

For further information...

Please contact:

Tourism and Parks –

Industry, Tourism and Investment,
Government of the Northwest Territories,
Box 2589 DEM, Inuvik NT X0E 0T0 Canada
e-mail: travel_westernarctic@gov.nt.ca
Phone: (867) 777-7196 Fax: (867) 777-7321

Northwest Territories Campground Reservations –

www.campingnwt.ca

Community Information –

www.dempsterhighway.com
www.inuvik.ca
www.trulyarctic.ca

Northwest Territories Tourism –

Phone Toll Free: 1-800-661-0788
www.spectacularnwt.com

National Parks –

Canadian Heritage, Parks Canada,
Western Arctic District Office,
Box 1840, Inuvik NT X0E 0T0
Phone: (867) 777-8800 Fax: (867) 777-8820
www.parkscanada.gc.ca

Yukon Parks –

www.yukonparks.ca
Phone Toll Free: 1-800-661-0408 Ext. 5648

Other useful contacts:

Road and Ferry reports –

www.dot.gov.nt.ca
Phone Toll Free: 1-800-661-0750

Weather forecasts –

(867) 777-4183

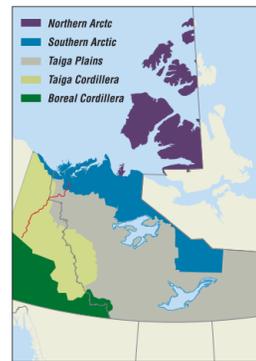
Royal Canadian Mounted Police –

Dawson City (867) 993-5555
Fort McPherson (867) 952-1111
Inuvik (867) 777-1111
Tuktoyaktuk (867) 977-1111

Hospitals –

Fort McPherson (867) 952-2586
Inuvik (867) 777-8000
Tuktoyaktuk (867) 977-2321

Our natural regions



One of the most appealing aspects of the trip up the Dempster is the contrast between the natural regions encountered. Mountains, valleys, plateaus and plains and the arctic tundra are all to be discovered along the way.

We have identified the five principal natural regions or “ecozones” by colour on the map for you:

The Boreal Cordillera – mountain ranges with numerous high peaks and extensive plateaus, separated by wide valleys and lowlands. The lower elevations are covered with dense mixed forest, the higher with alpine tundra.

The Taiga Cordillera – the northernmost extent of the Rocky Mountains, with some of Canada’s largest waterfalls, deepest canyons and wildest rivers. It remains a very sparsely populated wilderness, the home of Dall’s sheep, mountain goat, woodland and barren ground caribou, moose, wolf, grizzly bear, pika, marmot and wolverine.



A brown bear takes a leisurely stroll – and who’d stop him?



Don’t be surprised if you see caribou along the highway.



Bearberry leaves carpet the plains with vibrant colour.

The Taiga Plains – taiga, a Russian word, refers to the northern edge of the great boreal forest and describes much of the Mackenzie River watershed, Canada’s largest. The river valley acts as a migratory corridor

for the hundreds of thousands of waterfowl that breed along the arctic coast in summer. Typical animals found include moose, wolf, black bear, marten and lynx. The barren ground caribou that migrate onto the tundra to the north in the summer months, retreat to the taiga forest to over-winter.



The Southern Arctic is home to the snow goose.

The Southern Arctic – labelled as the ‘Barren Lands’ by early European visitors, because of the lack of trees. Trees do in fact grow here, but are reduced to stunted shrubs – dwarf birch and arctic willow, with scattered spruce in sheltered river valleys.

Evidence of the last ice age can be seen everywhere – exposed bedrock scoured clean of all topsoil, vast plains of glacial deposits of rock and sand strewn with thousands of shallow lakes and wetlands.



A ringed seal is just one of the many species of wildlife found in this region.

The Northern Arctic – often referred to as a polar desert, with as little as 100 mm annual precipitation. Snow may persist on the ground for up to 10 months of the year and permafrost in the ground may be several hundred metres deep, with only a few centimetres at the surface thawing for the brief few weeks of summer.

A road less travelled...



Cruising along the Dempster Highway.

Have you ever driven just to get off the beaten path and have a taste of adventure? The Dempster Highway stretches 740 km (460 miles) through some of the most beautiful wilderness scenery in the world to Inuvik. Why not take a journey on this

unique well-maintained gravel highway as it winds over two mountain ranges, crosses the continental divide three times, passes through three natural regions and traverses the Arctic Circle, loosely following the old dog team routes, on its way to the great Mackenzie Delta.



The ferry at Tsiigehtchic.

Completed in 1978, the Dempster Highway was named for Sgt. WJD Dempster of the Northwest Mounted Police, who, in the winter of 1910-11, was sent to search for the ‘Lost Patrol’. Construction was originally started under Canada’s ‘Roads to Resources’ program in the late 1950s, but only 117 km were completed at that time. In the 1970s work began again when an overland supply route to Inuvik was needed to serve large scale oil exploration taking place in the Beaufort Sea. Since then visitors from around the world have discovered the phenomenal beauty of this highway and make the journey a major focus of their vacation.

November 2017 an all-weather road to Tuktoyaktuk and the Arctic Ocean was completed.



Have your photograph taken at the Arctic Circle, along the Dempster Highway.

“The scenery was beyond our imagination.”
Rimby, AB



Enjoy one of the many breathtaking hikes in the area.

Plan at least a week for your trip. The most common complaint we hear? “I wish I had left more time to...” Although the highway can be driven in 12 to 16 hours, we suggest that you plan two days each way, as you’ll see and enjoy more if you are not rushed. Appreciate the vastness of the land, take in some hiking, fishing or photography.

To experience summer conditions, including the midnight sun, plan your trip for June through to September. September is a good month to view the fall colours. The herds of caribou may be seen either mid-September to late October, or again in March and April. Access to Inuvik is possible year round, except for periods during the spring and fall with break-up (thaw) and freeze-up of the ice at the Peel and Mackenzie River crossings.

For a winter experience, February through to April is recommended. Winter is the best time to see the northern lights. The road is in good condition and we enjoy longer daylight hours again. You will be able to drive the ice roads on the Mackenzie River to Aklavik from mid-December to mid-April, depending on the weather. Traffic will be very light so you must come well prepared. In the winter, carry a SPOT or satellite phone, shovel, sleeping bag, stove, matches, emergency snacks, and of course, dress for cold outdoor temperatures.



Drive the Dempster in winter – for a ‘cool’ experience!

Trip planning



Visitors’ Centres can provide travellers with a wealth of information.

Before you set off you may want to make a quick side trip into the historic Yukon gold mining town of Dawson City. There is much to see and do here, but don’t dally too long as the call of the open highway beckons you. While in Dawson, be sure to visit the Northwest Territories Dempster Delta Visitor Centre, housed in the old British Yukon Navigation Building, conveniently located on Front Street directly across from the Dawson Visitor Centre. Get the latest Dempster road reports, ferry information and current events. Watch a short video on driving the Dempster Highway. Interesting exhibits will give you a sense of the richness of the land and culture of the Western Arctic.

Specialized vehicles are not necessary to drive this well-maintained gravel highway, but services are far apart. It never hurts to carry extra fluids, spare belts, some basic tools, flare, tow-rope, axe, knife and matches. At any time of the year, have a vehicle that is dependable and well-maintained. Ensure that all of your tires are in good condition, with lots of tread, and have at least one full-sized spare tire in good condition, two if your tire is an unusual size.



You’ll never tire of these awe-inspiring vistas.

Slowing down and pulling over as far as possible when meeting vehicles, especially large trucks, will minimize rock damage to windshields – protect your headlights with plastic or wire mesh covers. Drive with headlights on at all times – it’s the law in the NWT, as is travelling with your seatbelt fastened.

CANADA'S Dempster Highway... Northwest Territories

To the
Inuvik/Tuktoyaktuk Highway...
and the Arctic Ocean

Government of
Northwest Territories

“The scenery was spectacular and the people all helpful and friendly – I’ll come back!”
NSW, Australia



An Inuvialuit woman wears a traditional sunburst parka.

The highway can be dusty in summer – to minimize dust inside your vehicle keep your windows closed and use your fan, set to defrost with the heat off. You can avoid skidding or sliding on loose road surface by eliminating sudden braking or steering. Although the region is on the

whole dry, there remains the possibility of the road being washed out in the mountains from time to time. Carefully observe any highway control signs and markers at such times.

Conditions along the Dempster and on the Beaufort Coast can change quickly at any time of the year, with cold winds and perhaps snow in the mountains even in summer. A warm jacket, good boots, hat and gloves are useful items to bring along. We suggest you bring clothing that can be layered. Summer travellers should be aware that mosquitoes and black flies can be quite plentiful at certain times and places. Consider equipping yourself with insect repellents and/or protective clothing.

Vehicle rentals are available in Whitehorse, Yukon or Inuvik, NT or Anchorage, Alaska. Don’t forget to bring along all the documentation necessary to get you on your way!

“It was an amazing trip.”
Germany

Recommended Reading

The Milepost is considered the ‘Bible’ of northern highway travel, with detailed descriptions of all highways in the NWT, Yukon and Alaska. Available retail, or from Vernon Publications, phone toll free 1-800-726-4707, or visit www.alaskainfo.com.

Driving the Dempster

144 km (mile 90) – Tuktoyaktuk



Tuktoyaktuk nestled on the shores of the Arctic Ocean is home to Parks Canada's "Pingo National Landmark" – a collection of ice hills.

736 km (mile 457) – Inuvik



Inuvik awaits you at the end of this year-round highway, offering a full range of services and facilities. The Western Arctic Visitor Information Centre is open from the third weekend in May to September 15. It features both indoor and outdoor interpretive displays about the whole Delta region and is a worthwhile destination in itself. Information on trips to all the outlying communities and other attractions are available from here.

Happy Valley Territorial Campground



Inuvik's Happy Valley Territorial Campground offers 27 sites, with laundry, nightly fee and 24-hour security.

731 km (mile 454) – Jak Park



Just outside the community of Inuvik, Jak Park Campsite offers 36 sites, with a fee for overnight or day use, and 24-hour security.

550 km (mile 342) – Fort McPherson



Fort McPherson offers a good range of basic services, the Tent and Canvas workshop, open 9 to 5 weekdays, and a self-guided tour of the community.

541 km (mile 336) – Nitainlai Territorial Park



Nitainlai Territorial Park campsite (23 sites, nightly fee) and its visitor information centre are open from June 1 to September 1. The centre offers fascinating displays of the traditional lifestyle of the Gwich'in people of the region.

539 km (mile 335) – Peel River Ferry



The Peel River ferry is free and operates from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. daily, from June to mid-October. Cross by ice bridge from the end of November to April 30.

447 km (mile 278) – Rock River Campground



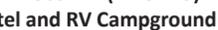
Twenty sites offer sheltered protection within a steep gorge of the Richardson Mountains.

405 km (mile 252) – Arctic Circle



Catch a photo of yourself crossing the Arctic Circle, taking a moment to see the displays that explain the Arctic Circle and the northern lights. From this latitude northwards the sun never sets at the summer solstice, June 21, and never rises at the winter solstice, December 21.

369 km (mile 229) – Eagle Plains Hotel and RV Campground



The halfway point. The hotel, Ph (867) 993-2453, open year round, offers a licensed restaurant and lounge, full service garage with propane, diesel and licensed mechanic, tire sales and repair, and limited aircraft facilities. Next services – Fort McPherson 193 km (120 miles).

72 km (mile 45) – Tombstone Mountain Campground



Tombstone Mountain Campground, with 22 sites, offers nature walks and campfire talks, in July and August, and a staffed interpretive centre. It is a base for hikes into the Tombstone range.

66 km (mile 41) Klondike Highway Maintenance Camp.

0 km (mile 0) – Gateway Interpretive Display

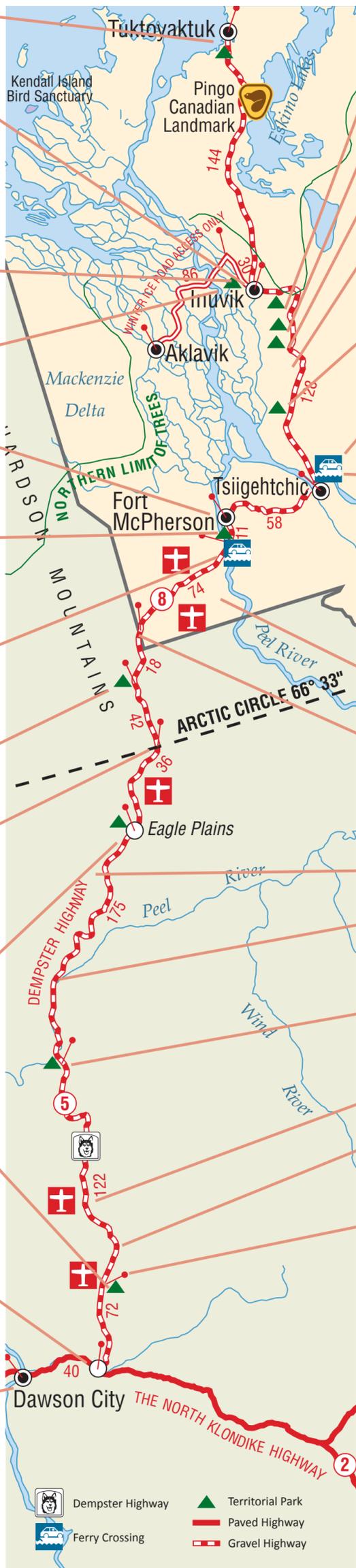


Take in the Gateway interpretive display at the junction of the Dempster Highway with Yukon Route 5, 40 km (25 miles) east of Dawson City. It's 365 kms (232 miles) to the next services at Eagle Plains.

Dawson City



Before you start your journey up the Dempster, be sure to stop in at the Dempster Delta Visitor Information Centre on Front Street in Dawson City, Yukon. See the excellent displays and meet our friendly travel counsellors, who can help you plan your trip. Open May 15 to September 15.



719 km (mile 446) – Nihtak Day Use Area (Campbell Creek)



714 km (mile 443) – Ehjuu Njik Wayside Park (Cabin Creek)



705 km (mile 438) – Gwich'in Territorial Campground



Twenty non-powered RV sites and four tent sites.

703 km (mile 437) – Tithegeh Chii Vitaii Lookout



It is a short walk from the road to the edge of the cliffs that overlook Campbell Lake, which is an example of a reversing Delta. The cliffs are home to raptors such as Peregrine Falcons.

692 km (mile 430) – Vadzaih Van Tshik Campground (Caribou Creek)



Vadzaih Van Tshik Campground has 11 sites.

608 km (mile 378) – Tsiigehtchic



Tsiigehtchic is a traditional Gwich'in community, where a more relaxed pace of life may still be found.

608 km (mile 378) – Mackenzie River and Arctic Red River Ferry



The Mackenzie River and Arctic Red River ferry is free and operates 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. daily, June to mid-October. Cross by ice bridge in the winter from the end of November until April 30. The flow of the Mackenzie River, draining one fifth of Canada, over 1,800,000 sq. km. (700,000 sq. miles), is exceeded in the western hemisphere only by the Mississippi and the Amazon. The Mackenzie Delta is the largest in Canada and the tenth largest in the world.

536 km (mile 333) – Tetlit Gwinjik Wayside Park



A view of the Mackenzie Delta and Peel River valley.

465 km (mile 289) – Yukon/NWT Border



Note the time zone change at the Yukon/NWT border crossing – set watches one hour ahead when travelling north, back when going south. There is an interpretive display here worth seeing that describes the local wildlife and landscapes.

326 km (mile 204) – Pullout



259 km (mile 161) – Ogilvie-Peel Viewpoint



196 km (mile 123) – Ogilvie Highway Maintenance Camp.



194 km (mile 120) – Engineer Creek Campground



Located at the foot of Sapper Hill, a sharply eroded limestone ridge with fascinating rock 'forests'. Eight sites and good fishing.

107 km (mile 67) – Pullout



82 km (mile 51) – North Fork Pass



The highest elevation on the Dempster, at 1,289 metres (4,229 feet). First crossing of the Continental Divide.

75 km (mile 47) – Tombstone Mountain



Take in the panoramic view west to Tombstone Mountain, some 40 km (25 miles) away.

LEGEND			
	Interpretive Displays		Dump Stations
	Campsites		Trails
	Picnic/Day Use		Lookout
	Toilets/Outhouse		Boat Launch
	Kitchen Shelter		Swimming
	Firewood		Playground
	Drinking Water		Power at Campsites
	Showers		Gasoline Station
	Automotive Services		Golf Course
	Tire Repair		Medical Services
	Accommodation		Police
	Restaurant		Airport, Scheduled Service
	Store		Emergency Landing Airstrip
	Bank		Post Office
	Banking Machine		Arts and Crafts
	Visitor Information		Church



Distances to Inuvik from...

By Road	Km / Mi	By Air	Km / Mi
Anchorage, Alaska	1612 / 1002	Aklavik	75 / 47
Calgary, Alberta	3595 / 2234	Holman	675 / 419
Fairbanks, Alaska	1416 / 880	Paulatuk	394 / 245
Los Angeles, California	6093 / 3786	Sachs Harbour	525 / 326
New York, NY	7600 / 4723	Tuktoyaktuk	94 / 58
Ottawa, Ontario	7099 / 4411		
Seattle, Washington	4038 / 2509		
Whitehorse, Yukon	1310 / 814		
Yellowknife, NT	3565 / 2215		
Tuktoyaktuk, NT	144 / 90		

Hunting



Pre-historic looking musk-oxen roam free across the land.

Anyone wishing to hunt or carry firearms in Canada must obtain the required licence. Revolvers, pistols and automatic weapons are prohibited entry into Canada. Non-residents wishing to hunt big game require the services of an outfitter who will provide a licensed guide.

Fishing



Red-bellied Arctic char taste as good as they look.

If you are between the ages of 16 and 65, and fish here, you must carry an NWT fishing licence, available at www.enr.gov.nt.ca or Western Arctic Regional Visitor Centre in Inuvik.