

# Yukon Wilderness Tourism Status Report



  
**YUKON**  
LARGER THAN LIFE





# Yukon Wilderness Tourism Status Report

2008



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Copies of the summary and technical report are available for download from the Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture's website at [www.tc.gov.yk.ca](http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca).

Front cover photos, clockwise from top: Falcon at the Bonnet Plume (YG, Jannick Schoe); Kathleen Lake (YG); Dempster Highway (YG)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Yukon is one of the world's pre-eminent wilderness destinations. Each year, thousands of guided and self-guided travellers come here — mainly from the United States, Canada and Europe — for wilderness adventures and to experience Yukon's outdoors, wildlife, history and natural phenomena.**

Yukon's wilderness tourism sector is growing, products are expanding and the season is becoming year-round. In response to developments like the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act*, internet marketing, non-traditional partnerships and various land and resource planning processes, the sector has also become more sophisticated, cohesive and needful of good sector data. The *Wilderness Tourism Status Report* will help deliver this information. Data provided by licensed operators through the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* were an important information source about guided visitors. The 2004 Visitor Exit Survey provided additional data on visitors who participated in wilderness and outdoor activities.

The wilderness tourism sector is a strong contributor to Yukon's economy. Visitors who included wilderness or outdoor activities during their Yukon visit stayed longer and spent more, and reported a very high level (93%) of value-for-money satisfaction. That year, about 57,000 of Yukon's 251,704 summer visitors participated in a wilderness or outdoor activity and spent almost \$34 million in total while in Yukon. They comprised less than one-quarter of all Yukon tourists, yet they represented almost half of all tourism spending in the territory (2004 Visitor Exit Survey).

Yukon wilderness guides have an international reputation as skilled and knowledgeable professionals

who deliver outstanding wilderness adventure trips. In 2004, 81 licensed operators guided over 35,000 clients on day and multi-day trips year-round, outside of national parks (*Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* data). An additional 15 to 18, mostly non-Yukon, operators guided about 1,500 clients a year in Kluane National Park and Reserve and Ivvavik National Park. While guided motorboat day tours on the Yukon River out of Whitehorse and Dawson was the most popular activity in terms of client numbers, day and multi-day canoeing, rafting, hiking, horseback riding and dogsled trips were the backbone of the wilderness tourism sector.

Yukon is famous for outstanding displays of wildlife, wilderness mountains, remote rivers, breathtaking scenery and the opportunity to find solitude in an unspoiled country. Yukon's wilderness is renowned for supporting outstanding adventure activities. Its rivers provide some of North America's longest canoe trips, and the territory's rafting trips are legendary. Hikers and horseback riders look forward to uncrowded trails, and most wilderness travellers expect to see wildlife, and are rarely disappointed. Visitors who stay close to the road can enjoy Yukon landscapes, wildlife and outdoor activities on day tours or on their own.

Wilderness tourism activities are built around features such as wilderness landscapes, parks, wildlife and wilderness-based historic sites and events. Yukon is one of North America's major wilderness attractions: only three per cent of the territory is developed, 77 per cent is wilderness further than five kilometres from highways, while another 20 per cent is open space within five kilometres of a road.

## **WILDERNESS TOURISM RESOURCES**

Wilderness landscapes are the foundation of the sector. Less tangible, but important wilderness qualities include the freedom to relax and reconnect with nature. Wilderness tourists identify with the challenge and adventure of the Klondike Gold Rush and want to learn about Yukon First Nations' culture and their special relationship with the land. Yukon has unique market advantages over other remaining wilderness regions in the world. The territory is readily accessible by air and road, yet few places are so pristine, so remote and offer so many adventurous landscapes.

The quality of the Yukon wilderness is an important factor for travellers choosing a wilderness destination. Most of Yukon remains wilderness — a vast northern landscape of mountains, lakes, rivers, forests and tundra. Park areas are important to wilderness tourism because they provide operators with certainty that high-quality wilderness landscapes will be maintained. Parks can increase the marketability of tourism products because visitors expect parks to contain special or significant features. Yukon has three national parks and four territorial parks that together comprise 10.3 per cent of the territory.

Wildlife viewing is a valued experience for visitors. Yukon is home to species of international significance such as grizzly bears, the Porcupine caribou herd and peregrine falcons, and seasonal home to millions of migratory birds. In 2004, 22 per cent of all Yukon visitors identified wildlife viewing as a sought-after experience. Among visitors on adventure trips, 99.7 per cent expected to see wildlife and 96 per cent were satisfied with their viewing experiences (2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey).

Historic features and events are cultural elements that complement the natural attributes of wilderness. Historic sites featuring palaeontology, First Nations, exploration, fur trade, gold rush, transportation and settlement themes add interest and value to wilderness trips. Wilderness-based events like the Yukon Quest draw major media attention that raises awareness of Yukon.

Built infrastructure supporting Yukon wilderness tourism is generally good. A well-maintained road system knits Yukon's tourism regions together, and networks of trails, international and regional airports, local air charter companies and wilderness lodges round out the infrastructure.

## **YUKON'S WILDERNESS TOURISM SECTOR**

Yukon's wilderness attracts year-round visitors seeking a wide variety of day and multi-day experiences. Self-guided visitors conduct their own activities and trips, purchasing goods, services and transport, and renting equipment. Yukon equipment rental companies rent approximately 2,000 canoes each year to self-guided parties.

In Yukon, licensed tour operators provide guided wilderness trips. From 1999 to 2004, 81 to 101 operators guided between 15,000 and 35,000 clients each year. In 2004, almost half of the guided clients took motorboat day tours on the Yukon River. Although the number of licensed operators declined during this period, the number of clients and user days increased. Current expenditures are approximately \$100 per client for day tours, and \$1,000 to \$5,000 per client for longer tours. Multi-day tours range from overnight to three weeks in duration and can generate significantly more revenue per client than day trips.

Of the 81 operators licensed in 2004, over three-quarters were Yukon-based and directly employed about 400 people. Thirty-nine operators were based in Whitehorse and 26 in other Yukon communities, and there were 16 non-Yukon businesses guiding here. Wilderness tourism companies ranged from small owner- and family-run businesses to large international companies (*Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* data).

Tourism Yukon, the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon, communities and individual operators market wilderness tourism products to potential visitors around the globe.

Yukon's two current priority North American wilderness tourism market segments are adventure challengers looking for a variety of adventurous wilderness-based activities and scenic outdoor travellers seeking more leisure outdoor activities in a beautiful setting. Both segments seek wilderness adventure trips and activities like hiking, camping, canoeing and rafting. Yukon's primary geographic markets are the U.S., Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom.

The territory's wilderness adventure experiences are a primary pillar of Tourism Yukon's marketing efforts and Yukon's wilderness attributes feature prominently in the territory's advertising campaigns. Tourism Yukon has been refining its marketing approach to

embrace more targeted strategies, and marketing partnerships like Yukon Wild are becoming increasingly important. Internet marketing continues to provide a significant tourism opportunity, particularly for the wilderness tourism sector.

Yukon's most bankable wilderness tourism asset is the territory's pristine landscapes, wild rivers, parklands and healthy wildlife populations. As wilderness diminishes worldwide, travellers will turn to destinations that can deliver an increasingly rare wilderness experience.

The potential for growth in the wilderness tourism sector is promising. In 2003, 80 per cent of licensed operators had plans to grow. Since then, the availability of winter product has increased, and more companies have expanded into the shoulder seasons, added new products and attracted new clients.

Quality continues to be a key differentiator that presents opportunities to Yukon wilderness tourism operators. The sector's demonstrated desire to hold itself to higher environmental, visitor experience and safety standards makes Yukon stand out from competing jurisdictions. Partnerships among operators, with governments, other associations and jurisdictions, and other resource sectors continue to be critical to the success of the wilderness tourism sector.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

**Known for expansive landscapes, stunning scenery and vast open spaces, Yukon provides visitors with opportunities for adventure and challenge and the freedom to relax and unwind surrounded by wilderness.**

Wilderness tourism has a century-long history in Yukon, and over the past 40 years it has developed into one of the most organized and progressive sectors of the tourism industry. In 2004, more than 80 licensed operators delivered a wide range of summer, winter and shoulder-season products to discerning international markets.

The growth of wilderness tourism in Yukon parallels the growth of this sector worldwide. Though wilderness tourism retains many characteristics of its early period, the modern-day industry has been transformed from its modest origins. Once a local affair, today, Yukon's wilderness tourism sector is international in its clientele, marketing networks and complement of guides and tour operators.

Yukon has a solid reputation in the competitive wilderness tourism marketplace as an environmentally

responsible destination where skilled guides deliver high quality wilderness products. The territory also attracts self-guided wilderness travellers who rent equipment, purchase trip supplies, souvenirs, restaurant meals and accommodation. Visitors who stay close to the road can readily enjoy Yukon landscapes, wildlife and wilderness activities by joining day tours or exploring on their own.

Over the past decade, industry and government partners worked together to develop the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act*, conduct market and product research, pursue product development and marketing opportunities, and support business development. In the process, they have collected a considerable amount of data and information on the sector.

The wilderness tourism sector regularly faces challenges and opportunities, and this is unlikely to change. Industry and governments must be prepared to address issues and explore new opportunities. To do this, they need comprehensive, accurate and readily available information on Yukon's wilderness tourism sector. The report will help deliver this information.



Asters (YG)

## SCOPE

The *Wilderness Tourism Status Report* focuses on non-Yukon visitors who participate in guided and self-guided wilderness tourism activities. Although the wilderness pursuits of Yukon residents contribute to community and regional tourism economies, these activities are outside the scope of this report.

This status report describes the wilderness tourism sector, including visitors, resources, markets, operators, and guided and self-guided wilderness tourism activities. It does not include guided hunting but does include wilderness tourism activities offered by hunting outfitters, licensed under the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act*.

## PURPOSE

The *Wilderness Tourism Status Report* is a research-based report that describes and reflects growth and changes in Yukon's wilderness tourism sector. It compiles and summarizes a considerable amount of wilderness tourism-related research and information. The report demonstrates the importance of trip and rental data from the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* in delivering information on Yukon's wilderness tourism sector.

The report will be used to:

- respond to issues and initiatives affecting wilderness tourism;
- provide entrepreneurs with the information they need to develop wilderness tourism products;
- participate in policy, legislative, regulatory and environmental assessment processes affecting the sector;

- provide wilderness tourism information for local, regional and sector tourism planning and First Nations final agreement planning initiatives, such as land use, regional economic development and protected area planning;
- participate in other resource-based industry planning and development activities such as forestry, oil and gas, transportation, mining and agriculture;
- identify and address issues that affect wilderness tourism growth; and
- help industry and governments plan, develop and manage Yukon's wilderness tourism sector.

## METHODOLOGY

The compilation of the *Wilderness Tourism Status Report* involved collecting, reviewing and analyzing multiple sources of data and information, including publicly available research and data on wilderness tourism (see Key Data Sources and the bibliography) and tourism-related knowledge and expertise from governments and industry.

A project working group comprised of representatives from the Department of Tourism and Culture (Tourism Branch), Department of Environment (Parks Branch) and the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon guided the research and writing.

The report presents information that describes Yukon's wilderness tourism sector as a whole, and by tourism region.

## KEY DATA SOURCES

Most statistics in the status report come from two key information sources: trip and rental report data from the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act*, and the 2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey. Parks Canada provided visitor data for Kluane National Park and Reserve, Vuntut National Park and Ivvavik National Park (Firth River.)

### Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act

Most data on commercially guided wilderness tourism operators and activities in Yukon — outside national parks — comes from the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act*, enacted by the Yukon government in 1999. This report presents *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* data from 1999, the first year data was collected, to 2004, the most recent year for which compiled data is available. Nearly all guided and equipment rental clients resided outside of Yukon.

Administered by the Department of Environment (Parks Branch), the act requires licensed operators and businesses that guide clients and rent equipment for wilderness tourism activities to report their trips and rentals at the end of each summer and winter season. (See Appendix 1 for more information on wilderness tourism activities and rental equipment.) The license and rental period runs from May 1 to April 31 of the following year. For example, 2004 data covers the period from May 1, 2004 to April 30, 2005.

Statistical information from trip and rental reports is used to track the type, location and level of wilderness tourism activity, and to help monitor the wilderness tourism sector's impact on Yukon's environment and economy.

Any identifying information about a business remains confidential. This means that in locations where fewer than three operators conduct tourism activities, data on those activities cannot be presented. Trip and rental information in this report cannot be linked to a single business.

### 2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey

The 2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey collected information from non-Yukon visitors during the summer of 2004. (See Appendix 2.) The *Wilderness Tourism Status Report* includes wilderness tourism-related data and information from the survey for all visitors, visitors who participated in a wilderness or outdoor activity and visitors who said they took a wilderness trip.

Although the data is not directly comparable, the exit survey and the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* provide accurate information to describe Yukon's wilderness tourism operators, activities and visitors.

### Parks Canada

Parks Canada provided data on commercially guided activities, operators and clients in Kluane National Park and Reserve, Vuntut National Park and Ivvavik National Park.

A wilderness tourism license is not required in national parks in Yukon, however, all operators conducting tours in national parks require a park business license, and must report information about their trips.

## GENERAL DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this report, the following definitions have been used.

- **Wilderness** is any area in Yukon in a largely natural condition in which ecosystem processes are generally unaltered by human activity. It may include areas of visible human activity that don't detract from wilderness tourism.
- **Wilderness tourism features** are distinctive natural, historic and cultural attributes in the Yukon wilderness that support, and are important to, wilderness tourism activities.
- **Wilderness tourism activity** is a guided or self-guided tourism activity occurring in the wilderness, including, but not limited to, canoeing, cross-country skiing, dog mushing, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, off-road vehicle riding (ORV), motorboat tours, mountain biking, river rafting, photo safaris, sport fishing and snowmobiling. (See Appendix 1 for a full list of activities.)
- **Self-guided** refers to any wilderness tourism activity in which the participant has no guide and is responsible for himself or herself.
- **User days** refers to the number of days a tourist spends participating in a wilderness tourism activity. For example, one tourist canoeing for one day (or less) accounts for one user day. One tourist canoeing for four days accounts for four user days.
- **Remote** refers to land or water greater than five kilometres from a highway, maintained on a year-round basis.

## Definitions from the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act*

**Operator** means a person or business that provides guiding services, transportation or rentals to make wilderness tourism activities available.

**Guide** means any person employed by an operator who, for gain, reward or material or financial benefit received, accompanies and is responsible for another person in any wilderness tourism activity.

Wilderness tourism **activities** defined in the act mean activities where the client is accompanied by a guide.

## REPORT FORMAT

The *Wilderness Tourism Status Report* is presented in two documents.

- This technical report which provides detailed information on Yukon's wilderness tourism sector, including its history, resources, current wilderness tourism activities (Yukon-wide), detailed descriptions of wilderness tourism activities in each of Yukon's nine tourism regions and the Yukon River watershed, a bibliography and appendices.
- A separate summary report which highlights key Yukon-wide and regional wilderness tourism information.

The technical report and summary report are both available as PDFs for download from the Tourism Branch at [www.tc.gov.yk.ca](http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca).

# CHAPTER 2: HISTORY

**Wilderness tourism has a century-long history in Yukon, and has developed into one of the most organized and progressive sectors of Yukon’s tourism industry.**

In 1976, a brochure published by the Yukon Department of Tourism listed eight “adventure outfitters.” In 1980, wilderness tourism businesses brought in about \$1 million in direct revenues. By the early 1980s, between 30 and 40 Yukon businesses offered guided wilderness trips or provided services to self-guided wilderness tourists. Most businesses were owner-operated and, in total, about 150 people, including principal owners, were employed in the sector. About 700 clients took guided multi-day trips, and 400 clients took day trips.

By 2004, industry data clearly demonstrated the sector’s impressive growth. Eighty-one licensed operators directly employed 400 people who guided or served over 35,000 clients. Guided day trip clients numbered approximately 34,000, while about 1,150 clients took multi-day trips totalling 9,700 user days.

The growth of wilderness tourism in Yukon parallels the growth of this sector worldwide. In the 1980s and 1990s, the cultural values and affluence of the baby boom generation fuelled market demand for wilderness adventure. Today, a younger clientele is participating in these activities. Yukon’s success in serving this demand results from:

- improvements in infrastructure;



Herschel Island (YG)

- expanded capacity in businesses, guides and support services;
- increasingly sophisticated marketing;
- a supportive regulatory regime; and
- the continued existence of a superb wilderness environment.

## THE EARLY YEARS

Wilderness tourism in Yukon originated in adventure travel, mountaineering and big game hunting more than 100 years ago. Warburton Pike set an early example in 1892 when he canoed from the mouth of the Stikine River through the Liard and Pelly basins, reaching the Yukon River at Fort Selkirk and continuing downriver to the Bering Sea. Unlike the explorers, traders and prospectors who preceded him, Pike's journey was a pleasure trip. He traversed a landscape that was already known to mapmakers.

According to Klondike Gold Rush observer Tappan Adney, some gold rush participants were sightseers with little intention of staking claims. In the three decades following the bonanza of 1897-1898, tourist parties were recorded on the Chilkoot Trail, canoeing or rafting the Yukon River, and venturing further afield in the Peel and Porcupine basins.

Mountaineering may be the earliest form of wilderness adventure travel in Yukon. In 1886, Lt. Frederick Schwatka led the first expedition to attempt to climb Mount St. Elias in what is now Kluane National Park. Other attempts followed in 1890 and 1891, with the Italian Duke of the Abruzzi reaching the summit in 1897. Mountaineers were drawn to the St. Elias Icefields as climbers sought first ascents of some of North America's giant peaks, including Mount Logan in 1925. Climbing accelerated

in the 1930s as ski-equipped aircraft made the interior of the Icefield Ranges accessible in a matter of hours instead of weeks.

In 1904 and 1905, noted scientist and collector Charles Sheldon hunted extensively in Yukon accompanied by an accomplished wildlife artist, Carl Rungius. His book, *The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon*, helped establish Yukon as a hunters' paradise. In the years following World War I, Yukon guides like the Jacquot brothers and Johnny Johns became internationally famous among wealthy hunters for trophy sheep, moose and grizzly bear. Most hunting trips were four-week expeditions on horseback in the White River, Pelly-Macmillan River and Carcross areas.



Porcupine caribou (YG)

## THE MODERN ERA

Through the 1960s and 1970s, a handful of Yukon-based guides and companies offered commercial wilderness tourism services in canoeing, river rafting, horseback riding, mountaineering and the occasional ski or dogsled trip. Most wilderness guides came from a background in adventure sports and approached their profession as a lifestyle. During this period, guided trips emphasized adventure, wilderness experience, nature study, skills and reliving the era of explorers and fur traders. Self-guided wilderness tourists became more common, most of whom hiked or canoed the gold rush route between Skagway, Alaska and Dawson City.

During the post-war years, new infrastructure for resource development helped to boost wilderness tourism. The Campbell Highway, Nahanni Range Road and Dempster Highway, along with float plane bases in Mayo, Watson Lake, Teslin and Ross River, created affordable access to wilderness areas like the Upper Liard Basin, the Peel River region and the Porcupine Basin. Guided and self-guided parties expanded into areas previously visited by big game outfitters, trappers and prospectors.

In the 1970s, a North American boom in wilderness pursuits was accompanied by widespread advances in equipment, techniques and information about wilderness destinations. These developments laid the foundation for the dramatic growth of adventure travel in the 1980s and 1990s. In Yukon, continued improvements in roads and air services, and the marketing support and promotion efforts of the Department of Tourism and Culture and the industry, helped to position Yukon among the world's



Kathleen River (YG)

top wilderness destinations. Parks Canada re-enforced this message as it publicized Kluane National Park, Ivvavik National Park and the nearby Nahanni National Park in the Northwest Territories.

### **An explosion of product**

River travel was the mainstay of commercial wilderness travel during the early years and remains so today. Yukon has over 70 canoeing rivers, offering wilderness trips up to three weeks long. Many of these rivers are in mountain country, an asset unique to Yukon. Mountain rivers typically have a fast gradient and difficult whitewater and are suitable only for covered canoes, rafts or kayaks.

Mainly Whitehorse-based wilderness travel companies have focused on economical and road-accessible rivers: the Yukon, Teslin, Big Salmon and South Macmillan. More specialized companies have featured fly-in trips to the Hess, Coal and Wolf rivers, and the remote Peel River watershed.

A standard format for commercially guided, fly-in canoe trips emerged, based on the capacity of a Single Otter floatplane with canoes nested and strapped on as exterior loads. One load was a three-canoe party (five clients and one guide), and two loads was a six-canoe party (10 clients and two guides). Using this format, the Peel River and the Upper Liard became economically attractive for guided canoe trips.

Rafting was established on whitewater rivers that were too difficult for canoes: the Tatshenshini, Alsek, Firth, the middle stretch of the Liard, and, occasionally, the Coal. A vigorous day-trip market developed on the upper Tatshenshini River. Like whitewater canoeing

in remote areas, rafting demands a skilled guiding pool schooled in contemporary techniques. Guides with these specialized skills were typically found and recruited in Whitehorse. Many second generation guides were trained in whitewater canoeing and rafting courses that had been initiated in Whitehorse in the early 1980s.

Backpacking and horseback riding developed as a strong secondary market for wilderness travel. Kluane National Park and the Tombstone Range were favoured by trekking companies, mostly Whitehorse-based, while trail riding and packhorse trips were more common in other Yukon communities.

Although most wilderness companies through the 1980s were mobile, a sub-sector of remote wilderness and sport fishing lodges gained visibility and market share. Most lodges were established in the 1970s — growth of this sector has been limited since the mid-1980s when the federal government stopped considering new applications for remote lodge sites. Yukon wilderness and fishing lodges helped ensure their sustainability by accepting modern sport fishing management regimes including catch-and-release.

In the early 1990s, operators began to respond to evolving market trends for “softer,” shorter and learning-enriched experiences. Some companies developed multi-day “eco-tours” and cultural tours, while others designed day trips. Mountain biking, dog mushing, and ATV and snowmobile tours were developed, but the most popular proved to be relatively short (day or half-day) motorboat tours on various segments of the Yukon River.

## An era of partnerships

Marketing skills and connections became a critical factor for wilderness companies throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. The first partnerships formed between wilderness tourism companies. These partnerships expanded marketing potential to travel agencies, wholesalers and specialty agents in Whitehorse and abroad. As the sector grew, the Department of Tourism and Culture developed a support and advocacy role. The German-speaking European market became increasingly important, stimulating a modest influx of guides and operators from these countries.

The Yukon Department of Environment also assumed a support role, upholding Yukon interests as the

U.S. National Park Service allocated trip permits for the Tatshenshini and Alsek rivers. Support was also needed as British Columbia asserted its intention to require guide licenses and insurance to operate on these same rivers.

On a broader scale, communication and cooperation between wilderness tourism operators and governments became more important. This allowed them to address regulatory issues, devise effective marketing programs, promote sustainable practices and identify wilderness tourism interests in land claims, industrial development and land use processes.

By the early 1990s, the sector acknowledged the need for an effective association of guiding businesses. The Yukon Association of Wilderness Guides had been



Montana stonehouses (YG)

providing some representation since 1980, but the sector remained fragmented. In 1993, the wilderness guides association disbanded and the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon formed. It was to provide a broad-based, unified voice in marketing, regulatory matters, conservation, training and industry development.

In the mid-1990s, the Yukon government worked with the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon to examine various ways to regulate the sector. The *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* set minimum standards for guided travel in Yukon outside of national parks. (National parks have their own tourism business permitting regime that includes requirements similar to those in the Yukon *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act*.) This important legislation required every wilderness tourism business that was guiding clients in Yukon to:

- obtain a license;
- carry public liability insurance;
- carry workers compensation coverage, when applicable;
- obtain Yukon business registration;
- meet minimum first aid standards for guides;
- adhere to minimum impact camping standards; and
- report statistics about commercial trips and rentals each season.

The licensing and trip reporting provisions provided the first reliable statistics and information on the wilderness tourism sector. Other provisions in the act enabled the government to establish regulations to address safety and resource management issues.

## THE WILDERNESS TOURISM SECTOR: 2000 AND BEYOND

Now in its fourth decade, wilderness tourism retains many characteristics of its early period. Travel through the wilderness is still important, and the same landscapes and trips are still valued. Canoes, rafts, backpacks, skis and horses have been joined by motorboats, mountain bikes, dog teams, off-road vehicles and snowmobiles. Guides still come mainly from backgrounds in outdoor pursuits. Because of its proximity to an international airport, as well as offering supplies and services needed for wilderness tourism activities, Whitehorse remains the centre for 60 per cent of Yukon-based wilderness tourism businesses.

Once wide open, guided activities are now regulated. Wilderness tourism operators must have licenses and insurance. If they are operating on regulated rivers like the Tatshenshini-Alsek, a permit is required. If they are operating in national parks, they need a park business license and environmental assessment. While the overall environmental impacts from commercial activity remain manageable, there are concerns in some well-travelled or fragile areas.

The modern-day industry has been transformed from its modest origins. Once a local affair, today Yukon wilderness tourism is international in its clientele, marketing networks and complement of guides and operators. In the 1970s and 1980s, individual businesses did their own marketing, often by referrals. In the mid-1980s and 1990s, a significant number of business start-ups were new operators offering products to a growing wilderness adventure market. In the 1990s, tour and travel agencies became important intermediaries in some markets.

From 2001 to 2003, a series of global and Canadian phenomena and events impacted Canada's tourism industry. This "perfect storm" included terrorism, the war in Iraq, SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and mad cow disease. Yukon's wilderness tourism sector recovered fairly quickly, but experienced changes. Some companies consolidated; others developed survival and exit strategies. Marginal operators left the sector and there were fewer business start-ups.

Today's sector is strong and stable with opportunities for growth and a keen interest in improving quality

and standards. Yukon wilderness tourism operators and the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon have developed solid relationships with government agencies such as the Department of Tourism and Culture, Yukon Department of Environment and Parks Canada. Thanks to internet marketing, tour operators in remote Yukon communities can market directly to the world. Better and more current information enables Yukon companies to identify and respond to market tastes and trends.



## WILDERNESS TOURISM ASSOCIATION OF THE YUKON

Formed in 1993, the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon (WTAY) is the collective voice for wilderness and adventure tourism operators on issues affecting their industry. The association continues to represent the majority of Yukon wilderness tourism operators and to effectively pursue its founding goals.

- Protect the integrity of the wilderness resource.
- Promote best practices for the wilderness and adventure tourism industry.
- Effectively market Yukon as a year-round wilderness and adventure tourism destination.
- Liaise with government, non-profit and private sector tourism stakeholders.
- Provide educational opportunities for members.
- Provide a forum for networking, communication and support among members.
- Enhance the wilderness and adventure tourism industry through projects which promote product development.

Several active committees address a wide range of issues including legislation, rafting certification, environment, education, land use and marketing. The organization is highly engaged in processes that affect the wilderness resource, such as land use planning, environmental reviews, and oil and gas and forest management planning. The association consistently articulates its vision through tools such as its code of conduct, and educates governments and other land users about wilderness tourism values and the need for large, intact ecosystems to support high-quality wilderness tourism products in Yukon.

The association continues to help design and promote educational programs and publications to improve best practices in the field. The organization works with the Department of Tourism and Culture to develop marketing and product development programs for the wilderness tourism sector. To continue to raise standards and improve knowledge, skills and operations, the association regularly offers educational seminars on topics such as legal liability and risk management, bear safety, insurance, interpretation, web marketing, packaging and pricing, and wilderness tourism business basics. New projects include a river rafting certification manual, and the association may work with its partners to develop other activity-specific standards.

A growing role for the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon is industry advocacy. Yukon wilderness tourism operators are subject to regulations from many agencies, both in and out of the territory, including the federal government, neighbouring provinces and the United States (on international rivers such as the Tatshenshini-Alsek). WTAY continues to support the interests of Yukon wilderness operators with respect to air transport regulations, marine regulations, guide licensing and certification, quotas and trip permits on inter-jurisdictional rivers, and other regulatory issues.

Strong partnerships are central to the success of the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon as an organization. It maintains excellent working relationships with diverse partners that include Yukon government departments of Tourism and Culture, Environment, and Energy, Mines and Resources, as well as Parks Canada, Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, Yukon Convention Bureau and Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

# CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW

**Yukon's wilderness tourism sector is growing, choice of products is expanding, and the season is becoming year-round. Mostly from the United States, Canada and Europe, guided and self-guided travellers come for many reasons.**

They come here to canoe, raft and fish on the territory's lakes and rivers, and hike and bike along historic routes and wilderness trails. They want to photograph and experience Yukon's wildlife, history



Fireweed (YG)

and natural phenomena, as well as ski, snowmobile and mush through sparkling winter landscapes.

Of Yukon's 251,704 summer visitors in 2004, about 57,000 participated in a wilderness or outdoor activity during their Yukon visit. Of those, over 5,100 took a wilderness adventure trip. Though they represented 22 per cent of all visitation, these tourists accounted for 44 per cent (\$34 million) of all visitor spending. (2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey).

In 2004, 81 licensed wilderness tourism operators guided over 35,000 clients on day and multi-day trips year-round throughout the territory. Sixty-five of these operators were from Yukon (*Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* data).

Wilderness landscapes are the foundation of Yukon's wilderness tourism sector, and the quality of Yukon's wilderness is an important factor for travellers choosing the territory as a wilderness destination. With few roads and healthy intact ecosystems, Yukon's wilderness provides visitors with less tangible but important qualities such as the freedom to relax, find solitude and reconnect with nature.

The romance of the Klondike Gold Rush is also associated with Yukon in most of its markets, and wilderness tourists identify with gold rush-era qualities: challenge, ruggedness, determination and adventure. Many wilderness travellers are interested in First Nation cultural experiences and want to learn more about Yukon's natural, cultural and ancient history.

Yukon's wilderness supports outstanding adventure activities. Yukon rivers provide some of the longest canoe trips in North America. The territory's rafting trips have exciting whitewater and exotic features

such as glaciers, caribou herds or tundra. Hikers and horseback riders look forward to uncrowded trails and campsites, and horizons without signs of development. Most wilderness travellers expect to see wildlife and are rarely disappointed. Visitors who stay close to the road can readily experience the power of the landscape and the romance of the past by joining day tours, or by participating in wilderness activities on their own.

## **WILDERNESS TOURISM RESOURCES**

Wilderness tourism activities are built around features such as wilderness landscapes, parks, wildlife and wilderness-based historic sites and events. Wilderness tourism operators use these features to create products and services to sell to tourists. Short day tours have the largest market appeal, while multi-day trips produce the highest earnings per client.

Yukon has unique market advantages over other remaining wilderness regions in the world. The territory is readily accessible by air and road, yet few places offer so many adventurous landscapes.

Yukon is one of North America's major wilderness attractions: only three per cent of the territory is developed, 77 per cent is wilderness further than five kilometres from highways, while another 20 per cent is open space within five kilometres of a road. (Yukon State of the Environment Report, 2002.)

### **Wilderness**

Wilderness landscapes are the foundation of Yukon's wilderness tourism sector. Compared to the rest of North America or the densely populated continents of Europe or Asia, Yukon is the kind of destination most



Short-eared Owl, Teslin (YG)

people only dream about visiting. Yukon residents enjoy one of the lowest population densities in the world, with 32,700 people living across 480,000 km<sup>2</sup>, an area slightly larger than California.

For visitors seeking a unique wilderness experience, Yukon offers a collection of wild and natural features found nowhere else.

Dozens of Yukon rivers draw visitors from around the world. Some are milky glacier-fed rivers, while many more flow pure and clear. Most Yukon rivers course through scenic mountain landscapes and offer remote journeys with little or no sign of people. The promise of wildlife is a major attraction. Yukon wildlife is generally abundant. The territory provides important habitat for Dall sheep, mountain goats, moose and bears, and many species of small mammals and birds. Thirty per cent of Canada's grizzly bears live in Yukon, and the territory is the seasonal home to the Porcupine caribou herd and millions of migratory birds.

Iconic natural features also draw visitors to experience Yukon wilderness. Travellers come to view the jagged ridges of Tombstone Territorial Park and colourful fall tundra along the Dempster Highway. In Yukon, visitors find unparalleled wilderness in the Peel River watershed, the deep blue waterways of the Southern Lakes, and spectacular winter landscapes. Deep in Kluane National Park, Mount Logan, Canada's highest peak, is surrounded by the world's largest non-polar icefields and dozens of lesser mountain giants. Kluane and three adjacent parks in British Columbia and Alaska together form the largest international protected area in the world.

Scenic beauty, wildlife, history, accessibility, and interesting and challenging things to do add to Yukon's tourism appeal and potential. Experiences that include learning, solitude, rest, health and wellness are increasingly important motivators for modern travellers.

According to the 2004 Visitor Exit Survey, visitors identified scenery and wildlife as the top two images of Yukon that came to mind before their visit. One year after their visit, images of scenery and wildlife remained imprinted on their memories. Scenery, wildlife and outdoor activities were among the most sought-after experiences for visitors. Ninety-eight per cent of visitors who expected to see scenery found what they were looking for, while 84 per cent found wildlife and 90 per cent found outdoor activities.

Here are examples of Yukon's wilderness tourism resources. (For more detail, read the regional descriptions in Chapter 4.)

- Large, accessible and remote lakes with good boating, sport and trophy fishing,
- Wilderness mountain canoe rivers suitable for multi-day trips — an unusual and appealing Yukon feature because usually mountain rivers are whitewater grade 4 and higher, making them too difficult for canoes.
- Whitewater rafting rivers (Tatshenshini, Alsek, Firth and Liard rivers).
- Wilderness mountain ranges with:
  - networks of hiking and horse trails,
  - alpine tundra walking,
  - mountain climbing and rock climbing,
  - wildlife viewing,
  - ski touring, dog mushing and snowmobile routes, and
  - opportunities to view unique geological features and Beringian landscapes.
- Natural hot springs.
- Healthy wildlife and fish populations.
- Large roadless areas, clean water, intact ecosystems.
- Wilderness access from most communities.

## Parks

Parks are important to wilderness tourism for several reasons. Formal park protection provides operators with certainty that a high-quality wilderness landscape will be sustained. Designated park areas often increase the marketability of wilderness tourism products because the public expects parks to contain lands and resources that are unusual or special.

National parks rank among Canada's top five tourism attractions. In addition to three national parks, Yukon has four territorial parks, one national wildlife area,

two ecological reserves and one wilderness preserve. (Table 1). Fully protected areas together total approximately 10.3 per cent of the territory.

Yukon’s four Canadian Heritage rivers have outstanding natural, recreational and heritage values, and Canadian Heritage River status recognizes them as best examples of Canada’s river heritage. Although not formally protected, river management plans help ensure that the exceptional values of these rivers are recognized and conserved.

More territorial parks will be designated as First Nation final agreements are implemented. These parklands will provide opportunities to protect, manage and interpret Yukon’s natural and cultural history.

All parks are not equally important to tourism. Access, local interest, and allowable tourism activities and development affect the tourism potential of parks.

Wilderness tourism can also thrive in unprotected landscapes, especially when efforts are made to recognize and mitigate potential impacts of other development on tourism.

### Yukon parks and protected areas

#### National parks and national wildlife areas

- Kluane National Park
  - Mount Logan and St. Elias Icefields: the world’s largest non-polar icecap
  - contiguous with UNESCO World Heritage Site which includes Alaska’s Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, and B.C.’s Tatshenshini-Alsek Wilderness Provincial Park

**Table 1: Yukon protected areas**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>PARK TYPE</b>	<b>AREA (KM<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>% OF YUKON</b>
Ivvavik	national park	9,696	2.00
Kluane	national park	22,158.6	4.58
Vuntut	national park	4,376.1	.90
	<b>Total national parks</b>	<b>36,231</b>	<b>7.48</b>
Asi Keyi	territorial park (in progress)	3,024	.63
Coal River Springs	ecological reserve	16	.003
Herschel Island	territorial park	113	.02
Kusawa	territorial park (in progress)	3,210	.66
Ni’iinlii’njik (Fishing Branch)	ecological reserve	169	.03
Ni’iinlii’njik (Fishing Branch)	wilderness preserve	5,214	1.08
Tombstone	territorial park	2,113	.44
	<b>Total territorial parks</b>	<b>13,859</b>	<b>2.86</b>
	<b>Total protected areas</b>	<b>50,090</b>	<b>10.34</b>

- Ivvavik National Park
  - Arctic mountains and tundra, Firth River, Porcupine caribou migration, Arctic coast migratory bird nesting grounds
- Vuntut National Park
  - Arctic mountains and tundra, Porcupine caribou migration, waterfowl nesting and staging
- Nisutlin Delta National Wildlife Area
  - waterfowl staging area in spring and fall

#### **Territorial parks, wilderness preserve and ecological reserves**

- Herschel Island Territorial Park
  - Arctic tundra and coast with wildflowers, large mammals and marine life, historic Pauline Cove whaling base
- Tombstone Territorial Park
  - spectacular subarctic setting among alpine lakes and granite spires
- Asi Keyi Territorial Park
  - forest growing atop Klutlan Glacier, adjacent to the northern boundary of Kluane National Park
- Kusawa Territorial Park
  - large freshwater lake straddling Coast Range Mountains and interior plateau hosting a variety of wildlife and important heritage resources
- Ni'iinlii'njik (Fishing Branch) Wilderness Preserve and Ecological Reserve
  - major grizzly bear congregation
- Coal River Springs Ecological Reserve
  - warm spring and large tufa formation

#### **Canadian Heritage Rivers**

- Bonnet Plume Canadian Heritage River
  - spectacular mountain scenery and whitewater canoeing river
- Tatshenshini and Alsek Canadian Heritage Rivers
  - superb whitewater rafting rivers through spectacular glacial mountains in Kluane National Park, B.C. and Alaska
- Thirty Mile Canadian Heritage River
  - especially scenic stretch of the Yukon River and endowed with gold rush and steamboat-era historical artifacts

#### **Other protected area**

- Old Crow Flats Special Management Area
  - major waterfowl staging and nesting area with significant cultural, archaeological and palaeontological values

#### **Significant wildlife features**

Wildlife is intrinsic to the Yukon way of life, and wildlife viewing is a valued and sought-after experience for visitors. Nearly all of Yukon is wildlife habitat, but places that offer reliable and predictable opportunities to observe wildlife are especially important for tourism. Yukon has species of international significance including major predators such as wolves and grizzly bears, the Porcupine caribou herd, and migratory birds including peregrine falcons and many species of waterfowl.

On guided trips, skilled field interpretation can increase the chances of seeing wildlife and enhance the value of wildlife encounters. Well-written guidebooks, brochures and signs that interpret stops of interest can enliven wildlife viewing for highway travellers.

In the summer of 2004, almost 40,000 visitors to Yukon identified wildlife viewing as a sought-after experience. Among visitors who participated in wilderness or outdoor activities during their Yukon visit, only hiking and backpacking exceeded the popularity of wildlife viewing and birdwatching. Among visitors who took a wilderness adventure trip, 99.7 per cent expected to see wildlife on their journey and 96 per cent were satisfied with their wildlife viewing experiences (2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey).

The following notable Yukon wildlife features include both remote and accessible viewing opportunities.

- Bear and eagle viewing, supported by salmon runs in Yukon and Alsek river watersheds.
- Sandhill cranes, swans and other bird migration along the Tintina Trench Flyway (almost half of the world's 500,000 Sandhill cranes migrate across Yukon in the spring and fall).
- Waterfowl at Swan Haven and the Nisutlin River delta.
- Porcupine caribou herd migration that crosses the Dempster Highway and both the Porcupine and Firth rivers.
- Dall sheep viewing in Kluane National Park, and Fannin sheep viewing at Mount Mye near Faro.
- Waterfowl viewing at Nisutlin Bay.
- Grizzly bear viewing at Bear Cave Mountain and Dalton Post.
- Arctic raptors and other birdlife along the Dempster Highway corridor, Canada's most accessible opportunity for observation.

## Wilderness-based historic features and events

Wilderness-based historic features and events are cultural elements that complement the natural attributes of the wilderness, and add value to a visitor's experience. In 2004, "Yukon history" was the third most sought-after experience by visitors who participated in a wilderness activity (2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey). In Yukon, historic sites feature palaeontology, First Nations history and culture, exploration and fur trade, gold rush, transportation and settlement themes.

Many historic sites have been significant to First Nations as meeting places and trading sites, and for hunting and fishing opportunities. The physical structures on these sites, and many of the stories associated with them, date from the post-contact period and are shared with Euro-Canadian history. Examples of wilderness-based historic features include:

- Fort Selkirk, Hootalinqua, Forty Mile and other Yukon River sites;
- Rampart House and LaPierre House on the Porcupine River; and
- Pauline Cove whaling station on Herschel Island.

Wilderness-based events include races and re-enactments in or through the landscape, and celebrations of Yukon wilderness. They may be well publicized and recurring, such as the Yukon Quest, or they may be one-of-a-kind. From a tourism perspective, these events can draw major media attention that raises awareness of Yukon and markets it as a destination for tourism.

Examples of wilderness-based events include:

- Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race;
- Yukon River Quest canoe race;
- Chilkoot Trail and Trail of '98 canoe route to Dawson;
- Yukon Arctic Ultra; and
- Faro Crane and Sheep Viewing Festival.

## PROFILE OF YUKON'S WILDERNESS TOURISM SECTOR

**Wilderness tourism in Yukon is a dynamic industry embracing partnerships, best practices and research.**

Yukon's wilderness attracts year-round visitors seeking a wide variety of day and multi-day experiences. Self-guided visitors conduct their own activities and trips, purchasing goods, services and transport, and often renting equipment. Licensed operators provide guided wilderness trips. Yukon operators have an international reputation for high-quality wilderness experiences delivered by skilled and knowledgeable guides.

Yukon offers a variety of wilderness activities, at any level of intensity. In 2004, eight operators offered motorboat day tours on the Yukon River out of Whitehorse and Dawson City, and provided almost half of the sector's 35,000 guided clients. However, day and multi-day canoeing, rafting, horseback riding, dogsled and hiking trips remained the backbone of the wilderness tourism sector. Sport fishing, wilderness lodges, off-road vehicle (ORV) touring, mountain biking, ski touring, whitewater kayaking and nature photography rounded out the product line.

For the most part, built infrastructure supporting Yukon wilderness tourism is good. A well-maintained

road system knits Yukon's tourism regions together, and networks of trails provide a variety of kinds of access to the backcountry. Yukon is served by one international airport, as well as regional airports, though not all communities receive scheduled service. Two major carriers provide up to four winter and six summer flights daily into Whitehorse. Direct summer charter flights from Germany are especially important to the wilderness tourism sector. Local air charter companies fly wilderness travellers to remote locations around the territory.

Ongoing research and reliable data also play an important role in the development of Yukon's wilderness tourism sector. Because of its reporting requirements, the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* provides good data about guided wilderness tourism. Visitor exit surveys, research from other jurisdictions, and industry and government expertise provide further information about guided and self-guided wilderness visitors.

### Economic value

The wilderness tourism sector includes business operators, guides, support staff, rental outfits and travel professionals. In addition to Yukoners, the sector includes companies from elsewhere in Canada and other countries and serves an international clientele. Wilderness tourism involves and benefits a wide range of businesses, including hotels and restaurants, airlines, media and advertising, vehicle rentals and gas stations, supermarkets, air charter companies, local entertainment, artists, craftspeople and retail stores.

Wilderness tourism is a strong contributor to Yukon's economy. In the summer of 2004, visitors who participated in outdoor or wilderness activities spent

almost \$34 million in total while in Yukon (2004 Visitor Exit Survey). These visitors comprised less than one quarter of all Yukon tourists, yet represented almost half of all tourism spending in the territory. They stayed longer and spent more, and they reported a very high level of value-for-money satisfaction.

Wilderness tourism expenditures were split fairly evenly between Canadians (32% of total spending), Americans (32%) and overseas visitors (36%). Visitors who participated in an outdoor or wilderness activity spent an average of \$83 per night during their visit to Yukon, compared to an average of \$77 per night for all visitors. Visitors who took wilderness trips spent almost \$5 million.

## Wilderness tourism markets

Yukon's wilderness tourism markets include current and potential visitors who come to the territory specifically for wilderness trips as well as visitors who participate in wilderness or outdoor activities as part of a Yukon trip.

### Wilderness tourism visitors

About 57,000 (22%) of Yukon's 251,700 summer visitors in 2004 participated in a wilderness or outdoor activity.<sup>1</sup> About 5,100 of these wilderness participants said they took a wilderness trip (Table 2).

Wilderness participants were a significant market for Yukon. In 2004, these visitors enjoyed day and multi-day wilderness activities and experiences as part of their Yukon holiday. Just over half came from the U.S., about one-quarter from Canada and about half of the rest from Germany. Yukon was the primary destination for about a third of these participants. All

stayed at least one night in Yukon, and almost two-fifths stayed more than five nights.

The most popular outdoor activities for wilderness participants were walking, hiking, wildlife and bird viewing, and fishing. About one-fifth were guided, mainly for horseback riding, boating and canoeing experiences. Scenery was the most highly sought experience, followed by wildlife viewing, birdwatching and outdoor activities. Ninety-three per cent felt they received value for their money, and 80 per cent rated their trip as eight or higher out of 10, compared to other destinations they had visited.

Wilderness travellers took day or multi-day guided and self-guided trips into the wilderness during their Yukon visit. Forty-three per cent came from the U.S. and 32 per cent were from Canada, about half of whom came from Alberta. Of the remaining visitors from other countries, about 60 per cent were from Germany. Yukon was the main destination for three out of five wilderness travellers, and scenery and outdoor activities were the main attractions. All stayed at least one night in Yukon, and 62 per cent stayed more than five nights. Four-fifths of wilderness travellers took a wilderness trip that included at least one overnight, and the average length of the wilderness trip was 11 days.

Canoeing (44%), hiking (20%) and wildlife viewing (11%) were the most popular kinds of wilderness trips, and most trips included several activities. Almost all wilderness travellers expected to see wildlife, and most did. Almost all travellers rated their trip quality and wilderness experience as high compared to other destinations they had visited.

<sup>1</sup>2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey data are not directly comparable to *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* data. See Introduction and Appendix 2.

**Table 2: Current Yukon wilderness tourism markets**

	<b>A. ALL YUKON SUMMER VISITORS IN 2004</b>	<b>B. WILDERNESS OR OUTDOOR PARTICIPANTS (SUB-GROUP OF A)</b>	<b>C. WILDERNESS ADVENTURE TRAVELLERS (SUB-GROUP OF B)</b>
Visitors	251,704	56,652, 22% of all visitors	5,119, 2% of all visitors
Origin	77% US (32% Alaska) 14% Canada (28% British Columbia, 22% Ontario) 9% other countries (31% Germany)	54% US (32% Alaska) 27% Canada (10% each Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta) 19% other countries (50% Germany)	43% US 32% Canada 25% other countries
Length of stay in Yukon	24% less than 1 night 57% 1 to 5 nights 18% over 5 nights	– 62% 1 to 5 nights 38% over 5 nights	– 38% 1 to 5 nights 62% over 5 nights
Primary destination	17% Yukon	34% Yukon	58% Yukon
Wilderness/ outdoor activities	22% wilderness/outdoor (wildlife/ bird watching, walking/hiking, fishing – top five))	37% wilderness/outdoor (wildlife/ bird watching, walking/hiking, fishing – top five)	43% wilderness/outdoor (wildlife/ bird viewing, walking/hiking, canoeing/rafting – top six)
Guided	not available	18% yes 71% no 11% did not say	51% yes 49% no
Spending	\$75.8 million, \$396 per visitor party, \$77 per day	\$33.9 million, \$83 per day, 44% of all visitor spending	\$4.9 million, \$1,536 per visitor party , 6.5% of all visitor spending
Enjoyment	80% rated visit as 7 out of 10 or better	80% rated visit 8 out of 10 or better	95% rated trip as 7 out of 10 or better
Value	70% felt they received value for money 27% did not say	93% felt they received value for money	92% felt they received value for money
Experience sought/found	scenery 29%/30% wildlife 15%/14% outdoor 5%/5%	scenery 25%/25% wildlife 15%/14% outdoor 10%/10%	not available
Images before trip	40% scenery, 17% wildlife, 7% history	41% scenery, 9% wildlife, 11% history	not available
Images 1 year later	41% scenery, 9% wildlife, 7% history	40% scenery, 9% wildlife, 5% natural attractions	not available

Source: 2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey

### Potential wilderness tourism markets

The wilderness tourism sector's target markets are visitors who have the interest, time, disposable income and motivation to choose Yukon as a wilderness destination. Industry and governments use research and market intelligence to identify target markets.

### Target market segments

Recent Department of Tourism and Culture research identified two priority wilderness tourism market segments for Yukon: Adventure Challengers and Scenic Outdoor Travellers.

Adventure Challengers include visitors who are active and want to travel to places that offer a range of wilderness and adventure travel activities. Their

primary motivation is to escape and have a physically demanding experience in the wilderness. This group is familiar with Yukon, and most have a positive view of what Yukon offers. Adventure Challengers are also keen to explore Yukon's cultural activities and offerings.

Scenic Outdoor Travellers seek a beautiful outdoor destination where they can relax. They are interested in local history, traditions and real, down-to-earth experiences and are more comfortable with leisurely wilderness experiences.

The top interests of both segments include wilderness adventure trips and activities like hiking, camping, canoeing, rafting and kayaking. Many are interested



On Lake Laberge (YG)

in visiting a place few others have seen, and they want to reconnect with nature and learn about First Nations culture.

Both segments express a strong attraction to natural phenomena like the northern lights and the midnight sun.

The highway touring market constitutes the majority of visitors to Yukon. Though visitors in this market are less interested in wilderness travel, Yukon's wilderness features are an important part of their trip. In 2004, Yukon's scenery and wildlife were the top two experiences all visitors were looking for when coming to Yukon, and outdoor activities ranked fifth.

### Geographic markets

Yukon's three primary geographic markets for wilderness tourism are the U.S., Canada and Europe (Germany and U.K.). Secondary markets include Australia and Japan.

Recent market research reveals several promising trends. In the U.S., "unspoiled wilderness" appeals to environmentally aware travellers and there is increasing interest in outdoor activities, nature and self-improvement. Growth in domestic travel is strong, with opportunities for Yukon to build on awareness generated through the 2007 Canada Winter Games, held in Whitehorse.

Meanwhile, environmentally responsible destinations and products are gaining importance in decision-making among Europeans. These visitors are looking for nature, scenery and rejuvenation, and they are interested in parks and wildlife. Soft and hard adventure and winter products remain good prospects for European markets.

## Marketing

"Markets" are the visitors that tourism businesses want to sell to, while "marketing" refers to the sales campaigns and tools (websites, brochures, media, industry and consumer shows) used to promote and sell tourism products and destinations.

The Department of Tourism and Culture, the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon, other tourism organizations and individual operators promote wilderness tourism products and experiences, and provide information to potential visitors from around the globe. A variety of government agencies, businesses and organizations deliver information and interpretive material to wilderness travellers once they arrive in Yukon. Guidebooks and other publications provide visitors with excellent information about Yukon's wilderness destinations.

The territory's wilderness adventure experiences are a primary pillar in Tourism Yukon's marketing efforts. Yukon's wilderness attributes feature prominently in the territory's advertising campaigns. Wilderness and adventure-seeking visitors stay longer and spend more than other visitors, and there is good potential for attracting new visitors from Yukon's wilderness tourism market segments. The Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon and Yukon Quest are partners in the Department of Tourism and Culture's marketing efforts.

Internet marketing continues to be a significant opportunity, particularly for wilderness tourism operators and target markets continue to use the web as their primary research tool. Web marketing is cost effective and results in direct referrals to Yukon operators. Marketing partnerships like Yukon Wild are

increasingly strategic and essential to retaining market share.

The wilderness tourism marketplace is highly competitive, and Yukon must compete with high profile wilderness destinations around the world. Yukon's wilderness tourism sector continues to find ways to increase awareness of Yukon as a wilderness destination in new markets, and to motivate target segments which are already aware of Yukon. Given Yukon's limited marketing dollars, good research continues to be an essential tool to determine how and where to focus campaigns.

### **Wilderness tourism operators and clients**

Licensed wilderness tourism operators guide and accommodate tourists on the land and water year-round, relying on Yukon's wilderness to maintain their livelihood. Of the 81 operators licensed in 2004, over three-quarters were Yukon-based and directly employed about 400 people. An additional 15 to 18 (mostly non-Yukon) operators guided in national parks in Yukon. About six Yukon companies rent equipment — mostly canoes and kayaks — to self-guided travellers.

Companies range from small owner- and family-run businesses to large international companies. They develop and market their own products, deliver tours for local and foreign companies, and tailor trips for conventions and special events. Yukon guides have an international reputation as skilled and knowledgeable professionals who deliver outstanding wilderness adventure activities throughout Yukon. A number of Yukon companies deliver tours that

include neighbouring jurisdictions as well as product elsewhere in North America and the world.

Yukon's wilderness tourism licensing regime is progressive and well planned. The *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* is a conservation management and public safety tool, and it is also responsive to the demands of a discerning market seeking high-quality wilderness experiences. Few other jurisdictions in Canada have such a comprehensive licensing system for wilderness tourism operators outside of parks.

Between 1999 and 2004, the Yukon government issued 167 wilderness tourism licenses. Renewing operators keep the same license, and not all operators run trips every year. Approximately 80 to 100 operators delivered Yukon wilderness adventure products each year from 1999 to 2004. In 2004, 65 of the 81 licensed operators were Yukon-based, of which 39 were from Whitehorse and 26 were from other communities. Sixteen non-Yukon companies guided trips in 2004 (Figures 1 and 2).

Although the number of licensed operators declined from 99 in 1999 to 81 in 2004, during the same period the number of clients and user days increased from 14,496 clients and 25,538 user days to 35,335 clients and 45,038 user day (Figure 3). Day and multi-day tours were both important to wilderness tourism. In 2004, 37 operators ran day tours, 55 delivered multi-day tours and some offered both.

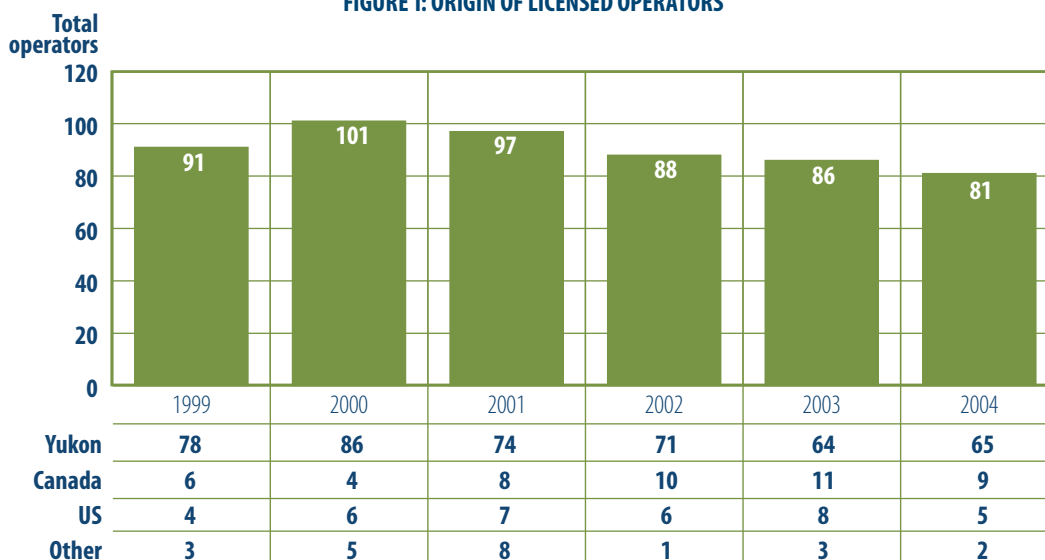
Between 1999 and 2004, the number of day trip clients ranged between 14,496 and 35,335. During that same period, about 1,100 to 1,700 multi-day trip clients spent 9,700 to 17,000 user days on wilderness trips each year (Figure 6). Multi-day clients spent approximately eight to 10 days per trip.

Day-trip clients spent approximately \$100 per client for day tours, and an average of \$1,700 per client to an upper range of \$3,000 per client for multi-day tours. Multi-day tours ranged from overnight to three weeks in duration, increasing the economic value of multi-day trips.

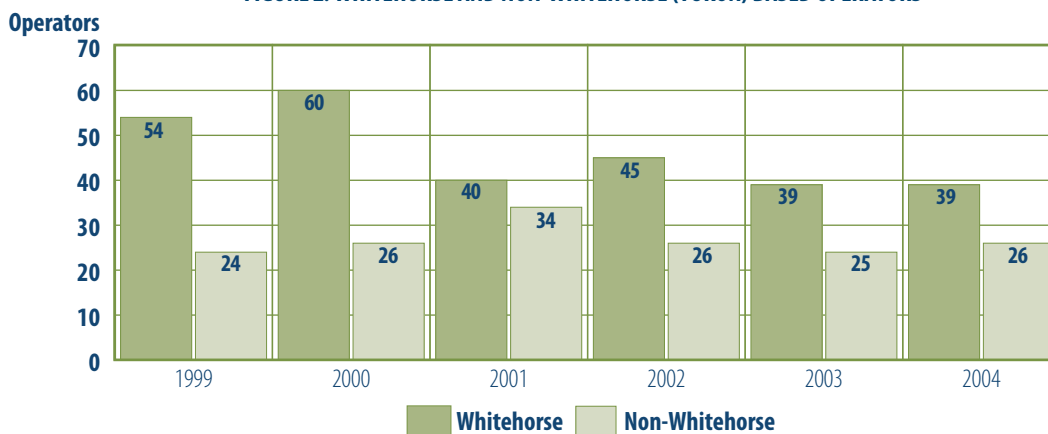
The most popular activity was Yukon River motorboat tours (Figure 5). Between 2000 (the first year all motorboat tour data was available) and 2004, the

number of motorboat tour clients ranged between 14,396 and 19,568 clients each year (Figure 6). However, during that same period, the percentage of motorboat tour clients compared to all other guided clients decreased from 76 per cent to 46 per cent. This is due more to an overall increase in the number of clients participating in other activities than a significant decrease in motorboat tour clients.

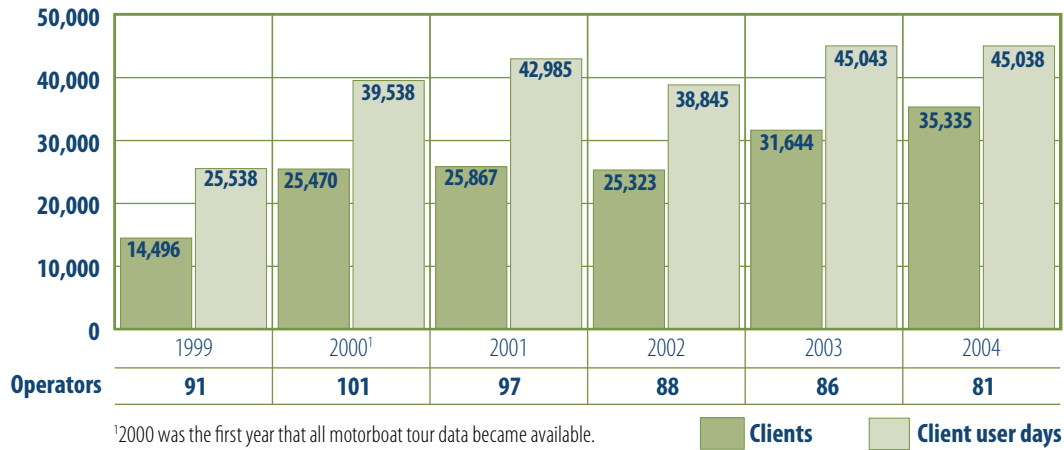
**FIGURE 1: ORIGIN OF LICENSED OPERATORS**



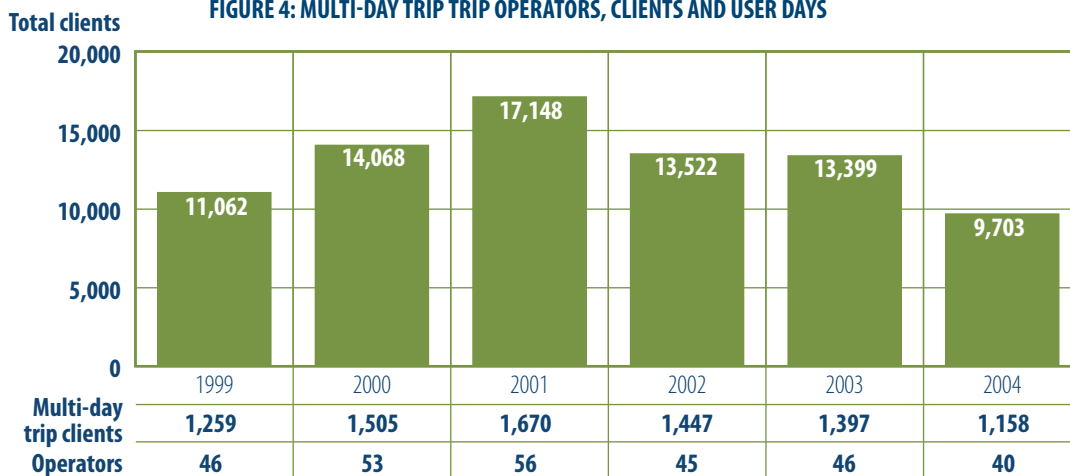
**FIGURE 2: WHITEHORSE AND NON-WHITEHORSE (YUKON) BASED OPERATORS**



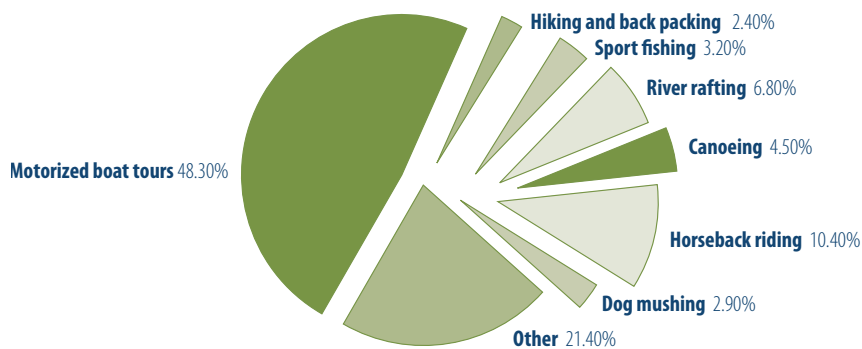
**FIGURE 3: OPERATORS, CLIENTS AND USER DAYS**



**FIGURE 4: MULTI-DAY TRIP OPERATORS, CLIENTS AND USER DAYS**



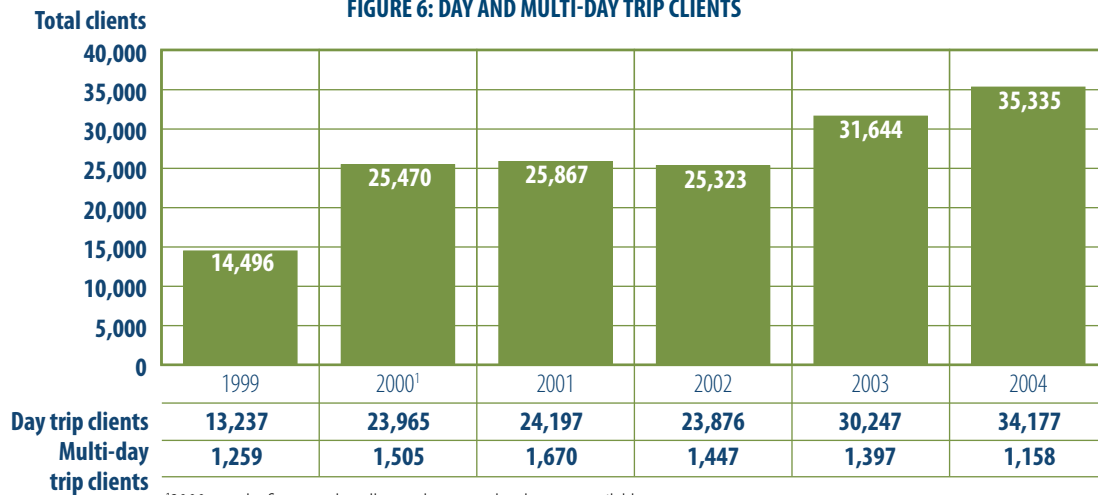
**FIGURE 5: NUMBER OF CLIENTS BY MOST POPULAR ACTIVITIES IN 2004**



**Table 3: Number of clients by most popular activities**

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
motorized boat tours	6,795	19,568	18,317	14,396	17,269	16,492
hiking and backpacking	1,055	1,092	1,024	752	730	810
sport fishing	634	1,006	1,175	814	674	1,104
river rafting	1,195	1,127	1,371	893	–	2,313
canoeing	860	730	576	1,356	2,115	1,535
horseback riding	1,087	1,239	3,210	1,656	3,046	3,559
photo safaris	–	16	20	5,271	–	~5,000
dog mushing	435	750	875	892	666	1,025

**FIGURE 6: DAY AND MULTI-DAY TRIP CLIENTS**



<sup>1</sup>2000 was the first year that all motorboat tour data became available.

### Room for growth

Summer (June-September) is the high season for wilderness tourism in Yukon, though shoulder season and winter activities are growing steadily. In 2004, 65 companies operated only in summer, three operated only in winter and 13 operated year-round (Figure 7). Between 1999 and 2004, the number of winter products increased, particularly dog mushing.

Yukon operators are interested in expanding their businesses, and the sector has room to accommodate growth. In 2002, seasonal tourism businesses operated at 59 per cent capacity, while year-round businesses operated at 39 per cent capacity. Eighty per cent of licensed businesses had plans to grow; almost half planned to grow in the next two years, and just 20 per cent had no plans to grow (Wilderness Tourism Capacity Study). Growth can occur from expanding existing products, developing new products and extending the season of operation.

High-quality specialty products, focused marketing, well-publicized winter events, proximity to an international airport and increasing interest from

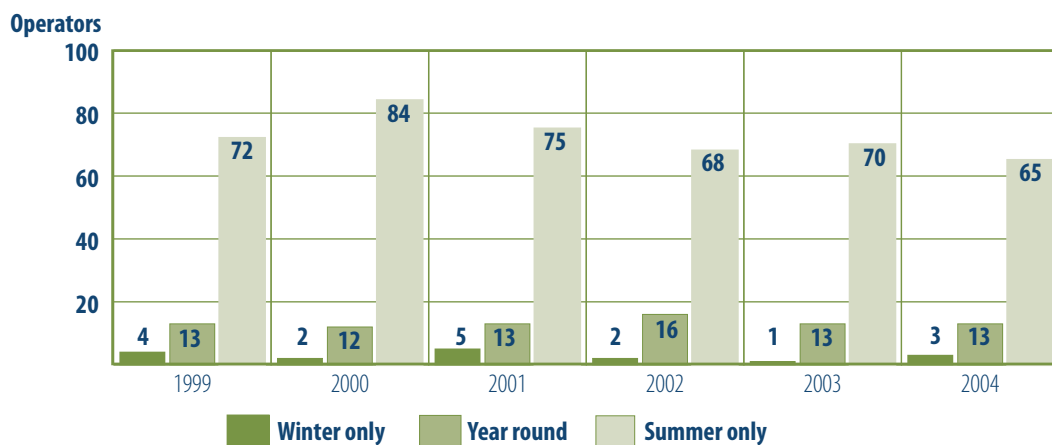
markets, tour companies and air carriers in shoulder and winter products are facilitating the growth of wilderness tourism beyond the traditional summer season.

### Wilderness tourism activities

Yukon has a reputation as an environmentally responsible destination that offers opportunities for high-quality wilderness trips. While people are on a wilderness excursion, they participate in different activities, and learn about Yukon's nature, culture and history. Canoeing, rafting or horseback riding may be the primary reason why a visitor takes a wilderness trip, but these activities may also be the means to obtain benefits such as knowledge, solitude, stimulation, exercise or spiritual awareness. Both guided and self-guided visitors pursue a range of wilderness activities, but horseback riding, dog mushing and whitewater rafting are almost exclusively guided.

The mainstays of multi-day trips are river rafting, canoeing, horseback riding, sport fishing and hiking. Popular day trip activities include motorboat tours,

FIGURE 7: SEASON OF OPERATION



canoeing, whitewater rafting, horseback riding, hiking, photo safaris, sport fishing and dog mushing.

### Activities

**Watercraft** are used on about 70 rivers and scores of lakes, which provide a variety of adventures for Yukon boaters and paddlers. Trip options vary in length, difficulty, access (road vs. fly-in) and wilderness scenery. Difficulty determines the choice of watercraft: motorboats and sea kayaks are used on lakes and flatwater rivers; canoeing generally occurs on rivers up to and including whitewater grade 3 (the general limit of an open canoe); and rivers rated as whitewater grade 4 and up are used by rafts and kayaks. Yukon's wilderness rivers are unusual and attractive because they offer lengthy, two- to three-week journeys through mountain environments that are suitable for canoes. River trip activities include wildlife viewing, hiking, nature study, fishing and photography, usually in river corridors.

- *Motorboating* as a guided tourism activity occurs on road-accessible lakes and larger flatwater rivers such as the Yukon and Teslin. One major tour operator and a handful of smaller operators offer day and multi-day tours on the Yukon River. In 2004, eight operators guided 16,492 clients on motorboat tours.
- *Rafting* in Yukon is both a commercially guided product and a self-guided undertaking. Multi-day trips occur mostly on the Tatshenshini, Alsek, Firth and Liard (B.C. section) rivers. Other guided rafting destinations include occasional trips on the Primrose, Coal, Hyland, Snake and Bonnet Plume rivers. The Upper Tatshenshini and the Tutshi rivers (south of Carcross, in B.C.,) provide popular day trip opportunities. Three operators guided 2,313 river rafting clients in 2004.

- *Canoeing*, both guided and self-guided, takes place mostly on the Yukon River and its major tributaries, the Big Salmon and the Teslin, with most trips ending at Dawson City. Other important wilderness canoe rivers include the Snake, Bonnet Plume and Wind in the Peel River basin, the Beaver and Hess tributaries of the Stewart River, the South Macmillan and Ross rivers in the Pelly basin, the Wolf and Nisutlin tributaries of the Teslin, and the Coal and Beaver tributaries of the Liard. Occasional trips occur on other Yukon rivers such as the Wheaton, Takhini, Porcupine and Donjek. In 2004, 29 operators guided 1,535 clients.

**Day and multi-day, mostly guided horseback trips** take place mainly in the Coast Range outside of Whitehorse, in the Kluane region, and in the Ogilvie Ranges of the Klondike region. Ten operators guided 3,559 clients in 2004.



About 12, mostly remote, **wilderness lodges**, offer sport fishing and other wilderness tourism activities. Sport fishing is the primary activity for most lodges. Most facilities include a main lodge and/or cabins, and some have satellite cabins at nearby locations. Several lodges provide guided activities, while others provide accommodation, equipment and other services to self-guided clients. Only businesses that guide clients on wilderness activities are required to obtain a Wilderness Tourism License and submit trip reports. Data is not available for facilities that offer self-guided activities and chose not to obtain a Wilderness Tourism License. In 2004, fewer than three lodges offered guided wilderness tourism activities other than guided fishing, so *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* data cannot be presented.

**Sport fishing** is popular throughout Yukon and includes self-guided casual angling, and guided sport and trophy fishing. Yukon is at the forefront of catch-and-release management rules to safeguard the limited stock of old and large fish. Important angling sites include Dalton Post, most of the large road-accessible lakes and river crossings, and accessible stocked lakes. Trophy fish lakes include fly-in lakes such as Wellesley, McEvoy, Tincup and Wolf. Most wilderness lodges noted here specialize in sport fishing; several offer guided services while others provide accommodation and other services, but not guided activities. Other operators guide clients but do not provide accommodation. Eleven operators — including several lodges — guided 1,104 clients in 2004.

**Hiking and backpacking** occur throughout Yukon. Most parties are self-guided, but guided trips operate in more remote and rugged areas. Popular backpacking regions include Kluane, the passes and

peaks around Carcross and Whitehorse, the Cassiar Mountains and Tombstone Territorial Park. Though located in Alaska and B.C., the Chilkoot Trail is an icon for backpackers visiting Yukon. Each tourism region offers trails for day hikes, and most mountain ranges have informal routes for long distance backpacking. Sixteen operators guided 810 day and multi-day clients in 2004.

**Photo safaris** usually use Jeeps or ATVs to take clients on scenic day tours away from paved roads. The vehicle ride is as integral to the adventure as are scenery and the opportunity to photograph and learn about the environment. Photo safaris are emerging as an important activity in the Southern Lakes region for cruise ship clients out of Skagway. In 2002, there were 5,271 guided photo safari clients. There were fewer than three operators in 2004, so *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* data cannot be presented for that year.

**Wintertime tourism** is growing, particularly day activities and multi-day tours close to Whitehorse.

- *Dog mushing*: Almost always guided, dog mushing is the primary winter activity. Most dog mushing day trips and multi-day excursions are offered in the Whitehorse, Southern Lakes, Teslin, Kluane and Klondike regions. Multi-day dog mushing trip formats include camping expeditions, hut-to-hut itineraries and cabin-based trips. In 2004, five operators guided 1025 clients for 2,760 user days.
- *Snowmobiling*: Snowmobile trips occur mainly in road-accessible areas. Tourists can rent snowmobiles for self-guided excursions, and guided commercial tours operate in the Whitehorse, Southern Lakes, Kluane, Teslin and

Klondike regions. (*Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* data is not presented because there were fewer than three operators in Yukon.)

- *Aurora viewing*: Northern lights viewing is usually sold as a packaged tour mostly to overseas markets. Dog mushing and snowmobiling are often added as day activities. (*Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* data is not presented for aurora viewing because there were fewer than three operators in Yukon.)

Equipment rental services provide canoes, kayaks, rafts, snowmobiles, ATVs and transport for self-guided wilderness parties. Rental companies mainly support self-guided parties on the Yukon-Teslin-Big Salmon

river system. In 2004, 1,564 self-guided rental clients paddled these rivers compared with 344 guided clients.

### Locations

Wilderness tourism occurs throughout Yukon, but certain regions attract more attention. These include the Yukon, Teslin and Big Salmon rivers; Kluane region including the national park, and Alsek and Tatshenshini rivers; the Peel River watershed; Tombstone Territorial Park and the Dempster corridor; and the Southern Lakes area. Table 4 summarizes wilderness tourism features and activities in Yukon's nine tourism regions and the Yukon River watershed. More detailed regional information is presented in Chapter 4 of this report.



**Table 4: Regional wilderness tourism features and activities**

<b>TOURISM REGION</b>	<b>CORE WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>PARKS, RESERVES, HERITAGE RIVERS</b>	<b>KEY FEATURES</b>	<b>WILDERNESS-BASED EVENTS &amp; HISTORIC FEATURES</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANT WILDLIFE FEATURES</b>
<b>Watson Lake</b>	Canoeing, horseback riding, hiking, sport fishing	Coal River Springs Territorial Park	Liard River and rapids Coal River and canyon Beaver, Hyland and Frances rivers Upper Rancheria River Nahanni Range Road		Bird life at Wye Lake
<b>Teslin</b>	Hiking, canoeing, dog mushing, sport fishing	Nisutlin Delta National Wildlife Area	Teslin, Nisutlin and Big Salmon rivers Quiet Lake Wolf Lake and River Teslin Lake	South Canol Road	Waterfowl nesting and staging in Nisutlin Bay
<b>Southern Lakes</b>	Photo safaris, horseback riding, canoeing, dog mushing, sport fishing, hiking, off-road vehicle riding	Chilkoot Trail National Historic Site – B.C. and Alaska Agay Mene Territorial Park	Large Yukon River headwater lakes Yukon River Montana Mountain Watson and Wheaton rivers Tutshi River rapids – B.C.	Trail of '98 route White Pass & Yukon Railway Mining, river and rail transport history	Waterfowl staging and migration at Swan Haven and M'Clintock Bay
<b>Whitehorse</b>	Motorboat tours, horseback riding, canoeing, hiking, sport fishing, dog mushing	Thirty Mile Canadian Heritage River Kusawa Territorial Park	Yukon River Lake Laberge Fish Lake	Hootalinqua Historic Site Old Dawson Road (Trans Canada Trail) Yukon Quest start/finish Yukon River Quest canoe race start	Salmon migration at Whitehorse Fish Ladder
<b>Kluane</b>	Horseback riding, canoeing, river rafting, hiking, sport fishing, dog mushing, mountaineering, boating	Kluane National Park & Reserve UNESCO World Heritage Site Tatshenshini and Alsek Canadian Heritage Rivers Asi Keyi Territorial Park Kusawa Territorial Park	Kluane and Icefield ranges (Mount Logan) Kusawa, Kluane and Dezadeash lakes Tatshenshini, Alsek rivers	Klukshu Village Silver Sled Dog Race	Salmon runs Grizzly bear viewing in Kluane National Park Dall sheep at Sheep Mountain Waterfowl staging

continued...

continued...Table 4: Regional wilderness tourism features and activities

<b>TOURISM REGION</b>	<b>CORE WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>PARKS, RESERVES, HERITAGE RIVERS</b>	<b>KEY FEATURES</b>	<b>WILDERNESS-BASED EVENTS &amp; HISTORIC FEATURES</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANT WILDLIFE FEATURES</b>
<b>Campbell</b>	Hiking, canoeing, sport fishing, wildlife viewing		Yukon River Pelly, Ross, Yukon and South Macmillan rivers Macmillan Pass and Itsi Range Frances and other large lakes	Yukon Quest Route Fort Selkirk Five Finger Rapids Dena Cho Trail North and South Canol roads	Bird migrations along the Tintina flyway Fannin sheep
<b>Silver Trail</b>	Canoeing, hiking, horseback riding, sport fishing, photo safaris, wildlife viewing	Bonnet Plume Canadian Heritage River	Peel River basin (Snake, Bonnet Plume, Wind, Hart and Ogilvie rivers) McQuesten River Stewart River	Historic mining artifacts Silver Trail historic route Trans Canada Trail	Mountain caribou Dall sheep Alpine butterflies
<b>Klondike</b>	Motorboat tours, snowmobiling, hiking, backpacking, canoeing	Tombstone Territorial Park	Yukon River North Fork Pass and Tombstone peaks Klondike River Dempster Highway	Klondike/Dawson Historical Complex Moosehide Forty Mile Historic Site Yukon Quest Route Yukon River Quest canoe race	Porcupine caribou herd migration Dempster Highway bird life Bird migrations along the Tintina flyway
<b>Yukon River Watershed Region</b>	Motorboat tours, canoe trips with associated hiking, fishing and wildlife viewing	Thirty Mile Canadian Heritage Rivers	Yukon, Teslin and Big Salmon rivers Scenic and historic waterways	Numerous historic sites Fort Selkirk, Hootalinqua, Forty Mile Yukon Quest and Yukon River Quest routes	Salmon migration Bird migration along Tintina Trench flyway
<b>North Yukon</b>	River rafting, canoeing, wildlife viewing, hiking, dog mushing	Herschel Island Territorial Park Ivvavik National Park Vuntut National Park Old Crow Flats Special Management Area Ni'iinliinjik Fishing Branch	Bell-Eagle-Porcupine River system Firth River British and Richardson mountains Arctic Ocean & Coastal Plain	LaPierre and Rampart House historic sites Dempster Highway	Porcupine caribou herd migration Bear Cave Mountain (grizzly bear, salmon) Waterfowl nesting and migration

## Tourism regions of Yukon



# CHAPTER 4: REGIONAL SUMMARIES

This chapter of regional summaries describes wilderness tourism activities and resources for each of Yukon's nine tourism regions and the Yukon River Watershed (Yukon, Teslin and Big Salmon rivers).

Data on guided and self-guided wilderness tourism activities comes from the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* trip and rental reports, the 2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey, and Parks Canada for Kluane National Park and Reserve, Vuntut National Park and Ivvavik National Park (Firth River). These sources are described in Chapter 1.

Each regional summary follows a similar format. Headings and data sources (if applicable) for each section are explained below.

**KEY FEATURES** includes significant natural, historic and built features most important to wilderness tourism. Major highways that simply provide access to locations

for wilderness activities are not included, unless the roads themselves are important components of wilderness tourism activities. The Dempster Highway and the North and South Canol roads are included in key features.

**POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES** includes the most common guided and self-guided wilderness tourism activities. Occasionally, activities in neighbouring jurisdictions are included when it is a trans-boundary activity (e.g. rafting the Alsek River) or carried out by a Yukon-based operator (e.g. Tutshi raft trips).

**WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004** summarizes commercially guided wilderness tourism activities. Parks Canada provided data for Kluane National Park and Reserve and Ivvavik National Park.

The **ACTIVITIES** table (located with the regional snapshot of each region) identifies known guided and self-guided wilderness tourism activities in a region.

The charts and graphs illustrate information for guided activities and equipment rental. Data is from either the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* or Parks Canada.

The *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* requires the Yukon government to ensure that identifying information about a business remains confidential. This means that where fewer than three operators conduct wilderness tourism activities, *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* data for these activities cannot be presented.

Anomalies in regional data, such as a significant increase or decrease in a particular activity, are explained in the regional summary.

- Watson Lake Tourism Region, 37
- Teslin Tourism Region, 41
- Southern Lakes Tourism Region, 45
- Whitehorse Tourism Region, 49
- Kluane Tourism Region, 55
- Campbell Tourism Region, 63
- Silver Trail Tourism Region, 69
- Klondike Tourism Region, 79
- Yukon River Watershed, 85
- North Yukon Tourism Region, 91



# WATSON LAKE TOURISM REGION

Known as the “Gateway to the Yukon,” the Watson Lake Tourism Region includes Rancheria to the west, Nahanni Range Road to the north, and the remote southeast corner of Yukon.

The Alaska Highway, Robert Campbell Highway, Nahanni Range Road and spur roads provide access to wilderness areas. The region has a modest volume of commercial wilderness tourism, including canoeing, horseback riding and hiking, and is used by self-guided wilderness parties and highway travellers.



Coal River Springs (YG)

## KEY FEATURES

- wilderness rivers (Coal, Liard, Hyland, Beaver)
- Liard River Rapids
- Coal River Springs Territorial Park
- Nahanni Range Road

## POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- canoeing
- river rafting
- horseback riding
- hiking
- snowmobiling
- sport fishing

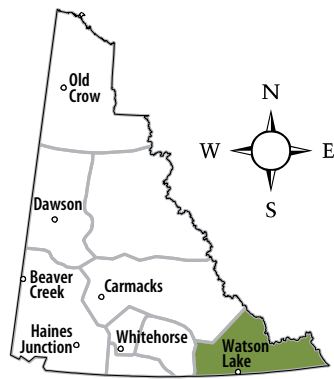
## WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 130 to 1,605 user days
- 15 to 155 day and multi-day trip clients
- 3 to 6 operators



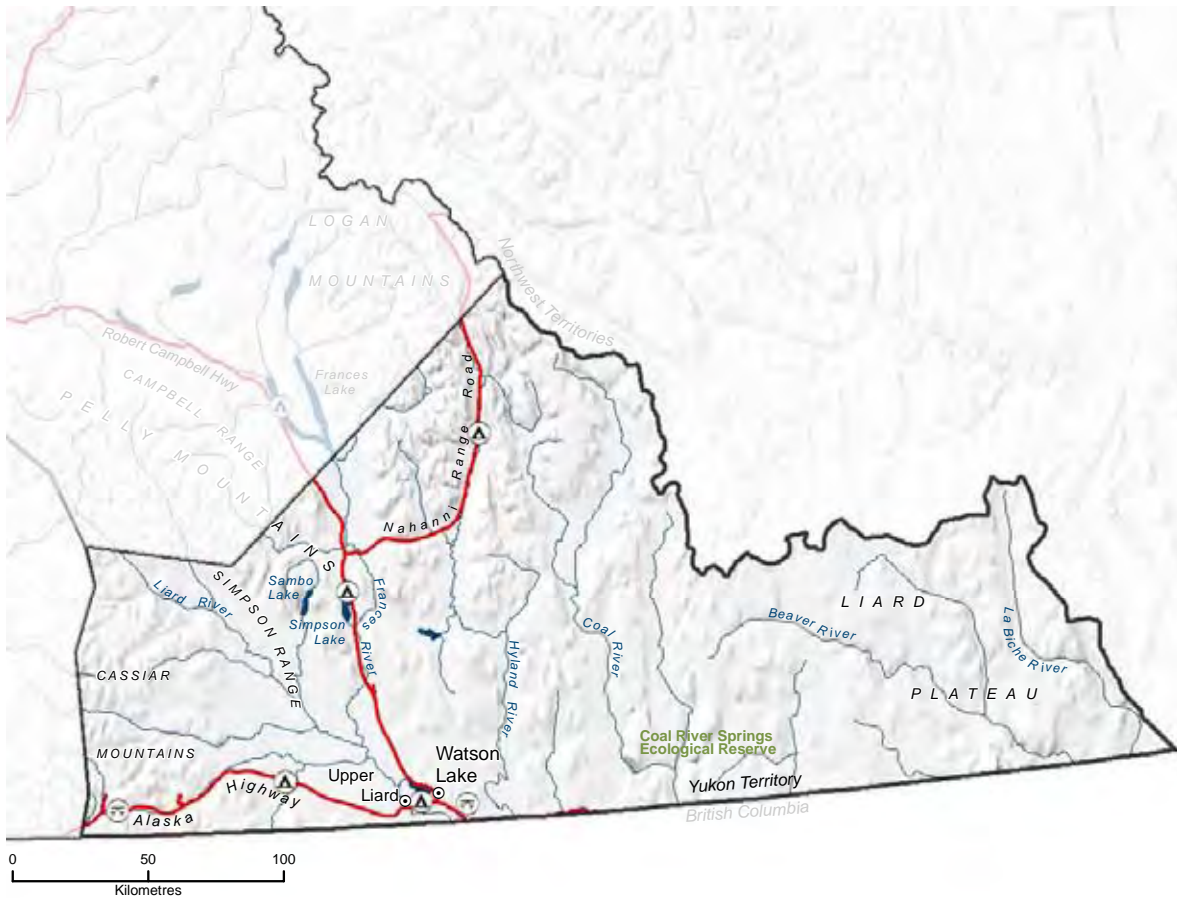
Northern lights (YG, Robert Postman)

# WATSON LAKE TOURISM REGION MAP



## Legend

- Campground
- Historic site
- Recreation site
- CHR** Canadian Heritage River
- HPA** Habitat Protection Area





Scenery along the Nahanni Range Road (YG)

## REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

About five operators guided up to 155 clients in the Watson Lake region each year between 1999 and 2004, almost all on multi-day trips. Multi-day canoe journeys accounted for about half of all guided activity in the region, and the most consistently used rivers were the Liard and the Beaver. Occasionally, operators took clients rafting and kayaking on the Liard River Rapids and in the Coal River Canyon, and on day and multi-day horseback riding, dog mushing and snowmobiling excursions. Except for a couple of local operators, most wilderness tourism businesses offering guided trips in the area were based in Whitehorse.

Most self-guided activities take place along the Alaska Highway corridor and often incorporate wildlife viewing and birdwatching. Popular self-guided activities include sport fishing on road-accessible lakes, streams and rivers, and canoeing on the Upper Liard, Upper Rancheria, Frances, Hyland and Coal rivers. Some hiking trips explore the Cassiar Ranges near Rancheria River, and along the Nahanni Range Road.

## PRODUCTS and FEATURES

The rivers of southeast Yukon offer high-quality remote wilderness valleys, many of which have road access at either end. Most commercial operators favour the Beaver River and the great rapids on the Liard, while self-guided parties value the Upper Rancheria, Frances, Hyland and Coal rivers.

The Nahanni Range Road provides access to multi-day canoe trips on the Hyland River, whitewater day trips on the upper Hyland River, and canoe routes to Nahanni National Park via the Little Nahanni or Flat rivers in the NWT.

**Activities** (Predominant activities are in bold)

	<b>SUMMER</b>	<b>WINTER</b>
<b>DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>sport fishing</b> hiking river rafting kayaking wildlife viewing	snowmobiling
<b>MULTI-DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>canoeing</b> <b>sport fishing</b> horseback riding jet boat tours hiking photo safaris	snowmobiling dog mushing

## Watson Lake Tourism Region

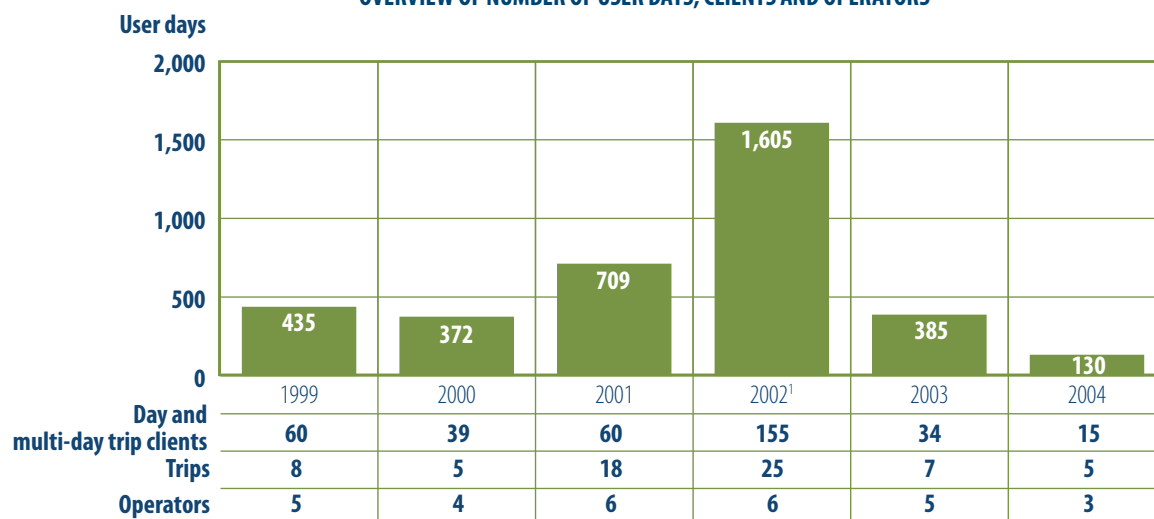
The Beaver River, used by commercial and self-guided parties, traverses the largest roadless watershed in southeast Yukon. Technically easy and suitable for most paddlers, the Beaver is ecologically unique with hot springs, dense forests, and flora and fauna found nowhere else in Yukon.

Below Watson Lake, the Liard River drops through extreme rapids suitable for specialist guided raft and kayak trips. Though little known, these are some of the most spectacular rapids run as a day trip in the north.

The Upper Rancheria River is suitable for entry-level and family groups. The Upper Liard provides an entry-level, mid-length (five- to seven-day) wilderness canoe route that exits at the town of Upper Liard. The Coal, accessed via Pike Lake, offers a spectacular whitewater canyon suitable only for experienced parties. Coal River Springs Territorial Park lies immediately adjacent to Coal River. The springs can be reached by helicopter, or overland from the Sulperito Road.

A commercial sport fishing lodge is located on Stewart Lake. A second lodge on Stewart Lake and two lodges on Toobally Lakes no longer operate commercially. The Watson Lake area is located within a geomagnetic band that stretches across the Northwest Territories to Fairbanks, Alaska that offers superior viewing of the northern lights in winter.

**OVERVIEW OF NUMBER OF USER DAYS, CLIENTS AND OPERATORS**



<sup>1</sup>The peak in 2002 is from a large number of canoe clients in that particular year.

# TESLIN TOURISM REGION

The Teslin Tourism Region features popular road-accessible canoeing rivers, sport fishing and the scenic South Canol Road.

The region is also adjacent to the headwater lakes of the Yukon River. The topography of the region is characteristic of the rolling interior mountains in the central Yukon River Basin, with forested valleys and slopes and small alpine areas. The South Canol Road provides access to high-quality wilderness areas for hiking, horseback riding, dog mushing and snowmobiling.



Teslin Lake (YG)



Nisutlin Bay (YG)

## KEY FEATURES

- Teslin, Nisutlin and Big Salmon rivers
- South Canol Road
- Teslin and Quiet lakes
- Nisutlin and Wolf rivers
- Nisutlin River National Wildlife Area

## POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- hiking
- canoeing
- dog mushing
- sport fishing

## WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 725 to 1,233 user days
- 141 to 232 day and multi-day trip clients
- 4 to 9 operators

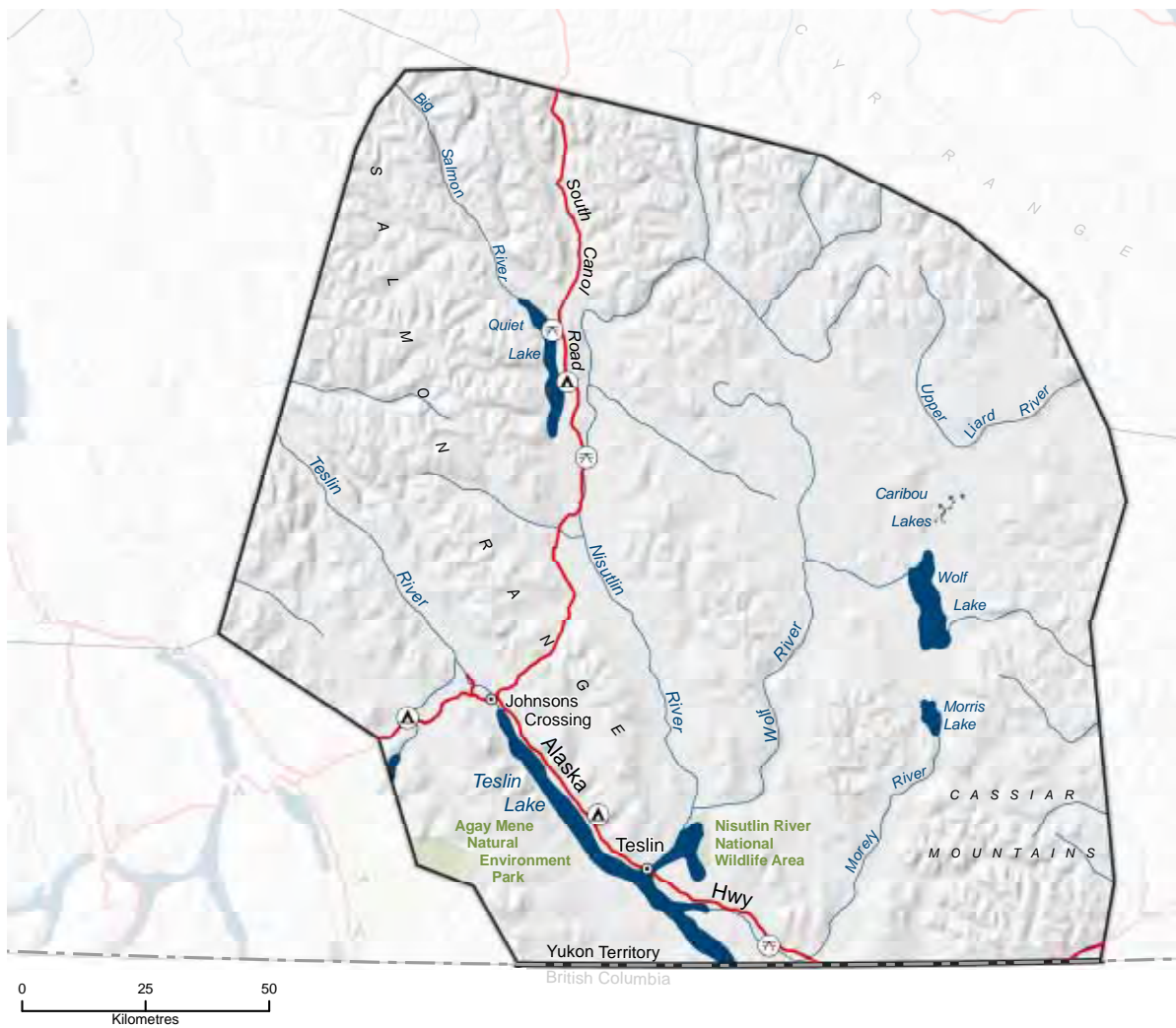
See page 85, Yukon River Watershed, for activity on the Big Salmon and Teslin rivers.

# TESLIN TOURISM REGION MAP



## Legend

- Campground
- Historic site
- Recreation site
- CHR** Canadian Heritage River
- HPA** Habitat Protection Area





## REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Most guided clients in the Teslin area participate in hiking, canoeing and sport fishing day trips. A sport fishing lodge on Wolf Lake offers self-guided multi-day trips. Dog mushing is a popular day and multi-day winter activity. Winter operators lead multi-day dog mushing trips in the Squanga Lake and Michie Creek area, and along the South Canol Road.

Teslin is a popular destination for self-guided canoeing, wildlife viewing and sport fishing on the large lakes in the region. Some accommodations offer outdoor equipment to their guests.

### Activities (Predominant activities are in bold)

	<u>SUMMER</u>	<u>WINTER</u>		<u>SUMMER</u>	<u>WINTER</u>
<b>DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>hiking</b> <b>canoeing</b> sport fishing off-road vehicle tours wildlife viewing	ice fishing snowmobiling dog mushing	<b>MULTI-DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>sport fishing</b> backpacking canoeing hiking	<b>dog mushing</b> snowmobiling

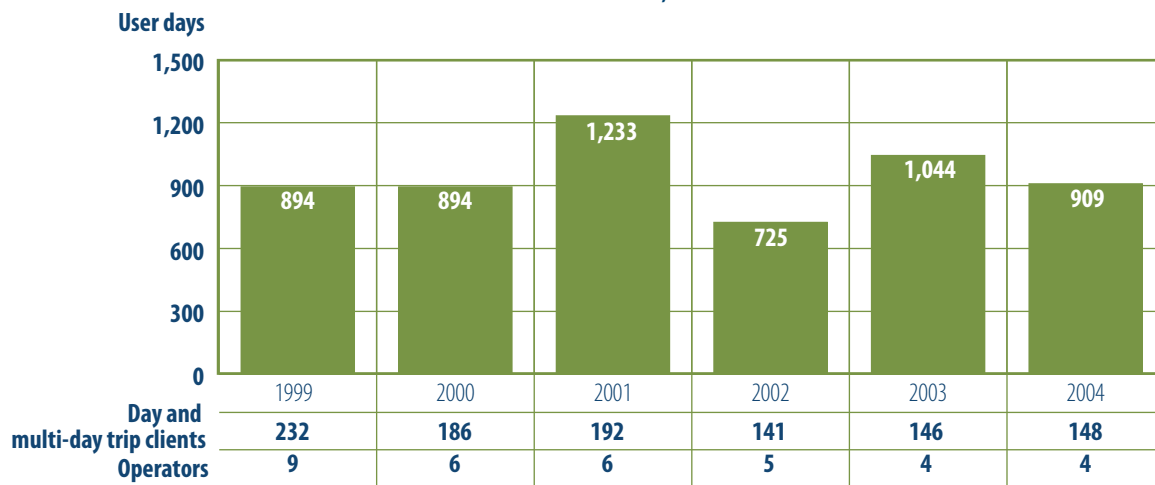
## PRODUCTS AND FEATURES

Popular with wilderness paddlers and boaters, the Teslin and Big Salmon rivers flow north from the Teslin region and connect with the Yukon River. Accessed from the South Canol Road, Big Salmon trips start at Quiet Lake and Nisutlin trips start at the Rose River bridge. The Nisutlin is a well-known entry-level canoe river with fine wildlife viewing and birdwatching, particularly at its outlet into the Nisutlin Delta.

The Wolf River, a tributary of the Nisutlin, is highly regarded as an easy, four- to five-day wilderness whitewater river with a waterfall portage. A fly-in sport fishing lodge is located on Wolf Lake. Nearby Caribou Lakes is the start of a five-day canoe trip down the Upper Liard River to Watson Lake.

The South Canol Highway is a 225-kilometre gravel road that connects the town of Ross River to the Alaska Highway. The South Canol has significant scenic value and historic interest. Most hiking in the region occurs along the South Canol Road and southeast into the Cassiar Mountains, with good access to alpine areas and relatively easy terrain. This area is also used for all-terrain vehicle tours in summer, and in winter the unmaintained Canol Road is an excellent snowmobile and dog mushing route.

OVERVIEW OF NUMBER OF USER DAYS, CLIENTS AND OPERATORS



# SOUTHERN LAKES TOURISM REGION

The Southern Lakes Tourism Region centres on the community of Carcross, about an hour's drive from both Whitehorse and the cruise ship port of Skagway, Alaska.

The region features a network of inland fjords unique to the north, including the Yukon River headwaters in Bennett, Tagish and Marsh lakes. The Klondike Trail of '98, mining artifacts on Montana Mountain, the White Pass and Yukon Railroad, and the legacy of boat transport on the big lakes add romance to a spectacular landscape of mountains and waterways.



Emerald Lake (YG, Derek Crowe)

## KEY FEATURES

- large interconnected lakes
- Carcross Desert
- accessible uplands including Montana Mountain
- Ibex Valley
- Tutshi and Wheaton rivers
- Chilkoot Trail and beginning of water route to the Klondike
- White Pass
- White Pass and Yukon Railroad

## POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- photo safaris
- horseback riding
- canoeing
- dog mushing
- wildlife viewing
- snowmobiling
- sport fishing
- hiking
- off-road vehicle riding
- motor boating

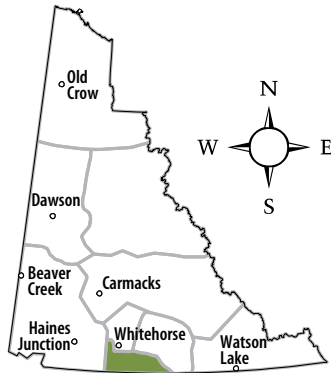
## WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 406 to 9,208 user days
- 232 to 8,951 day trip clients
- 3 to 219 multi-day trip clients
- 7 to 12 operators



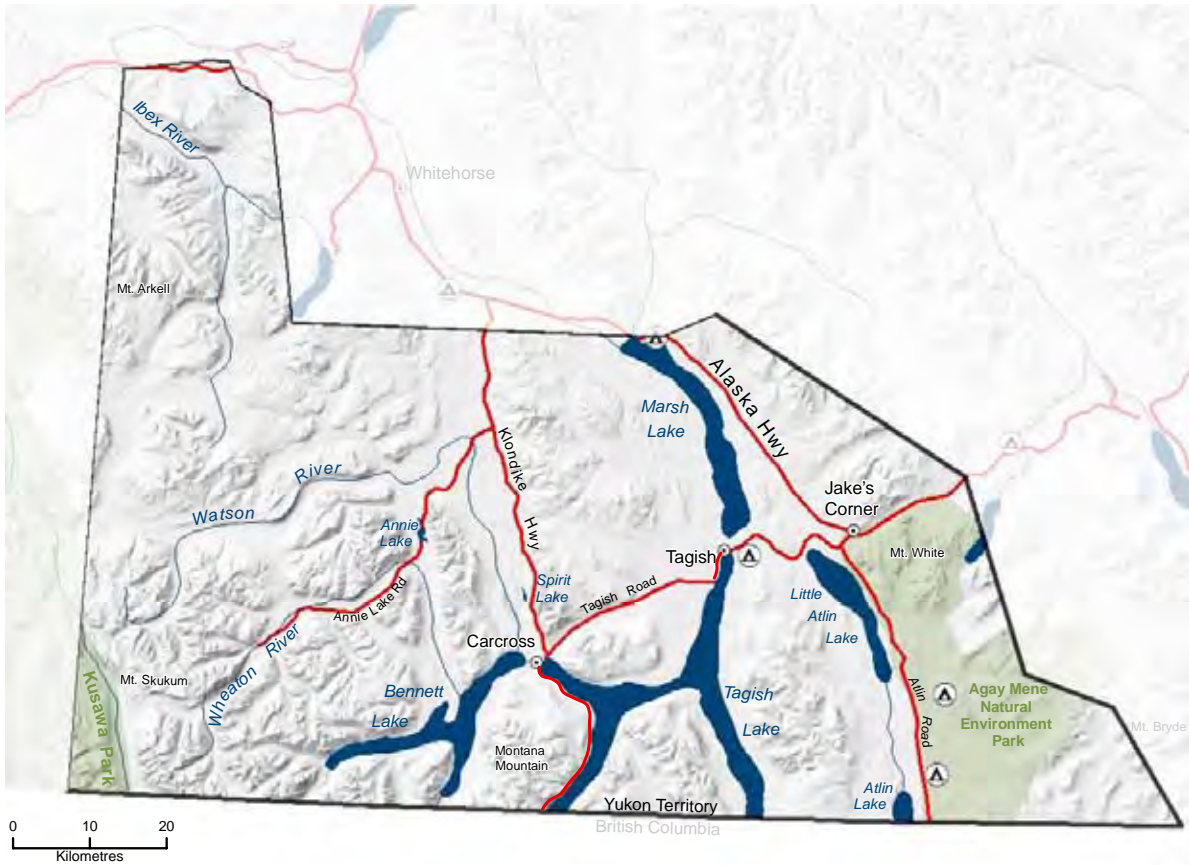
Carcross Dessert  
(YG, Derek Crowe)

# SOUTHERN LAKES TOURISM REGION MAP



## Legend

-  Campground
-  Historic site
-  Recreation site
- CHR** Canadian Heritage River
- HPA** Habitat Protection Area





Marsh Lake (YG)

## REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Between seven and 12 operators guided day and multi-day trips in the Southern Lakes region each year from 1999 to 2004. Most operators were local, and the majority of clients were day trippers from Skagway cruise ships participating in photo safaris, horseback riding and canoeing. The steep increase in guided day trip clients between 2002 and 2004 was mainly due to the growing numbers of cruise ship clientele.

Guided non-cruise ship visitors to the Southern Lakes participated in snowmobiling, fishing, hiking, all-terrain vehicle and motor boat tours. Other guided excursions included photography, dog mushing and northern lights viewing. Most wilderness tourism activity in the region occurred close to Carcross.

The Southern Lakes is a popular destination for self-guided travellers. Canoeing, boating, fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing and mountain biking are popular self-guided activities in the area. Several lodges offer guided or self-guided activities, and some rent or provide equipment to their guests.

## PRODUCTS and FEATURES

Visitors enjoy a wide range of guided and self-guided wilderness adventure activities in the Southern Lakes. Old mining roads and trails offer routes into alpine uplands for hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, skiing, snowmobiling and all-terrain vehicle tours. Montana Mountain and the Carcross Desert are also paragliding destinations. The large lakes provide dramatic backdrops to many mountain views in the area.

Important upland areas include White Pass, Montana and Nares mountains, Mount Lorne, Mount White and the Wheaton highlands. Above Carcross, Montana Mountain is a major asset for day tours. The mountain's

### Activities (Predominant activities are in bold)

	SUMMER	WINTER
<b>DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>photo safaris</b>	cross-country skiing
	<b>horseback riding</b>	backcountry skiing
	<b>canoeing</b>	snowmobiling
	<b>off-road vehicle tours</b>	dog mushing
	hiking	
	rafting (Tutshi River, B.C.)	
	kayaking	
	mountain biking	
	boating	
	sport fishing	
	paragliding	
wildlife viewing		
<b>MULTI-DAY TRIPS</b>	backpacking	<b>dog mushing</b>
	sport fishing	
	canoeing	
	photo safaris	

## Southern Lakes Tourism Region

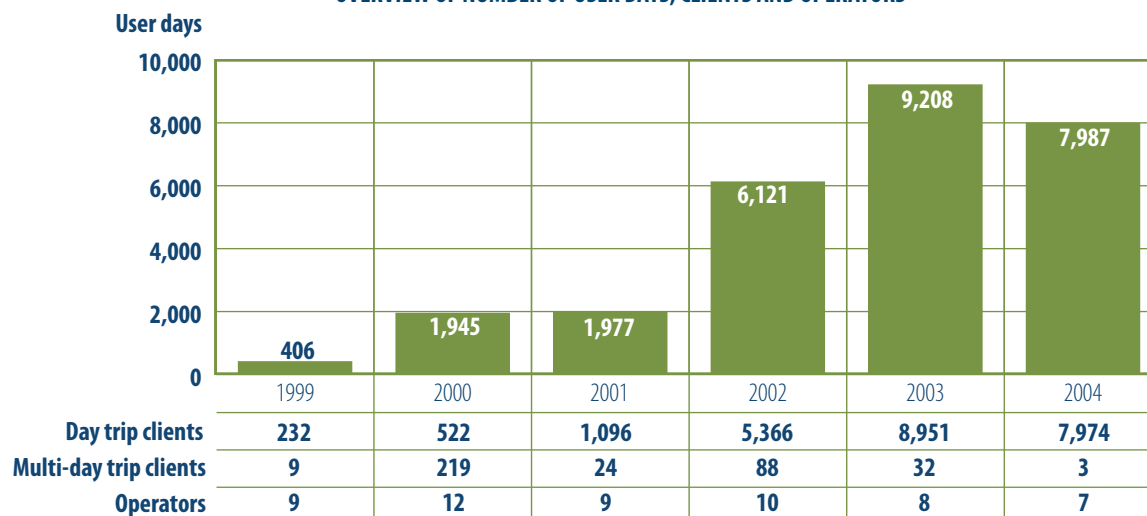
mining history is evident in abandoned stone buildings, mine works and wooden tramways that provide glimpses of life in the early 1900s. A well-graded road and spur trails give convenient access to alpine ridges with spectacular vistas.

In the northwest part of the region, the Ibex Valley (Scout Lake) Road enters a mountain valley popular for fishing, mountain biking, hiking, rock climbing and dog mushing tours.

Whitewater paddlers raft and kayak the difficult Tutshi River and canoe the pretty and enjoyable Wheaton River. The Watson River and many lakes in the area are used by flatwater canoeists and boaters. Although most parties travelling the Yukon River to Dawson City begin in Whitehorse, the Southern Lakes offer several starting points at Bennett, Carcross, Tagish, Marsh or Atlin lakes.

The same areas and trails are popular for winter and summer activities. Operators offer guided day and multi-day dog mushing and snowmobiling trips. Skiing, snowboarding and snowmobiling are popular with both visitors and residents, especially in the White Pass and the Wheaton River Valley

**OVERVIEW OF NUMBER OF USER DAYS, CLIENTS AND OPERATORS**



<sup>†</sup>The steep increase in guided day trip clients since 2000 is mainly due to growing numbers of cruise ship clientele coming from Skagway.

# WHITEHORSE TOURISM REGION

As a gateway city, Whitehorse is a rallying point for most wilderness tourism visitors to Yukon.

The Whitehorse Tourism Region includes the City of Whitehorse, Fish Lake to the southwest, and Takhini River valley, Lake Laberge and the Old Dawson trail to Braeburn to the north. (The Ibex Valley, Marsh Lake and the South Klondike Highway are included in the Southern Lakes Tourism Region.)

Whitehorse is the staging, starting or finishing point for most wilderness trips in Yukon, and most Yukon-resident operators and rental companies are based in the city.



Takhini River (YG)

## KEY FEATURES

- Yukon River
- Lake Laberge
- Miles Canyon
- Old Dawson Road (now Trans Canada Trail and Yukon Quest route)
- Thirty Mile River, a Canadian Heritage River
- Hootalinqua Historic Site
- multi-use trails

## POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- motorboat tours
- horseback riding
- canoeing
- hiking and skiing
- sport fishing
- mountain biking

## WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 2,241 to 3,552 user days
- 1,822 to 3,194 day trip clients
- 91 to 137 multi-day trip clients
- 10 to 12 operators

See page 85, Yukon River Watershed, for data on Yukon River activity.



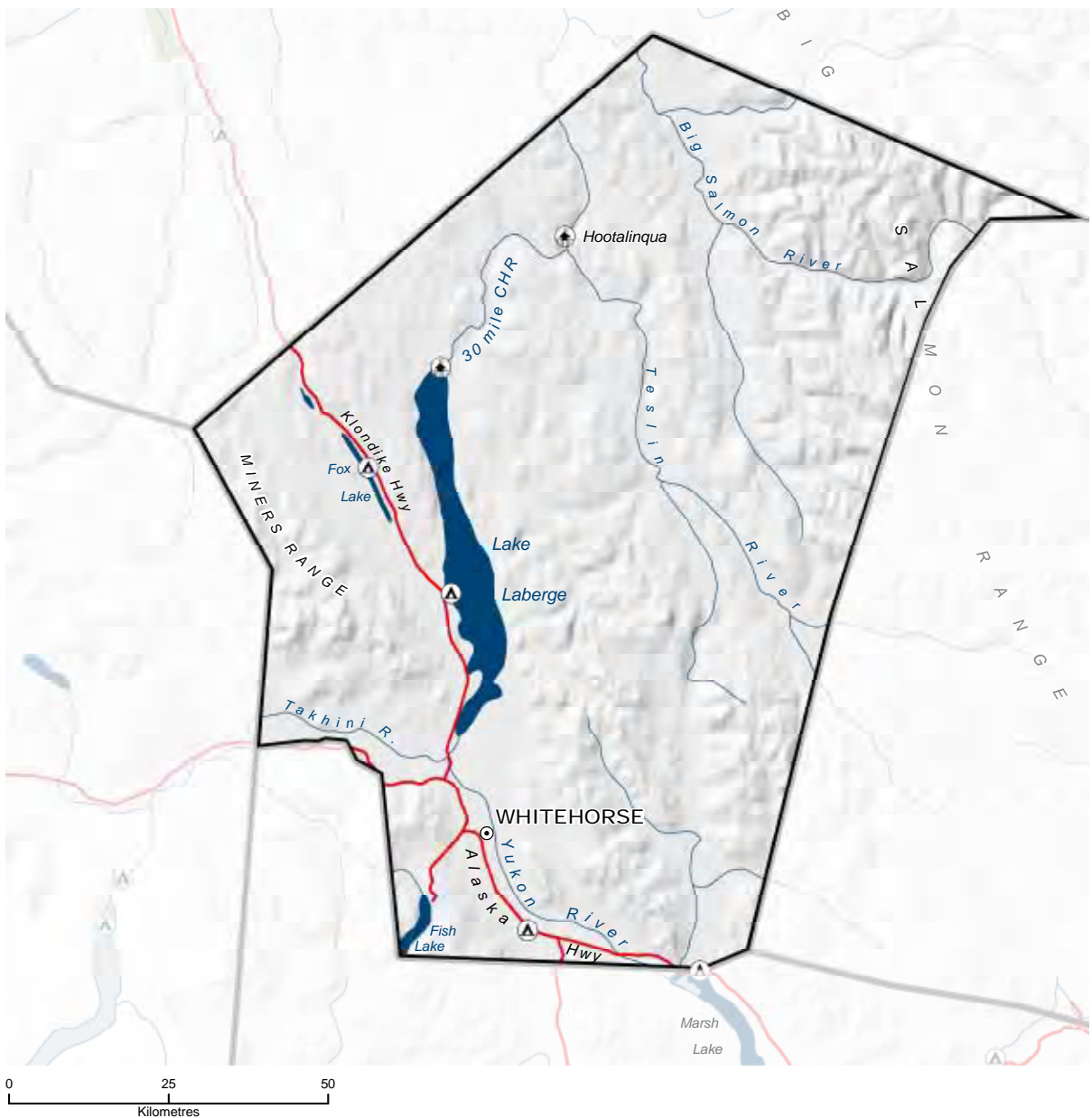
Dalton Trail (YG, Derek Crowe)

# WHITEHORSE TOURISM REGION MAP



## Legend

- Campground
- Historic site
- Recreation site
- CHR** Canadian Heritage River
- HPA** Habitat Protection Area





Lake Laberge (YG, Joseph Bradley)

## REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Between 1999 and 2004, 10 to 12 operators guided up to 3,200 day trip clients and 135 multi-day trip clients in the Whitehorse region each year. Up to four operators guided an additional 4,000 to 6,000 clients per year on motorboat trips, mostly day trips on the Yukon River. Most multi-day Yukon River trips started from the Whitehorse area and accounted for approximately 300 guided clients and 1,500 self-guided tourists a year. (See also page 85, Yukon River Watershed, for Yukon River data.)

### Activities (Predominant activities are in bold)

	<u>SUMMER</u>	<u>WINTER</u>		<u>SUMMER</u>	<u>WINTER</u>
<b>DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>horseback riding</b>	<b>dog mushing</b>	<b>MULTI-DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>canoeing</b>	dog mushing
	<b>canoeing</b>	snowmobiling		horseback riding	snowmobiling
	<b>hiking</b>	northern lights viewing		backpacking	
	<b>motor boat tours</b>	cross-country skiing		off-road vehicle tours	
	sport fishing			sport fishing	
	rock climbing				
	boating				
	wildlife viewing				
	mountain biking				
	kayaking				
off-road vehicle riding					

## Whitehorse Tourism Region

Popular guided activities in the Whitehorse area include Yukon River boat tours, horseback riding and dog mushing. Guided canoeing and hiking are moderately popular, while guided sport fishing, mountain biking, kayaking, all-terrain vehicle riding and rock climbing attract fewer clients.

Self-guided activities around Whitehorse include hiking, canoeing, skiing, biking, fishing and wildlife viewing. Many trails access wilderness areas in this region, and locally produced guidebooks and maps support self-guided activities. Guided nature hikes are offered by a local conservation group.

Several road-accessible, year-round facilities offer accommodations and guided and self-guided wilderness tourism activities, while some bed and breakfasts rent or offer outdoor equipment to clients. Most Yukon equipment rentals are located in Whitehorse, where approximately six companies offer canoes, boats, bikes, camping equipment and transport.

Whitehorse operators cater to a range of clientele including Alaska Highway travellers, visitors looking for day products before or after wilderness trips, people here for special events and conventions, and fly-drive clients who fly to Whitehorse and rent vehicles to tour the territory. Since so many visitors overnight in the Whitehorse area, operators can offer a variety of day trips ranging from easy to adventurous.

Whitehorse-area operators offering multi-day tours typically offer packages no longer than one week, which is shorter than many commercial wilderness expeditions elsewhere in Yukon. Multi-day tour operators based in Whitehorse have a logistical advantage of being closer to supply and support services and the airport.



Miles Canyon (YG)

## PRODUCTS and FEATURES

Motor boat tours are the most popular wilderness and outdoor activity in the Whitehorse area, where the highly visible S.S. Klondike lures many visitors to the Yukon River. The scenic appeal and historical interest in Whitehorse's role in the transportation system between Skagway and Dawson is an important draw. Boat and canoe tours can choose from many access and exit points between the Lewes River Bridge at Marsh Lake and Deep Creek on Lake Laberge.

Lake Laberge is also popular for its superb scenery and historical associations. The lake is accessible from the Yukon River and from shore sites at Shallow Bay, Jackfish Bay and Deep Creek Campground. Below the lake, the Thirty Mile stretch of the Yukon River, designated a Canadian Heritage River, is notable for its steamboat-era historic sites and artifacts. Overnight tours from Deep Creek sometimes aim for Hootalinqua shipyard at the junction of the Thirty Mile and Teslin rivers. Wilderness cabins, boat and canoe tour operators, and a Yukon campground are located around Lake Laberge, and commercially guided and self-guided canoe and boat parties cross the lake, en route to Dawson City.

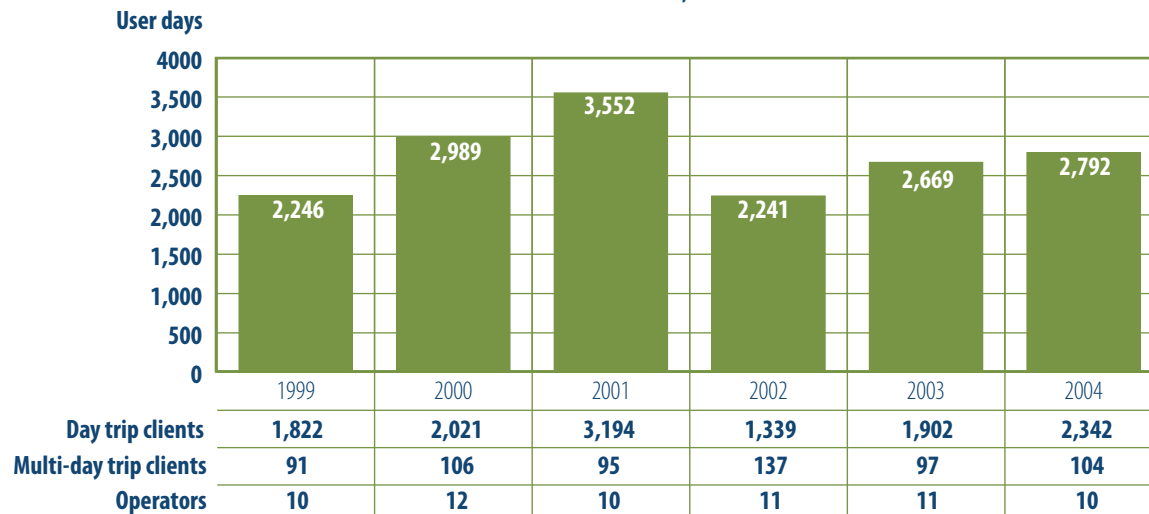
The mountains around Whitehorse are easily accessible to guided and self-guided visitors. Hiking trails and horse trails reach many prominent peaks, and rough roads access scenic alpine overlooks on Grey Mountain, Mt. McIntyre and Haeckel Hill. The Fish Lake Road accesses a large, scenic sub-alpine lake and a network of trails for hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, dog mushing, skiing and snowmobiling.

Trail systems near the Takhini River and hot springs are used by guided horse groups and self-guided visitors based at the hot springs campground. Rock climbers enjoy granite canyons ten kilometres to the west. Nearby, the Trans Canada Trail heads north to Braeburn along the old Dawson Trail, a route that is becoming increasingly important for guided dogsled groups in the winter and parties on horseback in the summer.

Wintertime tourists and convention visitors seek out guided dog mushing day tours or multi-day trips around Fish Lake and along the Dawson Trail. Northern lights viewing is often packaged with other guided winter activities.



**OVERVIEW OF NUMBER OF USER DAYS, CLIENTS AND OPERATORS**



See also page 85, Yukon River Watershed, for Yukon River data.

**DAY TRIPS BY MOTORBOAT TOUR CLIENTS, WHITEHORSE REGION**



<sup>1</sup>In 2002 there were fewer than 3 operators, so data cannot be presented.

# KLUANE TOURISM REGION

The Kluane Tourism Region is characterized by scenic vistas of broad, lush valleys, large lakes, mountain ranges, icefields and Mount Logan, Canada's highest peak.

A key destination for front-country hiking, wilderness backpacking and mountaineering, Kluane National Park and Reserve in the southwest corner of Yukon is the centrepiece of the Kluane Tourism Region.

Visitors to this region pursue a range of wilderness tourism activities made possible by the wide variety of features and landscapes.



Alsek River (YG)

## KEY FEATURES

- Kluane National Park and Reserve (largest non-polar ice cap in the world)
- Mount Logan (Canada's highest peak)
- wildlife at Sheep Mountain
- Kusawa Territorial Park
- Kusawa Lake
- Kluane Lake
- Tatshenshini and Alsek Canadian Heritage Rivers
- historic trails
- hiking trails and road access to scenic wilderness areas

## POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- horseback riding
- canoeing
- river rafting
- hiking
- sport fishing
- mountain biking
- snowmobiling
- dog mushing
- wildlife viewing

## WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

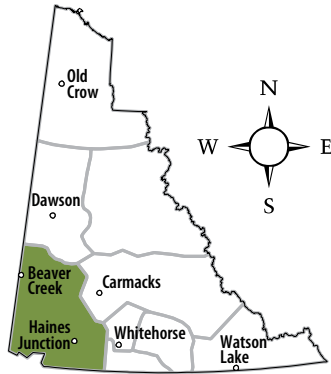
- 3,375 to 5,354 user days
- 1,345 to 2,233 day trip clients
- 219 to 461 multi-day trip clients
- 15 to 25 operators

See page 60, Kluane National Park, for park information.



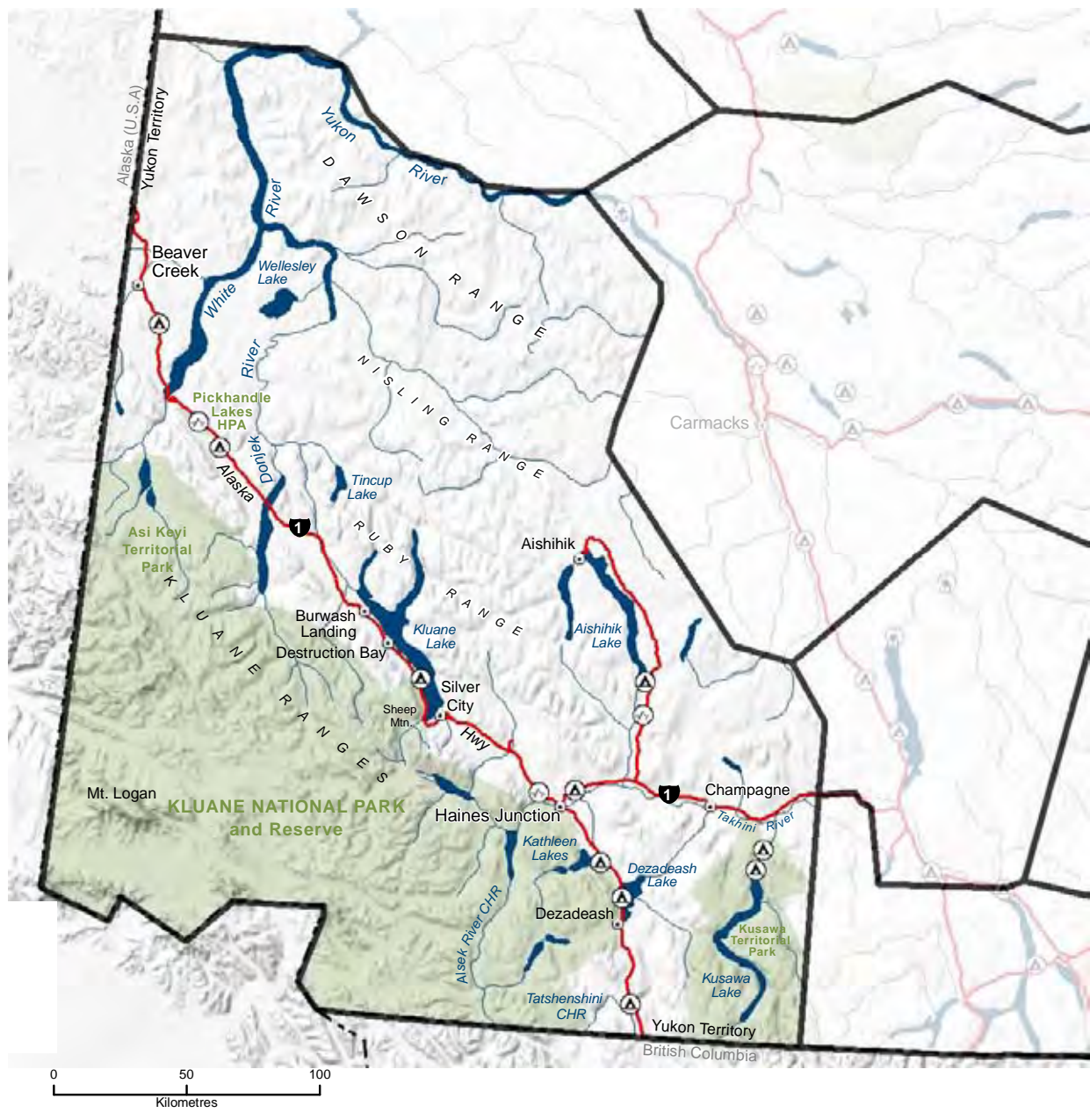
Kluane (YG)

# KLUANE TOURISM REGION MAP



## Legend

- Campground
- Historic site
- Recreation site
- CHR** Canadian Heritage River
- HPA** Habitat Protection Area





Tatshenshini (YG, Cathie Archbould)

## REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Between 15 and 25 operators guided trips in the Kluane Tourism Region (excluding Kluane National Park) each year from 1999 to 2004, four of whom ran winter trips. About seven operators were local, seven were Yukon-based and the rest came from outside of the territory. In 2004, the region hosted over 200 multi-day trip clients and 2,000 day trip clients for a total of 3,827 user days.

Most guided clients took part in canoeing, dog mushing, horseback riding, river rafting, First Nation interpretive tours and sport fishing, as well as photo safaris. Self-guided activities outside the national park included hiking, fishing, boating, canoeing and wildlife viewing.

## PRODUCTS and FEATURES

Kluane National Park, the region’s iconic tourism feature, is described in detail in the Kluane National Park and Reserve sub-region.

### Activities (Predominant activities are in bold)

	SUMMER	WINTER
<b>DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>hiking</b> <b>horseback riding</b> <b>boating</b> <b>sport fishing</b> <b>river rafting</b> First Nation interpretive tours wildlife viewing	<b>dog mushing</b> snowmobiling flightseeing
<b>MULTI-DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>hiking</b> <b>canoeing</b> <b>rafting</b> <b>horseback riding</b> <b>sport fishing</b> heli-hiking photo safaris off-road vehicle tours icefield and glacier tours mountain biking mountaineering wildlife viewing	<b>dog mushing</b> snowshoeing photo safaris skiing ice fishing northern lights viewing wildlife viewing snowmobiling

## Kluane Tourism Region

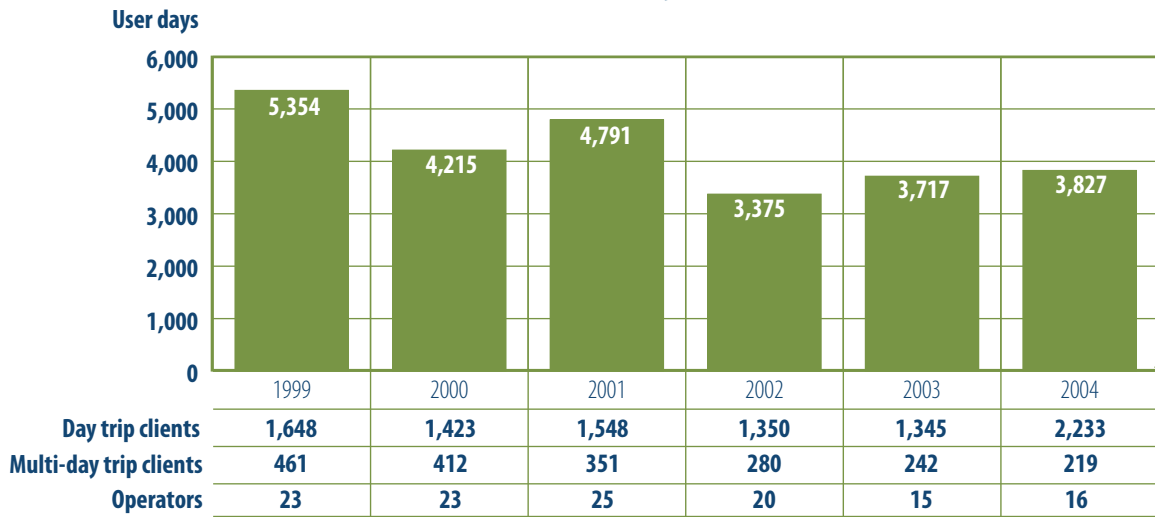
Less than an hour from Whitehorse, the Takhini River and Kusawa Lake are also important recreation and tourism assets. Served by a popular government campground with a boat ramp, this long narrow lake penetrates into the scenic Coast Ranges; the river is popular with anglers and canoeists. To the west, the Dezadeash River is a scenic and easy three-day wilderness canoe trip from the Haines Road to the village of Champagne on the Alaska Highway.

North of the Alaska Highway, Aishihik and Sekulmun lakes offer boating, fishing and hiking opportunities. The Nisling River, accessed through Stevens Lake, is a very long, remote wilderness canoe trip rich in wildlife. The region's other rivers—Kluane, Donjek and White—are glacier-fed rivers with gravel braids and swift currents that offer canoeists remoteness and wildlife viewing en route to Dawson City.

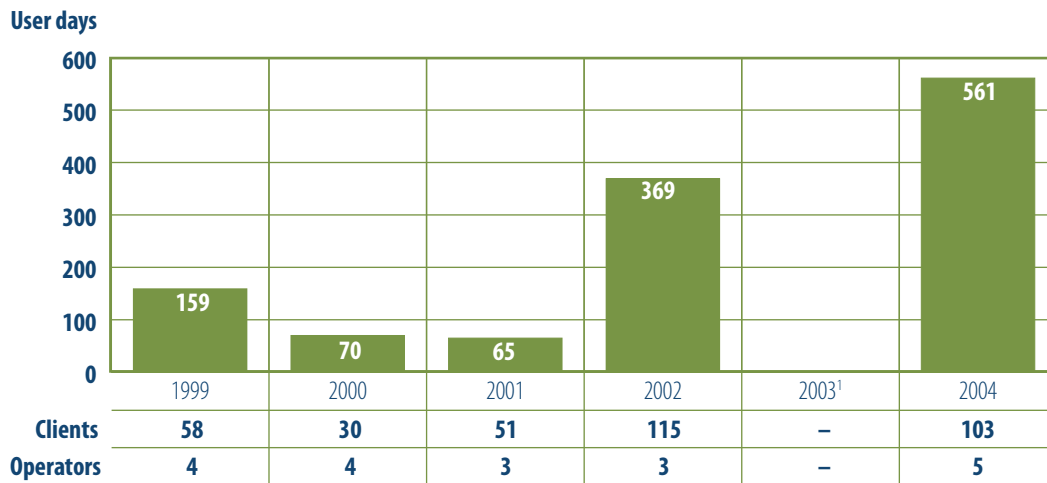
The Kluane region has excellent infrastructure for guided and self-guided activities like hiking. Well-maintained trails in Kluane National Park include interpretive signage, and most road-accessible lakes have boat ramps. The park also maintains groomed ski trails that complement the network of snowmobile trails outside the park. Established lodges on Tincup and Kluane lakes and fishing lodges on Wellesley and Dezadeash lakes support wilderness activities in accessible and remote parts of the region.



**OVERVIEW OF NUMBER OF USER DAYS, CLIENTS AND OPERATORS**



**TAKHINI RIVER GUIDED CANOEING**



<sup>1</sup>In 2003, there were fewer than 3 operators so data cannot be presented.

## Kluane National Park and Reserve Sub-region

Kluane National Park and Reserve is a world-class destination that attracts visitors for accessible and remote wilderness tourism activities. Kluane is known for beautiful glacial landscapes, abundant wildlife and iconic adventures like backpacking, mountaineering and Alsek River rafting. Kluane National Park, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park (AK), Glacier Bay National Park (AK), and Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park (B.C.) together form the largest protected landscape in the world. Kluane National Park is a living laboratory for co-management, where Parks Canada collaborates with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation and Kluane First Nation as stewards of this national treasure.

### KEY FEATURES

- spectacular mountain scenery
- significant wildlife populations
- St. Elias icefields and glaciers
- Alsek Canadian Heritage River (Yukon portion)
- Mount Logan (Canada's highest mountain peak)
- Tachal Dhal (Sheep Mountain) Interpretive Centre

### POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- hiking
- backpacking
- river rafting
- wildlife viewing
- sport fishing

### KLUANE NATIONAL PARK AND RESERVE DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 2,895 to 4,379 total user days
- 768 to 1,511 day trip clients
- 12 to 21 day trip operators
- 195 to 466 multi-day clients
- 16 to 22 multi-day trip operators



### REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Between 31 and 37 wilderness tourism operators guided day and multi-day trips in Kluane National Park each year from 1999 to 2004. About five operators were local, half were Yukon-based, and the rest were from outside the territory. Most operators offered either day or multi-day trips, but rarely both.

In 2004, 21 operators guided 1,210 day-trip clients, most of whom (over 90%) took part in guided interpretive hikes on front country trails. Other guided day trips included fishing, horseback riding and a unique opportunity to visit a remote camp located in the icefields.

Sixteen operators guided 195 multi-day trip clients totalling 1,327 user days in 2004. The most popular multi-day activity was hiking, followed by rafting trips on the Alsek River, as well as fishing, mountaineering and horseback trips. About seven operators guided three- to 14-day trips down the Alsek each year. Other popular

**Activities** (Predominant activities are in bold)

	SUMMER	WINTER		SUMMER	WINTER
<b>DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>hiking</b>	skiing	<b>MULTI-DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>rafting</b>	
	wildlife viewing	dog mushing		<b>hiking</b>	
	fishing			wildlife viewing	
	boating			fishing	
				mountaineering	
				horseback riding	

multi-day destinations were Slims River Valley, St. Elias icefields and Cottonwood Trail. Several aircraft operators transported mountaineers, skiers and river rafters to or from the park.

An estimated 2,000 to 3,000 self-guided visitors took day trips each year. While most were day hikes on park trails, other popular activities included fishing, wildlife viewing and boating. Self-guided multi-day visitors went backpacking, river rafting, ski touring and mountaineering in the park and camped overnight away from roads.

**PRODUCTS AND FEATURES**

Kluane National Park features an immense core of icefields surrounded by high mountains, alpine tundra and lush valleys that support a wide array of plant and wildlife. The park is home to significant populations of Dall sheep, woodland caribou, moose, wolves, mountain goats and the largest stable population of grizzly bears in Canada. At least 150 species of birds have been seen in the park and 118 species nest there.

Well-maintained hiking trails, interpretive signage, opportunities to view wildlife, two interpretive centres, a Parks Canada campground and day-use facility at Kathleen Lake, and private campgrounds support a variety of park day use activities. About 3,800 visitors camp at Kathleen Lake each year, and most venture further into the park.



Kluane National Park (YG, Wayne Towriss)

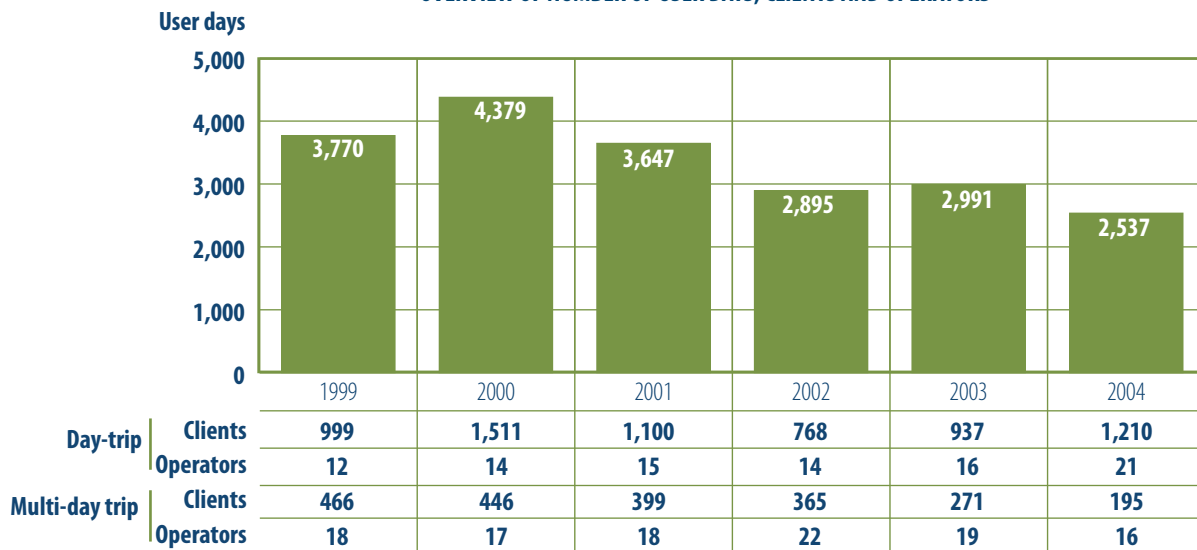
## Kluane Tourism Region: Kluane National Park and Reserve Sub-region

Visitors travelling to more remote areas of the park enjoy spectacular and varied scenery, excellent wildlife viewing and world-class rafting on the Alsek River. The Dezadeash-Alsek River valleys offer several wilderness experiences and features not accessible elsewhere in the park. At the park's north end, the Duke and Donjek river valleys support high-quality, rugged wilderness hiking experiences for guided and self-guided visitors.

Beginning in 2003, Parks Canada offered guided hikes for bus tour clients. In 2004, Parks Canada guides escorted about 1,200 clients on interpretive programs on King's Throne, St. Elias, Alsek and Rock Glacier trails and hosted a campfire talk and stroll at Kathleen Lake.

*Note: Kluane National Park and Reserve data was provided by Parks Canada. Each year, between 1999 and 2004, 30 to 37 operators conducted trips in the park. About 20 of these operators conducted trips in Kluane National Park and elsewhere in Yukon. These operators required both a Yukon Wilderness Tourism License and a park business license. Client number and user day data in this sub-region are specific to the park and are not duplicated in WTLA data.*

**OVERVIEW OF NUMBER OF USER DAYS, CLIENTS AND OPERATORS**



# CAMPBELL TOURISM REGION

The Campbell Region stretches across central Yukon from the mountainous Northwest Territories border in the east to the Yukon River in the west.

The region offers remote and scenic roads for highway travellers, and access to lakes, rivers and trails for the more adventurous. Wilderness tourism activities include fishing and wilderness lodges, river trips, hiking and wildlife viewing of migrating birds and unusual Fannin's sheep.



Near Faro (YG)



Faro (YG, Stephen Krasemann)

## KEY FEATURES

- Mount Mye Sheep Centre
- bird migration
- Frances Lake
- remote and road-accessible lakes
- wilderness and whitewater rivers
- North and South Canol roads
- Dena Cho Trail
- Macmillan Pass and Itsi Range
- Yukon River
- Pelly River
- Fort Selkirk
- Five Finger Rapids

## POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

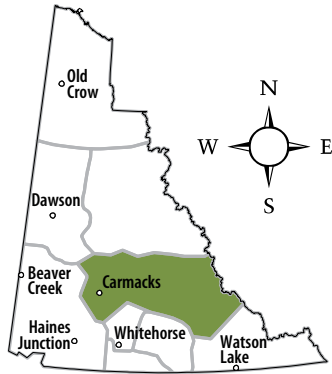
- hiking
- canoeing
- sport fishing
- wildlife viewing

## WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 1,621 to 6,159 user days
- 211 to 774 day and multi-day trip clients
- 8 to 14 operators

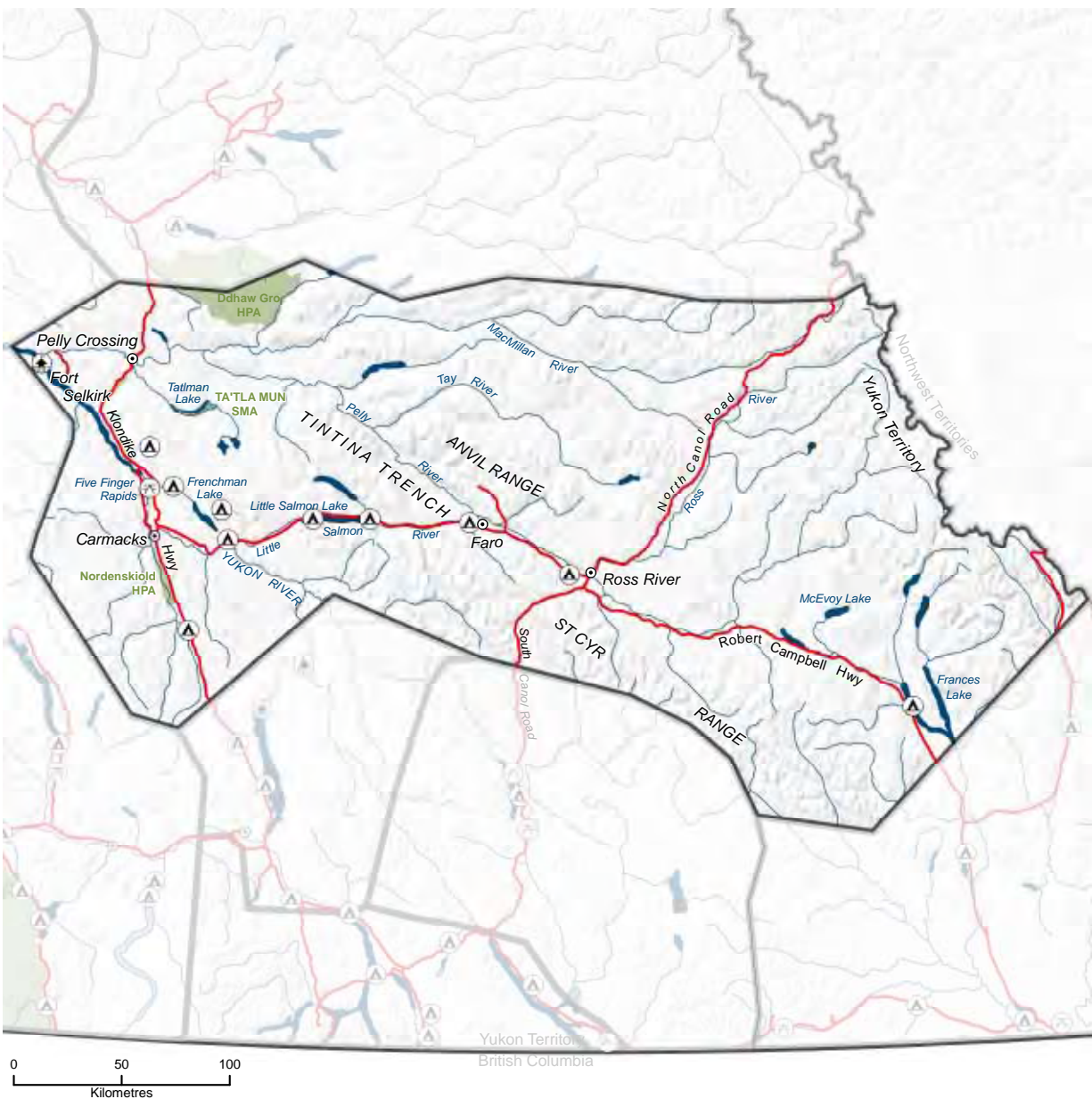
See page 85, Yukon River Watershed, for data on Yukon River activity.

# CAMPBELL TOURISM REGION MAP



## Legend

- Campground
- Historic site
- Recreation site
- CHR** Canadian Heritage River
- HPA** Habitat Protection Area





## REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Between eight and 14 operators guided between 211 and 774 clients each summer in the Campbell region from 1999 to 2004. Several local operators as well as Whitehorse-based businesses offer guided trips in the region. Over 95 per cent of clients were on multi-day trips that averaged between seven and 15 days.

### Activities (Predominant activities are in bold)

	SUMMER	WINTER		SUMMER	WINTER
<b>DAY TRIPS</b>	boating <b>fishing</b> <b>hiking</b> mountain biking wildlife viewing		<b>MULTI-DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>canoeing</b> <b>backpacking</b> mountaineering heli-hiking botanical tours horseback riding kayaking off-road vehicle tours photo safaris sport fishing (lodges)	dog mushing northern lights viewing skiing snowshoeing

## Campbell Tourism Region

Popular guided activities include hiking, canoeing and sport fishing and occasionally horseback riding, motoboat tours, dog mushing and photography. Visitors come to wilderness lodges in the Campbell region for guided sport fishing, canoeing and alpine hiking excursions, and operators run guided canoe trips on the region's wild rivers.

Self-guided activities are similar but include more adventurous pursuits like mountaineering in the Itsi Range—home to Yukon's most northerly mountain goat population—and whitewater paddling on the Lapie River. Several regional businesses rent outdoor equipment.

### PRODUCTS and FEATURES

Canoeing is the main wilderness tourism activity in the Campbell region. Several rivers offer lengthy wilderness journeys with road access at both ends, rewarding wildlife viewing, moderate whitewater and fine scenery. These important attributes guide commercial companies in selecting and developing products because these rivers are economical to operate on, are not too difficult, appeal to a wide range of clients and offer high-quality experiences.

Canoe expeditions operate on remote rivers flowing from the mountainous NWT border, including the South Macmillan, Ross, Pelly and Yusezyu rivers. The Lapie River is valued for its exciting whitewater day trips. Journeys on the Yukon River include both day tours through Five Finger Rapids to Fort Selkirk, and multi-day trips to Dawson City. Local operators offer motoboat trips on the Yukon and Pelly rivers. These usually include a visit to Fort Selkirk. Wilderness lodges are located on Frances and McEvoy lakes in the east and Mandanna and Coghlan lakes south of Carmacks.



Pelly River (YG)

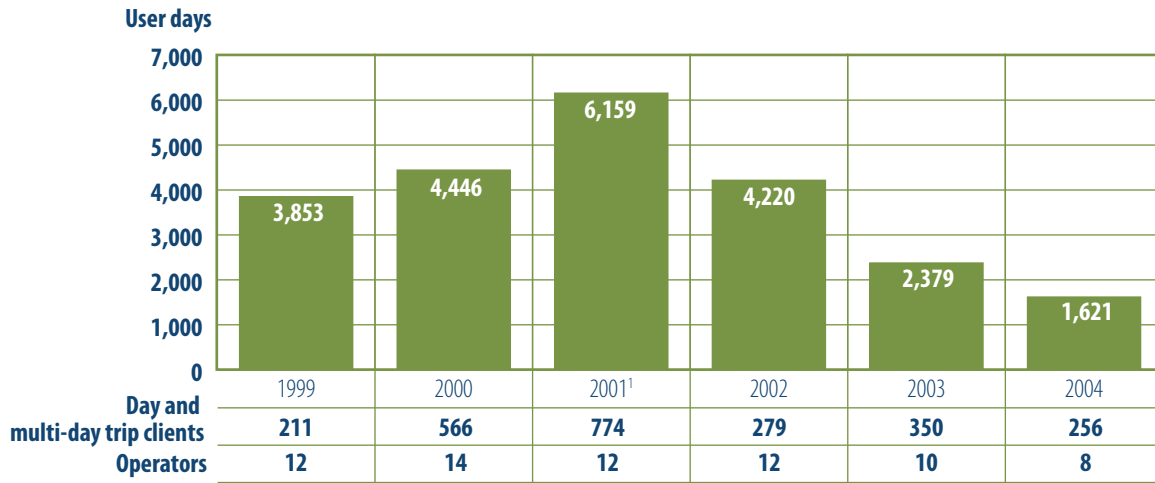


The rugged, scenic North and South Canol roads provide access to appealing alpine terrain for hiking. These highways are gateways to the backcountry for both day activities and longer wilderness expeditions. Most communities maintain local trails like the gemstone trails near Carmacks, wildlife viewing trails near Faro, and the longer Dena Cho Trail, a historic 65-kilometre route between Faro and Ross River.

The region has a number of unique and viewable wildlife features including Fannin's sheep on Mount Mye near Faro, chinook salmon in Blind Creek in August and impressive spring and fall bird migrations along the Tintina Trench. The Mount Mye Sheep Centre, the Faro Arboretum and local interpretive trails and displays enhance wildlife viewing opportunities in the Faro area.

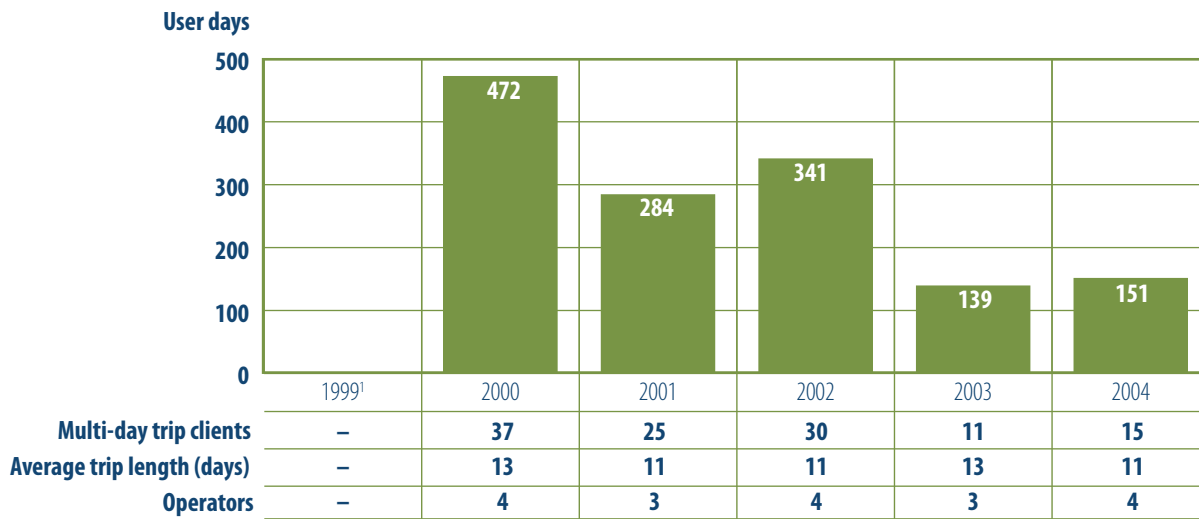
Several large road-accessible lakes, like Frenchman, Little Salmon, Finlayson, Dragon and Frances, are enjoyed by tourists for boating, fishing and camping. Special features in the Campbell region include scenic Lapie Canyon and historic sites at Five Finger Rapids and Fort Selkirk.

**OVERVIEW OF NUMBER OF USER DAYS, CLIENTS AND OPERATORS**



<sup>1</sup>The peak in 2001 was a result of one operator guiding a large number of hiking clients in that year only.  
See also page 85, Yukon River Watershed, for Yukon River activity.

**PELLY RIVER GUIDED CANOEING**



<sup>1</sup>In 1999, there were fewer than 3 operators so data cannot be presented.

# SILVER TRAIL TOURISM REGION

For this report, the Silver Trail Tourism Region is divided into two sub-regions: Mayo-Keno-Elsa & Peel Watershed.

The Mayo-Keno-Elsa Sub-region includes three “communities with character” that are linked by the historic Silver Trail Highway: Mayo, Keno and Elsa. The surrounding area features trails and rough roads and supports a variety of soft adventure opportunities accessible from the highway. Information and data for this area is presented in the Mayo-Keno-Elsa Sub-region.

To the north, the Peel Watershed Sub-region (including the Ogilvie, Blackstone, Hart, Wind, Bonnet Plume and Snake rivers) is Yukon’s largest mostly undisturbed remote wilderness area. It is recognized as a world-class wilderness canoeing and ridge hiking destination. Information and data for this area is presented in the Peel Watershed Sub-region.



Falcon at the Bonnet Plume (YG, Jannick Schoe)

## KEY FEATURES

- Peel River Basin (one of Yukon’s largest intact wilderness watersheds)
- Snake-Wind-Peel river system
- Bonnet Plume Canadian Heritage River
- remote and road-accessible rivers
- historic mining district with good road access
- hiking trails

## POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- canoeing
- hiking
- horseback riding
- sport fishing
- photo safaris
- mountain biking
- dog mushing

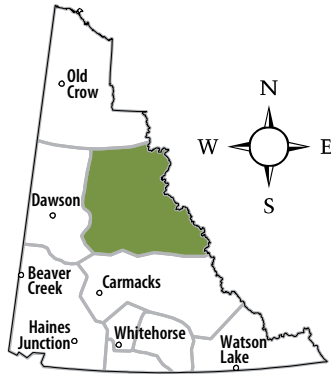
## WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 984 to 2,265 user days
- 80 to 190 day trip and/or multi-day trip clients
- 10 to 15 operators



Snake River (YG, Peter Mather)

# SILVER TRAIL TOURISM REGION MAP



## Legend

- Campground
- Historic site
- Recreation site
- CHR** Canadian Heritage River
- HPA** Habitat Protection Area





Keno Hill (YG)

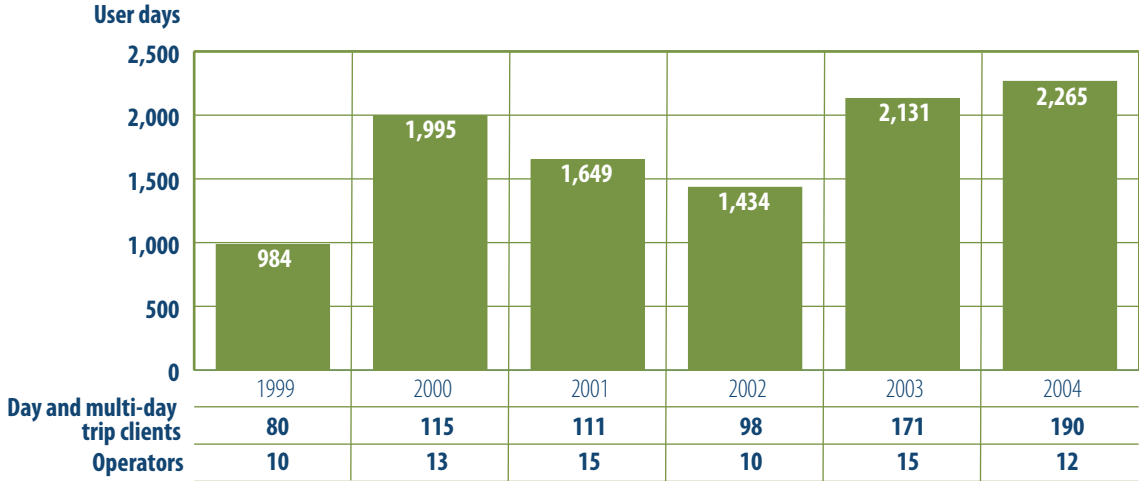
**REGIONAL SNAPSHOT**

Guided clients were almost exclusively engaged in multi-day trips.

**Activities** (Predominant activities are in bold)

	<u>SUMMER</u>	<u>WINTER</u>		<u>SUMMER</u>	<u>WINTER</u>
<b>DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>hiking</b>		<b>MULTI-DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>canoeing</b>	snowmobiling
	<b>wildlife viewing</b>			<b>backpacking</b>	skiing
	horseback riding			horseback riding	dog mushing
	sport fishing			sport fishing	
	mountain biking				
	boating				
	photo safaris				

**OVERVIEW OF NUMBER OF USER DAYS, CLIENTS AND OPERATORS**



## Mayo-Keno-Elsa Sub-region

A variety of wilderness tourism activities occur in the Mayo-Keno-Elsa area, most notably hiking, canoeing and wildlife viewing. The operators using this sub-region are a combination of local, Whitehorse-based and non-Yukon businesses. Visitors include highway travellers looking for soft adventure day trips in the front country, and backcountry travellers seeking multi-day wilderness canoe trips.

### KEY FEATURES

- historic mining district
- road access to backcountry
- Trans Canada Trail
- hiking trails
- northern alpine butterflies
- Stewart River
- McQuesten River
- Horseshoe Slough Habitat Protection Area
- Keno City Alpine Interpretive Centre

### POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- canoeing
- hiking
- wildlife viewing
- sport fishing
- boating
- photography
- mountain biking

### WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 182 to 1,651 user days
- 14 to 88 clients
- 4 to 9 operators



Keno Hill (YG)



### SUB-REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Commercially guided wilderness tourism activities in this sub-region include canoeing, hiking, horseback riding, sport fishing, dog mushing and photo safaris. In addition, self-guided pursuits also include wildlife viewing (butterflies, birds, moose, alpine flowers), mountain biking and boating. In this sub-region, there are too few operators to report data on each guided activity.

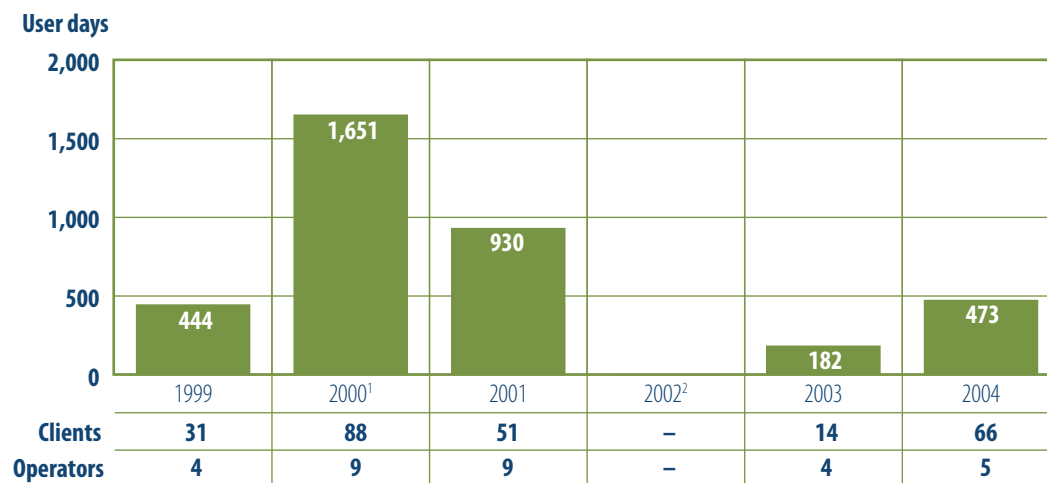
Activities (Predominant activities are in bold)					
	SUMMER	WINTER		SUMMER	WINTER
DAY TRIPS	<b>hiking</b>	dog mushing	MULTI-DAY TRIPS	<b>canoeing</b>	
	<b>wildlife viewing</b>			<b>horseback riding</b>	
	horseback riding				
	sport fishing				
	mountain biking				
	boating				
	photo safaris				

## PRODUCTS AND FEATURES

The Mayo-Keno-Elsa mining district is rich with historic sites and interesting destinations for hikers and mountain bikers. An extensive network of rough roads and trails provides good infrastructure and easy backcountry access for wilderness tourism operators and self-guided visitors. Historic sites are accessible, and local publications, interpretive centres and museums support tours and interpretation.

Rivers in this area are easy to get to and offer excellent wilderness canoeing experiences. Tourists paddle the road-accessible South Macmillan, McQuesten and Stewart rivers, while trips on the Hess and the Upper Stewart require air access. River trip activities include wildlife viewing, hiking, nature study and fishing, and commercial trips in this sub-region have a reputation of being high-quality and well-priced. Keele Peak and Horn Peak on the upper Hess River are of significant interest to climbers and hikers.

### OVERVIEW OF NUMBER OF USER DAYS, CLIENTS AND OPERATORS



<sup>1</sup>Anomaly results from several long-distance canoe trips.

<sup>2</sup>In 2002, there were fewer than 3 operators so data cannot be presented.

## Peel Watershed Sub-region

The Peel River watershed (Peel, Blackstone, Hart, Wind, Bonnet Plume and Snake rivers) offers remote, scenic mountain rivers with a high density of features attractive to paddlers from around the world. These features include pristine wilderness, easy access to ridge hiking, canyons, rapids, alpine lakes, hoodoos, rock towers, hot springs, wildlife viewing, birdwatching, good camping, fishing and historic sites.

The dominant activity in the Peel sub-region is multi-day (12 to 20 days), world-class wilderness canoe trips on the tributaries of the Peel River. These rivers are accessible only by chartered bush plane. The operators using this sub-region are a combination of local, Whitehorse-based and non-Yukon businesses.

### KEY FEATURES

- Peel River Basin (one of Yukon's largest intact wilderness watersheds)
- Bonnet Plume Canadian Heritage River
- high-quality wilderness rivers

### POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- canoeing
- hiking
- wildlife viewing

### WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 344 to 1,949 guided user days
- 27 to 157 multi-day trip clients
- 20 to 54 canoe rental multi-day trip clients
- 316 to 1,216 canoe rental user days
- 6 to 11 operators



### PRODUCTS AND FEATURES

Guided and self-guided multi-day river trips in the Peel watershed have grown steadily since 1999. The Snake is the most popular of the Peel Basin canoe routes, and the Wind is the most technically easy and least costly to fly into. The Bonnet Plume has the most difficult whitewater and is more popular with experienced self-guided canoeists than with commercially guided parties. Recently, the Hart and Ogilvie rivers (accessible from the Dempster Highway) have become more popular among paddlers.

Most operators in the Peel are Yukon-based and use Whitehorse and local suppliers for canoes, supplies and equipment, air transport, pre- and post-trip accommodation and activities. Twelve- to 20-day trips on these remote rivers incorporate adventure, challenge, learning and a variety of wilderness activities, including hiking,

## Silver Trail Tourism Region: Peel Watershed Sub-region

fishing and photography. Several wilderness schools operate field-based learning tourism packages in the Peel Basin. Most operators, including those who offer trips on other Yukon rivers, consider Snake, Wind and Bonnet Plume trips as their “top of the line” river tours in Yukon.

About six Yukon companies rent equipment, provide air access and expedite for self-guided parties travelling in the area. Most of the region’s remote rivers are accessed by air from Mayo. Other wilderness tourism activities in the area include multi-day horseback riding, backpacking and sport fishing. Backcountry winter activities are small-scale and are usually under 10 days.

The Peel watershed has outstanding tourism values that support about 20 Yukon-based businesses that guide, transport and expedite guided and self-guided wilderness adventures. The region has excellent potential for managed growth of wilderness adventure product. Current and future tourism activities in the Peel watershed depend on maintaining wilderness and wildlife values that can support high-quality sustainable tourism products.

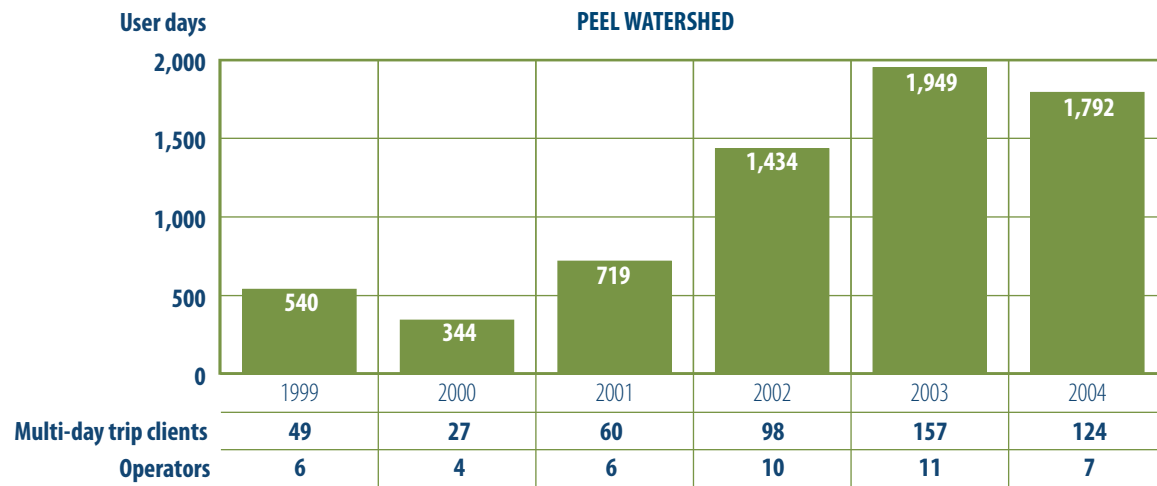
### Activities (Predominant activities are in bold)

	SUMMER	WINTER
<b>DAY TRIPS</b>		
<b>MULT-DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>canoeing</b> <b>backpacking</b> horseback riding wildlife viewing rafting sport fishing	dog mushing

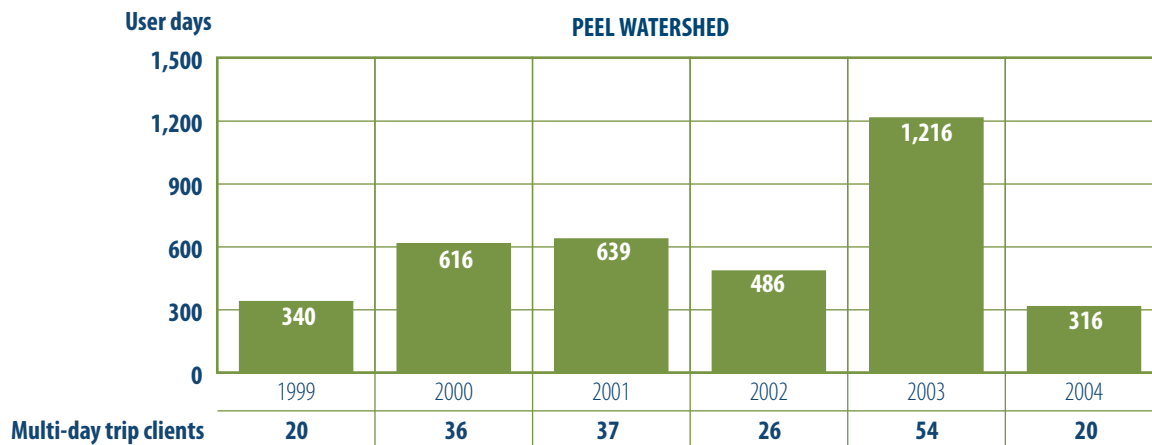




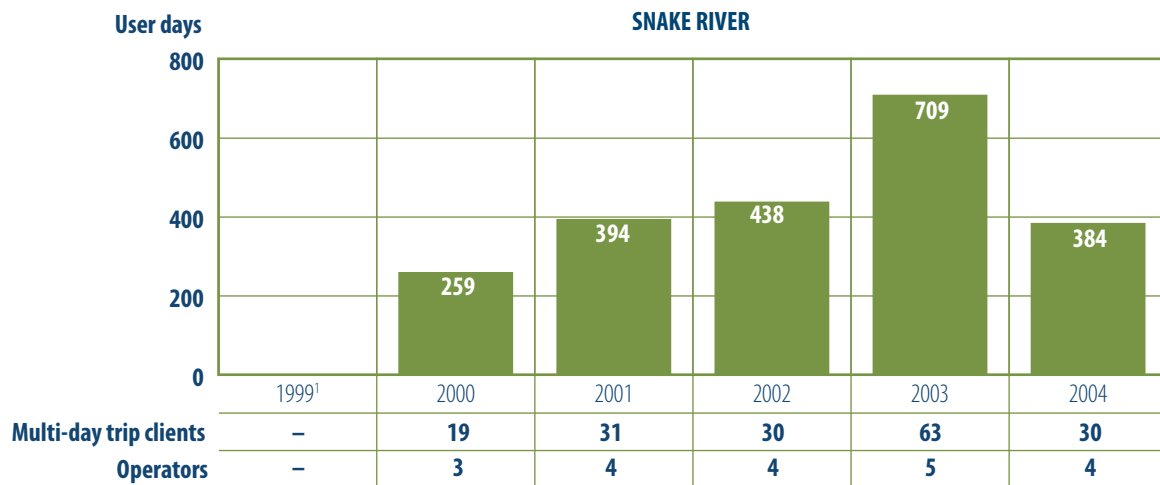
### NUMBER OF GUIDED CLIENTS, USER DAYS AND OPERATORS



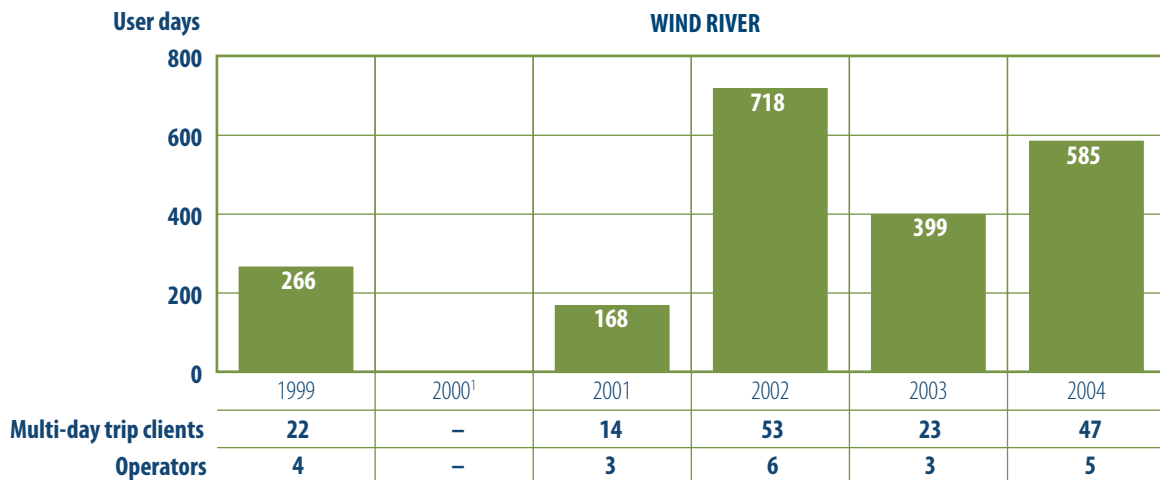
### NUMBER OF CANOE RENTAL CLIENTS AND USER DAYS



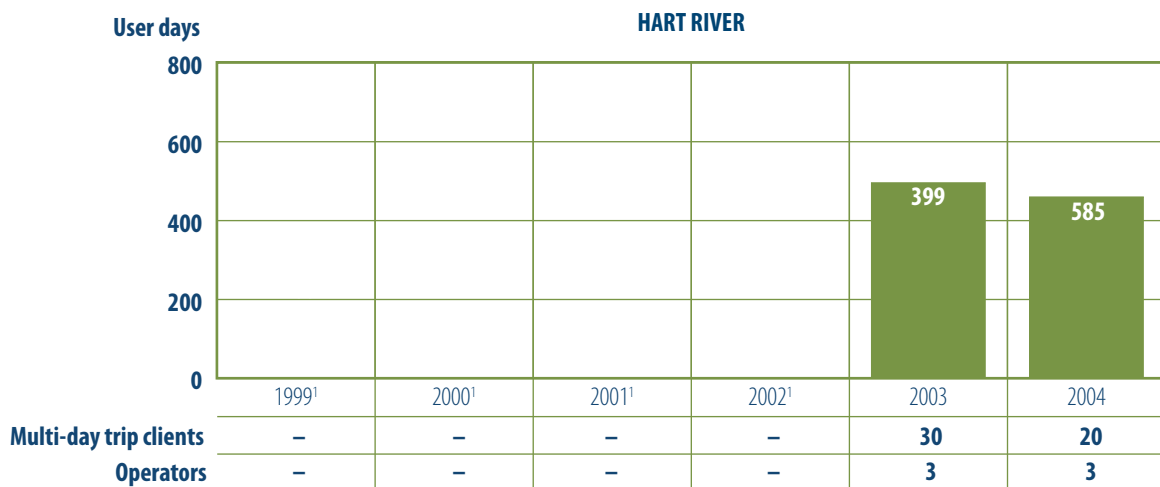
## NUMBER OF GUIDED CLIENTS, USER DAYS AND OPERATORS



<sup>1</sup>Between 1999 to 2002, there were fewer than 3 operators so data cannot be presented.



<sup>1</sup>Between 1999 to 2002, there were fewer than 3 operators so data cannot be presented.



<sup>1</sup>Between 1999 to 2002, there were fewer than 3 operators so data cannot be presented.

# KLONDIKE TOURISM REGION

The Klondike Tourism Region centres on Dawson City and includes the Klondike Goldfields, Tintina Trench, Tombstone Territorial Park and the taiga uplands of the Dempster Highway.

Dawson is a popular destination for many Yukon and Alaska visitors, including Yukon River canoe and boat parties. Wilderness adventure events like the Yukon Quest Sled Dog and Yukon River Quest races promote wilderness tourism in the region. Dawson offers a variety of wilderness day tours and activities, and the town is a staging point for wilderness groups venturing into Tombstone Territorial Park and other backcountry areas off the Dempster Highway.



Dempster (YG, Robert Postman)

## KEY FEATURES

- Tombstone Territorial Park
- Forty Mile Historic Site
- Tintina Trench
- Dempster Highway
- Yukon River and tributaries
- Hart River Winter Road
- historic gold mining area
- Ridge Road Trail
- Porcupine caribou herd crossing the Dempster Highway during fall migration



Dawson City (YG)

## POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- motorboat tours
- snowmobiling
- hiking
- backpacking
- canoeing
- mountain biking
- rafting

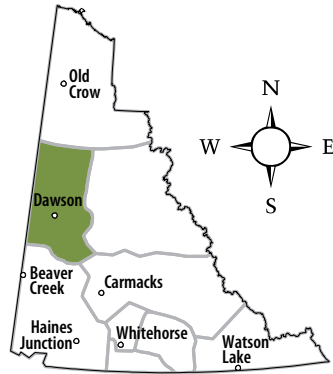
## WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 306 to 3,972 user days
- 169 to 1,023 day and multi-day trip clients
- 8 to 15 operators

See page 85, Yukon River Watershed, for Yukon River data.

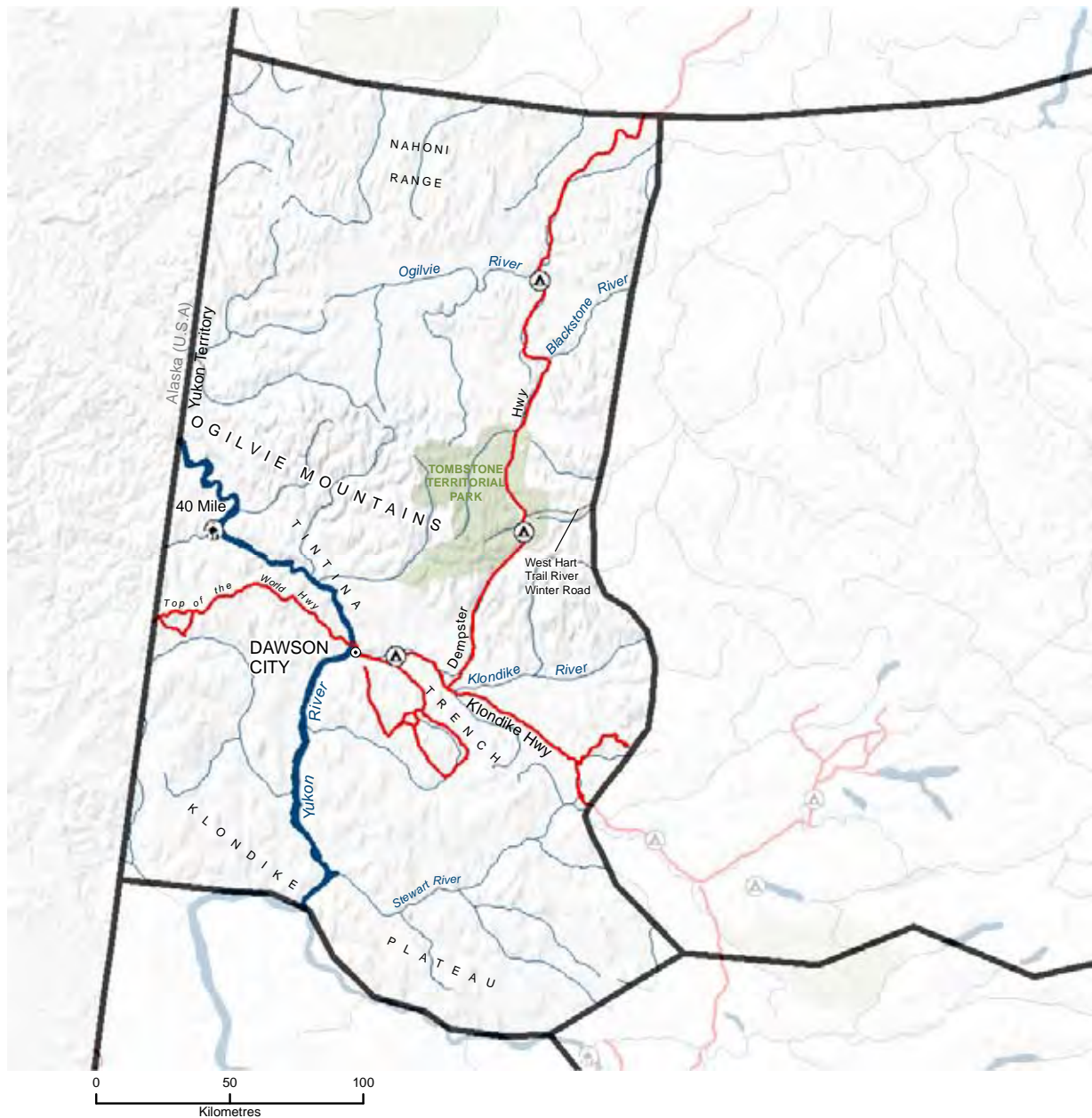
See page 83, for Tombstone Tourism Sub-region for data on Tombstone Territorial Park.

# KLONDIKE TOURISM REGION MAP



## Legend

- Campground
- Historic site
- Recreation site
- CHR** Canadian Heritage River
- HPA** Habitat Protection Area





## REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Between eight and 15 operators guided up to 1,000 clients in the Klondike region each year from 1999 to 2004. Most clients joined hiking day trips in Tombstone Territorial Park, as well as some snowmobiling, horseback riding, photo safaris and sport fishing.

The most popular guided activity in the Klondike region is motorboat tours on the Yukon River. In wintertime, a major snowmobile tour traverses the Top of the World Highway between Tok, Alaska and Dawson City. In 2004, a bus tour company introduced wilderness tours that include Jeep tours of the Klondike goldfields, Klondike River rafting, and Dempster Highway and Tombstone Territorial Park tours. Clients who join these tours stay an extra night in Dawson.

Popular self-guided activities in the region include mountain biking, hiking, backpacking, canoeing and fishing. Travellers can choose from a variety of day trips off the Dempster Highway and near Dawson City, while most backcountry trips take place in Tombstone Territorial Park. The Dempster area and Tombstone Territorial Park have growth potential for both day and multi-day tours.

### Activities (Predominant activities are in bold)

	SUMMER	WINTER
<b>DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>hiking</b> <b>canoeing</b> <b>motorboat tours</b> <b>rafting</b> <b>mountain biking</b> sport fishing off-road vehicle touring	<b>snowmobiling</b> cross-country skiing dog mushing northern lights viewing
<b>MULTI-DAY TRIPS</b>	<b>backpacking</b> motorboat tours mountain biking wildlife viewing off-road vehicle touring canoeing First Nation cultural tours mountain biking sport fishing horseback riding photo safaris mountaineering	<b>snowmobiling</b> dog mushing northern lights viewing off-road vehicle tours

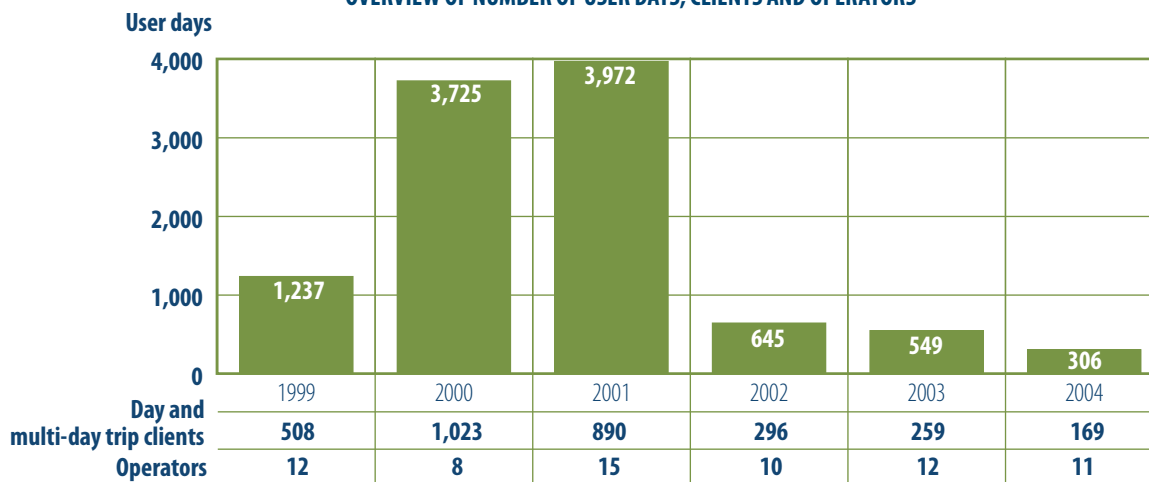
## PRODUCTS and FEATURES

Thanks to several major assets — Yukon River, Klondike National Historic Sites, Tombstone Territorial Park, Dempster Highway — the Klondike is one of Yukon’s most active wilderness tourism regions. Dawson City serves as a vibrant, attractive focal point and staging area for commercial wilderness activities.

A special feature of the Klondike region is the opportunity to see subarctic landscapes and birdlife, only just a short drive up the Dempster Highway. Birdwatching and natural history tours in the area build on this theme. Guided interpretive day hikes in Tombstone Territorial Park continue to be a key product in the region.

Some canoe parties use the Dempster to access the Peel River watershed via its upper tributaries, the Ogilvie, Blackstone and Hart rivers. The Hart River Winter Road from North Fork Pass is used by backpackers, mountain bikers and people on ATVs and snowmobiles. Bikes and canoes are available for rent in Dawson.

**OVERVIEW OF NUMBER OF USER DAYS, CLIENTS AND OPERATORS**



• In 2000 and 2001, an annual snowmobile event used an off-road route and required a wilderness tourism license. Since 2002, the event has followed an existing road and no longer requires licensing.

• The graph includes activity in Tombstone Territorial Park but not Yukon River activities. (See Yukon River Watershed for data.)

## Tombstone Tourism Sub-region

Established in 2004 to protect the life, landforms and heritage of the South Ogilvie Mountains, Tombstone Territorial Park encompasses over 2,113 square kilometres of subarctic wilderness. The Dempster Highway runs through the park, providing access to spectacular views and tundra environments like nowhere else in Canada.

### KEY FEATURES

- Tombstone Territorial Park
- Tombstone Mountain
- caribou migration
- permafrost landforms
- tundra views from the Dempster Highway

### POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- hiking
- backpacking
- wildlife viewing

### WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 122 to 723 user days
- 106 to 215 day trip clients
- 15 to 49 multi-trip clients
- 3 to 9 operators



Dempster Highway (YG, Robert Postman)

### PARK SNAPSHOT

Visitor numbers at the Dempster Highway Interpretive Centre increased from 1,500 in 1986 to approximately 10,000 in 2004. From 1999 to 2004, three to nine operators guided about 190 to 580 day and multi-day trip clients each year.

Guided trips in the Tombstones are almost exclusively hiking or backpacking. Occasional offerings include horseback riding, photo safaris and some guided winter trips. Day-trip clients use established routes off the Dempster Highway at Grizzly Creek, North Klondike River and Goldensides Mountain. Multi-day trips occur throughout the park with user days concentrated on the Tombstone Range.

The Tombstone area is a popular destination for self-guided visitors seeking roadside experiences like hiking, photography and skiing, as well as multi-day backpacking and mountaineering adventures.

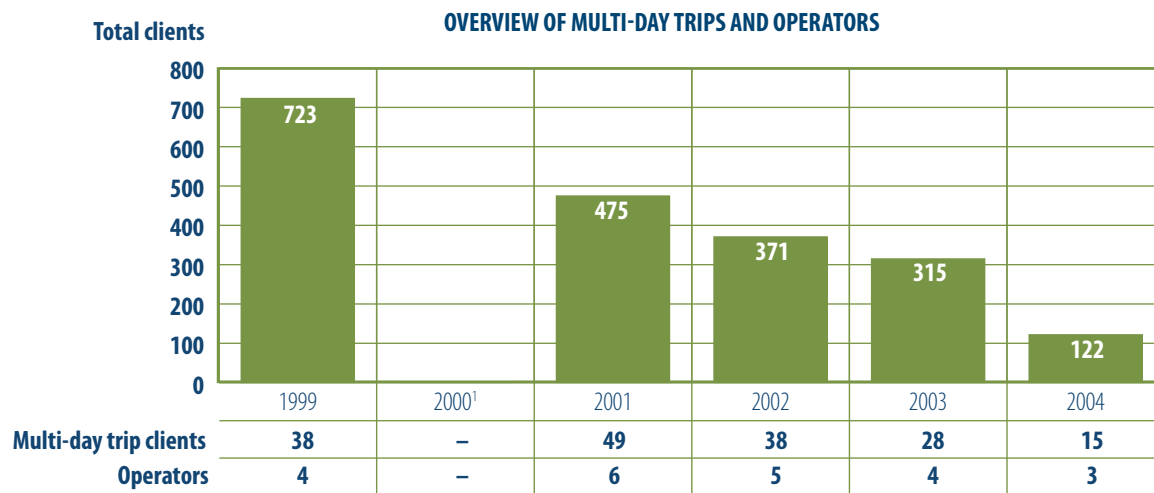
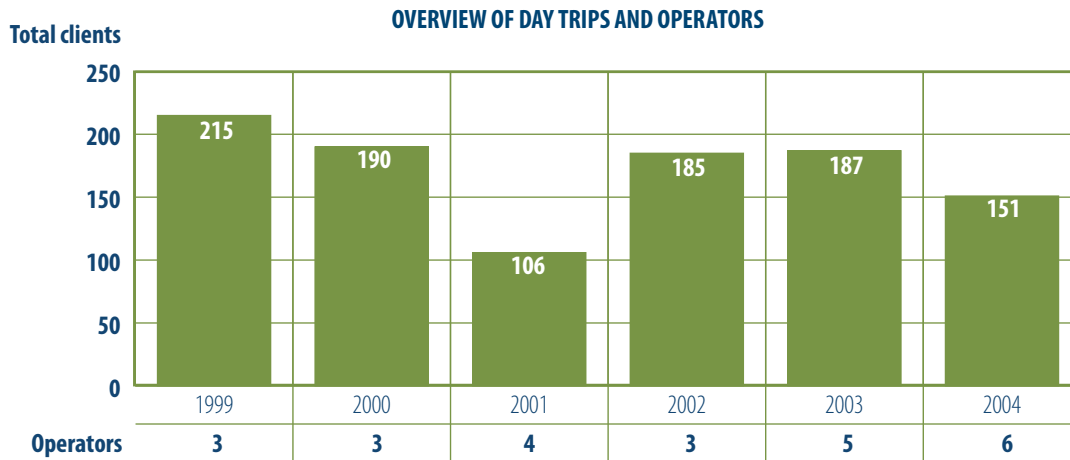
### PRODUCTS and FEATURES

Over 80 per cent of non-water-based wilderness tourism activity in the Klondike region takes place in Tombstone Territorial Park. Hikers and photographers are attracted by tundra walking with dramatic views, unusual

## Klondike Tourism Region: Tombstone Tourism Sub-region

landforms and craggy peaks. Wildlife watchers are rewarded by a diversity of species including large mammals and an array of arctic and subarctic birds.

Exploring Tombstone Territorial Park can involve everything from short hikes off the highway to multi-day backpacking and mountaineering trips in the backcountry. The park has few established trails.



<sup>1</sup>In 2000, there were fewer than 3 operators so data cannot be presented.

# YUKON RIVER WATERSHED

The Yukon River drains more than half of Yukon. Fed by tributaries from the St. Elias, Coast, Cassiar, Pelly, Selwyn and Ogilvie mountains, the Yukon River originates just 25 kilometres from the Pacific Ocean in a chain of lakes close to the B.C.-Alaska border.

The river flows northwest for 1,140 kilometres through the boreal forest of Yukon's central lowlands to the Alaska border. From here, it courses westward for another 2,060 kilometres through central Alaska and empties into the Bering Sea. The Yukon is a clear river until its junction with the Teslin River at Hootalinqua, where it gains volume, velocity and turbidity with each major tributary.



Yukon River (YG)

## KEY FEATURES

- Yukon, Teslin and Big Salmon rivers
- historic sites
- large lakes
- Thirty Mile Canadian Heritage River
- accessible and entry-level wilderness canoe routes
- salmon migration
- bird migrations (swans, cranes)

## POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- motorboat tours
- canoe trips with associated activities (wildlife viewing, photography, hiking, fishing)

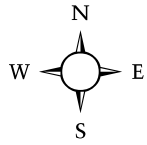
## WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 344 to 474 guided canoeing clients on all three rivers
- 13 to 18 guided canoeing operators (Yukon River only)
- 1,278 to 1,671 canoe rental clients
- 6 to 11 motorboat tour operators
- 7,336 to 19,636 motorboat tour clients



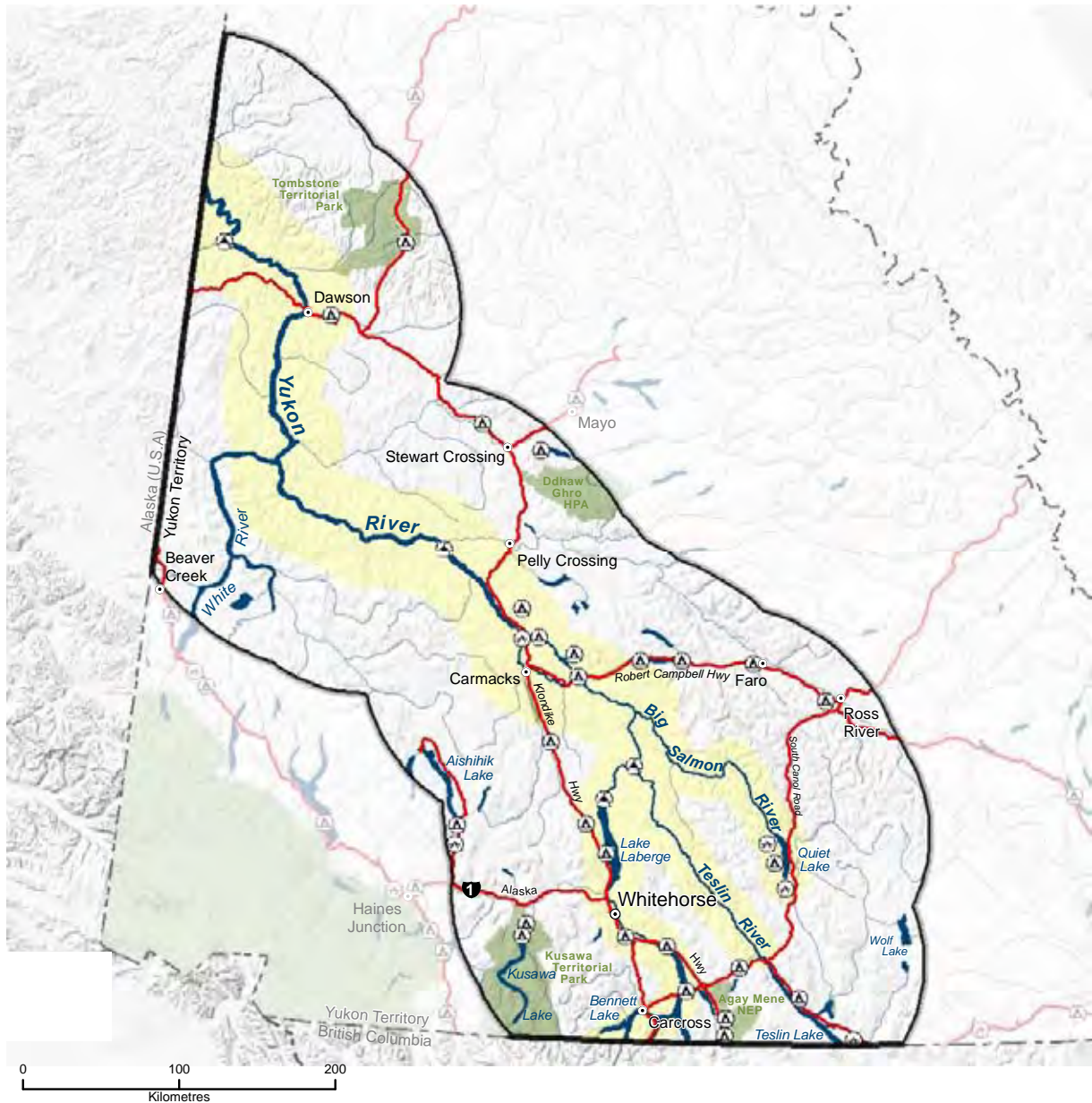
(YG)

# YUKON RIVER WATERSHED MAP



## Legend

- Campground
- Historic site
- Recreation site
- CHR** Canadian Heritage River
- HPA** Habitat Protection Area





Five Finger Rapids (YG)

## REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Three categories of river travellers use this region.

- Guided motorboat tour clients on Yukon River day trips out of Dawson City or Whitehorse.
- Guided, multi-day canoe clients on the Yukon, Teslin, and Big Salmon rivers downstream to the Alaska border.
- Self-guided, multi-day canoe parties on the Yukon, Teslin and Big Salmon rivers downstream to the Alaska border. However, the 1997 Yukon River Survey revealed that 62 per cent of travellers used rental equipment (canoes) and 12 per cent were guided, which leaves approximately 26 percent (552 river travellers) as self-guided with their own equipment.

Information on self-guided parties comes from the *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* rental report summaries and from the Yukon River Survey that recorded use on the Yukon, Teslin and Big Salmon rivers between June 15 and September 13, 1997.

Motorboat tours were the most popular wilderness tourism activity with over 17,000 clients in 2004 and operated almost exclusively on the Yukon River. Up to 11 licensed operators offered guided motorboat tours, most from permanent bases in Whitehorse and Dawson and several in Carmacks and Pelly Crossing. A few operators offered multi-day motorboat tours.

Between 13 and 18 operators guided up to 470 clients on multi-day canoe trips on various sections and tributaries of the Yukon River from 1999 to 2004. (Some operators guided on more than one river each summer.) The 1997

### Activities (Predominant activities are in bold)

#### DAY TRIPS

#### SUMMER

**motorboat tours**

canoeing

kayaking

hiking

photo safaris

sport fishing

wildlife viewing

#### MULTI-DAY TRIPS

**canoeing**

motorboat tours

rafting

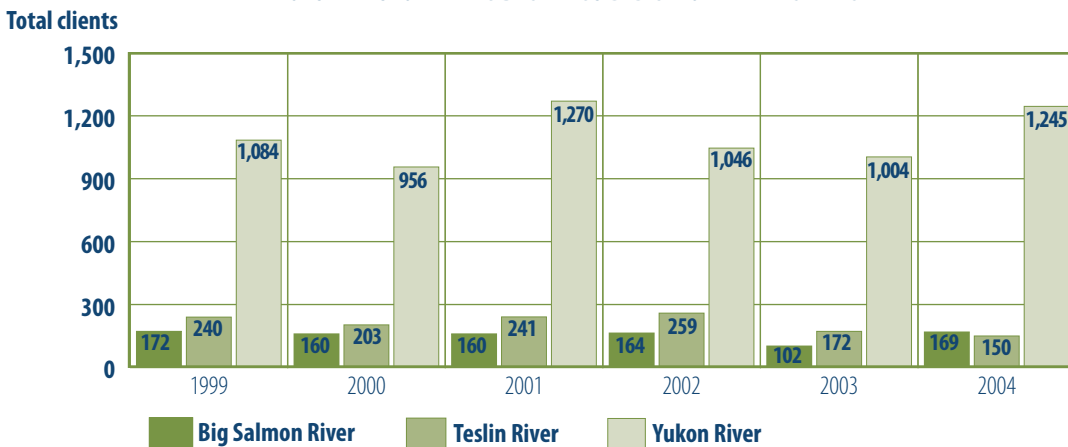
## Yukon River Watershed

Yukon River Survey found that 12 per cent (255 clients) of traffic on the Yukon, Teslin and Big Salmon rivers was guided.

The 1997 Yukon River Survey found that about 1,300 river travellers used rental craft, primarily canoes. From 1999 to 2004, between 1,278 and 1,671 river travellers rented canoes for trips on the Yukon, Teslin and Big Salmon rivers each year. Self-guided canoe travellers incorporated wildlife viewing, photography, hiking, visits to historic sites and fishing into their river trip.

According to the 1997 Yukon River Survey, river travellers generally rated their trip as an excellent wilderness experience with few serious problems. Of the total 2,125 travellers, more than 50 per cent came from Europe, and the rest from Canada (23%), USA (11%) and Japan (7%). Yukoners accounted for one-third of Canadian travellers. The most common age group was 25 to 35 years and the ratio of males to females was three to one. Most paddlers went down the Yukon River (42%) and others went on the Teslin (25%) and Big Salmon (17%). Over 40 per cent of Yukon River travellers felt that litter and garbage were a “moderate” to “serious” problem, a sentiment that was stronger among Europeans.

**POPULAR YUKON RIVERS BY SELF-GUIDED CANOE RENTAL CLIENTS**



**YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE MOTOBOAT TOURING CLIENTS (DAY TRIPS)**



<sup>1</sup>2000 was the first year that all motorboat tour data was available.

## PRODUCTS and FEATURES

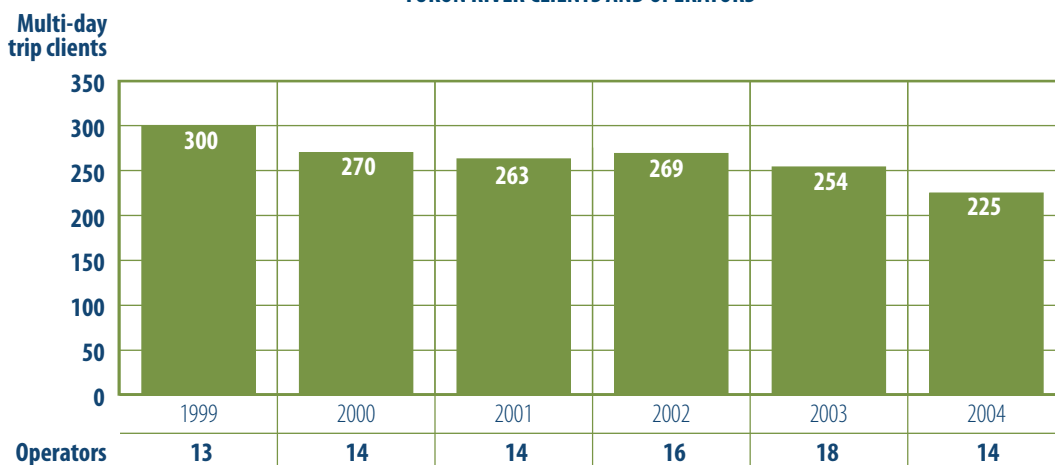
The Yukon River is the tenth longest river in the world and the fourth longest in North America. The Canadian section comprises the upper 35 per cent of its 3,200-kilometre length. Most canoe trips take place between Whitehorse and Dawson (approximately 14 days), or there are shorter trips that start or stop in Carmacks. Travellers see old wooden buildings, steamboats and other relics of an era when up to 250 paddlewheelers transported trappers, goldseekers, miners, tourists and supplies up and down the river until the mid-1950s when the Alaska Highway and the Klondike Highway put them out of business.

The Yukon River’s enticing blend of scenery, wildlife and history, ease of access and ease of paddling makes it the most popular canoe route in Canada’s North (Madsen & Mather, 2004). Most of the river is fast flowing and technically easy, making it a pleasure for entry-level canoeists. The river has many campsites and showcases First Nations and Klondike Gold Rush history. The scenic and historic Thirty Mile section of the Yukon River was designated a Canadian Heritage River in 1991. The Teslin River joins the Yukon at Hootalinqua, and the Big Salmon River joins the Yukon River at Little Salmon between Whitehorse and Carmacks.

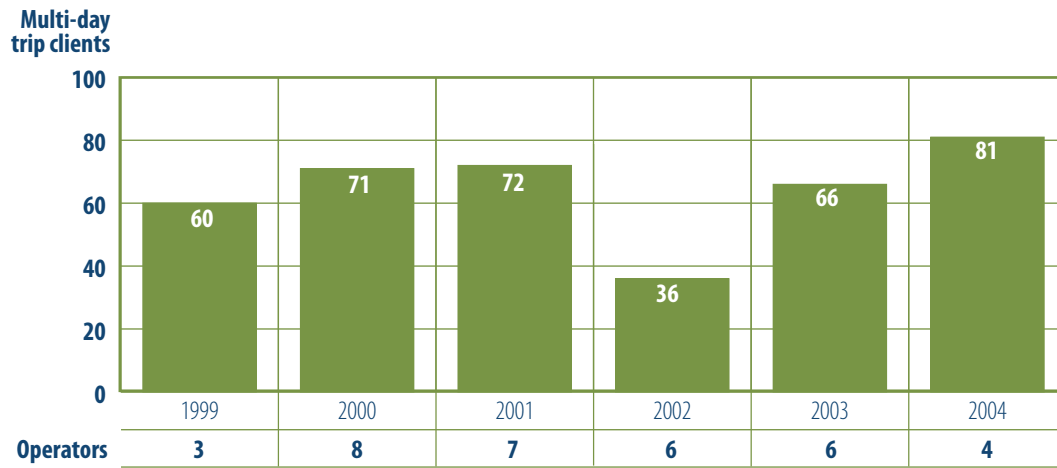
The Big Salmon River is one of the most popular wilderness canoe routes in Yukon. An entry-level trip, it has easy access at Quiet Lake off the South Canol Road and at Little Salmon on the Campbell Highway. This scenic watershed has abundant hikes, fine fishing and good wildlife viewing potential including a healthy moose population. A canoe trip on the Big Salmon presents a variety of experiences including open lakes, fast and slow river sections, log jams and historic sites. Guided and self-guided parties enjoy this nine to eleven-day trip.

The Teslin River was one of the historic routes to the Klondike goldfields. Stampeders travelled up the Stikine River to Telegraph Creek, slogged overland to Teslin Lake, and finally paddled down the Teslin and Yukon rivers. Easier than the Big Salmon, the Teslin is used by entry-level canoeists and some motorboat parties. Groups typically put in at Johnson’s Crossing for a week-long trip to Little Salmon or a two-week trip to Dawson City.

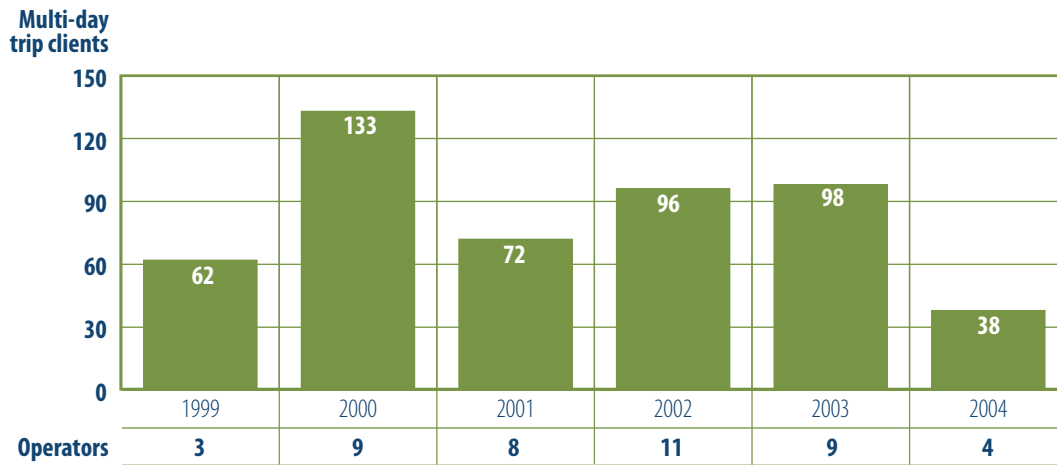
**YUKON RIVER CLIENTS AND OPERATORS**



**TESLIN RIVER CLIENTS AND OPERATORS**



**BIG SALMON RIVER CLIENTS AND OPERATORS**



# NORTH YUKON TOURISM REGION

The North Yukon Tourism Region boasts five large protected areas, all of which overlap the range of the Porcupine caribou herd.



Dempster (YG, Marten Berkman)

The legendary Dempster Highway crosses the Arctic Circle and leads travellers across the region's spectacular subarctic landscape. Currently, the North Yukon Tourism Region is seldom visited by wilderness tourists. Some commercially guided tourists visit Herschel Island Territorial Park or raft the Firth River. Ivvavik National Park, Firth River and Herschel Island are all accessible by air charter from Inuvik.



Herschel Island (YG)

## KEY FEATURES

- Herschel Island Territorial Park
- Vuntut National Park
- Ivvavik National Park/Firth River
- Old Crow Flats Special Management Area
- Ni'iinlii'njik Park (Fishing Branch) Wilderness Preserve and Ecological Reserve
- Arctic Ocean
- Dempster Highway
- Bell-Eagle-Porcupine River system
- Rampart and LaPierre House historic sites
- Porcupine caribou herd
- bird migration

## POPULAR WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- river rafting
- canoeing
- wildlife viewing
- hiking
- photography

## WILDERNESS TOURISM LICENSING ACT DATA, 1999 TO 2004

These data cannot be presented because fewer than three operators conducted commercially guided trips.

## YUKON PARKS DATA, 1999 TO 2004

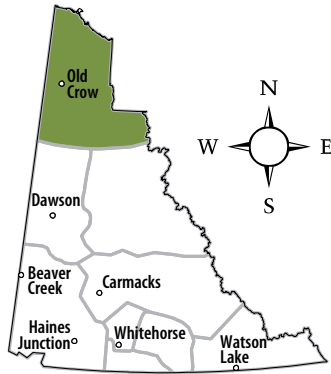
- average of 570 visits per year over the six-year span to Herschel Island Territorial Park

## NATIONAL PARKS DATA, 1999 TO 2004

- 125 to 140 visits to Ivvavik National Park per year
- 1 to 7 visits to Vuntut National Park per year

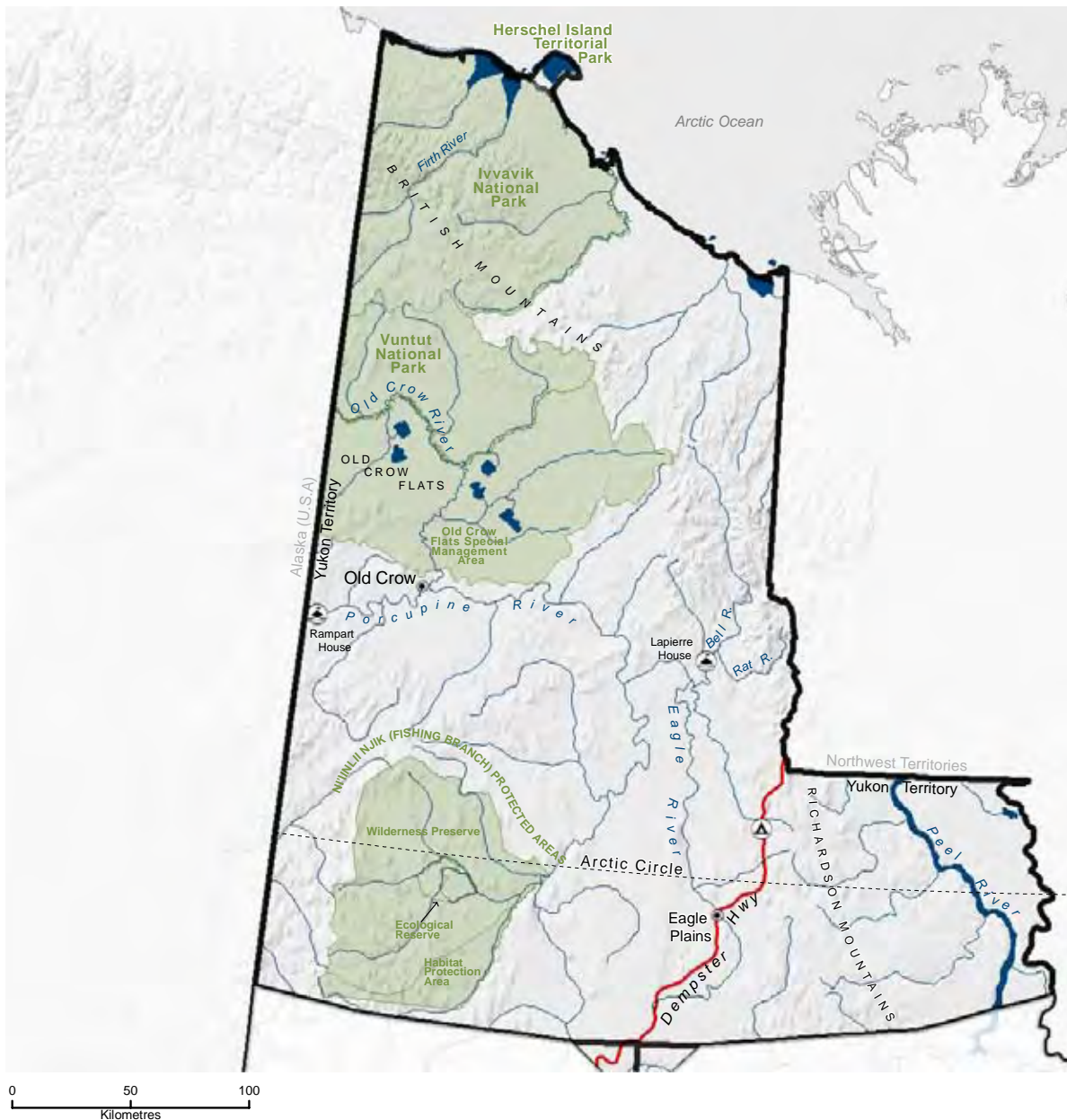
National Parks data provided by Parks Canada.

# NORTH YUKON TOURISM REGION MAP



## Legend

- Campground
- Historic site
- Recreation site
- CHR** Canadian Heritage River
- HPA** Habitat Protection Area





## REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Current wilderness tourism activity in the North Yukon Tourism Region is low, consisting mainly of summer river paddlers, Dempster Highway travellers and the occasional winter dog mushing trip. Most of the 60 to 70 adventure travellers take self-guided canoe trips on the Eagle, Porcupine and occasionally Bell rivers. Their activities include wildlife viewing, fishing, hiking and visiting historic sites, and most stop over in Old Crow. Guided dog mushing trips in North Yukon are infrequent and are usually associated with media, filmmaking or scientific research.

As many as 8,000 independent motorists and guided clients in vans and buses travel the Dempster Highway during the summer months. Most commercial activity takes place at Tombstone Campground and Eagle Plains.

About 10 tour companies serving up to 500 clients operate van trips on the Dempster, camping as they go and incorporating wildlife viewing, birding, natural history and hiking. Most van tours that operate north of Tombstone Territorial Park do not need a wilderness tourism license because they limit their activities to the highway and its right-of-way. Some self-guided hiking parties access the Wright Pass area of the Richardson Mountains from the Dempster.

There are five protected areas in North Yukon: Herschel Island Territorial Park, Vuntut National Park, Ivvavik National Park, Ni’iinlii’njik (Fishing Branch) Wilderness Preserve and Ecological Reserve, and Old Crow Flats Special Management Area. Guided and self-guided activities in these parks include river rafting, canoeing, wildlife viewing, hiking and photography. Most tourism activity outside of the parks is self-guided.

### Activities (Predominant activities are in bold)

	SUMMER	WINTER
DAY TRIPS	<b>wildlife viewing</b>	dog mushing
	hiking	aurora viewing
	sport fishing	
MULTI-DAY TRIPS	<b>rafting</b>	dog mushing
	<b>canoeing</b>	
	hiking	

### PRODUCTS AND FEATURES

The Dempster Highway beckons with spectacular wilderness vistas and opportunities to experience arctic landscapes and wildlife. The migration of the Porcupine caribou herd across North Yukon is one of the best viewing spectacles in the territory. The Richardson Mountains bordering the NWT offer outstanding alpine and tundra hiking, though access can be challenging.

Herschel Island Territorial Park, a tundra island on the Beaufort Coast with an early 1900s whaling base, is visited by tour groups via air charter from Inuvik, and cruise ships. The Firth River in Ivvavik National Park on the Arctic slope is a pre-eminent northern river for rafting trips offering spectacular hiking and viewing of the Porcupine caribou herd migration. Commercial rafting companies offer trips on the Firth, and experienced private parties also descend the river.

Old Crow Flats are noted waterfowl staging and nesting wetlands that also have outstanding resources for palaeontology and archaeology of the last ice age. South of Old Crow, the heart of Ni'iinlii'njik Park includes a portion of the Fishing Branch River where grizzly bears feast on spawning salmon in late autumn. Yukon Parks has partnered with the Vuntut Development Corporation to develop commercially guided bear viewing tours at this site.

The Porcupine River, a historic fur trade route, flows across North Yukon from the NWT border to Alaska. It offers one of the longest, roadless, entry-level canoe routes in Yukon or Alaska. The Porcupine is accessible from the Eagle River Bridge on the Dempster Highway, by air to Summit Lake on the Bell River, or by lining up the historic Rat River route from the Peel River. Parties can exit by air from Old Crow or continue downstream to the Yukon River Bridge in Alaska. Rampart House on the Alaska border is a largely intact but abandoned fur trade post.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: WILDERNESS TOURISM ACTIVITIES LIST AND RENTAL EQUIPMENT LIST

### Wilderness tourism activity list

In this report, wilderness tourism activities means commercially guided and self-guided tourism activity occurring in the wilderness, including but not limited to:

- off road vehicle riding (includes all terrain vehicle and jeep riding);
- boating (includes self-guided motor boating and guided non-motorized boating);
- canoeing;
- cross-country skiing;
- dog mushing (includes dog sledding);
- heli-hiking;
- heli-skiing;
- hiking and backpacking (includes interpretive hikes);
- horseback riding;
- kayaking;
- motorized boat tours\* (guided motor boat tours);
- mountain biking;
- mountaineering;
- northern lights viewing;
- photographic safaris (includes photography);

- river rafting (includes whitewater rafting);
- rock climbing;
- snowmobiling;
- sport fishing (includes trophy fishing and casual fishing);
- First Nation cultural interpretive tours; and
- wildlife viewing (includes bird watching).

### Rental equipment list

Anyone who rents equipment to commercial or private wilderness travellers must submit a rental report at the end of each summer and winter season: The following equipment is covered:

- all terrain vehicles;
- bicycles;
- canoes;
- horses;
- kayaks;
- motorized water crafts;
- personal water crafts;
- rafts; and
- snowmobiles.

\*Motorized boat tours refer to guided tours, and are identified as a distinct activity.

## APPENDIX 2: 2004 YUKON VISITOR EXIT SURVEY

From June to September of 2004, a major survey of visitors to Yukon was undertaken by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics on behalf of the Government of Yukon's Department of Tourism and Culture. This survey sought answers from visitors on a wide variety of questions relating to their visit to Yukon. The 2004 Visitor Exit Survey asked visitors about outdoor and wilderness activities they participated in. Visitors who said they took a wilderness trip were asked to complete a Wilderness Adventure Supplement Survey that asked specific questions about activities, location, satisfaction and logistics of their wilderness trip.

The 2004 Visitor Exit Survey was administered by trained surveyors to visitors as they exited the Yukon for the last time. Visitors were intercepted and personally interviewed at various locations around Yukon, including, but limited to the Whitehorse

International Airport, hotel lobbies and roadside pull-outs. Numbers contained in reports have been weighted to reflect the border crossing statistics collected on a monthly basis by the Canadian Border Services Agency for June through September 2004.

The 2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey main survey presents Yukon-wide information. A parallel series of regional reports presents information on Yukon's nine tourism regions, a regional summary report, an Adventure Travel sector report (including wilderness traveller profiles) and a technical paper describing methodology used in the survey.

Completed 2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey reports are available from the Department of Tourism and Culture, Tourism Branch, or at [www.tc.gov.yk.ca](http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca).



