

PETER MACFARLANE (Z73-81) undertaking solo paddle over 740 miles

In about 3 weeks' time, I shall be embarking on a solo through-paddle of the Northern Forest Canoe trail. This is a series of interconnected traditional waterways which stretches from Old Forge, NY, in the south-western Adirondacks, across the Adirondacks and Lake Champlain, through northern Vermont with a loop into Quebec, across northern New Hampshire and way up into northern Maine, finishing at Fort Kent, ME, on the St John River. The total distance is 740 miles, including about 55 miles of portage, and includes flat water and whitewater rivers, both upstream and down, and small and large, exposed lakes.

Not content with challenging myself with this distance, I'm also aiming to complete it within a month, not to race, but because I have to make a living, and a month on the Trail represents a distinct shift of my bank balance for the worse! So I'll have to average about 25 miles per day. Furthermore, I plan to complete it in one of my own cedar-strip canoes, maybe not the best treatment of such a canoe, facing rocky whitewater some of the way, but a fairly extreme form of product testing (the "before" and "after" photos will be interesting)! Another reason to use it is its light weight, which will facilitate portaging (the longest carry is nearly 6 miles). The icing on the challenge cake is that I shall probably start in blackfly season, and remain in it as I progress north. This is the downside of choosing a time of year with long days and probably sufficient water in the rivers. My start date is 19th May, and I aim to finish in mid-June.



I've attached some pictures, mainly of the canoe, kitted out, but also one shot of me doing some white water training. The canoe is no longer pristine, the way it was when it first left the workshop, but any current scratches are superficial, the result of a summer's use, including at a summer camp, and regular handling.

In case you're wondering, yes, they are ski poles in the bow of the canoe. A traditional means of progressing upstream, especially in shallow rapids, is to use a pole to punt the canoe. As I'm using a small canoe, I'm

a little leery of standing in it (OK on flat water, but maybe not moving), and so traditional poling is not an option. Double poling (like skiing), however, while kneeling, has proved possible in (rather limited) trials. Besides, a couple of ski poles are much lighter than a 12-foot spruce pole with a brass shoe.

There's more information about the NFCT at www.NorthernForestCanoeTrail.org and more information about my trip in particular via a link from the landing page of www.OtterCreekSmallcraft.com. There are details there of how to [follow my progress](#) while I'm on the trail - not a live blog, but a series of GPS waypoints on an online map. And I'll be happy to report back after I re-enter society at the end. I'm hoping the tale will be one of triumph, success and self-discovery, not that I wrap the canoe around a rock on day 4 and have to abort. I'd like the ratio of paddling time to planning time to be a little larger than that!



If I seem to be forgetting to send a follow-up report, please feel free to bug me. That's it for now.