

The French Delta - Old Voyageur Channel



Participants: Janice and Bill, Bob and Cathy.
Total Distance: 56 Km including 360m in 5 portages and 2 lift overs.

Janice: Wed. Aug. 8/01. 14 Km. We met Bob and Cathy at Schell's Camp Ground on Tues. Aug. 9/01. We camped for the night and did laundry to get ready for today. It was so hot that our clothes on the line were dry in 2 hours. We were up at 7 am and after a good shower and packing we left to go to Hartley Bay Marina. We left there at 9:30 am and headed W.N.W. to Wanapitei Bay. There was no wind and it was hot. We turned south in Wanapitei Bay and travelled down the eastern shore. The wind came up and was in our face as we paddled. It was a cooling breeze. We crossed over and paddled the west side of Nishoda Island. We went into the Western Channel and stopped for a swim and a break at the first campsite. We decided that since it was 11:30 we would have our lunch and since it was still too hot we jumped into the lake to cool off before we left. We paddled to the south of Attwood and Pig Islands and the breeze was in our face again. As we neared Crombie Bay Pt. we saw that some people were on the campsite we wanted. We decided to see if they were only lunching or if they were staying and as it turned out they were just finished their lunch and were going for a quick dip and then they were leaving. We were here at 1:30 pm. We spent our afternoon and evening lazing about and swimming. It was great. As Bill and I floated in our life jackets and enjoyed the soak, Bob and Cathy pointed out a loon that popped up beside us. Cool eh? We were worried that it was going to rain and we listened to it thunder in the distance; so far it has passed us. The sun came out long enough for us to see it go down and there was a small rainbow high in the clouds. A great day; too hot though. We headed for the tent at 9:00 pm.

Bill: Thurs. Aug. 9/01. 14 Km including 120m in 4 portages. I woke in the night when Bob went to get his food barrel to get some medicine and then shortly after that Janice got up. We went back to sleep and got up at 6:30 am. We had a lazy morning. The old seagull who couldn't fly was laying dead at our door step in the morning. We had oatmeal for breakfast and packed up. Cathy wasn't feeling good so they decided to head back for home because she wasn't feeling any better. They headed back east up the Western Channel to Hartley Bay with the wind in their back and we headed south west to the West Cross Channel. We parted ways at 10:00 pm. As soon as we turned the corner we were met with a head wind. We paddled slowly up the left side and used our compass at the end where it branched out to make sure we got into the Old Voyageur Channel. There were a whole bunch of big round rocks in the water as we went through Rock Circus. We stopped for lunch on the right just before Petite Faucill at 12 noon. We saw a very tired looking group of canoes heading up the channel and we wondered if they planned to go that way or if the waves in Georgian Bay were too big. We left and saw a group of kayakers at Petite Faucill. They were just out for the day and were heading back to their camp to the east of where we stayed last night. We portaged over the rock since there was no water running down this channel. At Palmer Rapids we had to portage over the rock channel. If the water was running you would have to portage anyway because the channel brings you right into another rock. La Dalle we just canoed through, but it was neat with a smooth rounded rock on one side and square broken rock on the other. We were not sure if we were in the cross channel until we went a bit further and checked with our compass that we were going the right way. When we got to Cross Channel Rapids we had to portage on the left about 60m. and then to go straight through we had to portage about 10m. over the dried up river

bed of grainy sand. It wasn't long and we were at the place where all the rapids come in from the Bad River Channel and we looked at the camp sites there. We didn't like them so we had a break at 3 pm. and had some gorp and water. We looked at Devil Door Rapids and it was just a swift. We went down Little Jameson Rapids and looked for the the campsite on the island, but it was small and rustic, so, we went on to the next island and it was taken. Since it was so windy we decided not to go out to the bay and we paddled back through Big Jameson Rapids which was a lift over. We came upon some sailboats moored on the middle of the channel. We saw a site on the right side in a bay across from the one on the north side that wasn't marked on the map but looked pretty good. We decided to camp here at 5 pm. We had a swim and set up the tent. It was thundering in the distance so Janice pumped water and I put up the tarp. We had a thunderstorm at 6 pm. and we didn't get back out of the tent till 7 pm. We had our hungry man soup with dumplings for supper and got everything put away for the night. We are in the tent at 9:30 pm. and hope to get an early start tomorrow without wind.

Janice: Fri. Aug. 10/01. 11 Km including 2 lift overs. We woke early. It was 5:30 am., but we didn't move for another 15 minutes. 5:45 am., we are starting to break camp, dress, have breakie, etc. This cove has been a nice site, I have enjoyed it except for the skunky animal smell. We figure some small animal lives close (there is a fair amount of scat around). We are on the water at 7:15 am. It's calmer than yesterday, but there is still a breeze and it gets stronger as we head out towards the lake. It's a stiff breeze that blows in our face. We headed east just before the last large island on the east point of Bad River. We followed the channel along the Finger Boards. We had to do a lift over to the east of the last cottage here. It was then that we remarked about the how we were following a green canoe and we noticed his paint all along the way. The water is very low (record low for Lake Huron) and we had many extra rocks showing that normally wouldn't be here. We took note where the East Cross Channel joined up with us. We stayed in the channel and paddled across Whitefish Bay to Sand Bay. We crossed Sand Bay and stopped for a gorp break on the island with the rustic campsite on the east side of the point at 10:00 am. It was a nice view that met us. Bill took a bearing and we headed across the French River Main Channel mouth. We were lucky with our breeze, it was in our backs and not very strong. We skimmed Herschel Island and Flat Island and then Dorion. We checked out several campsites on the island west of Obstacle Island and a few spots before we landed at the campsite in the cedar grove south of the Eastern Outlet. Tomorrow we are going up Bass Creek. We had lunch here at 12:15. This is a nice site in the cedars with a lot of space in behind our grove as well as in front. We spent our afternoon swimming, relaxing, washing, and Bill fished. This is a very busy channel with boats, but they are not bothering us. It is 8:20 and the wind has died down, it looks as if it might be promising a good day for tomorrow. We hung the bear bags and Bill is pumping water for tomorrow. There is a beautiful sunset at 8:45. We have seen many cormorants, gulls, and terns, and yes a few loons along the way.

Sat. Aug. 11/01. 10 Km including 240m in 1 portage. We woke early and rolled over and never moved until 7 am. It is cooler today. We are on the water at 9 am. It's a beautiful day as we leave our scenic spot and head up Bass Creek. We did the 240m. portage at the Boat Tramway. We checked out the old cabins at the end of the portage and decided that there would be no log to sign here and the newer cabins looked as if they were occupied. We carried on through Bass Lake and as we rounded the point on the right we heard a porcupine. He was coming down to the water. We took his picture and watched as he bared his quills for us and marched off. Wow! As we canoed further along a long slim island we saw a curious brown mink who peaked at us and ran along the island to check us out. We were as fascinated with him as he was with us. We stopped at the campsite on the east side at The Elbow, 10:45 am before we crossed into the Main Outlet. This site is huge. It's clean except for the food in the fire pit, (I don't know who is supposed to burn that in a fire ban) and the toilet area. There is a box here but people are just moving the box around. Bill is fishing. We are lunching here and then moving on.

Bill: I lost one of my favourite lures there. We canoed up the Main Outlet and checked out the camp site on the east. It was good for a camp site but not good for swimming and pumping water. We went east when we got to the Western Channel and camped on the first camp site on the south side (south of Canal Island). It is a very nice site with lots of room. Someone not too long ago did a lot of damage to the trees by cutting live limbs off and scarring the trunks of trees. We set up camp and had fruit punch surprise

and a swim. It is very busy here with fishing boats passing all the time. We saw a couple of groups of canoes go by from the east and 1 group came from Hartley Bay and turned west. The wind blew harder this afternoon but it has eased off and we have all blue sky. We had a great pesto parmesan noodle meal with hamburg and carrots. We had our dried fruit dessert as an appetizer and a cup of soup to wash it all down. We are lazing on a rock in the sun and I am going fishing.

Janice: It's 8:30 pm and the chores are done. Bill is stuck on fishing, a few strikes, 1 fight and no fish. A man in a boat stopped to ask if we knew that there was a fire ban. He told Bill there were 4 fires burning around us. We are having a tea and then we will brush our teeth, hang the bag and off to bed.

Sun. Aug. 12/01. 7 Km. We are up at 6:30 am. A humming bird came and buzzed our yellow tent and then left. That was cool. Bill is fishing and is dressed for mosquitoes. It is cooler than last night and they came to eat upon us as we brushed our teeth and hung the bag. The sun is up and it looks like another glorious day. We spent a relaxing morning, Bill fishing, a couple coffees, washing up (dishes and us) and packing. We left our site at 10:35 am and rounded the corner of Canal Island to head north easterly to Hartley Bay. The wind was in our back. We stopped for a gorp break at the first long island on the east side of Wanapitei Bay. We soaked in the view and then headed on. As we paddled past the small slender island in the centre of the bay we noticed a moose carcass on its' shore. We had to stop and check this out. We lunched at the campsite on the island on the south east corner heading into Hartley Bay. We headed back east to Hartley Bay and of course the breeze was in our face. We arrived at Hartley Bay Marina at 12:30 pm. We had a great trip; missed Bob and Cathy though. It was so dry here. Many of the blueberry bushes are completely brown with a few dried up berries on them. Some of the deciduous trees are turning brown and the leaves are dropping. We sure could use some rain in Ontario this year.