

GoMedia Canada 2020

Eeyou Istchee James Bay, Quebec

Exploring Cree culture

September 5-9, 2020

Theme

For over 5,000 years, the Cree have occupied the vast territory (350,000 km²) of Eeyou Istchee James Bay, moving across the land with the seasons and the migration of animals. Many Cree traditions and activities from the past are alive and well today, passed down from generation to generation. On this tour, set off to discover a vibrant living culture with roots that reach back millennia.

Description

Established in 1668, Waskaganish was the Hudson's Bay Company's first-ever trading post. The community celebrated its 350th anniversary in 2018, though it's important to note that the Cree have occupied the Eeyou Istchee territory for millennia.

Immerse yourself in the history of [Waskaganish](#). Witness the traditional scooping of whitefish at Smokey Hill, admire the wild Rupert River and navigate the waters of James Bay. You'll be accompanied by local Cree boat captains, who will regale you with the territory's history and help you spot the many different species of wild flora and fauna. If we're lucky, we'll cross the paths of polar bears, seals, beluga whales, migrating birds and many other members of the animal kingdom. You'll also have a chance to disembark on one of the bay's islands, where you can walk around and eat lunch.

The community of [Ouje-Bougoumou](#) has been recognized by UNESCO for its construction incorporating sustainable development criteria and traditional architecture. You'll visit the gorgeous Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute, which provides an enriching and important overview of the Cree nation's history. You'll also visit community Elders and create tamarack geese, an authentic regional symbol.

Considerations

- Travel and nature activities in the remote north are at the mercy of Mother Nature. All water-related activities (i.e., the James Bay eco-cruises) are extremely weather dependent and may be cancelled in the event of heavy rain or high winds. Travel delays can also occur. Participants should be flexible.
- The Cree of Eeyou Istchee have lived in this region for thousands of years, following a traditional lifestyle based on hunting, fishing and gathering. There are people today who still keep up this subsistence lifestyle. A respect for the earth and animals is deeply rooted in their culture. Tour participants must be comfortable with these activities and open to hearing people talk about them.
- The Northern Lights are weather dependent and cannot be guaranteed.
- Participants must be in good physical condition and able to get around independently in different circumstances. Excursions involve walking, navigating uneven surfaces and potentially unstable ground, and other physical activities.
- Internet access will be limited or non-existent during certain parts of this tour. You can expect your accommodations to have internet access, though speeds may be much slower than you are used to.
- Cell service/reception outside of communities will be very weak or non-existent.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Saturday, September 5, 2020

- 7:45 a.m. Montréal – Waskaganish flight (Air Creebec YN905)
- 10:50 a.m. Arrive in [Waskaganish](#), guided tour of the community
The Waskaganish tourism officer will lead this tour, making this the perfect moment to learn about the history of the community, which was the first-ever trading post established by the Hudson's Bay Company.
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch, check-in at the [Kanio Kashee Lodge](#)
- 1:30 p.m. Visit to the historic Smokey Hill site, bannock tasting
This site is still highly valued today for the traditional scooping of whitefish, whose use is reserved for the Cree. Time permitting, visitors can observe this activity and sample tender smoked fish prepared on a wood fire. Your guide will accompany you in tasting bannock, a traditional Indigenous bread that is extremely popular in Eeyou Istchee James Bay.
- 6:30 p.m. Traditional dinner, choice between sleeping in a teepee or at Kanio Kashee Lodge
The community of Waskaganish has provided tourists and its residents with a site that features two different types of traditional dwellings: teepees and wigwams. Spend the night and enjoy an unforgettable experience!

Day 2 – Sunday, September 6, 2020

- Morning Breakfast
- 8:30 a.m. Depart for [the James Bay eco-cruise](#)
This cruise, guided by certified Cree captains, is an extraordinary way to explore James Bay. You'll be awestruck by the immensity of this body of water, its marine life and the splendour of the scenery. The guides' stories will also give you a different perspective on this vast territory.
- 12:00 p.m. Picnic lunch on one of James Bay's islands
James Bay has a number of magnificent islands where we can land for a short excursion.
- Afternoon Continue the cruise and island excursions
- 5:00 p.m. Return to Kanio Kashee Lodge
- 7:00 p.m. Dinner and overnight at Kanio Kashee Lodge

Day 3 – Monday, September 7, 2020

- Morning Breakfast and depart from the lodge
- 9:00 a.m. Studio visit with [artist and painter Tim Whiskeychan](#)
Visitors will discover the work of this Cree artist and be treated to many stories about the territory and nature.
- 10:30 a.m. Depart for the airport
- 12:00 p.m. Flight to Chibougamau (Air Creebec YN927)
- 3:20 p.m. Arrive in Chibougamau and drive to [Ouje-Bougoumou](#) (30 minutes)
- 4:00 p.m. Check-in at Capissisit Lodge
- 5:00 p.m. Guided tour of the community
Accompanied by the local tourism officer, visitors will learn the history of this newest Cree community and discover what makes it so unique.
- 6:30 p.m. Dinner and overnight at [Capissisit Lodge](#)

Day 4 – Tuesday, September 8, 2020

- Morning Breakfast at the lodge
- 9:30 a.m. Guided visit of the [Aanischaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute](#)
This museum is an essential stop for learning about the history of the Eeyou Istchee Cree. The permanent exhibition uses artifacts, everyday objects, art objects and videos to tell the story of a millennium of Cree occupation of this territory.
- 11:30 a.m. Traditional lunch with community Elders
- 1:30 p.m. Tamarack geese workshop with artist [Harold Bosum](#)
These miniatures were used in the past as decoys for geese hunting and have today become works of art in their own right. The artist will teach visitors how to make their own goose, which you can take home as a souvenir.
- 3:00 p.m. Depart for the Chibougamau-Chapais Airport
- 4:20 p.m. Flight to Montréal (Air Creebec YN928)
- 5:40 p.m. Arrive in Montréal, overnight

Day 5 – Wednesday, September 9, 2020

- 9:05 a.m. Montréal – Victoria flight (Air Canada 303, layover in Vancouver, Air Canada 8085)
- 1:25 p.m. Arrive in Victoria

Recommended items to bring

- Watkins-style insect repellent
- Sunscreen
- Refillable water bottle
- Warm clothing (windbreaker, toque, mittens, fleece, wool socks, etc.)
- Rain gear (jacket, pants)
- Hat/cap
- Hiking boots/shoes
- Binoculars and cameras