



13 Days

Canada

Canoeing the Keele

The Keele is a kind whitewater river that runs from high in the 3000-metre high Mackenzie Mountains. Its clear turquoise waters are unique in the north. This river has amazing vistas, gracious campsites, no portages, no bugs, excellent wildlife viewing and fishing. Destination Canada, the Canadian tourism commission, has designated the Keele River as a Canadian Signature Experience. This is a step into pristine and remote wilderness and is by the far the best river trip in the north. The river challenges paddlers to remember the ancient routes of the Dene, our own connection with the wilderness and our belief in the strength and simplicity behind a canoe expedition. The Keele offers the best in northern travel and will capture your soul!



Recommended expedition itinerary

Day
1

Yellowknife

Welcome to the remote Northwest Territories. Arrive in Yellowknife on Great Slave Lake where the group will overnight at the Fred Henne Park Campground for barbecue and swim.

Day
2

Norman Wells

Depart Yellowknife on Canadian North Airlines for Norman Wells, a remote community on the banks of the historic Mackenzie River, the 5th largest river drainage in the world. We are met by our guides on arrival transferring to the Canoe North Adventures Basecamp Lodge and Outfitting Centre at DOT Lake. Archeological evidence shows ancient peoples used this area 12,000 years ago at the end of the last ice age. For centuries the Mountain Dene trapped beaver and moose and crafted sturdy moose-skin boats that carried families and dry-goods down the Keele River to the mighty De Cho – Mackenzie River. This river served as a travel route during the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898 and a hunting and trapping region for Mountain Dene who now live in Ross River or Tulita. The afternoon is spent doing final gear check and canoe skills training at DOT Lake. The guides will review the trip logistics and expedition overview. Barbecue dinner and overnight at the rustic log and timber frame lodge.

Day
3

Delthore Camp by float train

After breakfast, the group transfers by float plane deep into the 3,000-metre high Mackenzie Mountains; the peaks and valleys show the immensity and beauty of this remote wilderness region. Our first glimpse of the Keele River is from the air as its turquoise waters cut a striking pathway through these mountains. Our float plane lands just below the confluence of the Natla and Keele Rivers between the Delthore and Stelfox mountain ranges. Stepping out of the plane, we encounter towering mountain scenery and broad valleys full of rugged black spruce. A short paddle takes us down to our campsite near Shezal Canyon. A short hike gives us a view of the surrounding landscape and time fishing might provide fresh Arctic Grayling or Bull Trout for dinner.

Day
4 & 5

Black Wolf Camp

After a hearty breakfast the guides review skills and river-safety training before launching our canoes. The Keele River boasts miles of safe Class II whitewater and some challenging Class III whitewater that can be skirted as required. There are very few rocks in play which makes for more relaxed paddling. Very few experiences bring such a range of personal enjoyment and the deep satisfaction of individual and group accomplishment. Our paddle today takes us to Black Wolf camp a broad gravel bar across from Fortress Mountain where we will stay for two nights. Our layover day allows us to access the high alpine, to perhaps glimpse a herd of Dahl Sheep or Woodland Caribou and to view our campsite from on high.





Day
6

Strawberry Camp

Paddling on this day takes us through the 2300-metre biggest mountains and canyons on the trip. The mountains plunge right down to the river's edge. Our skills are honed with many waves trains and tight corners. We have learned how to paddle this river as a team and now set up camp like pros. Strawberry Island welcomes us with its soft sand and a fine swimming and fishing hole.

Day
7-8

Sparkling Creeks

Our journey takes us through a region rich in natural beauty and opportunities for wildlife viewing. Perhaps around a bend in the river, we will see a moose with her calf standing in the water, or a small group of caribou bending down for a drink of the clear waters. Both Grizzly and Black bears use this region for their ranges. We are both lucky and honoured to see a bear. They are so wild here that they are terrified of our groups. Our camp will be on one of the sparkling creeks where the fishing is superb. Again, we have an opportunity to stay in this camp for two nights.

Day
9

Red Dog Mountain

Our paddling takes us through the last of the mountain ranges and the Keele flows through broad valleys. The mountains fall back and there are many braids before the confluence. Red Dog Mountain is the last major land feature before the lowlands. The Keele is still full of youthful exuberance until the very end!

Day
10

Mike Peak Camp

The Keele River's steady current carries us through the Mackenzie Lowlands and through traditional lands of the Mountain Dene. Sandhill Cranes fly overhead in pairs or huge chevrons. A black wolf lopes along the water's edge signifying the end of the Keele River at the Mackenzie River confluence.

Day
11

Mackenzie River Confluence

Our float plane returns our group to Norman Wells for a final night dinner at the Canoe North Adventures Basecamp Lodge and Outfitting Centre. An opportunity to share the experience and say goodbye to the wild lands of northern Canada. The group is invited to share poems, songs or skits inspired by their Keele River Expedition.

Day
12-13

Depart the Northwest Territories

Tour of the local Norman Wells Museum where crafts made by local aboriginal artists are available. Depart Norman Wells for Edmonton midafternoon on Canadian North Airlines.

Further information

Look what's included!

- International flights
- All accommodation
- All food
- All transportation and activities
- Bi-lingual, first-aid qualified local expedition leader
- Parent and student expedition launch evening
- Comprehensive pre-expedition training programme
- 1-day offsite safety INSET day for staff
- ATOL financial protection
- Medical Emergency / Repatriation Travel Insurance
- Group first aid kit and prescription meds pack
- BS8848 safety management and risk assessments
- Detailed pre-departure information and kit lists
- Comprehensive teacher travel packs
- Permanent operations team in your destination
- 24-hour UK operational support whilst overseas
- Carbon offsetting of all flights
- Free t-shirt for every participant and teacher

What's excluded?

- Transport to airport in UK
- Drinks (advice will be given on purification of water)
- Visas or tourist cards if required
- Any required inoculations
- Personal spending money
- Tips for guides, drivers and porters
- Airport departure taxes paid locally
- Cancellation and personal effects insurance

Your expedition timeline



Physical expedition rating:

● ● ● ● ● 5/5

A high level of fitness is required to participate on a trip of this level. We recommend previous multi-day trekking experience at this level, either in the UK or internationally. You need complete confidence in your ability to trek for multiple days over difficult terrain and cope with significant variations in temperatures throughout the tour. Altitude could be higher than 4,500m but good acclimatisation will be built into the programme. Longer periods of trekking could be of a sustained nature, but rest days will be planned. A pre-travel fitness programme of four to six months is essential to ensure you are in optimal fitness to make the most of this trip.

Culture shock rating:

● ● ● ○ ○ 3/5

Students should expect some culture shock. You'll be exposed to signs of poverty. The food will be quite different to home and English, whilst still spoken, will be less prevalent. Respecting the local culture will make it easier to fit in and get the most out of your trip. We're likely to visit remoter locations on this tour where access to western style services may be sporadic. Often on trips of this grading there are parts of the itinerary which are more remote, interspersed with sections which are more 'comfortable'.



A journey of 1,000 miles...

Starts with a single step... Contact us now to start your expedition journey



1 Get your tailor-made proposal and further information

If this itinerary doesn't quite scratch your expedition itch then let us tailor-make one for you. Our wealth of experience and expert in-country contacts means we can design an itinerary just for you. Contact us for more information and a detailed quote.

2 Ask for risk assessments and marketing materials

We can provide initial risk assessments and destination threat assessments to help you with your expedition approval process. Ask for posters and your pre-booking information pack too.

3 Arrange an expedition launch evening at your school

This is a chance for students and parents to hear more about the expedition with a comprehensive information evening with opportunity for questions.



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