

Outposting – NWT
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Capital: Yellowknife
Area: 1,171,918 sq km (over 11 per cent of Canada's land mass)
Population: about 42,154 (half Indigenous, half non-Indigenous)
Languages: English, French and various native dialects and languages
Major Industry: Mining, petroleum and natural gas
Climate: Cold and dry

WHEN TO GO:

The Northwest Territories (NWT) does get warm weather, but it doesn't stay long. If you're hoping to get some hiking or rafting in, it's best to go in July or August. The winters are long and cold, as cold as -45° C., but traveling in the summer can be a battle too. Insects like black flies and mosquitoes are known to swarm the area in the heat so bug spray is a must. If you're planning to hike the Canol Heritage Trail, it's best to start in late July when the rivers aren't too high to cross.

GETTING THERE:

Air Canada only flies into Yellowknife, but leaves from most major Canadian cities, with some direct flights from Edmonton and Calgary. Canadian North flies into several NWT cities including Norman Wells from Ottawa and Calgary. First Air is also an option if leaving from, or connecting in Edmonton. Flying is the quick and easy option, but driving is definitely the more scenic and adventurous one. The Alaska and Mackenzie Highway routes are both viable options.

GETTING AROUND

There are several small airports in the NWT, and charter flights have become very popular among travellers. Some areas, such as the Canol trail, can only be accessed by aircraft. However, if you plan on camping your way across the north, driving will make it a lot easier to get where you want to go and haul all that necessary (and warm) gear with you.

Be sure to pencil Nahanni National Park into your itinerary for as much time as you can afford; it would take months to max out the adventures this area has to offer. Or trade your tent in for a tipi by booking a couple nights at a cultural camp for a true local experience.

There are several adventure outfitters to help you navigate your way around the NWT:
Stan Simpson's Ram Head Outfitters: Offers organized hunting trips in the Mackenzie Mountains during the summer months. He will also fly hikers to the Canol Heritage Trail and provide three food drops along the way at a very reasonable price
www.ramheadoutfitters.com

Nahanni River Adventures: Guided rafting and canoe trips from five to 21 days long. There are trips for beginners to experts through the Nahanni canyons, rapids and glaciers
www.nahanni.com

WHAT TO SEE & DO

The Northern Lights is one very good reason to bundle up and visit the NWT during the dark winter months. You can see the famous “dancing lights” almost every night between October and April.

You may not even need your binoculars to spot the remarkable wildlife of Northern Canada, which includes black and white wolves, caribou, wolverine, polar bears, muskox and more. Dall sheep is worth a taste. It’s said to be very tender and delicious meat when fresh.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you’re planning on camping, a satellite phone and bear spray are very smart safety precautions. You won’t be allowed on the plane with the spray, but grizzlies are not uncommon to the area so be sure to pick some up upon arrival.