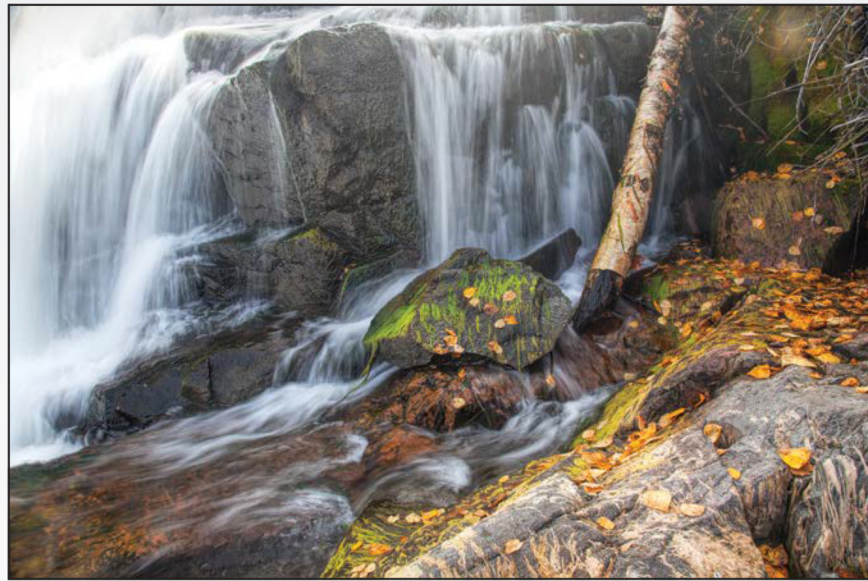


A Weekend in Saskatchewan's North

By Larry Easton



Saskatchewan is often referred to as the Land of Living Skies, but if you journey to the northern half of the province and beyond, it is also a land of boreal forest and 100,000 lakes.

You can also be treated to some spectacular sunsets and sunrises in this province of Living Skies. To fully experience the north, a person can go on one of the many canoe or kayak trips on pristine lakes, gentle rivers or

some of the greatest whitewater rivers anywhere.

A great introduction to experiencing the north in a three-day weekend is a trip between LaRonge, Missinipe and Stanley Mission.



If it is the first trip north of Prince Albert National Park, you will pass a point that is the approximate geographical centre of Saskatchewan in the Montreal Lake area along Highway 2.

One must stop is the Nipekamew Sandstone cliffs, 27 kilometres east of the junction of highways 2 and 165, toward Nipekamew River. Follow the road south on the west side of the river for about 1.2 kilometres to the parking area. From there, hike the 1.5-kilometre trail to the edge of the Nipekamew River.

The journey continues to LaRonge. A hotel or motel room should be arranged for two nights. On Day 2, the morning journey will continue along Highway 102. The landscape is now in the Canadian Shield and forests and lakes. There are a few small lakes along the road with pull outs to get some scenic views.

Continue to the village of Missinipe. There is also accommodation, a store and Churchill River Canoe Outfitters to check out if you want to try some canoeing. Just a few kilometres north of Missinipe are the Churchill River and camp grounds with some good



views of Otter Rapids from the bridge spanning the Churchill River. Planning for this part of the trip should be for the morning.

By noon, continue to Stanley Mission from the junction of highways 102 and 915 for 36 kilometres. Across the river at the original site of Stanley Mission is Holy Trinity Anglican Church, built between 1854 and 1860. It is the oldest standing building in Saskatchewan and a National and Provincial Heritage site. The community of Stanley Mission has a current population of about 1,630.

One highlight of this trip is a visit to Nistowiak Falls, 20 kilometres east of Stanley Mission on the Churchill River. The falls are one of the highest in Saskatchewan and is about a half-kilometre hike along a well-used portage trail to the falls from the Churchill River.

Nistowiak Falls is part of the Rapid River, a drainage system of Lac LaRonge. The falls are accessible from the Churchill River by a boat tour from an operator in Stanley Mission and must be pre-arranged. The falls are accessible by canoe/kayak and floatplane.

Don't forget to ask the tour guide to stop above the North Stanley Rapids to view the indigenous rock painting (pictographs) on a granite rock face. ✱

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