

## **WILDERNESS SECTION**

**Maps 13, 14, 15, 16**

**Rugged terrain! Challenging! For very experienced hikers only**

**DO NOT hike this section alone**

The Wilderness Section is accessible by public road at only four points. The first one is at Country Road and Hwy 35 in the Village of Moore Falls. There is a grassy parking area just before a sign indicating that only cottage residents are allowed further. This is private land, and you should have a decal or newsletter on the dashboard to indicate you are a member. Overnight parking is NOT permitted. Do not take cars on the Black Lake Cottage Road.

The second access point is at Devil's Lake. This can be reached by going about 6 kilometres along the Deep Bay Road. (County Road 2) north of Moore Falls, and then turning left on to the Devil's Lake Road. There is parking for four or five cars at the trailhead to Devil's Lake.

The third access point is at Victoria Bridge, which can be reached by summer road along the north loop of the Black River, north and east of Sadowa. Note that this road is closed from March 1 to May 15 each year.

There is parking at the cemetery in Sadowa, but no access to High Falls loop at Sadowa. Use Black River Road and Chisholm Trail as an alternate for through hikers.

The following are the hiking distances:

From Moore Falls to Devil's Lake	19 KMs
From Devil's lake to Victoria Bridge	37 KMs
From Victoria Bridge to Sadowa	20 KMs
From Moore Falls to Sadowa	65 KMs
From Moore Falls to Victoria Bridge	45 KMs

Blazes create a route with little evidence of a trail. In treeless areas, the blazes are painted on rock outcrops or are indicated by rock cairns.

The terrain in the Wilderness is rugged and in places very strenuous. It should be attempted only by experienced hikers. Averaging 3 kilometres an hour is considered good going. West of Loon Lake, for about 10 kilometres, the route goes around beaver ponds, swamps, small lakes and over beaver dams with no landmarks visible, so watch the blazes! Carry a compass and GPS, and have a good map with you. Never go into the Wilderness alone!

Do not attempt to traverse from Devil's Lake to Victoria Bridge without telling a responsible person:

- ❖ When you are going in
- ❖ What your route is
- ❖ The names of the people in your party

Issued: April 1, 2022

- ❖ When and where you expect to complete the hike
- ❖ If and when to alert police if you are overdue

Note: Because of the prevalence of beavers, the water in the Wilderness MUST be boiled or treated or filtered before drinking it.

### **Access Route From Devil's Lake Start of Devil's Lake Section Map 13**

Km

- 0.0 Parking lot at Devil's Lake. Just east of the parking area the trail leads west along a cottage road.
- 0.7 The trail turns left into the forest.
- 1.3 Deep ravine. Shiny down the cliff near a birch tree.
- 1.6 Cross over a beaver dam to get south of the lakes.
- 2.7 East arm of Sheldon Lake. The trail proceeds close to the lake to reach the north arm of Sheldon Lake.
- 3.6 Start of the portage route between Sheldon Lake and Devil's Lake. After a short distance, the trail turns west, off the portage trail, proceeds around the northshore of Sheldon Lake and follows an ATV trail to:
- 5.5 Petticoat Junction. End of Devil's Lake Section. This is where the access route from Devil's Lake meets the main Wilderness trail.

### **Main Wilderness trail from Moore Falls Start of Scrabble Mountain Section**

#### **Maps 13, 14, 15, 16**

Km

- 0.0 Hwy. 35 and Country Road in Moore Falls.
- 0.1 A grassy area is on the left where Ganaraska Trail hikers (only) can park a car. There is no overnight parking permitted. A sign indicates that the road is for cottage residents only. Proceed on foot along that road.
- 1.1 Turn right off Black Lake Cottage Road and make sure to follow the blazes and not walk on the private cottage laneway immediately next to the trail.
- 2.9 A small stream with a beaver dam – Fairy Pond (mostly dried up). Past the beaver dam is a crossing over a creek at the top of a waterfall – Fairy Falls. Trail follows a faint path and then turns right, up a hill, goes over and past scenic rock formations, then comes down again. The trail proceeds in a northwesterly direction to the north end of Black Lake, where it comes to and follows a bush path that leads to:
- 6.3 Snowmobile bridge over Black Creek. The trail goes up the hill on the other loop and follows a snowmobile trail.

Issued: April 1, 2022

- 8.9 Scrabble Mountain, a beautiful view in all directions. Memorial marker for Aldie LeCraw, buried in Norland, who loved this area. He was a "jack of all trades" and operated a local hunt camp. According to Peter Verbeek, leaving a coin at the memorial will ensure that you will come back here one day.
- 9.6 A left turn into a deep ravine and out again. Trail goes in a northerly direction through gently undulating forest.
- 11.3 Snowmobile bridge over a deep gully. The trail follows a snowmobile trail in a northerly direction.
- 13.3 Portage trail between Sheldon Lake and Cooney Lake.
- 13.8 Petticoat Junction. End of Scrabble Mountain Section, start of the Wolf Lake Section. Junction with the trail coming from Devil's Lake. There are direction signs attached to trees.

From here to:

Sheldon Lake landing	1.9 KM
Devil's Lake parking lot	5.5 KM
Victoria Bridge	31.4 KM

From Petticoat Junction: If you are hiking from Devil's Lake, the distances shown are 8 kilometres less.

- 13.8 Head north-northwest into open scrubland before going west, then south, through the woods, to avoid a swamp north of Cooney Lake, and reach the portage trail between Cooney Lake and Peter's Pond.
- 17.2 The trail turns north from the portage into the bush and parallels the north shore of Peter's Pond and Victoria Lake.
- 19.0 Trapper's cabin. There are a couple of good tent spots here near the shore. The terrain north of Victoria Lake is the most rugged and strenuous in the Wilderness Section.
- 20.7 Cross the Head River over a very long beaver dam. This is a large river crossing at the outlet of the Head River and Wolf Lake. Beavers have historically moved their dam from time to time, if it is impassable, try the old beaver dam approximately 500 metres upstream on the Head River. The trail crosses a conspicuous pine-clad isthmus between Victoria and Wolf Lakes, then generally follows the south shore of Wolf Lake, moving inland a few times to avoid swamps.
- 23.9 The trail turns west and follows a faint snowmobile trail again, skirts the north shore of Freshette Lake before heading to Loon Lake.
- 26.4 Loon Lake. This is the end of the Wolf Lake Section and the start of Black River Section. The north end of Loon Lake is about halfway between Devil's Lake and Victoria Bridge and is an excellent camping spot. There is a cairn under a large rock, containing a register for people to sign. Then begins a long winding course around beaver ponds, lakes and swamps.
- 29.6 Deep Gully. There are a few good tent spots here. For the next six kilometres, there are few good tent spots because of beaver ponds and swamps. This part of the trail goes through an area with no landmarks, so watch the blazes. About 8 kilometres west of Loon Lake, the route meets up with an ATV trail, which it follows until it has crossed a wide watercourse on a beaver dam.

Issued: April 1, 2022

37.2 Turn off the ATV trail, into the forest and follow the south loop of the watercourse for 2 kilometres to Otter Junction. This is the junction with the blue-blazed Montgomery Creek Loop Trail.

Follow the white blazes to the right and cross a small stream in a deep ravine.

44.9 Victoria Bridge. End of Black River Section. This is a very scenic area where the Black River forces its way through some narrow chutes in the rocks.

This is an access point where there is ample parking.

45.0 The remainder of the trail follows the roadways to Sadowa. Follow the summer road for 12 kilometres west to Brook's Bridge.

54.6 Continue west past the parking at Lewisham Lane.

57.4 Head south over the bridge.

61.9 Wilderness Section ends and Orillia Begins

### **Day Hikes And Loop Trails In The Wilderness**

Hiking the Wilderness end to end is usually considered a three or four-day backpacking hike. There are many flat camping spots, but water is often a problem. Water must be filtered before drinking, and water from beaver ponds or other stagnant water will plug up a filter. There are a number of day hikes which experienced hikers can do in 8 hours or less, on both the main trail and the loop trails.

- Moore Falls to Devil's Lake via Petticoat Junction 19 kms/7 hours
- Victoria Bridge to Sadowa 17 kms/7 hours

Both of these hikes require a car shuttle.

- Victoria Bridge along the Montgomery Creek Loop Trail to Otter Junction, returning to Victoria Bridge along the side trail 12 kms/5 hours
- Victoria Bridge along the Ragged Rapids Loop Trail to Black Fly Junction, returning to Victoria Bridge along the main trail. 16 kms/6 hours
- Victoria Bridge along the High Falls Loop Trail 33 kms/2 days

These hikes do not involve a car shuttle.

All day hikes involve rugged, challenging terrain, not suitable for beginners. **Do not hike these trails alone.**

### **Montgomery Creek Loop Trail**

#### **Map 14, 15**

From Victoria Bridge, proceed south on the side trail along the Black River, across the Montgomery Creek Bridge, then to the top of the rocky hill overlooking the bend in the Black River. Turn east onto the Montgomery Creek Loop (blue) Trail. This trail parallels the Montgomery Creek going east for about 5

Issued: April 1, 2022

kilometres, meeting the main trail at Otter Junction. There is an overnight camp area shortly before reaching Otter Junction, indicated by a yellow-blazed access trail to the south.

The trail to the right goes up the hill and continues east to Petticoat Junction. The trail to the left goes down into a valley and is the return to Victoria Bridge. The combination of the blue and main trail make a very nice loop. It is very rugged and suitable for day use by experienced hikers. Several steep ascents and descents require extra care, especially in wet weather. There are many excellent views of Montgomery Creek, beaver ponds and the open country to the south. Total distance is about 12 kilometres and will probably require 5 hours to complete.

### **Ragged Rapids Loop Trail**

#### **Map 15**

From Victoria Bridge, proceed south on the main trail along the Black River, across the Montgomery Creek Bridge, then to the top of the rocky hill overlooking the bend in the Black River. Turn west into the bush onto the Ragged Rapids Loop (blue) Trail. It is a rugged but very scenic trail.

The trail first goes south to cross a deep ravine over a beaver dam with a lake to the south. Then the trail gradually climbs through dense ferns to a rocky ridge covered with scrub oaks. A high point overlooks a grassy marsh, beyond which the summer access road to Victoria Bridge is visible, with the Black River directly in the foreground.

The trail now continues westward, often next to the Black River, until it comes to the Ragged Rapids. Watch carefully, because the trail veers south and climbs to the top of a high rocky gorge. This is a wonderful lunch and photography spot. The river, with two sets of rapids with a pool in between, is directly below. That spot is on the private property of Mr. John Steen, who has given us permission to visit it.

Just past the 'rock garden' at the lower end of the rapids, the trail turns south (left) and climbs through mixed forest. About 1 kilometre from the river, the trail descends into a grassy gully and then climbs back up through open mixed forest and then across flat rocky terrain to Black Fly Junction. Turn east on the side trail and follow it back to Victoria Bridge.

### **High Falls Loop Trail**

#### **Map 15.16**

This trail makes an excellent overnight trip from Victoria Falls. Follow the ragged rapids loop to Black Fly Junction. Continue past the Junction to High Falls Loop. There are well marked campsites with orange tape. Most are on Rainy Lake on the east side of High Falls loop.