Easting
0492366 Northing 6277984 / elev 298 m

Possible Campsites

- On the island at 49 km, on river right, near the beginning of the island (D14P03)

Emergency Road Access

The only road is at the cottages near the Whitemud River mouth, or look for a trail leading due west from the downstream side of the Whitemud mouth (about 2.5 km beyond Peace Island).

Bibliography

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Images

(All photos by Teresa Griffith)

Fascinating erosion on cliffs

The 30-mile well site

Gooseberries



Peace River Guide

Map 15

Sunny Valley

90 km

UFO Rock

80 km

Hutton Creek

70 km

Cadotte

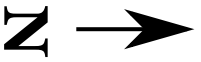
River

60 km

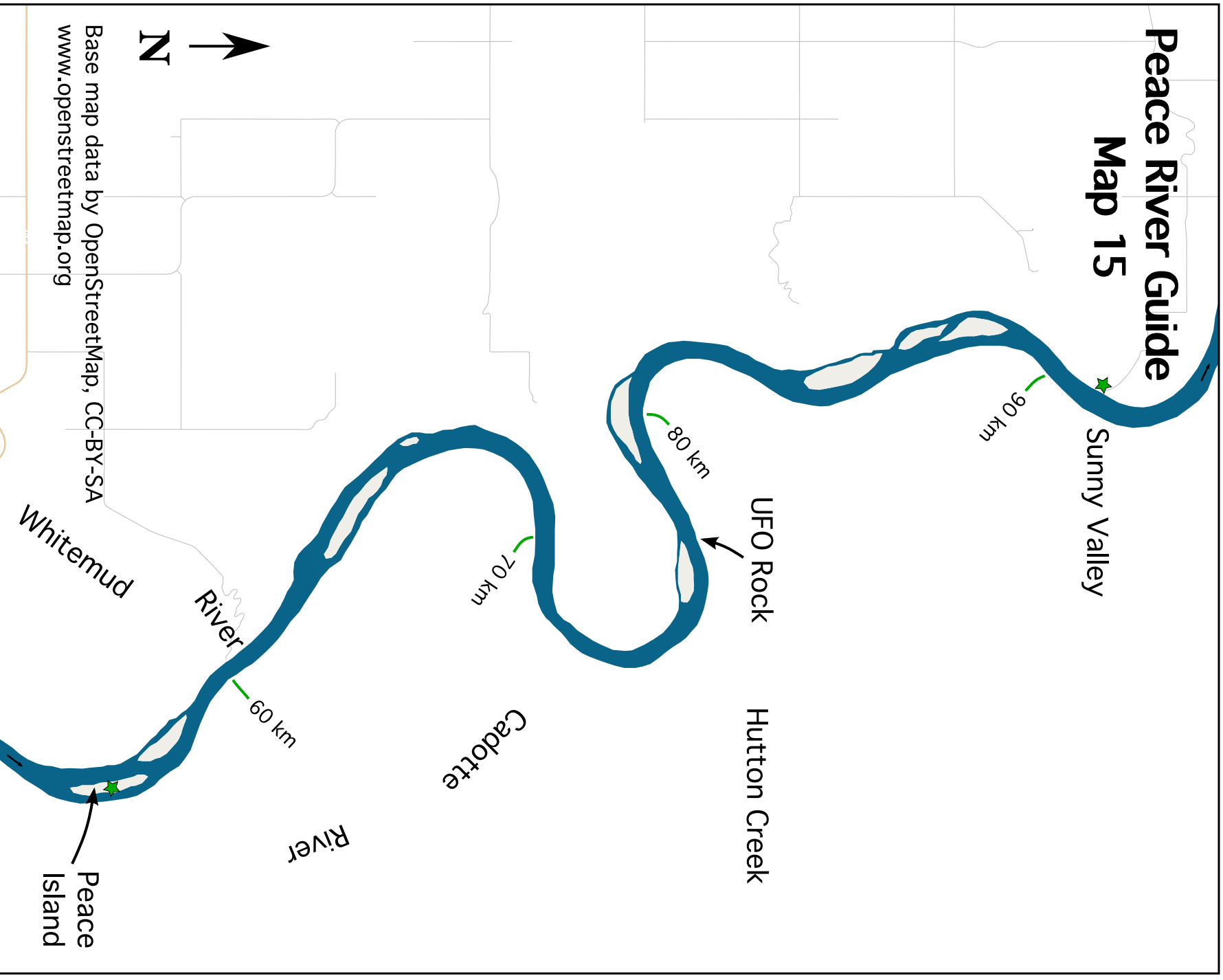
River

Whitemud

Peace
Island



Base map data by OpenStreetMap, CC-BY-SA
www.openstreetmap.org



Guide 15

Peace Island to Sunny Valley

Name of River Section	Peace Island to Sunny Valley	
Paddling Time	3 – 6.5 hrs	
Paddling Distance	34 km (57 – 91 km)	[433 – 467 km]
Rapids (Class number)	Class I – no rapids	
Portage	none	
Typical speed of current on this section	3-7 km/hr	
Mobile (cellular) telephone access	none	
Appeal to Families & Children	This section makes a nice day paddle with two chances for rockhounding and breathtaking river banks.	
Appeal to People with passion for topic	Paddling past towering cliffs, you'll navigate around a long, looping curve and have two opportunities to do some rockhounding.	
Scenic Appeal of River Section	★★★★	
Possible as a day-trip?	Yes	
NTS maps required for this section	84 C (C/11, C/14)	

Departing the Whitemud River area, you'll paddle past some of the highest cliffs since the reach downstream of Many Islands, and you'll go around the bend too!

As you depart Peace Island, make sure to glance back — the downstream end of the island has steep, sandy-looking cliffs and

trees falling off the edges due to erosion.

The first waypoint of today is the mouth of the Whitemud River, which was named for the appearance of the mud and recorded by the Geological Survey of Canada as early as 1884. The mouth of the Whitemud was the location of the Northwest Company's earliest fur trading post this far up the Peace, namely Fort McLeod. It was established in 1791, and was mentioned in Alexander Mackenzie's journals in 1792 as “the establishment of last year.” It's unclear exactly where the post was, but it operated for a few years before closing down. In comparison, the first fur trade post on the entire Peace River was established at the mouth of the Boyer River in 1788, by another NW Company employee, Charles Boyer. This goes to show you how fast-moving the NW Company was; in only 2 years, they moved about 390 km upstream. The NW Company was very aggressive in establishing posts inland, to take fur business away from the Hudson Bay Company, and competition between these two companies was fierce from 1783 when the NW Company was formed until 1821 when they could not withstand the competition any longer and amalgamated. It's interesting to note that the NW Co was a partnership of shareholders whereas the HBC was formed in 1670 by King Charles II. Profits from the NW Co were passed to the shareholders, which resulted in employees that were much more motivated to succeed than those of the HBC.

If you'd like to stop here, you can look slightly upstream of

the river mouth for a possible camping spot above the gravelly beach. The land downstream of the Whitemud is private; about 800 m farther down is a dock for some local cottages, and a farm on the flat behind.



Go to the right of the first island for the best channel. Then prepare to be wowed as you paddle towards some extremely high cliffs – over 1,000 feet (300 m)! The high bank wraps around the bend on the river left and gradually tapers off near the peak of the loop. Or should I say, the river has eroded the bank as it works its way around the bend. Perhaps some day, the loop will close and the river will take the more direct route. In such a scenario, the remaining hook-shaped lake would be an oxbow lake, which in

Australia would be called a billabong.

Around 72 km, you will pass the mouth of Cadotte River. This river is named after Jean Baptiste Cadotte, a fur trader and interpreter who travelled among the likes of Joseph and Thomas Frobisher, Alexander Henry and Peter Pond in 1775. Cadotte's sons also became traders and partners in the Northwest Company.

Around the lovely Cadotte River mouth (D15P02), you can stop and splash in the clear water, cast a line, or do some rockhounding! There is an abundance of rocks, a little driftwood, and even a cabin to explore. I didn't make it to the cabin, so I leave it up to you to explore, carefully; it is upstream of the river's mouth and among the trees. The shore is quite muddy before the river mouth, so you may want to go to the rocks and then walk back toward the cabin. This is a favourite local fishing hole.

The next creek you will paddle by is Hutton Creek, on river right. On the far side of the bend is the second rockhounding spot of the day, on river right. One feature is a large “UFO rock,” (D15P03) a very unusual-shaped rock that fell down from the side of the cliff due to erosion (see photo on the next page). This rock is a *concretion* – a spheroidal rock formed in a sedimentary host rock such as sandstone or siltstone. The concretion forms around a nucleus such as a leaf, piece of wood or animal shell in layers that have already been deposited but not yet cemented. You'll see more of these concretions down the river, in particular, north of Tompkins Landing (guide #21). There are several other large, interesting rocks

in this boulder field, and the diversity is delightful.

After departing the rock field, just around the right curve at about 81 km, you'll make your closest approach to the town of Deadwood. The Alberta Place Names section of the Alberta Online Encyclopaedia has this to say about it:

“A post office was established here in 1930. One source suggests that the first postmaster came from Deadwood, South Dakota, and hence the choice of name. In 1931, when asked about its origin, the postmaster said the name referred to the visible remains of a fire that occurred in the area thirty years earlier. Now a hamlet, it is under the jurisdiction of the MD of Northern Lights No. 22.”

Could it be coincidence then, that in about a kilometre or so, you'll start to notice a large patch of dead trees on the right bank? Could this be from a forest fire dating back all the way to 1900? Sustainable Resources Development confirmed it was from a forest fire, but not so distant past. In 2008, they began conducting prescribed burns in this area, a project that is on-going. This is done for wildlife enhancement for elk, deer and moose populations. This type of fire is meant to burn the scrubby undergrowth which is why many of the trees don't look completely black. It burns fast because of the slope of the bank. If you see other burnt-looking areas in the range of 10 km north or south of Hutton Creek, it is likely because of this wildlife enhancement project. In 2006, there was quite an outbreak of Mountain Pine Beetle in the Peace region, so this could



explain any dead *pine* trees you see in this 100 kilometre reach.

Plan to pass to the right of the next three islands and enjoy their beauty set among the valley. After rounding the next right bend, today's destination draws near, the Sunny Valley boat launch. The end coordinates for this guide are at the boat launch itself (river left), and you can camp a little ways up the road in a clearing. This may be a busy spot on nice-weather weekends as many people use this river access point.

You can also camp about 1 km downstream on the left bank past a house. It is a very shallow bank, which means you'll have to walk a ways to find a spot high enough to pitch your tent, and a

small change in river height will translate to a large change in shore line. On the flat behind the campsite is farm land.

On river right, across from the boat launch, there are some privately owned cottages. A little bit farther on the right there appears to be a small clearing suitable for camping, which was identified by an Alberta government survey in 1990. If you've got the time, you might like to explore the right side, making sure to land downstream of the cottages.

START – Peace Island

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Deadwood, AB, T0H1A0
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Peace River, AB
County or Municipal District	County of Northern Lights
Nearest Primary Highway	35
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	N/A
Parking Instructions at Site	N/A
Ownership of Site	Crown
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Year round
UTM Coordinates of Starting Point	11V Easting 0492366 Northing 6277984
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Starting Point	56° 38.758' N 117° 7.469' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	6 m
Altitude of Site in meters	298 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Gradual slope

END – Sunny Valley

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Deadwood, AB T0H 1A0
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Manning, AB
County or Municipal District	County of Northern Lights
Nearest Primary Highway	35
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	Turn east off Hwy 35 at North Star. Go east for 8.2 km. Follow curve to the right, then left for about 2 km before resuming an easterly course. Stay on this road as it curves for 13 km until you must turn right. Go south 0.8 km, turn and go east 0.8 km, turn right again and follow road for 1.5 km to the boat launch area.
Parking Instructions at Site	Park off to the side, out of others' way
Ownership of Site	Crown
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Year round
UTM Coordinates of Ending Point	11V Easting 0484201 Northing 6298031
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Ending Point	56° 49.551' N 117° 15.532' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	5 m
Altitude of Site in meters	283 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Medium-steep slope up the road

Waypoints

D15P01 (Whitemud River): 56° 39.738' N 117° 9.880' W / 11V Easting 0489906 Northing 6279806 / elev 295 m

D15P02 (Cadotte River): 56° 43.434' N 117° 10.742' W / 11V Easting 0489044 Northing 6286666 / elev 288 m

D15P03 (UFO Rock): 56° 45.101' N 117° 12.368' W / 11V Easting 0487394 Northing 6289764 / elev 285 m

D15P04 (end point): 56° 49.551' N 117° 15.532' W / 11V Easting
0484201 Northing 6298031 / elev 283 m

http://www.albertasource.ca/Placenames/resources/displaycontent.php?source_id=590

Possible Campsites

- Upstream of the Whitemud River mouth, river left
- Upstream of the Cadotte River mouth, river right, if you can find a spot to land that's not too muddy.
- Along the islands from 85-89 km.
- 1 km past the Sunny Valley boat launch, along the left shore
- 1.5 km past the Sunny Valley boat launch, along the right shore

Emergency Road Access

Around 78 km, on river left, there is a road/trail leading for several kilometres to a gravel road. Do not be fooled into thinking the trail on river right (visible on topo maps) near the cottages at Sunny Valley leads anywhere; it only leads into the bush.

Bibliography

Alberta Place Names

Peace River Paddling Guide

Images

(All photos by Teresa Griffith)

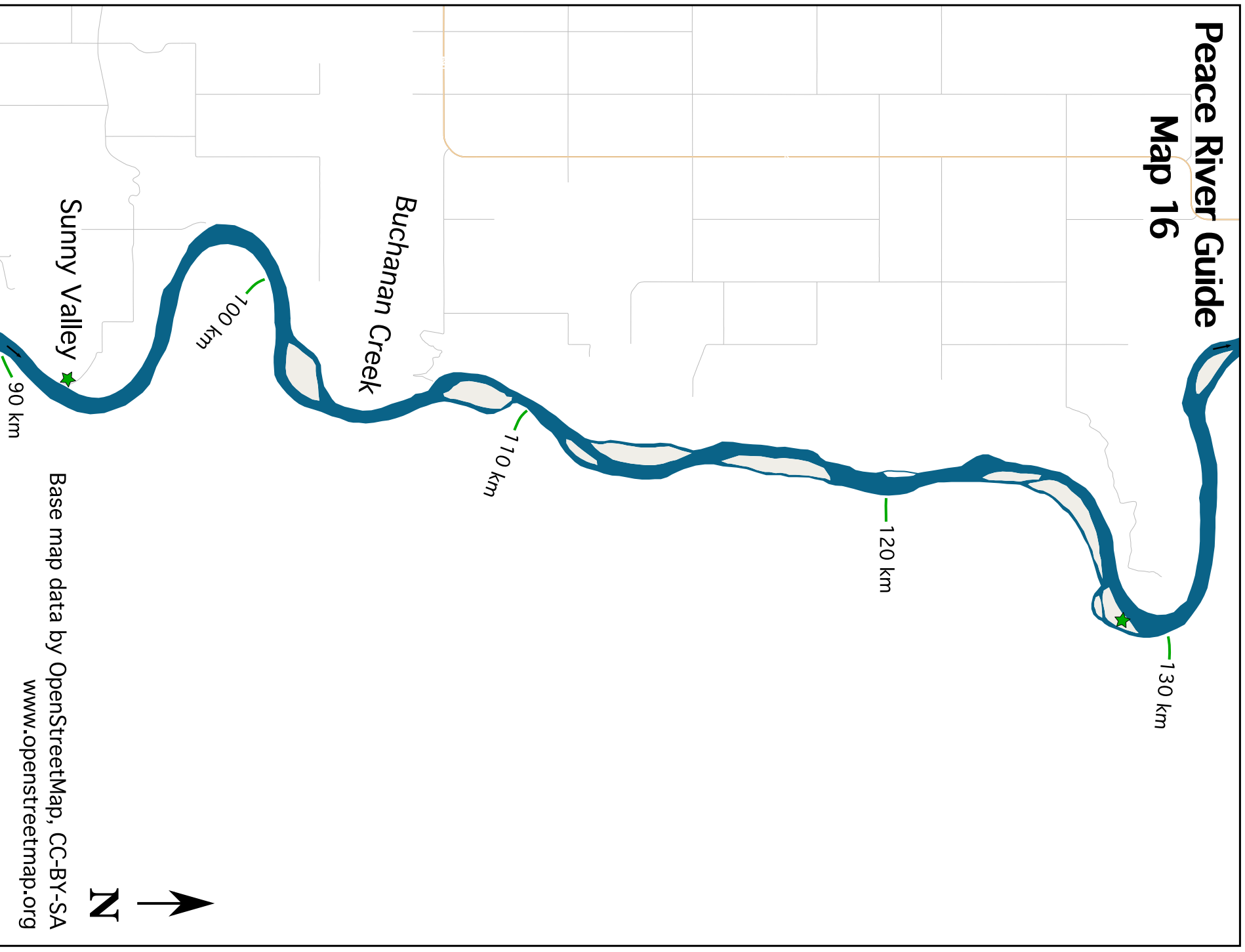
High banks along the Peace

The “UFO rock”



Peace River Guide

Map 16



Guide 16

Sunny Valley to McCracken's Flat

Name of River Section	Sunny Valley to McCracken's Flat	
Paddling Time	4 – 8 hrs	
Paddling Distance	38 km (91 – 129 km)	[467 – 505 km]
Rapids (Class number)	Class I – no rapids	
Portage	none	
Typical speed of current on this section	4 – 6 km/h	
Mobile (cellular) telephone access	none	
Appeal to Families & Children	Enjoy the wilderness-at-arm's-reach today, with the river's breathtaking banks, islands and curves.	
Appeal to People with passion for topic	Treat yourself to fabulous scenery in the valley today – high banks, flats and creeks.	
Scenic Appeal of River Section	★★★★★	
Possible as a day-trip?	Yes	
NTS maps required for this section	84 C, F (C/14, F/3)	

Impressive high banks, gravelly creek-mouths and picturesque islands abound today as you paddle a hearty 38 km. The river maintains a fairly straight northerly course, without too many curves. There is only one spot along this reach where you will see any signs of civilization.

For GPS geeks: use your GPS in UTM mode to watch the Northing change from 6299999 to 6300000, within about 2 km of starting out today. This means that you are now 6,300,000 metres or 6,300 km north of the equator at this spot.

Sunny Valley was once considered as a possible location to put in a ferry, however it never became a reality. Notice how low the flat is on the left as you start out today; in about 5 km, the river will meet back up with the high bank that was there around 82 km. In some places, where the river “bounces back and forth” between two high banks, I imagine that, at one time, shortly after the glaciers melted off this land 11,000 years ago, a mighty torrent filled the valley from high bank to high bank, which flowed incredibly fast where the gap between the banks narrows. Then, as the amount of water decreased and the flow rate slowed, the river started meandering. This meandering or “bouncing back and forth” between high banks is quite noticeable if you look at a 1:250,000 topo map from about 88 km to 106 km, and again around the Carcajou area. You'll see the high bank/low bank alternating on the left/right.

The U-curve of the day is a beautiful one. The left shore is a nice flat, facing east and backed by tree-covered hills, and then before the bank goes high again, you'll see a few buildings. The flat “switches sides” around 98 km, and there is a cute red-roof house and farm beyond on the right flat. There's no road access on the east where this house is, so everything must be brought across the river.

Small things can come over on a boat, but large items like farming equipment are probably brought over the ice in winter. The banks on the left are incredibly high – 300 feet (90 m)!



Before long, you'll see an island near the middle of the river. I went to the right, but it looks possible to go either way. Flowing in from the left as this island ends is Buchanan Creek. It was named after John Alexander Buchanan, a surveyor. He was born in Comber, Ontario in 1887 and came to Edmonton in 1910. He worked as a surveyor throughout much of the Peace River region and Northwest Territories early on in his career, and later as a cost engineer on the Canol Pipeline Project during WWII. He was also into politics, serving as vice-president for the northern Alberta

Progressive Conservative Association and president of the Conservative organization in Edmonton. He was appointed to the Senate in 1959 by Prime Minister Diefenbaker and retired six years later. Prior to Buchanan, the creek was named Bear Creek (noted on a map dated 1919).

After the creek, you'll paddle past Kulyna's (pronounced "koo-LEE-nahs") Flats on the left. Most of the flat is agricultural land, but at the north end of the flat, there's a group of cottages (107 km). The flats were named after the landowner. This is a nice place to stop, and although there is no public campground, there is "Lots of Happy Campers," a small business that rents cabins and lots along the river. You can arrange to rent a small cabin that sleeps 10, with *everything* you need (even coffee), including electricity and on-demand hot water! Or you can arrange to camp at the site; call 780-836-2762 to make reservations.

Before long, the river regains high banks on both sides. You'll pass by a lovely island on your right, and an extensive gravel bar. Around 111 km, watch for a gravel bar in the middle of the river; it is marked as a *tiny* island on the 1:250,000 topo map, but it is hard to see due to the gray county border. It shows up much better on the 1:50,000 map. The island has a significant gravel bar spread out in front of it; you can go around either way.

There is a large, mostly-dried-up island on the left from 112 –

115 km, and after that, there is a small flat – Lambert's Flat (P16D02), named after a local landowner – on the left shore



immediately after the island ends. It affords a nice view of the island just passed, and the ones coming up, and is generally a nice spot to stop and stretch or even camp. I noticed many hoof and paw prints in the muddy bank; this is a wildlife freeway! Stop here to photograph wildlife tracks.

As you pass the next island, a long and skinny one on the

right, watch your GPS as you are about to enter 57° North! Switch to your next topo map. Also watch the skies for bald eagles in this area. Bald eagles like to nest along lakes and large rivers, since their main diet is fish. They build their nests, which can be up to 4.5 m across, in old-growth trees with a view, away from human populations — that's why you'll see them along the river.

At approximately 115 km, you may be able to start seeing the Loon River Formation, located below the Shaftesbury Formation and the Peace River Formation. The Loon River is primarily dark grey shale and siltstone, with some minor sandstone and concretions (see guide #15). More and more of it will be visible as you paddle north until it will be the only bedrock visible (from Carcajou onwards).

The river continues on fairly straight with high banks. Much of the area on the left bank up to Notikewin Provincial Park is farm land at the top of the valley, sometimes right up to the edge. The two small islands indicated on the 1:250,000 topo map around 120 km (UTM 6320000) are actually right up against the shore. Watch out for a gravel bar in this area, however.

Just after the narrow spot in the river, you can stop on river left for a shady break on a hot day and do a little rockhounding along the narrow shore below the bank, anywhere near waypoint

D16P03. Practice extra bear awareness when stopping on such a narrow bank – make plenty of noise as you approach, and keep it up as you look along shore, so that any bears out there will hear you coming and head for the hills.

On the approach to today's destination, you'll pass a sequence of islands on the right. Look for the boat launch on the left shore. You may see trucks parked there, or slightly downstream, you might see the gap in the trees. This is the beginning of McCracken's Flats, so you might not really see the “flat” yet – it is around the corner, so you'll paddle past it tomorrow. It was named after local landowners, James and Pauline McCracken.

MLA Frank Oberle congratulated Mrs. McCracken on her centennial birthday:

What a pleasure it was to recognize Mrs. Pauline McCracken of Manning on her 100th birthday. Pauline was born May 13, 1910 near Wishart, Saskatchewan and moved to Manning in the late 1920's at the request of her sister. She met and married James McCracken and the couple raised their children on the family farm outside Manning. In fact Pauline resided on the farm until June 2010. She is mother to five children, grandmother to 11 and great-grandmother to 11.

The end point of this guide is about 500 m past the boat launch (D16P04), across the river on an island (river right). You could camp near the boat launch, but there isn't a lot of room there.

This guide is listed as a day trip because of the nearby boat launch. You could pick out any spot that looks good along the right curve; you must be getting good at spotting campsites by now!

Additional Notes:

To use this guide for a day trip, take out at the McCracken's landing boat launch (river left ~128 km). Turn-by-turn directions: In Manning, turn east on secondary hwy 691 and travel 16.2 km, then go north for 16.3 km on hwy 741. Turn right at Range Rd 932 and go east for 6.5 km, then simply follow the road for another 7.3 km to the boat launch.

START – Sunny Valley

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Deadwood, AB T0H 1A0
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Manning, AB
County or Municipal District	County of Northern Lights
Nearest Primary Highway	35
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	Turn east off Hwy 35 at North Star. Go east for 8.2 km. Follow curve to the right, then left for about 2 km before resuming an easterly course. Stay on this road as it curves for 13 km until you must turn right. Go south 0.8 km, turn and go east 0.8 km, turn right again and follow road for 1.5 km to the boat launch area.
Parking Instructions at Site	Park off to the side, out of others' way
Ownership of Site	Crown
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Year round
UTM Coordinates of Ending Point	11V Easting 0484201 Northing 6298031
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Ending Point	56° 49.551' N 117° 15.532' W

Accuracy of site coordinates	5 m
Altitude of Site in meters	283 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Medium-steep slope up the road

END – McCracken's Flat

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Hotchkiss, AB T0H 2B0
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Manning, AB
County or Municipal District	County of Northern Lights
Nearest Primary Highway	35
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	N/A
Parking Instructions at Site	N/A
Ownership of Site	Crown
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Year round
UTM Coordinates of Starting Point	11V Easting 0490409 Northing 6325753
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Starting Point	57° 4.504' N 117° 9.492' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	5 m
Altitude of Site in meters	276 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Medium slope

Waypoints

D16P01 (Kulyna): 56° 54.714' N 117° 15.416' W / 11V Easting 0484424 Northing 6307582

D16P02 (Lambert): 56° 58.565' N 117° 13.854' W / 11V Easting 0485964 Northing 6314747 / elev 278 m

D16P03 (shady spot): 57° 2.265' N 117° 13.505' W / 11V Easting 0486341 Northing 6321610

D16P04 (McCracken): 57° 4.522' N 117° 10.129' W / 11V Easting 0489765 Northing 6325788

D16P05 (end point): 57° 4.504' N 117° 9.492' W / 11V Easting 0490409 Northing 6325753 / elev 276 m

Possible Campsites

- Kulyna's Flats, near Buchanan Creek
- Kulyna's Flats, near the cottages
- Lambert's Flat (D16P02), 115 km. Coordinates are near a very small creek mouth; camping possibilities upstream from here. You may have to flatten some vegetation.

Emergency Road Access

There is definite road access at 97 km, river left. Look for a landing just upstream of the buildings. There are several recreational trails just downstream of and around the mouth of Buchanan Creek. Kulyna's Flats has road access, and if you were in urgent need of something, you might even be able to catch a ride into Manning, only 13 km away from the flat. Manning has a drug

store and health centre, among other services. There is a road of unknown condition/ trail following the creek on river left at about 111 km. There is fair-weather road access at McCracken's Flats – follow it up from the boat launch.

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Frank Oberle's website:

[http://www.myclients.ca/mycampaign6/display.php?](http://www.myclients.ca/mycampaign6/display.php?List=1591&N=13777&nx_document=August_11_2010_-_Oberle_11_Aug_2010.html#1)

[List=1591&N=13777&nx_document=August_11_2010_-_Oberle_11_Aug_2010.html#1](http://www.myclients.ca/mycampaign6/display.php?List=1591&N=13777&nx_document=August_11_2010_-_Oberle_11_Aug_2010.html#1)

Birds of Alberta by Chris Fisher and John Acorn, Lone Pine Field Guide

Images

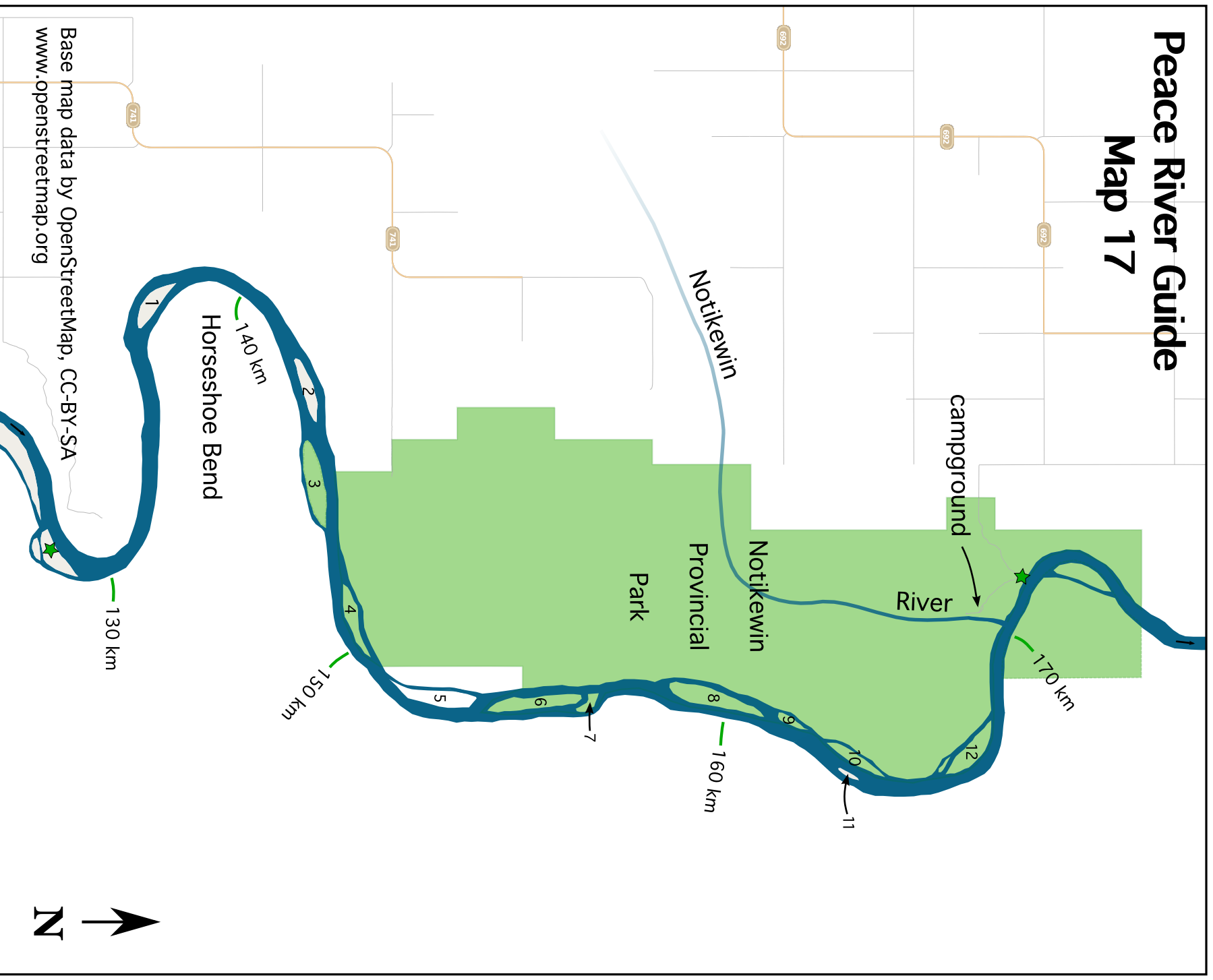
(All photos by Teresa Griffith)

Steep banks along the river

The view from Lambert's Flat, looking downstream

Peace River Guide

Map 17



Guide 17

McCracken's Flat to Notikewin Provincial Park

Name of River Section	McCracken's Flat to Notikewin Provincial Park	
Paddling Time	4 – 8.5 hrs	
Paddling Distance	42 km (129 – 171 km)	[505 – 547 km]
Rapids (Class number)	Class I – no rapids	
Portage	none	
Typical speed of current on this section	4-6 km/hr	
Mobile (cellular) telephone access	none	
Appeal to Families & Children	Challenge yourself a little with a longer paddle today – worth it for the view and the rockhounding at the end!	
Appeal to People with passion for topic	High banks greet you and islands tease you as you paddle this near-virgin section with little evidence of human interference.	
Scenic Appeal of River Section	★★★★	
Possible as a day-trip?	Yes	
NTS maps required for this section	84 F (F/3, F/6)	

A few curves, high banks, several islands and a huge river-mouth gravel bar are the features today, along with a good chance of seeing wildlife.

As you depart your campsite, be careful of a gravel bar along the inside bend of the upcoming curve – head over to the right, high bank. And high it is! Count the topo lines, if you can... it towers above the river almost 300 feet (90 m) high. Over the next 6-km reach, which runs roughly east-west, this high bank slopes down a great deal. There are some dead trees on this slope from an accidental forest fire in 2008 which raged through this area, burning 1900 hectares (4,695 acres, 19 square km or 7.3 square miles).

From 134 km, you can clearly see the next curve which is called Horseshoe Bend. In 1803, Alexander Roderick McLeod established a fort called Horseshoe House on the point of this river loop. He was a Northwest Company employee, and the post was built to trade with the Beaver Indians. David Thompson spent 6 weeks here in the spring of 1804 after *walking* from Fort Fork (about 10 km south of the Smoky River confluence) waiting for the ice to leave the river. He was a prolific explorer, and he often travelled by walking on the ice in winter, for example, from Fort Fork to Rocky Mountain Fort, which was near Taylor, BC, and back again! There's no record saying which side of the river Horseshoe House was on, and as you approach, you can think about which side you would pick, and why.

After you begin the Horseshoe Bend, you'll pass Island 1 (see the accompanying map), which may be blocked by a gravel bar on the right; as is often the case, it works best to go around the long way. As you round the corner, prepare for the one and only sign of

civilization for today: high voltage power lines. You've no doubt noticed the white and orange balls or triangles that dangle from power lines across the country, but did you know their purpose? Their main purpose is to make the lines visible to pilots; that's why these visibility aids are placed where aircraft tend to fly. Many small-aircraft pilots love to fly along the river valley, and sometimes pilots will follow the river in poor weather to find their way home. The second reason for these balls is for flotation. If the power line came down for some reason, it would not sink to the bottom of the river.

As you leave the bend and the river turns to head due east, be aware that the islands are not as depicted on the 1:250,000 topo map. It shows a medium-sized one centered in the river (Island 2) followed by a larger one slightly offset to the right (Island 3) – these are accurate enough. Then it shows three small islands – I only saw one (Island 4). As usual, the 1:50,000 map is much more accurate; it's too bad they aren't practical on such a long trip! I would add that when referring to a topo map, you can probably assume – unless water levels are very high – that gravel bars (indicated by dots) are islands. Going back to the 1:250,000 map, note that several tiny islands are all joined and labelled as Island 5 on the accompanying map.

Island 3 (144-146 km) has some nice camping possibilities (river right), and roughly marks the beginning of Notikewin Provincial Park. If you look closely along the left bank, you can see

a little clearing on the bank where there was, at one time, a large wooden sign welcoming you to the park. Use your imagination! This park has an abundance of wildlife, from moose, elk, white-tailed deer and mule deer, black bears and grizzlies, to birds such as sandhill cranes, various raptors, woodpeckers, eagles, and Canada geese. I personally saw an elk cow and calf grazing along the shore of the park (river left).

Looking at your map, you'll notice a small area along the left shore that isn't part of the Park. This is Haskell's Flats, named after a family originally from Idaho that owns the land. There is a private road from the plateau above to this area — a little bit of farmland among the wilderness.

Stay on the outside of the left-hand bend to pass Islands 4 and 5, and take either channel around Islands 6 and 7. The main channel is then to the right of all the other islands (8, 9, 10, and 12) leading up to the Notikewin River — keep a watch out for shallow areas. There is a large gravel bar starting around 162.5 km (labelled 11) not seen on topo maps, located slightly to the right of center in the river.

The Notikewin River comes into view around 169 km. It was originally called the Battle River but the Dominion Land Survey in 1915 changed the name to avoid confusion with the Battle River which flows through southern Alberta and Saskatchewan. There were in fact three “battle rivers” in the North: this was the First Battle River, Second Battle River was renamed the Hotchkiss River,

and Third Battle River was renamed the Meikle (both of these rivers flow into the Notikewin). Some local people know the rivers in reverse order – where they live changes how they “count” the rivers (first, second, and third).

Notikewin comes from the Cree word for battle, *nôtinkewin*. The anglicization is pronounced “not-ih-CUE-in.” This area was the location of many battles between the Cree and Beaver Indians in the 1700's. For many years, the Cree had the upper hand since they had muskets. They would go up the Notikewin River and attack Beaver families who were camped along it. The Beaver eventually fought back; warriors would climb up high on the bank and from that vantage point, they could spot invading Cree war canoes from a great distance.

Historian Dorothea Calverley interviewed Norman Mercredi, a medicine man of mixed Cree-Beaver heritage. See the bibliography for the web address of the whole interview. A small portion of the interview follows; Ms. Calverley's comments are in parentheses.

“ 'As late as 1929', he said, 'our people were still using bows and arrows. Around Hay Lakes until 1900, it was still North West Territories. They (he didn't specify who) would still come stealing women, girls

and women. My mother remembers when she lived around Notikewin, on the Battle River there, they would come from Hay River and steal girls. My people



were staying up beyond the Hotchkiss River when they had a battle. About ten of the girls tried to escape. They were all holding hands and wading across, but the river was strong, and all were swept away. That was my mother's or grandmother's aunties. All of the men had

been killed, and the girls were trying to find other people.' (He was relating a folktale about the last great battle between the Beaver and the Crees. These girls were Crees.)”

The Hudson Bay Company had a post at the Peace-Notikewin confluence, just upstream of the mouth of the Notikewin River. The area is very overgrown now. Near the day-use area, you can see a trapper's cabin built in the 1920's.

Near the boat launch — the end point of this guide (D17P05) — there is a small creek which only flows in spring. When building the road to the boat launch, a huge bed of charcoal was found. The Beaver people would gather here for a period every summer and build huge fires to smoke and dry the fish they would catch in the Peace and Notikewin Rivers.

Now to the practical things: The boat launch is about 1 km downstream of the mouth of the Notikewin River. You can land at the mouth of the Notikewin (D17P03), walk over the extensive gravel bar (about 400 m) and toward the main campsite. Starting from D17P03, follow the Notikewin River upstream along its west bank to the trail waypoint (D17P04), the trailhead leading to the camp sites. This will be another 400 m of walking – certainly not practical to carry all your gear that far, but if you eat supper by the river you could just carry your tent, clothes and other necessary items. The trail to the campsite is lovely, and you will walk through an amazing forest of ostrich ferns (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*), up to

2 m (6 feet) tall... a truly magical place. The camp sites are very nice, and the trees around the sites are beautiful, old-growth balsam poplar and white spruce.

The second alternative is to stop and explore the Notikewin River mouth, walk the ostrich-fern trail, but then paddle 1 km farther down, to the end point coordinates (D17P05) to camp near the boat launch. The gravel bar is smaller here and you will not have to walk as far to set up camp. Canoeists are allowed to set up in the day-use area and make fires in the fire pits. If you make a campfire anywhere else within the Park boundaries ensure you:

- do so along the shore
- build your fire on rocks or another non-flammable base
- keep your fire small.

The spacious gravel bar is a rockhoulder's paradise. Fossils, petrified wood and even ammonite can be found; if you do find any of these, please take photos but don't remove anything. Ammonite is a beautiful, multi-coloured “gem” that is actually the fossilized shell of the prehistoric creature, the Ammonite. It had squid-like tentacles coming out of a coiled shell, although sometimes the shell was conical or straight. The creature lived during the Paleozoic and Mesozoic eras, 425 to 65.5 million years ago, and its fossils are subtly luminescent, similar to opal until polished and treated.

For the fishermen out there, there are plenty of spots to put a line in near the mouth of the Notikewin. Here are the species you might catch (most likely in **bold**): Arctic Grayling, Burbot,



Finescale Dace, Flathead Chub, **Goldeye**, Longnose Sucker, **Northern Pike**, Slimy Sculpin, **Walleye**, White Sucker. Make sure you abide by the latest regulations if you plan on keeping the fish you catch.

Additional Notes:

To use this guide for a day trip, start at the McCracken's landing boat launch (river left ~128 km). Turn-by-turn directions: In Manning, turn east on secondary Hwy 691 and travel 16.2 km, then go north for 16.3 km on Hwy 741. Turn right at Range Rd 932 and go east for 6.5 km, then simply follow the road for another 7.3 km to the boat launch.

START – McCracken's Flat

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Hotchkiss, AB T0H 2B0
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Manning, AB
County or Municipal District	County of Northern Lights
Nearest Primary Highway	35
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	N/A
Parking Instructions at Site	N/A
Ownership of Site	Crown
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	Year round
UTM Coordinates of Starting Point	11V Easting 0490409 Northing 6325753
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Starting Point	57° 4.504' N 117° 9.492' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	5 m
Altitude of Site in meters	276 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Medium slope

END – Notikewin Provincial Park

Nearest Community with Postal Code	Hotchkiss, AB T0H1 2B0
Nearest Community with a Tourist Booth (VIC)	Manning, AB
County or Municipal District	County of Northern Lights
Nearest Primary Highway	35
Turn by turn directions from Primary Highway	Turn east off Hwy 35 onto secondary Hwy 692 towards Hawk Hills. Go east for 12.5 km, then north for 6.3 km, then east again for 8.2 km until you get to a T-intersection. Turn right. Follow this road for 5 km to the boat launch.
Parking Instructions at Site	Park out of others' way
Ownership of Site	Crown
Access to Site (when open/accessible)	May 15 – Oct 31

UTM Coordinates of Ending Point	11V Easting 0491020 Northing 6349553
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates of Ending Point	57° 17.333' N 117° 8.939' W
Accuracy of site coordinates	5 m
Altitude of Site in meters	269 m
Describe Terrain from River to Site	Gradual slope

Waypoints

D17P01 (possible campsite): 57° 7.998' N 117° 12.399' W / 11V Easting 0487491 Northing 6332243

D17P02 (possible campsite): 57° 8.802' N 117° 6.852' W / 11V Easting 0493089 Northing 6333721 / elev 276 m

D17P03 (just downstream of the Notikewin River mouth): 57° 17.151' N 117° 8.050' W / 11V Easting 0491911 Northing 6349213 / elev 266 m

D17P04 (the trailhead leading to the main campground): 57° 16.910' N 117° 8.089' W / 11V Easting 0491873 Northing 6348768 / elev 264 m

D17P05 (end point): 57° 17.333' N 117° 8.939' W / 11V Easting 0491020 Northing 6349553 / elev 269 m

Possible Campsites

- At 142.5 km, on Island 2. Pass by the island to the right and then land about 1/3 of the way down (near where the trees start).

- At 144.5 km, on Island 3. Pass it on the left; the camp spot is near the beginning of the island, to the right of waypoint D17P01.
- At 151 km, along the edge of the grouping of islands (5), river left, D17P02 waypoint.
- At 166 km, along Island 12 on the corner, river left, near the beginning of the island.

Emergency Road Access

The most direct route is at 139 km; you could walk west (up left bank) along the power lines to the nearest road. The only other access shows as a dotted line on the 1:50,000 topo maps at about 152 km, river left (near Haskell's Flats). This would, however, be a long walk. There is road access at Notikewin Park as well.

Bibliography

David Thompson: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/canada/alberta/vol1chap2.htm>

Norman Mercredi interview: <http://www.calverley.ca/Part01-FirstNations/01-107.htm>

Alberta Parks <http://www.albertaparks.ca/siteinformation.aspx?id=87> (Fish species)



Images

(All photos by
Teresa Griffith)

Looking up the
Notikewin River
from the side bank

Gravel bar at the
Notikewin mouth

The Notikewin
Provincial Park
campground in the
early spring