



Introduction



Established

On January 8, 1971 President Richard M. Nixon created Voyageurs, the 36th National Park, with these words. “The uniquely scenic and historic Voyageurs National Park, stands as a monument forever to the dedicated citizens and conservation organizations whose vision, ingenuity and courage match the splendor of this superlative wilderness area. Rich in the history of the early, exciting exploration of our great country, Voyageurs will serve as a living legacy linking generation to generation and century to century.” On April 8, 1975, Voyageurs National Park was established “to preserve for the inspiration and enjoyment of future generations, the outstanding scenery,

geological conditions, and waterway system which constituted part of the historic route of the Voyageurs who contributed significantly to the opening of the Northwestern United States.”

Outstanding scenery, unique geological conditions, and an historic waterway system, all good reasons for creating a National Park in Minnesota.

Land of Lakes

Located on Minnesota’s border with Canada, Voyageurs’ 218,000 acres include four major lakes - Rainy, Kabetogama, Namakan, and Sand Point - and thirty smaller inland lakes that together make up more than a third of the total park area. The smaller inland lakes are scattered throughout the park, but primarily on the Kabetogama Peninsula. The peninsula is Voyageurs’ largest landmass and can be reached by water in summer or over the ice in winter.

Rainy Lake is 60 miles long and 227,604 acres in size; it has 929 miles of shoreline. The park includes 36,418 acres of Rainy Lake. Within the park Rainy Lake has a maximum width of 12 miles, maximum depth of 161 feet, an average depth of 35 feet, and 200 islands.

Kabetogama Lake is 15 miles long and 25,760 acres in size. It has 78 miles of shoreline, a maximum

width of 4 miles, a maximum depth of 80 feet, and 200 islands. All of Kabetogama Lake is in the park.

Namakan Lake is 16 miles long and 25,130 acres in size. It has 146 miles of shoreline, a maximum width of 7 miles, and a maximum depth of 150 feet. The park encompasses 12,323 acres of Namakan Lake.

Sand Point Lake is 8 miles long and 8,869 acres in size. It has 92 miles of shoreline, a maximum width of 5 miles, a maximum depth of 184 feet, and 115 islands. There are 5,179 acres and 66 islands of Sand Point Lake within the park.

The normal pool elevation is 1108 feet above sea level for Rainy Lake and 1118 feet for Kabetogama, Namakan and Sand Point Lakes.

The Past

Voyageurs is a boater's park. Visitors must leave behind their car and explore by boat. In doing so, the visitor of today shares with the voyageur of yesterday nature's challenge to forsake the familiar for the unknown.

For over one hundred years, French- Canadian voyageurs left Montreal for the adventures of the fur trade. Traders and trappers ventured into the Ojibwe Indian territory to trade with them. The traders, trappers and Ojibwe Indians traveled these waters in birch bark canoes. The voyageurs carried tons of European- made trade goods in their canoes and bartered them for furs trapped by the Ojibwe Indians.

The voyageurs canoed the waters in a customary route that became the border between the U.S. and Canada. A portion of that historic route is commemorated in Voyageurs National Park.

These lakes were used from Late Paleoindian times well into the historic era by Native Americans, most recently the Ojibwe or Chippewa. From 1736- 1941, the Bois Forte tribe of the Minnesota Chippewa lived in what is now the park. Their homeland was legally relinquished in the 1866 treaty creating Nett Lake Reservation. However many Bois Forte continued to stay on their traditional lands until the 1930s when children were forced to go to school. The last person moved to Nett Lake in 1941.

In July of 1893 a prospector discovered gold on Little American Island in Rainy Lake. By the spring of 1894

several hundred people had moved into the boom town known as Rainy Lake City which was located on the western end of the Kabetogama Peninsula. The gold business didn't prove very profitable with less than \$5,000 in gold produced at the mine. By 1901 the city was virtually deserted.

Logging for timber, primarily pine, took place in the area from the late 1800s to 1937. At Hoist Bay, 202,735,220 board feet of lumber was hoisted onto railroad cars to be taken to the sawmill in Virginia, Minnesota. Lumber baron E.W. Backus constructed dams at International Falls and Kettle Falls in the early 1900s. The Kettle Falls dam regulates water levels, which in turn generates power as it flows through the International Falls dam. Pulpwood logging, primarily for the production of paper, began in the early 1920s and peaked about 1940. Pulpwood logging continued on the Kabetogama Peninsula until 1971, when Voyageurs National Park was authorized.

Voyageurs National Park is a land steeped in the history of the Native Americans, Voyageurs, gold miners, loggers, commercial fisherman and resort and cabin owners.

The land here at Voyageurs has been uplifted and eroded, heated and tilted, and then finally scraped clean by at least four waves of glaciation, with the last happening over 10,000 years ago. The result is that some of the earth's oldest exposed rock, the Canadian Shield, now lies at the surface within the park.

The Present

Today, around 250,000 people visit the park each year. Visitors can access the park via four points along U.S. Highway 53. From Orr, County Road 23 leads to Crane Lake. County Road 129, also called the Ash River Trail, leads to Ash River. County Road 122 leads to the third entry point, Kabetogama. The fourth road providing access to the park is Minnesota Highway 11 east from International Falls to the Rainy Lake Visitor Center. The park also has visitor centers at Kabetogama and at Ash River. Crane Lake has a Ranger Station.

Visitor destinations include the historic Kettle Falls Hotel built in 1910, and Ellsworth Rock Gardens begun in 1944, as well as many other historic sites.

Visitors to Voyageurs National Park have miles of waterways to explore, hundreds of islands to enjoy, dozens of fish to catch, and over 200 boat-in campsites to call home on a quiet evening.

Nature abounds here. Because of the combination of forest, bog and lake environments, Voyageurs has a wealth of habitats that support a rich diversity of life.

Park naturalist programs allow visitors to safely explore the park. Become a modern- day voyageur on a North Canoe adventure. Take a cruise with a naturalist to the Little American Gold Mine, Kettle Falls Hotel and Dam, or the Ellsworth Rock Gardens. Paddle to nearby islands on a guided canoe trip or join a naturalist for an informative evening program. Bring the young ones to an adventures for kids program, or stop by a visitor center to become a Junior Ranger.

Explore the over 45 miles of hiking, skiing and snowshoe trails that the park has to offer. The park maintains a seven mile ice road in the winter from the Rainy Lake Visitor Center, and monitors and stakes 110 miles of snowmobile trails in winter.