



## Deh Cho Travel Connection Northwest Territories – Story Leads

### Pioneer Pilot of the North

Simpson Air's Ted Grant, a former member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), received the 2009 Tourism Industry Association of Canada's Lifetime Achievement Award for helping to open up the North as a tourism destination. Grant fell in love with the beauty of Nahanni National Park Reserve when he was stationed with the RCMP in nearby Fort Simpson in 1976 and took a flight with renowned pilot Dick Turner. This Dene village in the southwest corner of the Northwest Territories is located in the Deh Cho region.

Five years later, Grant was working at another detachment near Yellowknife when he bought Simpson Air in April 1981. The small company had been offering charters in the Mackenzie Valley since the 1960s. Grant had a commercial pilot's licence and became its president and chief pilot. Since then, he and his staff have hosted many people, from tourists to such foreign dignitaries as Britain's Prince Andrew. The September 2006 issue of Air Canada's *EnRoute* magazine listed Simpson Air as one of the "100 Things to Do Before You're 100."

In 1985, Grant bought the log cabins at Little Doctor Lake some 90 kilometres west of Fort Simpson. Visitors can now stay at Nahanni Mountain Lodge, which was once home to trappers and prospectors Gus and Mary Kraus. That purchase helped this pioneering pilot fulfil his childhood dreams of joining the RCMP, owning an airplane and a lodge. Apparently he also dreamed of owning a sailboat, but you'll have to ask him about that.

**Information:** Simpson Air [www.simpsonair.com](http://www.simpsonair.com)

### Golfing at Midnight

It's midnight on June 21 and the sun is shining. Golfers at the Yellowknife Golf Club are lined up and ready to tee off at the Canadian North Midnight Classic golf tournament. They aren't the only ones. Foxes and ravens wait in the shadows to create hazards of their own at Yellowknife's 18-hole golf course. Stealing balls isn't in the playbook, but these tiny competitors have plenty of practice. The club celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008 and has a scenic course with sand fairways and artificial greens.

There are five golf courses along the Deh Cho Travel Connection route within the Northwest Territories. The Hay River Golf Club's nine-hole course with grass fairways sits on the banks of the Hay River and is lined with Aspens. If you don't want to spend time driving to the course, the club has a 10-unit RV Park with electricity and pump-out.

The Pelican Rapids Golf & Country Club, just outside the town of Fort Smith, overlooks the Slave River. This nine-hole course with grass fairways and sand greens is only two kilometres south of the 60th parallel. This makes it the most northerly golf course in Alberta. Check out the view of the world-class whitewater rapids from the lookout deck at the first tee.

If you're feeling particularly brave, step inside Fort Smith's RCMP detachment during business hours to ask for a map of the nine-hole Blue and Gold golf course. Tee off at the first hole in front of the building at the world's only RCMP golf course. RCMP members and volunteers look after the upkeep.

Fort Simpson's Seven Spruce Golf Course offers a nine-hole course with grass fairways.

### **Information:**

Yellowknife Golf Club [www.yellowknifegolf.com](http://www.yellowknifegolf.com).

Hay River Golf Club [www.hayrivergolfclub.com](http://www.hayrivergolfclub.com)

Pelican Rapids Golf & Country Club [www.fortsmith.ca](http://www.fortsmith.ca) or [www.golfnorthernalberta.com/fortsmith.aspx](http://www.golfnorthernalberta.com/fortsmith.aspx)

### **Casting a Line**

Yellowknife is the kind of place where fishing has such an important place that the local newspaper publishes a photo of the catch of the week throughout the summer. Great Slave Lake is the fifth largest lake in North America and feeds the Mackenzie River, which flows north and empties into the Arctic Ocean. Local operators take visitors to some of their favourite fishing holes for a few hours or a day, topped off by a shore lunch.

True North Safaris heads to the North Arm of Great Slave Lake and the Yellowknife River to cast for Northern Pike. Fly out with Yellowknife Outdoor Adventures to the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, a place that is slated to become a national park. The two-hour stop includes a chance to fish while your guide prepares – what else - fish for lunch. Operator Carlos Gonzalez once operated his own restaurant. Get a taste, literally and figuratively, of Great Slave Lake with Bluefish Services casting for Northern Pike and Arctic Grayling. Their four-hour fish fry tour takes visitors out Yellowknife Bay past the Aboriginal village of Dettah and stops either on the mainland or an island to fish and fry. Pick up an NWT Sport Fishing licence before climbing aboard.

### **Information:**

True North Safaris [www.truenorthsafaris.com](http://www.truenorthsafaris.com)

Yellowknife Outdoor Adventures

[http://www.yellowknifeoutdooradventures.com/?page\\_id=11](http://www.yellowknifeoutdooradventures.com/?page_id=11)

Bluefish Services [www.bluefishservices.ca](http://www.bluefishservices.ca)

### **Walk with Dene Culture**

Torrents of water along the Hay River, just north of the Northwest Territories border, throw themselves from the top of Alexandra Falls. They land with a loud, thundering sound, 34 metres into the chasm below. Just a short walk away along an ancient and sacred portage route, Louise Falls doesn't roar quite as loudly. Long before Europeans arrived, the Dene people portaged through this area just south of Enterprise each spring and fall. According to traditional Dene beliefs, grandmother and grandfather spirits watch over the portage route and the falls.

Doug Lamalice, from the K'atlodeeche (Pronounced Hat-low-day) First Nation reserve near the town of Hay River offers short, interpretive walks each summer called "Walk a Mile in My Moccasins." The 2.5-kilometre hike begins with a fire feeding ceremony with an Elder. Then

Lamallice explains how his people used the area, some of the cultural significance of plants on the route, and stops at 17 interpretive signs along the way. He also offers a separate tour of the Hay River Dene reserve to share its history and culture. It includes visits to see two churches, the Dene Cultural Institute, a fire feeding ceremony and fish drying demonstration. Tours can be booked through the Hay River Visitor Information Centre.

**Information:**

(867) 874-3180 (summer only)

(867) 874-6522 (Hay River town hall)

**In the Footsteps of the Fur Traders**

A crowd stands on the rocks overlooking Mountain Portage near Fort Smith as one whitewater kayaker after another twists and turns, navigating through the churning water. It's the first long weekend in August and paddlers from as far away as the United States and Australia have come to participate in the annual Slave River Paddlefest. The event features activities for kayakers, canoeists and spectators. It includes games and competitions on the water, guided hikes along the river and opportunities to be introduced to kayaks.

Fort Smith sits on the banks of the Slave River, the waterway that explorers and fur traders used for centuries as their gateway into the North. Four sets of impassable rapids between Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Smith were the only obstacle between northern Alberta and the Arctic Ocean more than 1,100 kilometres away. The waterway helped turn Fort Smith into the administrative centre of the Northwest Territories until Yellowknife was named the official capital in 1967.

Follow in the footsteps of the fur traders by hiking along the former portage routes to each of the four sets of rapids along the 27-kilometre route to Fort Smith: Cassette, Pelican, Mountain and Rapids of the Drowned. Participate in Paddlefest. Learn about the town's history at the Northern Life Museum and Cultural Centre, Fort Smith Mission Historic Park and St. Joseph Cathedral.

**Information:**

Fort Smith [www.fortsmith.ca](http://www.fortsmith.ca)

Fort Smith Paddling Club [www.fskayak.webs.com](http://www.fskayak.webs.com)