

Official Map and Guide



Voyageurs at Dawn by Frances Ann Hopkins. Oil, 1871. Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa

Water dominates the Voyageurs National Park landscape. Within its boundaries more than 30 lakes—some large, some small—fill glacier-carved rock basins. Between these lakes and adjacent rocky knobs and ridges extend bogs, marshes, and beaver ponds. These waters play a major role in your experience at the park. Once you arrive at one of the park's four entry points, you leave your car behind and set out by water, much as the voyageurs traveled during the fur trade of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Voyageurs National Park exists to preserve this natural environment and its native plant and animal life, for the benefit of present and future generations.

As the fur trade expanded westward, it depended heavily upon the voyageurs, or French-Canadian canoemen, who moved beaver and other pelts and trade goods between Montreal and the Canadian Northwest. The route of these adventuresome men, who paddled up to 16 hours per day, became so established that the 1783 treaty ending the American Revolution specified that the international boundary should follow their "customary waterway" between Lake Superior and Lake of the Woods. Today, Voyageurs National Park, established in 1975, adjoins a 56-mile stretch of that Voyageurs Highway.

The voyageur has been described as daring if not brave, knowledgeable though uneducated. Above all, he was colorful. Understandably, varying accounts of these men's lives exist. Daniel Harmon, a partner in the North West Company, wrote of them in 1819: "... the Canadian Voyageurs possess lively and fickle dispositions; and they are rarely subject to depression of spirits of long continuance, even when in circumstances the most adverse. Although what they consider good eating

and drinking constitutes their chief good, yet when necessity compels them to it, they submit to great privation and hardship, not only without complaining, but even with cheerfulness and gaiety. ... Trifling provocations will often throw them into a rage," Harmon continued, "but they are easily appeased when in anger, and they never harbour a revengeful purpose against those by whom they conceive that they have been injured."

Whether by flattery or other motivations, voyageurs were persuaded to risk their lives to advance the fur trade. And risk them they often did. The enemy took the form of rival fur company representatives, unfriendly Indians, or nature's forces. They came to know the country well, and they, along with the Indians and lumberjacks, gave this region the bulk of its place names, such as Grassy Portage, Kabetogama Lake, and Cut-over Island. Note that the place names are predominantly water-related. Even today, the ridges and hilltops in the park bear no names.

The park lies in the southern portion of the Canadian Shield. The ancient sediments that comprise the shield represent some of the oldest rock formations exposed anywhere in the world. Younger rock formations do not appear here. Perhaps they never existed, but more likely glaciation simply removed them. At least four times in the past one million years, continental glaciers—ice sheets two miles thick—bulldozed their way through the area. They removed previous features, leaving mostly level, pock-marked rock up to 2.7 billion years old. Hundreds of ponds, lakes, and streams now nestle in the depressions, and some rock surfaces in the park still bear the scrape marks. The glaciers gouged out the lake and river beds and set the stage for vast forests. You might say that the Voyageurs Highway was a gift of the glaciers. Look out across the landscape here and you will see the elements of

the fur trade itself. The waters provided the "highway"; fur-bearing animals provided the goods; and boundless forests provided the materials for the birch-bark canoe, that marvel of environmental adaptation. The canoes were constructed of birchbark, cedar boughs, and cedar or spruce root bindings sealed with pitch. It was a skill developed by the American Indians and exploited by early European explorers. The canoes were light, easily navigable, and quickly repaired with native materials. For several generations the fur trade was the continent's biggest industry, returning investments up to 20-fold. One historian called it a vast empire held together by nothing stronger than birchbark.

Nature's abundance is evident in other ways here. Osprey, eagle, and great blue heron nests occur throughout the park. Be observant and you may see kingfishers, loons, and cormorants. Since water covers one-third of the surface of the park, aquatic animals are common. Creating ponds, the beaver provides not only its own habitat, but also the environment needed by aquatic plants. These plants provide food for aquatic insects and some fish. The fish, in turn, support the wide variety of fish-eating birds. Beaver are fare for coyotes and timberwolves.

Perhaps nothing so symbolizes Voyageurs National Park's enduring primitive character as the presence of its wolves. The park is in the heart of the only region in the continental United States where the eastern timber wolf survives. Wolves are shy and secretive and, contrary to folklore, they pose virtually no threat to humans. Their wariness and small numbers make it unlikely that you will see them during a visit, although you might see their tracks in winter. Wolves usually live in packs of two to twelve. They may kill large animals such as deer and moose for food, but more frequently feed upon beaver. The timber wolf may cover as

many as 40 miles in a single night and can run several miles at 30 to 35 miles per hour. The wolf's howl on a moonlit night is a rare treat.

Winter is a force to be reckoned with here. From spring thaw until freeze-up the voyageurs had six months at most to complete their travel. Their round trip between depots at Grand Portage or Fort William on Lake Superior and the subarctic interior of northwest Canada consumed four or five months. Summer is relatively short here, but winter need not be a time of inactivity. From late December until late March, life's pulse is slowed. Ski and snowmobile travel is often possible as snow blankets both land and lake. And warming temperatures and increased animal activity in late winter definitely invite snowshoers. However you travel, proper equipment is a must. Take a compass and map, dress in layers, and carry an emergency survival kit. High winds can spring up quickly and, accompanied by low temperatures, can be dangerous.

When the waterways begin to open in spring, animals stir from a season's rest. Migratory birds return to summer in the North. It's one of the best times to observe nature here. Both spring and fall favor those who seek quiet enjoyment of nature's continuous show. For many, the display of fall colors marks a highlight of the North Country year.

The voyageur's canoe has long since gone, but his land remains. Here you can take to the waterways of this intricate landscape where loons call and moose, wolves, and bears wander. Here you can sense the spirit that beckoned the voyageur to adventure.



Grassy Bay Cliffs



Lakeside campsite



Northern leopard frog



Winter



Locator Lake, looking toward War Club Lake



Kettle Falls Hotel



Showy lady slipper

Visiting Voyageurs National Park

Visitor Centers and Park Activities Three park visitor centers offer a variety of information, including brochures, maps, books, navigational charts, films, and exhibits. Rainy Lake Visitor Center is open all year; Kabetogama Lake Visitor Center and Ash River Visitor Center are open seasonally. Check at visitor centers for schedules of naturalist-guided activities, such as guided trips on concession-run tour boats, canoe trips, children's programs, and campfire talks. Publications, maps, and naviga-

tional charts may be purchased from Lake States Interpretive Association, 3131 Highway 53, International Falls, MN 56649. Call 218-283-2103.

Check at visitor centers and boat ramp bulletin boards for areas closed for protection of visitors or park resources. Areas closed are posted with signs.

Boating Most visitors travel park waters by motorboat, although many also travel by canoe, kayak, sailboat, or houseboat. Boating safety be-

gins with knowing your boat and how it works. Comply with federal and state regulations. Each person in a watercraft must have a USCG-approved, wearable life preserver readily available for use. The use of nautical charts is strongly recommended. Along main travel routes, a USCG-numbered buoy system guides boaters and marks navigational hazards (see other side of this folder). Outside these navigational channels, most rocks and reefs are unmarked and can be hazardous. Floating logs

can also be hazardous. Know distress signals and carry signal gear. When loading your boat, pack gear low and balanced. Heed all weather forecasts; tune to local radio stations (640 AM, 1230 AM, 93.4 FM, 104.1 FM, or 99.5 FM) or monitor a weather radio for NOAA broadcasts. Storms can arise quickly, and high waves are hazardous, especially to small boats and canoes. If you are caught on the water, find a sheltered cove and wait for calm. Park rangers monitor marine band 16 for emergencies.

Fishing Fishing for walleye, northern pike, and smallmouth bass is world renowned. Anglers also catch lake trout, muskie, sauger, perch, and crappie. In winter ice fishing is popular. Fishing in park waters requires a Minnesota fishing license. In Canadian waters, an Ontario license is required.

Camping More than 175 campsites are maintained by the National Park Service and are accessible only by water. Sites are classified as tent, houseboat, or day-

use sites; all are designated by signs. Tents may not camp in houseboat sites or day-use sites; houseboats may not stay overnight in tent sites or day-use sites. Maps showing the location of these sites are available at the visitor centers. Public and private campgrounds, accessible by car, are located near the perimeter of the park.

Trails Maintained trails for hiking, crosscountry skiing, and snowmobiling are available within the park. Some trailheads

can be reached by vehicle, others by boat only.

Winter Activities From late December to late March, snow dominates the landscape. During this time, you can cross-country ski, snowmobile, winter camp, snowshoe, and ice fish. Snowmobiling is allowed on frozen lake surfaces, safety portage trails on land, and the Chain of Lakes Scenic Trail. Complete maps of snowmobile trails are available at the visitor centers and local resorts.

Be prepared for severe winter conditions. Travel in groups; tell someone your destination, planned route, and expected time of return. Take matches, first-aid supplies, and food. Avoid slush and unsafe ice; check on current ice and snow conditions. Avoid hypothermia by dressing in layers, staying dry, and avoiding wind.

Adjacent Wilderness Area The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) lies to the east of the park.

For information, write: Forest Supervisor, Superior National Forest, 8901 Grand Avenue Place, Duluth, MN 55808-1102.

More Information Write: Superintendent, Voyageurs National Park, 3131 Highway 53, International Falls, MN 56649-8904. Call 218-283-9821. Internet: www.nps.gov/voya.

Park Regulations

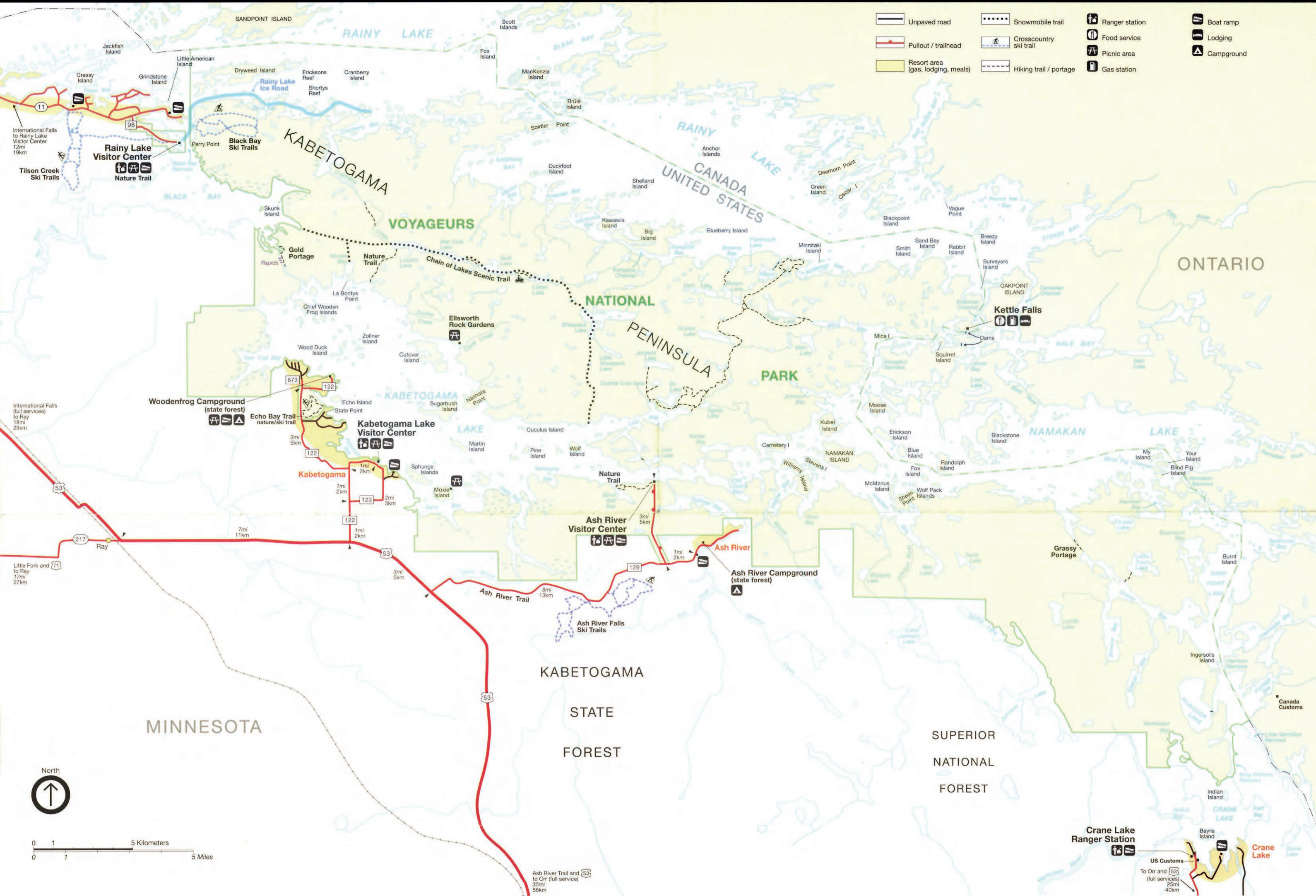
- Hunting, archery, firearms, chainsaws, and fireworks are prohibited. Off-road vehicles are prohibited in the park.
- Pets must be controlled and on a leash no longer than 6 feet. Pets are not permitted on any trails or in the backcountry.
- Black bears can be serious nuisances. All food, garbage, and cooking equipment must be kept in a vehicle, vessel, bear-proof locker, or hung 10 feet high and 4 feet out from a pole or tree.

- Use only dead and down wood for campfires. Campfires are permitted in metal fire grills or existing rock rings; do not build new rock rings.
- Pack out all refuse.
- Cultural artifacts may not be disturbed or removed from the park. A reward is offered for information leading to the conviction of violators.
- Do not trespass on private property in the park.
- Stay at least 0.25 mile away from bald eagle, osprey, and great blue heron nests. The Ship-

wreck Islands tern rookery in Kabetogama Lake and all loon nests should be approached no closer than 100 yards.

- Quiet hours are from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- National Park Service rangers enforce federal and state laws. U.S. Coast Guard boating regulations apply within the park, as do Minnesota state fishing, waterskiing, and snowmobiling regulations.

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Traveling in and Around the Park

Getting to the Park Voyageurs National Park is a 6-hour drive from Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.; 3 hours from Duluth, Minn.; and 4 hours from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Roads approach the park from four points along U.S. 53 between Duluth and International Falls. See map (right) for routes and towns. The nearest airport is International Falls Airport; rental cars are available there.

Travel in the Park Voyageurs is a water-

based park; access to the Kabetogama Peninsula, the islands, and nearly all of the park's shoreline is by watercraft. Public boat ramps and parking are available at the park's visitor centers and at the Kabetogama State Forest campgrounds. Watercraft, outfitting guides, and rental and water taxi service are available from private outfitters and resorts at each of the park's gateway communities: Ash River, Crane Lake, International Falls, and Kabetogama.



In summer, visitors may travel by private and rental boats, float planes, kayaks and canoes, or concessioner tour boats.

In winter, the 7-mile-long Rainy Lake Ice Road provides automobile access into the park. Winter travel elsewhere in the park is by snowmobile, cross-country skis, or snowshoes. Equipment rentals are available from local resorts. During freeze-up in late autumn and ice-out in early spring, the lakes are inaccessible.

Park Visitor Centers Information, films, exhibits, and other visitor services are available at visitor centers. See park map (above) for visitor center locations.

- **Rainy Lake Visitor Center** open all year.
- **Kabetogama Lake Visitor Center** open seasonally.
- **Ash River Visitor Center** open seasonally.
- **Crane Lake Information Station** open seasonally.

Accommodations and Services Overnight lodging, campgrounds, restaurants, grocery stores, boat rentals, and other services are offered outside the park at private resorts at Rainy Lake, Kabetogama, Ash River, and Crane Lake. There are services available outside the park at private resorts at Rainy Lake, Kabetogama, Ash River, and Crane Lake. There are services available outside the park at private resorts at Rainy Lake, Kabetogama, Ash River, and Crane Lake.

Aids to Navigation

Learn these important navigational aids for your safety. Boats must comply with U.S. Coast Guard safety regulations. Water flows from Crane Lake through Sand Point and Namakan lakes to Kettle Falls. Kabetogama Lake flows toward Kettle Falls. Rainy Lake flows toward International Falls.

A diamond warns of danger. A cross in a diamond means boats must keep out.

A circled mark means a controlled area; for example, an area with a speed limit.

A diver's flag warns of the presence of divers, who may be just beneath the surface.

Green can buoys have odd numbers. Keep them to your left when going up-lake.

Red nun buoys have even numbers. Keep them to your right when going up-lake.

boats up to 21 feet long. Location and addresses of resorts and campgrounds are available at park visitor centers or by mail from the park superintendent. A brochure describing facilities for special accessibility needs is available from the park.

Traveling Across the United States-Canada Border Check with Canadian and U.S. customs before crossing the border. Customs services are available by water at Portage Bay on Sand

Point Lake or Sand Bay on Rainy Lake and by vehicles at the Crane Lake Public Landing or at International Falls Bridge.

More Information Write: Revenue Canada, Customs, Trade & Admin., 302 Scott St., Fort Francis, Ontario P9A1H1 Call: 807-274-3655.

Write: U.S. Customs Service, Second Avenue, International Falls, MN 56649. Call: 218-283-2541. Internet: www.customs.ustras.gov.