

CanoeSki Spring News 2008

My last day of skiing was March 9 at Eb's Trails, north of Saskatoon. It was the finest of spring skiing weather with tee shirt temperatures - giving me the false impression that winter was just about over! That was almost 2 months ago and I was still shoveling snow off my driveway last weekend. I suspect Meewasin's annual pelican watch contest at Saskatoon's weir will be setting a new record for late arrival this spring!

Although pretty tardy this year, we know spring-like weather is just around the bend and the canoeing season is already filled with lots of action. The earliest local news is the [Saskatoon Canoe Club Open House](#) May 4 at the Boat House. 35th Anniversary celebrations are planned to coincide with the annual open house. CanoeSki will have Souris River Canoes available for demo, so Saskatoon paddlers can take advantage of an opportunity to paddle super light, super fast and super good looking canoes!

The next news event has national overtones, as it commemorates a 200 year-old marathon canoe journey by renown explorer and map maker David Thompson as he travelled from Rocky Mountain House to Fort William to announce his successful expansion of the North West Company's fur trade west of the Continental Divide. On May 10th, the Alberta-initiated [2008 David Thompson Brigade](#) is slated to begin its re-enactment of Thompson's epic 3600 km journey. Of the 15 teams registered, 3 are from Saskatchewan with the "Centennial" team captain from Saskatoon. Captain Ray Fieber competed in the 1967 Cross-Canada Centennial voyageur canoe race and has assembled a remarkable team of alumni from the '67 event. A wave of the paddle to these folks for their dedication to celebrating our heritage!

Communities along the Brigade route will be hosting the voyageurs with various festivities. In Saskatchewan, the Brigade will be paddling the North Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Rivers, stopping at Battleford, Fort Carlton, Prince Albert, James Smith Cree Nation, Nipawin and Cumberland House. To get the latest on community events associated with the Brigade, visit the tourism sites for each centre.

Still on the historic theme, the David Thompson Voyageur Trek 2007, a considerably less elaborate (and infinitely more relaxed!) 2-day CanoeSki trip on the South Saskatchewan River last August, was recorded by local and national media. You can read the accounts of this fascinating exploration of the David Thompson-era fur trade forts on the river from both the [Star Phoenix](#) and [Canadian Geographic Travel Magazine](#).

Better yet, you can join this July's [Thompson Trek 2008](#), paddle a voyageur canoe, join in the Open House festivities at South Branch House and camp near an ancient fur trade fort. To get a good visual feel for the trip, check out the tour photo gallery. There's an eye-catching line-up of over 60 slides captured for the Can Geo story – courtesy of one of Saskatchewan's foremost photographers, Courtney Milne.

Last summer's trips got coverage from more than newspapers and magazines. Another river trip highlighting history and taking in the South Saskatchewan River valley fall colors, benefited from connections made via the David Thompson Trek. Dominique Hurley, who was assisting Courtney Milne with the photography assignment for Canadian Geographic, joined the CanoeSki team as trip photographer on Saskatoon's River History tour in September. Her professional touch has nicely captured the fall beauty of the valley, the migrating cranes and geese, and the paddling fun everyone had. [Her images along with stories](#) submitted by the paddlers will give you the full flavour of the annual corn roast history trip.

Earlier in July, the Family Voyageurs trip in Prince Albert National Park generated some interesting photos and stories. The kids even got into the act with drawings of ducklings and the "moose" they spotted while canoeing! The parents wrote up their trip memories and Jean McPherson along with her story captured some great photos of the children and the wild red lilies blooming about the campsite.

Later in July, a new tour entitled Rock Art & Bannock ran on the Churchill River in Lac La Ronge Provincial Park. The itinerary included the significant scenic and historic attractions in the Stanley Mission area, such as majestic Nistowiak Falls and the venerable Holy Trinity Church. Exploring the various Aboriginal rock art sites along the canoe route provided a cultural connection to the land; bannock provided the culinary connection to a traditional way of life. [Click here](#) to view photos and stories from the inaugural tour.

Looking ahead to the upcoming season, the new tours from last year are back on the schedule along with the full slate from the last several years. Canoeing lessons get underway at the end of May. The ever popular Map & Compass course kicks off the instruction programs on May 25. The tour programs get rolling toward mid-June. Keep your paddles crossed – we may get some summery weather by then!

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