

## French River

### Dokis to Little French to Lake Nipissing to Dokis



Participants: Janice and Bill.

Total distance: 87 km. including 910m. in 3 portages.

Sat Sept. 15/01: *Janice:* Left Bayfield and drove to Grundy Provincial Park. We stayed on site #313 Poplar. Beautiful site with beach right behind us. I liked it. Went to bed at 11:00pm. Slept in van.

Sun. Sept. 16/01: 7km. We woke at 7:30. Bill says he slept well. Bill made sausage and eggs for breakie and we checked out some of Grundy Park. After a shower we left the park to head north on 400 to hwy. 64 to the gravel road to Dokis. We checked out the Little French River as we drove over it and decided that it looked great and it had a good amount of current here. We checked in at the River View Cottages and Marina. \$3.50 a day to leave the van. We loaded and left the boat ramp around 11:30. It's a great sunny day. We headed north past Concord Island and then west with a good stiff breeze in our face, but who can complain it's so nice. We lunched on the first campsite on the first big island on the Little French River. The site is back a bit from the water on the big flat rocks. There are 8 large lounging arm chairs here and at least half of them have foot stools. They are all arranged in a circle around a fire pit. Wow, that's a lot of rocks to muscle around! We paddled on and decided to camp on the island across from the entrance to Clearwater Bay. We got here around 3:00pm and it took us a good 3/4 of an hour to clean the mess from the previous people. We burnt on big pile of garbage after that. It's a nice site with good views all around, complete with a thunderbox. Bill has set up the tent and it's time to go and get things put away. I better move it gets dark early now.

*Bill:* We had a delicious rice and mushroom meal and a strawberry mousse for dessert. We stayed up and had a fire and went to bed at 9:45.

Mon. Sept. 17/01: 20km. It is 7:30am. and we are getting up. Everything is damp and wet outside, but there was no rain in the night. We had red river cereal for breakfast and we cleaned up the camp and were on the water at 10:30am. We are in no rush. We haven't seen anyone around to compete for the campsites. We went around the corner to the Free-Flowing Channel and took a picture. We decided to have a look at the Little Chaudiere Dam, so we went there. It looked as if the dam was closed up and not letting any water out. We went down the little rapid to the west and then portaged over the rock to the river because there was a 4 foot drop at the bottom. We had lunch here at 12 noon and then carried on. We followed the river, sometimes with, but mostly against the wind that was coming out of the west. We looked for the campsite on the point between Otter Bay and Bear Bay, but we couldn't see where it had ever existed. The island was too small to camp on and so was the next one that was marked as a campsite. We ended up on the north side of the river where it narrows again. We were here at 4:30pm. and set up camp. Janice made the tent up while I made supper and drinks. We had pepperettes as an appetizer and then a noodle meal, cup of soup, and a swiss mocha to drink. We hung our bear bags very low in a branch and crossed our fingers that it would be alright. There just weren't any good trees to hang it from. We are in the tent at 7:30pm., only because there are a lot of mosquitoes here (in September!)

Tues. Sept. 18/01: 14km. *Janice:* We woke several times. It drizzled off and on in the night. We were awake at 7:00am., not really wanting to face the mosquitoes. We weren't expecting so many this time of year and it made it harder to deal with them. We finished packing in a drizzly mist and were on the water at 9:30. As we left our site it started an all day rain, with no wind. We canoed around the bend and eastward to the 300m. portage at Five Finger Rapids. I thought these rapids were beautiful. We

took a few pictures as we portaged alongside of the rapid. The trail went up into the bush where we saw someones huge blue tarp set up for a privy (I'm assuming). I thought it was an eyesore and we carried on. There was a lone canoeist camped at the end of the portage, who came out to say hello. He was doing a figure eight around Okikendawt Island and Eighteen Mile Island. He was staying put today and heading back tomorrow. He thought it was a good day to stay put because of the rain and we thought it was a good day to move because it was only rain and no wind or lightening. We had a gorp break on the campsite on the large island to the southeast of Hall Island. We canoed up the main French River channel and the rain dissipated into a mist and we ended up with a strong head wind. We lunched at a campsite on a small island in Chaudiere Channel, 12:00 to 12:50. As we paddled on we could smell the aromatic shore lunch from a fishing boat (no wonder bears can smell food for miles). We paddled up past Huntington Island and crossed to the north side to hopefully avoid the wind. We decided the wind was just as strong here as we dug in to slide in behind Georgia Island. It was quite scenic as we slipped on up to the west side of Boom Island. We are camped here at 2:30pm. It's a nice site with access to a little island. It would have been nicer without the soggy rotting diapers at the back of the site. There is a dead tree on the point across to the north of us on the mainland. We have seen a hawk and a heron perched in the top. What a picture! We enjoyed our afternoon, watched some fishermen, enjoyed a fire, explored the site and fished. It is now 8:40, we were in the tent at 8:00. Too many mosquitoes. An ATV. came and roared up and down the road across the channel from us about 7:00pm. It is quiet now and we can hear Cradle Falls and the frogs singing.

Wed. Sept. 19/01: 17km. Bill: We were up at 7am. and had oatmeal for breakfast. I tried to catch a fish, but there were no takers. We packed up and were on the water at 9:45am. Turns out it was Lower Chaudiere Rapids we heard last night and Cradle Falls was just a current in the river. We got to the 600m. portage and looked at the falls. The portage was easy to follow with orange arrows pointed on the trees and rocks. We crossed over a gravel road and went up and down a hill. Our packs felt heavier today. We canoed and had lunch at the NE. side of Wright Island at 12:00 noon. We carried on and just about across from Marshall Island we saw an otter go on shore and then it jumped back in when we got close. It kept diving and coming up and looking at us and then it was gone. Shortly after that we saw a fox in the next bay. It ran along the hill and seemed to be looking for something. Probably it's next meal. Soon it was gone. Further along we saw what we thought was an osprey swooping around in circles to disappear over the bush. We went into Satchels Bay and checked out the campsites along the way. We ended up on the 2nd one on the east side of Summer Island at 2:45. As soon as we landed it started to rain and so we put up the tent before we got too wet. Next was the tarp and then we had our gorp break and some hot chocolate. Janice cut her finger trying to break a dead fern for the fire. We never did have a fire because it was too wet. We had mashed potatoes with hamburg gravy and green beans on top. It was delicious. We had a chocolate mousse for dessert and lots of tea. We were sitting there quietly and Janice spotted a grouse 30 feet away from us pecking away at the leaves on the shrubs. He had flown down from above us. We were surprised it would come that close to us. It has kept raining the whole time and is really putting a damper on things. We cleaned up and went in the tent at 8:00pm. It is still raining and hopefully it will stop by morning.

Thurs. Sept. 20/01: 15km. Janice: We woke at 6:40am. to a wet world, however, it was not raining. We tried to dry some stuff out, but to no avail, so we packed everything to leave. We were treated to the sight of 2 great herons, one following the other as they flew across the channel in front of us to circle around and head into the little bay beside us. Nice. We left our site and Satchels Bay at 10:10 and headed northeast toward Lake Nipissing. The French River was calm as we skirted the southeastern shoreline, so we decided to go to the north of Partridge, Lorne, and Sylvia May Islands. There is a cormorant rock before Partridge Island. There were many cormorants resting here. The wind picked up and we decided to cut across the river to the small island (between Burnt Island and Browns Island), our destination. We wanted to look at Lake Nipissing and there were 2 campsites there. The crosswind blew and increased as we tacked toward our island. We arrived at 11:40. We decided not to camp here. These islands are too small for proper toilet distance from the water and the cold wind helped us to decide to lunch here and then carry on to Hunters Bay. We left at 12:50. We headed west behind the

little islands to avoid the wind. We splashed over the waves as we headed for Cameron Island. A plane had left this island and came back again and he was docked here as we paddled by. We carried on west to get out of this strong southeast wind. We passed a fishing boat behind Cleland Island and I asked him what the weather forecast was and he responded "afternoon thunder showers and strong winds". He was right about the wind! When we got to the end of Cleland Island we donned our rain suits as it was starting to rain and we prepared to head out into that wind and those waves again. A fishing boat slowed and asked us if we were ok and we answered yes and off he sped as we bounced over those waves in the rain to Hunters Bay. We rolled into a calm bay at 2:00pm. We checked out all of the sites and were quite surprised that they were rustic and the island too small. We were looking at the east point when Bill found a trail and it led to the site in the bay. This is where we are camped. The best site here and we checked them all, even the unmarked one across the bay from us. Time goes by so quickly when you are tripping, always something to do. The mosquitoes are better here, until dusk. We fished until we couldn't stand the bugs and we are in the tent at 8:00pm. It has rained off and on all afternoon and it is drizzling now. 9:15 and I think I'm ready to shut out the light.

Fri. Sept. 21/01: 8km. *Bill:* We were awake at 6:30, but didn't move till 7:10 after we read the log to see if we had any sunny days at all. It is still raining and we packed what we could in the tent and hauled the rest out under the tarp. I got our oatmeal breakfast ready while Janice took down the tent. The last thing we did was take down the tarp. We left the site at 9:45am. We paddled out of a calm Hunters Bay and into a windy channel with a cold drizzle in our face. It was difficult to see through our glasses. We tried to use the islands as a wind break, but the wind tunneled down the channels. We checked out the campsites to the north of Hunt Island and picked the larger island. We landed here at 12:00 noon and set up camp. We ate our gorp and then made biscuits for lunch. I pan cooked them for the first time and after a doughy centred one the rest were much better. We fished after that and I caught a pike and a bass using Janice's lure. For supper we had a curry and tomato and rice and vanilla mousse for an appetizer. We got the dishes done and the bags hung and ourselves washed up for bed. We saw the moon for the first time tonight and actually had a reddish sunset. We were in the tent at 8pm.

Sat. Sept. 22/01: *Janice:* We crawled out of bed at 8am. We are staying put and boy did we laze in bed for a long time. It looks as if it could rain, but it isn't. There is a cold wind from the north off and on and the mosquitoes and black flies come and go too. We cooked bannock for lunch on the fire and the mosquitoes were better then. Every once in a while we get to see a tiny bit of blue sky and it still hasn't rained, although it threatens to at times. We fished a bit from shore in the morning and we went out in the afternoon and canoed around and fished some more. Bill caught a perch and I caught a pike. We surprised a muskrat when we rounded into a bay. the sun finally burned through the clouds at 4pm. Boy it feels good! We are back at the site at 5pm. to make supper and do the ritual of dishes, teeth and pumping water before bed. It is starting to dry up, everything is so wet. The ground oozes water when we walk on it, so we have had to keep our boots on. We would have loved to change into our other shoes. It has been a nice day. I'm very happy it didn't rain today. We are in the tent at 8:15 and there was a beautiful shiny 1/4 moon in the sky and a few stars starting to twinkle along side of it. There wasn't a cloud around.

Sun. Sept. 23/01: 6km. *Bill:* We were up at 7:00am. It was cloudy out, but at least it was not raining, that is until we were almost finished breakfast. We packed up in the rain and left at 10am. We came through the narrow channel at the NW. end of Hunt Island. It was just deep enough for a canoe. I cast my line back in and caught a pike. We went to the north of the islands by Comfort Island. As we headed out to the open water to head back to the River View Cottages it was pouring rain and not a breath of wind. I caught another pike and let it go. I put the pole away and we had a break on a small island campsite. We made it to River View Cottages at 12 noon and paid for the parking and 2 showers. We got cleaned up and left. As we went over the Little French River on the way out I took a picture for an aerial view of where we had canoed. Janice's comment on the way out was we didn't even see a bear. The next trip we deserve no rain because for the 8 days we were out it rained for 5 of them.