

CANOL HERITAGE TRAIL

Embrace the wilderness



HIKING ROUTE

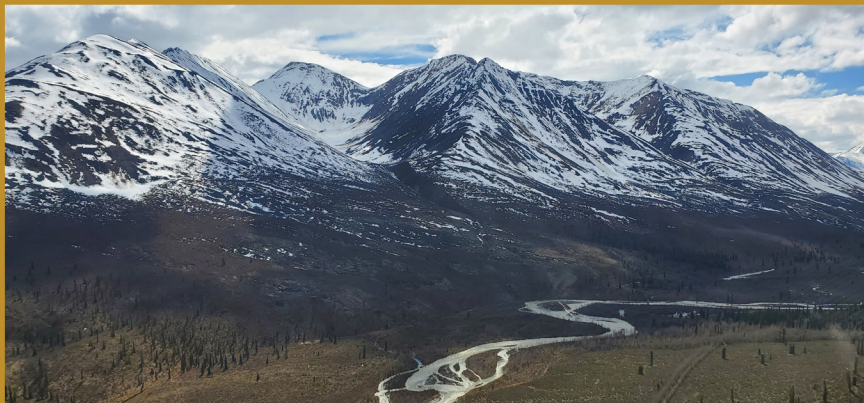
21

14-21 day
remote wilderness hike



www.NWTParks.ca

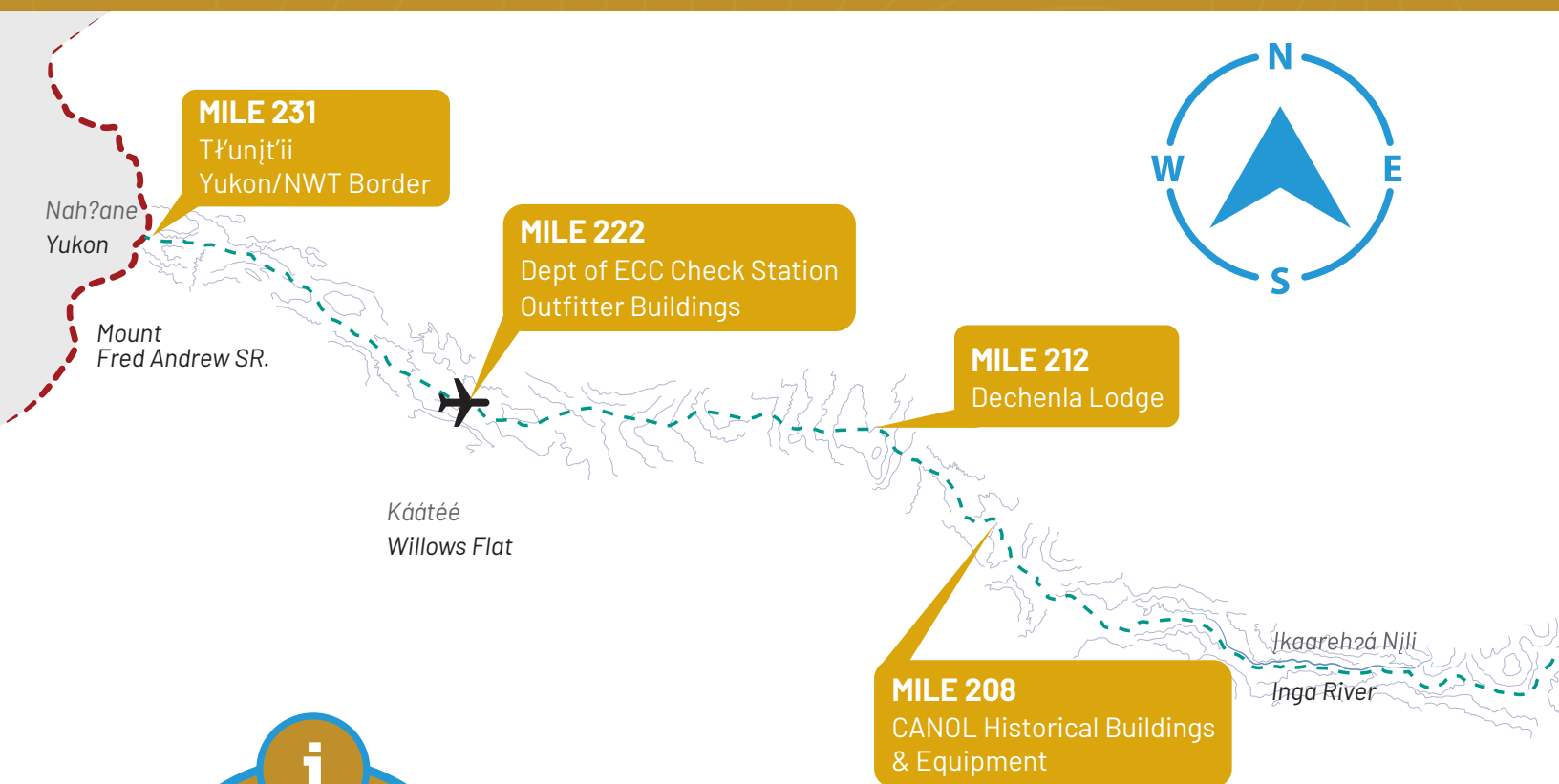




HIGHLIGHTS:

The CANOL Heritage Trail is one of the most remote and historically rich hiking routes in the world. Stretching from Norman Wells in the Northwest Territories to the Yukon boarder, the trail follows the remnants of the WWII-era Canadian Oil (CANOL) pipeline project through rugged wilderness, offering travelers an immersive experience in Canada's pristine northern landscapes and a glimpse back in time.

The CANOL project was, at the time, the largest construction project in the world after the Panama Canal and the infrastructure associated with the project stretches from Alberta into the NWT, and then on the west side as far as Alaska. Today the CANOL Heritage Trail is a challenging, unparalleled journey through one of North America's last frontiers, a combination of scenic beauty and significant historical appeal.



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To view the trail map continuously, print this document single-sided and lay it out page by page.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

RCMP in Norman Wells	911 or (867) 587-1111
North-Wright Airways Ltd.	(867) 587-2288
Canadian Helicopters	(867) 587-2136
Sahtu Helicopters	(867) 587-2827

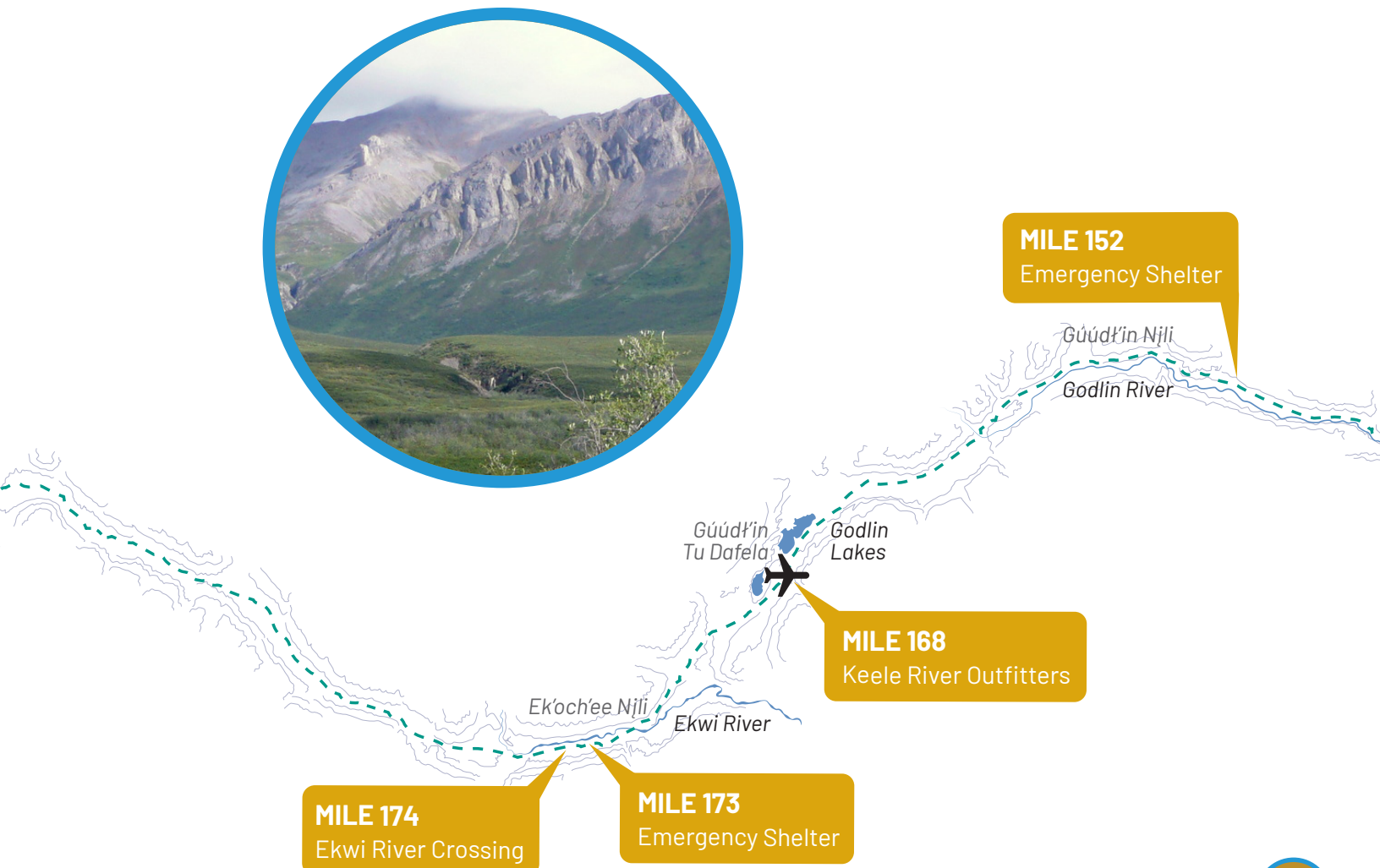
HIGHLIGHTS:

Hikers will encounter a variety of historic sites and landmarks, including pumphouses and historic buildings and equipment at Miles 36, 108, and 208. At many points along the trail abandoned relics such as vehicles, barrels, and buildings scatter the landscape. Mile 184 has a fascinating “vehicle boneyard” of abandoned equipment. Hikers should use caution around historic structures.

Along the way, 9 emergency shelters dot the route at intervals, providing critical resting points for hikers and offering additional shelter when needed.

The terrain is breathtakingly rugged, with the Mackenzie Mountains looming and wild rivers like the Carcajou, Ekwi, Twitya, and Little Keele carving through the land.

For a unique rest stop, Dechenla Lodge at Mile 212 offers a rare wilderness lodge experience with contact options for those who want to plan a stay. Keele River Outfitters base camp is also located at Mile 170 and provides accommodations. All in all, the CANOL Heritage Trail is a powerful immersion into North America’s history and wilderness — a testament to the endurance of both the land and those who travel it.

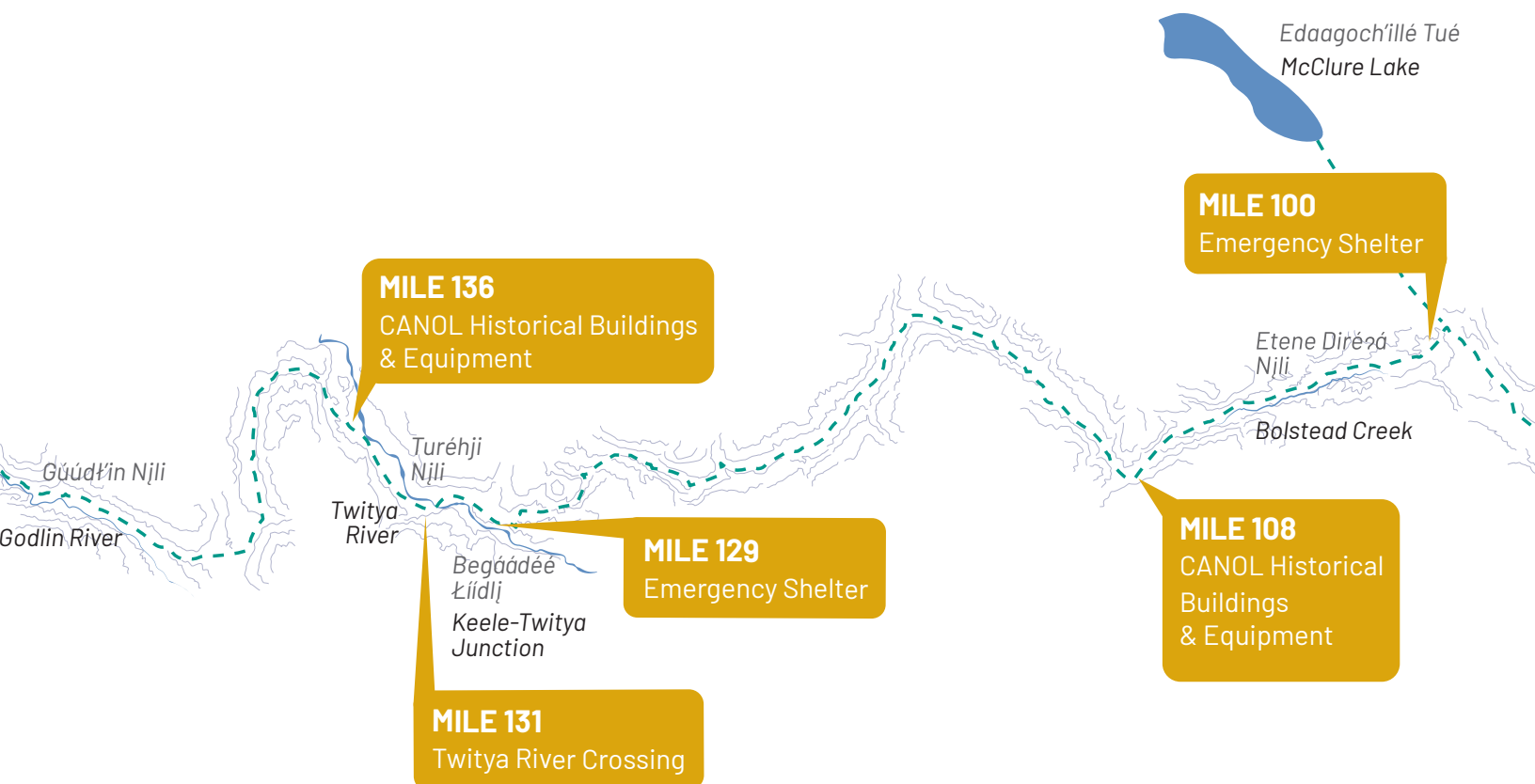




The CANOL Heritage Trail in the Northwest Territories is an adventurous, 371km (231-mile) trek that traces an abandoned WWII-era pipeline route through the stunning Mackenzie Mountains. The journey starts near Norman Wells, requiring a boat crossing over the Mackenzie River, and concludes near the Yukon border. Following the path of history, hikers encounter relics such as collapsed pump houses, abandoned machinery, and remote shelters.

ITINERARY:

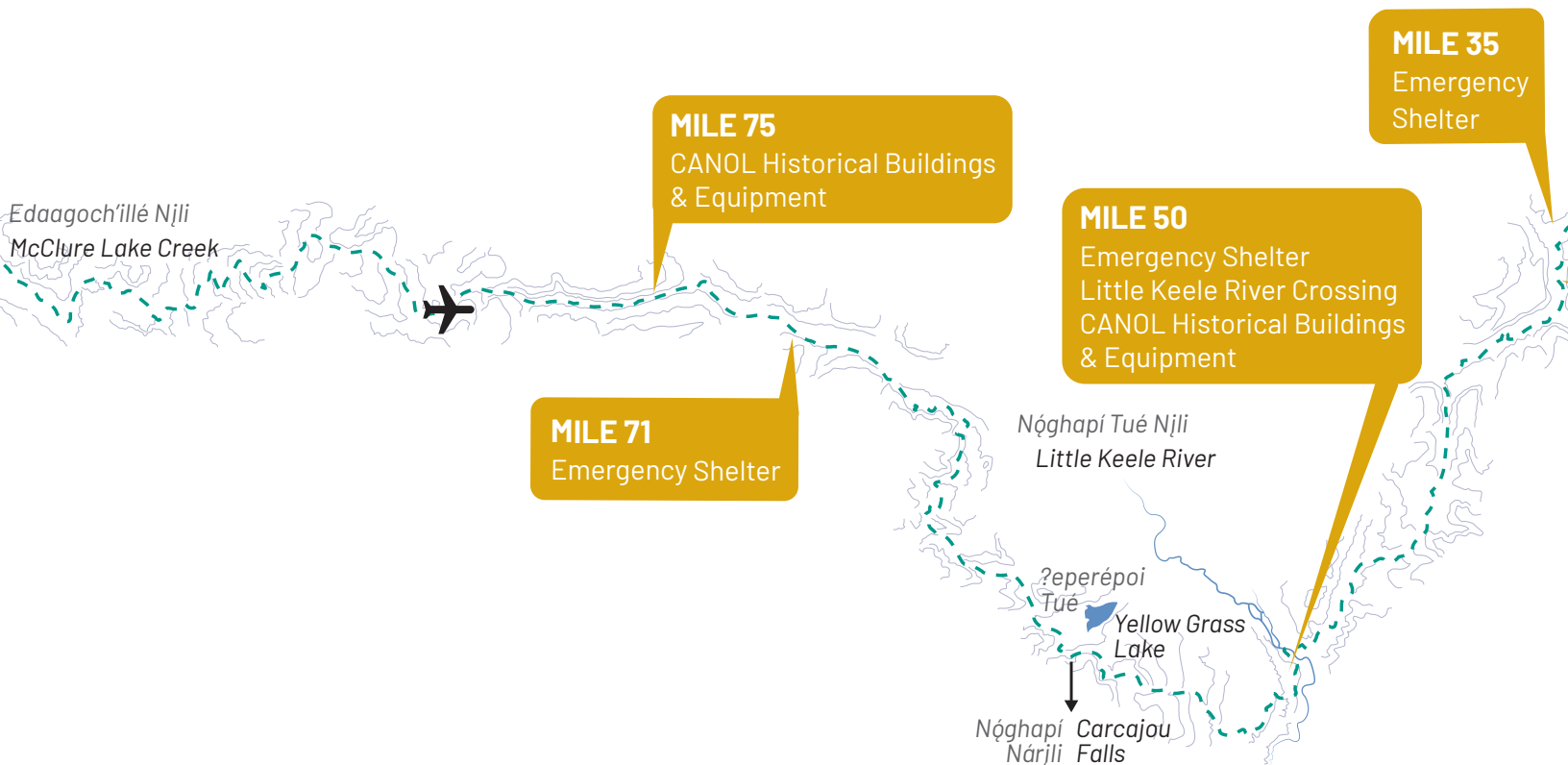
At Mile 1, a shelter welcomes hikers right across from Norman Wells, and another awaits at Heart Lake (Mile 8). Further along, at Mile 25, an unofficial shelter lies near the Carcajou River, the first river crossing. Hikers should bring a pack raft, as there are no bridges across this or any other major river along the trail. While low river conditions may allow a dangerous on-foot crossing, the trail's remoteness requires caution; past hikers have lost their lives in attempts to cross these unpredictable waters.



ITINERARY:

The Mile 35 shelter is located in Dodo Canyon, just before nearby Echo Canyon where a waterfall awaits. Mile 36 has historic buildings. At Mile 50, a shelter with an outhouse marks the Little Keele River crossing, a historically significant site scattered with camp remains. Moving forward, the next shelter is at Mile 71 with hikers encountering sites like Pumphouse 3 at Mile 76, a reminder of the massive logistical efforts once made here. Mile 80 has an airstrip, fuel cache, and collapsed buildings. At Mile 100, another shelter with an outhouse provides respite, and at Mile 108, remnants of Pumphouse 4 and its facilities transport visitors back in time.

At Mile 129 hikers will have to cross the Twitya River: the most challenging river crossing on the route. A shelter has been constructed to support visitors. Artifacts like drum caches (Mile 142) and scattered vehicles (Mile 184) lend a sense of the past, as well as practical guidance markers through rough terrain. Additional shelters at Godlin River (Mile 152) and Ekwi River (the last river crossing at Mile 173, which has multiple crossings that range from knee to waist deep water) — both with outhouses — support hikers along the trail's increasingly challenging second half. Keele River Outfitters base camp is located at Mile 170 and can be used as a food drop location or accommodation if coordinated in advance.



ITINERARY:

Finally, mile 205 marks the Intga River, leading to the remnants of Pumphouse 6 at Mile 208. Hikers may take a well-deserved rest at Dechenla Lodge (Mile 212), a remote wilderness stop with contact information for those coordinating stays.



DURATION & DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:

DISTANCE:

371 km (231 miles). There are few established campsites or amenities along the trail, except for basic emergency shelters. Plan for an entirely self-sufficient trip.

AVERAGE TRIP TIME:

14-21 days on foot (depending on the hiker as well as unforeseen events such as weather delays, river crossing issues, wildlife encounters, etc.).

RIVER CROSSINGS:

Carcajou, Little Keele, Twitya, and Ekwi.

EMERGENCY SHELTERS AT:

Miles 1, 8, 35, 50, 71, 100, 129, 152, 173. All have outhouses and burn barrels, except for shelters at mile 1 and 8.

CHALLENGES:

Expect difficult conditions. This wilderness trail has no services, cell coverage, or potable water. There are contaminated sites along the trail; use caution when approaching areas with historical debris. Do not drink water in these areas. There are 4 unbridged river crossings; bring a pack raft. Crossing by foot even in low water conditions is dangerous. Prepare for abundant mosquitoes, horseflies, gnats, black flies, and no-see-ums.

TERRAIN:

While the trail includes defined sections, portions are washed out or in boggy conditions, which can make navigation challenging. Certain parts of the route may require a temporary detour off the trail and the skills to navigate through wilderness areas to reconnect with it.

WEATHER CONDITIONS:

This mountainous, remote area can experience unpredictable weather. Be prepared for significant rain, wind, and potential flooding along riverbanks. Bring additional provisions in case of delays.

SAFETY TIPS:

Travel with a satellite phone and GPS for navigation. Stay near emergency shelters where possible, and alert local contacts of your location. Carry bear protection (i.e., bear bangers, bear spray, and a firearm such as a 12-gauge shotgun) as the trail passes through Grizzly habitat. Food drops can be arranged with helicopters/outfitters at shelters or historic buildings to reduce the interest of bears. In the event of an emergency contact the local RCMP in Norman Wells (911 or 867-587-1111).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Have a check-in/contact in Norman Wells to who has your itinerary. Emergency rescue services are not provided; all rescue and evacuation costs are a personal responsibility. In the event of a medical emergency, evacuation by helicopter or aircraft to Yellowknife, Inuvik, Edmonton, or the nearest appropriate medical facility may be required; costs range from \$40,000 - 90,000+. Provincial and territorial health care plans do not cover out-of-province medical evacuations. Visitors are strongly advised to purchase travel insurance that includes medical evacuation coverage before travelling.

