



Gros Morne
National Park

Hiking in the Long Range Mountains

A Preparation Guide

Gros Morne National Park
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Introduction

The Long Range Mountains provides hikers with some of the most scenic and challenging hiking terrain in eastern North America. Hiking in the Long Range Mountains is physically and mentally challenging. It is remote, strenuous, and potentially hazardous. There are no built trails on the Long Range although there are a number of suggested backcountry routes. These routes are not marked with signs or maintained in any manner. Hikers need backcountry travel experience, be self-reliant, and proficient using maps, compass, and GPS to navigate unfamiliar wilderness terrain.



Reaching 800 metres out of the bogs along the Gulf of St Lawrence, the ancient Long Range Mountains mark the northern end of the Appalachian mountain range. The arctic-alpine bogs and barrens are home to caribou, moose, arctic hare, and black bear. (S.Stone)

Recommended Routes

Within Gros Morne National Park, there are six recommended backcountry hiking routes leading onto the Long Range Mountains. All are unmarked routes or include sections of unmarked routes that require wilderness navigation skills. These routes vary in length, difficulty, and hiking times but all climb onto the Long Range plateau and are challenging.

1. **Western Brook Pond Gorge** (7-8 hours) – enjoy a challenging guided day hike to the top of Western Brook Pond gorge with Out East Adventures and Bontours. For all additional information on this experience, visit www.bontours.ca or call 1-888-458-2016.



Western Brook Pond gorge, Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism

2. **Snug Harbour to North Rim** (1-2 nights, 24 km) – Backpack the primitive Snug Harbour trail and camp at Snug Harbour. Then day hike to a viewpoint on the cliffs of the North Rim looking down on Western Brook Pond gorge.



North Rim, S. Stone

3. **Ferry Gulch to Bakeapple Pond** (1-2 nights, 20 km) – Backpack along the Gros Morne Mountain trail and camp at Ferry Gulch. Then day hike onto Crow Cliff towards Bakeapple Pond and the view over Ten Mile Pond.
4. **Northern Traverse** (3 nights, 27 km) – Climb onto the Long Range plateau through the rugged gorge at the east end of Western Brook Pond. Then return by a challenging westerly route north of Western Brook Pond.
5. **Long Range Traverse** (3-4 nights, 35 km) – Climb onto the Long Range plateau through the rugged gorge at the east end of Western Brook Pond. Then backpack south across the plateau towards Gros Morne Mountain.



Long Range Traverse, S. Stone

6. **Combined Northern and Long Range Traverse** (5-7 nights, 60 km) – For a longer backpacking route, combine the Northern traverse and Long Range traverse. Access the Long Range plateau by Snug Harbour and then follow the routes east and south towards Gros Morne Mountain.

Important Note:

Hiking times are estimates. Actual times will vary due to weather, delayed departures of the boat shuttle, and individual ability of hikers. Hikers are advised to plan for delays and allow for extra time to complete the hike.

Who Should Hike in the Long Range Mountains?

Hiking in the Long Range Mountains should only be attempted by persons who are physically fit, have good wilderness navigation skills and are experienced in backcountry travel and backpacking. There are no trails on the Long Range. In places you will encounter beaten pathways from previous hikers but they are often indistinguishable from game paths. Hikers need to be experienced at navigating unmarked routes. If nobody in your group has the necessary navigation skills you need to learn and practice them before you arrive or have other hikers with the needed navigation skills join your group. Route finding can be further complicated when low cloud and other weather conditions reduce visibility.

Terrain in the Long Range Mountains can be challenging. You will encounter rocky, steep and sometimes snow covered terrain. You will need to navigate through deep mud, bogs, fast flowing brooks, and across unstable boulders and slick rocks. It is recommended that at least one person in your group have training in wilderness first aid. The area is remote and in case of accidents and injuries, it may take more than 24 hours for help to arrive.

Hiking in the Long Range Mountains should not be attempted by novice hikers. Individuals who have previously injured their ankles, knees, back, or other joints may experience flare-ups while hiking in the Long Range. To avoid unnecessary problems test your strength and endurance on shorter, less demanding backpacking trips prior to hiking in the Long Range. Hiking with a partner or in a small group is strongly recommended. When choosing a hiking group make sure you choose compatible companions and stay together!

Hiking Season

- Spring – mid June to early July
 - Cool temperatures and wet conditions often result in fog or low clouds on the mountains. Frosts and late snowfalls are possible. Expect to encounter large snow beds along the route. Water levels in brooks and ponds will likely be high due to snowmelt, making brook crossings more challenging. The black flies and mosquitos are usually minimal in June.



Hikers should expect to encounter large snow beds along the route from mid June to early July.
(M.Anderson)

- Summer – early July to late August
 - For many hikers, summer's warmer temperatures and greater possibility of extended periods of dry sunny weather make this the preferred time to hike in the Long Range Mountains. Expect fewer and smaller snow beds. Water levels in brooks and ponds tend to be lower, making brook crossings easier. Expect more blackflies, sometimes enough to make travel very uncomfortable.



Warmer and drier summer weather from mid July to late August make for some of the best hiking conditions on the Long Range but expect more blackflies.

- Fall – late August to early October
 - Cool temperatures and hopefully fewer insects can make early September one of the best times to hike in the Long Range Mountains. Expect wetter conditions and an increased likelihood of severe winds later in September and into October. Extended periods (several days) of rainy weather are more likely as well as early frosts and snowfalls. Ground is often saturated and water levels in brooks and ponds tend to be high or rise quickly after rains making brook crossings more challenging. Black flies have subsided by mid-September but you can still expect to encounter them.

Reservations, Quotas, and Fees

Long Range and Northern Traverses

To maintain a high quality hiking experience and to minimize the impact of hikers on the environment, the park uses a quota system. Only 3 groups (with a maximum of 4 people per group) per day are permitted to depart on the Long Range traverse and 2 groups per day for the Northern traverse.

Reservations are required to guarantee your departure date. During peak season (mid-July to end of August) the daily quota is often fully booked. Visitors are encouraged to book early. Check the park website for more information on when and how to make a reservation.

All Long Range hikers require a Backcountry Permit plus a National Park Entry Permit which must be valid for the entire duration of their stay. For our latest fees, please consult our website at (<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/nl/grosmorne/visit/tarifs-fees>).

Important Note:

Your Backcountry Permit will be issued upon arrival in Gros Morne National Park. Permits must be picked up at the Gros Morne National Park Visitor Center by **4:00 p.m. the day before your reserved start date**. At that time, we will gather your emergency contact information and expected return date. We will also provide you with any updated route conditions and outline procedures for emergencies and rescues on the Long Range.

If arriving without a reservation, report to the Visitor Centre and check with staff for availability. There is no guarantee you can be accommodated.

Snug Harbour and Ferry Gulch Routes

Check the park website for more information on reservations for the Snug Harbour and Ferry Gulch primitive campsites. There is a fee for these campsites and are in addition to park entry fees. For our latest fees, please consult our website at (<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/nl/grosmorne/visit/tarifs-fees>).

Route Access

The **Long Range** and **Northern traverses** are both accessed by the Western Brook Pond trail and the gorge at the east end of Western Brook Pond. To reach the gorge, hikers must take the Western Brook Pond boat tour or the shuttle boat. These services are generally available from June 1 to September 30 but are subject to weather and seasonal conditions. Hikers need to contact Bontours at bontours.ca or 1-888-458-2016 for reservations and ticket purchases.

Important Note:

Hikers will not be allowed to disembark at the back of Western Brook Pond unless they have a valid backcountry hiking permit.

Hikers doing the Long Range traverse will need to arrange return transportation as the start and finish of this route is 35 kilometres apart. We recommend leaving your car at the finish and arranging for a taxi to take you to the start of the route. Taxis should be arranged 1-2 days prior to your departure.

Snug Harbour to North Rim and the combined **Northern and Long Range traverse** is accessed by the Western Brook Pond and Snug Harbour trails. These routes will require fording Western Brook. In June and later in September, hikers can expect deep (up to 1 metre) and cold water. Hikers are advised to ford the brook just upstream of where the brook drains from the pond. In this location, the water is at its shallowest and the current at its weakest.

Ferry Gulch to Bakeapple Pond route is accessed by the Gros Morne Mountain trail. Hikers should note that in June there can be significant late snow beds in the Ferry Gulch portion of the trail creating challenging hiking and navigation conditions. Also the summit portion of the Gros Morne Mountain trail is closed from May 1 to the last Friday in June.

Preparing to Hike in the Long Range – What do I Need?

Navigation skills

- All the above Long Range backcountry hikes require navigating unmarked routes. Hikers need to be experienced navigating in wilderness terrain.
- We recommend that more than one person in the group be proficient in using topographic maps, GPS, and compass for navigation. If you or members of your group don't have the navigation skills, learn and practice them before you arrive, have someone with the required navigation skills join your group, or hire a guide. This trek should not be your first time navigating with map, compass, and GPS.
- Route finding can be difficult when low cloud and other weather conditions reduce visibility. Mountain weather is highly unpredictable and can change quickly. Be prepared to wait if weather makes navigation too difficult or impossible.

GPS track files

- A GPS track file by itself is not a substitute for good route finding skills.
- Download the GPS track file from the Parks Canada website of the suggested Parks Canada route and load into your GPS.
- There are other GPS track files available on the internet but a GPS track file is only as good as the quality of its information. What do you know about the source of the track

file you will be using? Is it a tested and safe route? Although you are free to choose your own route, it is recommended that you also download the track file of the suggested Parks Canada route as backup.

- Load the appropriate topographic maps into your GPS.
- A GPS track file is only good if your GPS is working. What is your back-up if your GPS breaks, loses power, or gets lost? (**Note:** GPS devices such as smartphones that rely on access to data networks will not work on the Long Range.)

Maps

- For hiking the Long Range Traverse or from Ferry Gulch to Bakeapple Pond, obtain NTS map sheet 12H/12 *Gros Morne*.
- For hiking from Snug Harbour to the North Rim viewpoint, obtain NTS map sheet 12H/13 *St Pauls*.
- For hiking the Northern Traverse obtain NTS map sheets 12H/13 *St Pauls* and 12H/12 *Gros Morne*.
- Caution, know which datum your map sheet is. Older map sheets will be NAD27 while, newer versions will be NAD83. If using a GPS, ensure both the map sheet and GPS are using the same datum.
- If using a compass to navigate, ensure you correct for magnetic declination.
- For more information on using topographic maps down load Natural Resources Canada – [Topographic Maps: The Basics](#).

Tip:

Topographic maps 12H/12 *Gros Morne* and 12H/13 *St Pauls* are available through the Gros Morne Co-operating Association (709-458-3605) and can also be purchased at the Visitor Centre.

Trip plan - Before you leave for your hike, prepare a trip plan and leave it with a responsible person (e.g., friend or family member). Detail where you are going, with whom, when you plan to return, and what to do if you do not return as planned. Your park permit does not fulfil this role. Check out adventuresmart.ca for advice on creating a trip plan and sample trip plans.

First Aid - The area is remote and in case of accidents and injuries, it may take more than 24 hours for help to arrive. You must be self-reliant. It is recommended that at least one person in the party have wilderness first aid training. Carry a first aid kit suitable for blisters, cuts, sprains, breaks and insect bites.

Think of your Feet

Hiking boots are strongly recommended. Do not break in new boots on this hike. Be able to treat blisters adequately. Apply moleskin to blister prone areas **before** starting to hike. Take extra socks and assume your feet will get wet.

Equipment

When choosing equipment, your main consideration should be keeping yourself warm and dry. Choose quality, lightweight equipment and clothing designed for cool, wet, windy conditions. Synthetic or wool clothing is best as they provide warmth when wet. (Cotton clothing is not recommended.) Consider putting your clothes and sleeping bag in light weight dry bags. Take extra food in case you get delayed. Have the capability to quickly prepare hot meals and drinks. Carefully select and test all of your equipment.

How Much to Carry

Your pack should fit well and weigh no more than 30% of your body weight for men and 25% for women. Before you leave home, test pack your pack. Reassess your pack contents if your pack is too heavy. Be realistic - every ounce counts. Minimize packaging to reduce weight and garbage.

What to Take – Equipment List

Core Items

- Backpack and waterproof pack cover and dry bags
- Lightweight tent with rain fly and groundsheet (Tent should have a minimum 3 season rating and able to withstand high winds.)
- Sleeping bag and insulating sleeping pad
- Stove, fuel, cook set and matches
- Water bottle and purification kit
- Food for trip, plus 2 extra days supply of food and fuel
- 30' (9 m) of sturdy cord (to secure your tent to tent platforms)
- Litterbag
- Map, compass, GPS (with extra batteries)
- Toilet paper and small trowel
- Insect repellent/bug head net
- Pocketknife
- Repair kit for equipment
- First aid and blister kits
- Flashlight/headlamp and batteries
- Whistle for emergencies

Clothing

- Sturdy, comfortable, broken-in hiking boots
- Waterproof/windproof jacket and pants
- Insulating layers (wool and synthetics are best)
- Extra change of clothes and socks
- Wool hat and mittens
- Sun hat, sun glasses and sunscreen
- Bug head net
- Gaiters

Optional

- Signaling device (SPOT, InReach, satellite phone, etc.)
- Lightweight tarp (useful in rainy weather)
- Bear spray
- Bug jacket
- Antihistamine (in case of allergic reactions to insect bites)
- Trekking pole(s) (helpful on snow beds, in rocky fern covered areas, on steep descents, for crossing brooks, and erecting tarp.)
- Sandals or light weight shoes (for around camp)
- Shorts (It can get hot in summer.)

Tip:

Make sure all gear is inside your pack. Gear hanging off your pack can be ripped off as you are climbing up onto the Long Range or through *tuckamore*. Losing a compass or jacket can be disastrous.

Safety in the Long Range

• Wildlife

- **Moose** are commonly seen on the Long Range but are generally not aggressive. As with all wild animals, do not approach them and be mindful of their escape route. Moose are likely to be more aggressive in the spring and early summer when cows are very protective of their new born calves or in late September to mid-October when bulls are in rut. An aggressive moose will charge in an attempt to drive you away. If this occurs, seek protection behind a tree or large rock. An attack may be imminent when their ears are back, they are licking their lips, the hair on their hump is raised, or the moose is walking stiffly towards you. Back up slowly until the moose turns away and leaves.
- **Coyote** encounters are very rare in Gros Morne National Park. Usually you will just see a coyote in the distance or hear them yipping at night. To prevent unwanted visits from coyotes, keep a clean campsite and never feed them. Should a coyote approach, stand your ground and never run. If the animal comes too close, be aggressive – use a low/deep voice, shout, wave, throw rocks or sticks, keep your eye on the animal and do not turn and run.
- **Black bear** encounters are uncommon. To prevent unwanted visits from bears, keep a clean campsite, never feed them, and cook, store food and garbage away from your sleeping area. Use metal food lockers where provided. Bear spray can be effective but be sure you understand the manufacturer's directions.
- **Blackflies, mosquitos** and other small biting insects are common in the Long Range Mountains. They pose no health risk but they are an annoyance and at times they can be almost unbearable. Some people have an allergic reaction and exhibit swelling in areas where they have been bitten multiple times, especially around the eyes, face, neck, and hands.
 - Carry and use insect repellent.
 - Wear light colour clothing.
 - Cover up. Use a hat or bug head net, wear long sleeves and pants (tuck pants into socks). A bug jacket may be useful but can be easily torn on the thick brush.
 - Exposed windy areas and cool air over snow beds can provide some relief.
 - Bring antihistamine if prone to allergic reactions.

• Terrain

- **Steep Terrain** – Take care when ascending Western Brook Gorge and descending into Ferry Gulch. Both sections are steep with loose and/or slippery rock, and mud.
- **Tuckamore** – A Newfoundland term for dense stunted forest common in the Long Range Mountain's windswept alpine zone and an obstacle to be avoided by hikers. Consisting of mainly spruce and fir, this forest has been shaped by the wind into a matted mix of twisted and sturdy tree branches and trunks. Too dense to walk through, too low to walk under, too high to step over, *tuckamore* is often impenetrable to hikers. If you need to go through it, find an existing game path to follow or retrace your steps to open terrain and find a way around it. Forcing your way through *tuckamore* is exhausting and can tear your clothes and backpack as well as tear away gear strapped onto your pack. It is quicker and easier to walk around *tuckamore* than go through it.
- **Snow Beds** (late snow pack) – Take care crossing edges as melting weakens this area first. Look for weak spots in the middle where trees and rocks protrude or where brooks flow underneath.

- **Weather** – Regardless of season, hikers should prepare for wet, cold, windy conditions, and heavy rains.
 - **Reduced Visibility** – due to fog/rain/snow. Stay put or take extra care while navigating.
 - **High Winds** – a common occurrence in the Long Range. Clothing and gear should be suitable. Avoid setting up tent on exposed areas and tie it down securely.
 - **Lightning** – Avoid exposed high ground during electrical storms.
 - **Heavy Rain/Flooding** – Brooks may rise rapidly, take care crossing brooks. Camp in well drained areas and away from low spots around ponds. Watch for signs of hypothermia.
 - **Snowfalls** – can occur in early June and late September. Be prepared for cold wet conditions. In these conditions hypothermia is a real concern.
- **Drinking Water**
 - Assume all water is contaminated, you never know what is upstream. All drinking water should be purified, boiled, or filtered.
 - Access to water is limited along the Northern traverse between Snug Harbour and Triangle Pond. Elsewhere water is readily available.

Backcountry Etiquette/Low Impact Camping

Plan to leave Gros Morne National Park in as good or better condition than you found it. The *National Parks Act* protects all the natural and cultural resources within Gros Morne National Park. It is an offence to harm, collect, remove, destroy or deface any natural or cultural heritage resources within the park. ***This includes cutting trees for firewood or makeshift shelters*** as well as collecting or removing antlers, fossils, artifacts, rocks, and plants.

Use a stove. Fires are not permitted. Do not rely on fires for cooking, staying warm or drying out.

Support safe water – Use pit toilets that are available at all designated campsites. Elsewhere, dig a hole 20 centimetres (7 inch) deep, at least 30 metres (100 feet or three bus lengths) away from water sources and well off commonly travelled routes. Bury the human waste. Pack out toilet paper and dispose of in pit toilets. Pack out all feminine hygiene products.

Waste Water – Dispose of any dirty water at least 30 metres from water sources and campsites. Use only biodegradable soap.

Your actions can kill wildlife and endanger hikers. – Keep a clean campsite. Cook and prepare food away from your tent and tent platforms. Store your food, garbage and toiletries out of reach of animals and away from tents. Use the metal food lockers available at each campsite. If camping at an undesignated site, hang your food pack, toiletries and garbage at least 3 m off the ground. If there are no trees, store them on the ground 50 metres away from your tent.

Pack it in, pack it out. – There are no garbage cans on the Long Range. Everything you pack in you must pack out, including orange peels, feminine hygiene products, tarps, ropes, and wet clothes. Before arriving at the trail, minimize packaging to reduce garbage and weight. Pit toilets and food lockers are not for garbage.

Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.

In Case of Emergency

How to Contact Help in an Emergency

Cell phone coverage in the Long Range Mountains is limited and should not be considered a reliable signaling device. In emergencies you may need to get a message to park staff with the help of other hikers or with one of your own group.

Technologies such as “SPOT”, “InReach”, satellite phones, and VHF radios are effective for emergency communications in the Long Range Mountains. If using one of these devices, be familiar with its use and operation. Make sure to let your contact person know how to contact Parks Canada in case of emergency.

Emergency number for Gros Morne National Park is 1-877-852-3100

In Case of Injury

If you are injured but can hike and don't need immediate medical attention. – Take care of any injuries and continue hiking with the assistance of your party or other hikers.

- Consider slowing your hike or resting a day. If you realise you will be overdue from your expected return date by more than a day, try to get a message to park staff of your situation.
- If your condition worsens re-evaluate and consider the need for evacuation.

If you are seriously injured and unable to continue hiking. – Take care of any injuries, keep hydrated and warm. Get a message to Park staff with the name of the injured person and the group leader, exact location (provide map coordinates) where the injured person is, the time and description of the medical emergency and related injuries, whether first aid is being administered and if possible, any related medical problems.

Parks Canada will begin a rescue operation when it receives your message for help. We will assess the urgency of the incident, consider weather, the safety and availability of rescue personnel and resources. Rescue can be delayed by hours or days depending on weather. Poor visibility and high winds are common factors that delay rescues.

Important Note:

Minor complaints such as blisters, sore feet, bug bites, fatigue and lack of food do not warrant evacuation. Rescues are not taken lightly. They put rescuers at risk and cost thousands of dollars.

Each hiking party is responsible for assisting injured members of their party. Injured hikers should not be abandoned to wait for assistance on their own!

If You Become Lost

You must stay put, make your camp as visible as possible, take care of any injuries, keep hydrated and be patient. Park staff track when hikers are due to return and will initiate a search for over-due hikers. A group is not automatically considered over-due on their

expected return date. Delays due to weather are common when rain, low cloud and reduced visibility make navigation more difficult. Based on weather conditions, we typically allow hikers an extra day or more before initiating a search.

Important Note:

Prevent unnecessary searches. After completing your trip, all hikers must report back to Park staff and return their backcountry permit indicating they have returned safely.