



Northern Traverse

Route Description

The Northern Traverse (formerly the North Rim Traverse) is an unmarked and rugged backcountry hiking route. It is known to be a demanding hike, because of its terrain and the large tracks of *tuckamore*¹ that hikers need to navigate around and through. This is a route more suited for those hikers looking to experience challenging terrain and testing their route finding skills. Although shorter than the Long Range traverse, the Northern traverse is considered to be significantly more difficult. Unlike many portions of the Long Range Traverse, this route does not follow large valleys or have obvious natural landmarks to follow. Hikers should not underestimate the difficulty of this route. Do not expect an open landscape that is easy to navigate. **GPS trackfiles and waypoints are strongly recommended for this route. Be sure you are proficient using a GPS.**

As with the Long Range traverse, the Northern traverse starts by climbing onto the Long Range plateau through the rugged gorge at the east end of Western Brook Pond. The route then returns to Snug Harbour and the western end of Western Brook Pond by a westerly route to the north of the pond. The route is 33 kilometres long and usually takes 3 nights to complete. The suggested route offers spectacular views of Western Brook Pond only at the eastern and western ends of the hike. The rest of the hike you are travelling the sub-arctic terrain of the Long Range Mountains.

To reach the gorge, hikers must take the Western Brook Pond boat tour. Hikers need to contact Bontours at bontours.ca or 1-888-458-2016 for reservations and ticket purchases.

Note: Coordinates are provided as Universal Transverse Mercator UTM Zone U21, North American Datum 1983 (NAD 83).

¹ *Tuckamore* – a Newfoundland term for dense stunted forest consisting of mainly spruce and fir. This forest is shaped by the wind into a matted mix of twisted and sturdy tree branches and trunks. It is virtually impassable to hikers.

Leg	Start	End	Distance (approx.)	Elevation Gain/Loss	Description
1	Western Brook Pond (Waypoint LR-1) 21U 452380m E / 5507076m N	to Top of Western Brook Gorge (Waypoint NT-1) 21U 455550m E / 5506083m N	4.0 km	560 m/-60 m	<p>The ascent onto the Long Range mountains through Western Brook Pond gorge is the most strenuous and possibly the most spectacular part of the entire route. The ascent up the gorge is rugged with thick vegetation in places and climbs over 600 metres in elevation over a distance of 4 kilometres. Do not underestimate the difficulty of this section of the route and give yourself plenty of time to complete it before dark. We recommend you start this no later than noon to ensure you have sufficient daylight to reach the campsite at Gilley Pond.</p> <p>From the dock at the back of Western Brook Pond (Waypoint LR-1) head east towards the back of the gorge. In this area a beaten path from previous hikers will lead you past a small pond in a meadow and to the brook draining down the gorge. After heavy rains this pond may flood making it necessary to skirt around the pond through the woods to the north.</p> <p>Stay close to the brook and continue heading east towards the back of the gorge. Depending on the water level, you will likely cross the brook several times. In this area, frequent flooding and occasional rock falls can obscure or alter the route. Watch for pathways from previous hikers and remember there is no need to go very far from the brook. After about 2.5 kilometres you will reach a large waterfall (454800m E / 5506121m N) (Waypoint LR-2).</p> <p>To get around the waterfall, stay to the right and work your way up through the steep wooded slope. Look for a beaten path from previous hikers. As the slope lessens and when you are above the waterfall, head left back towards the brook until you reach the exposed rock slab at UTM 455059m E/ 5506050m N (Waypoint LR-3). Follow the rock slab east to UTM 455550m E / 5506083m N (Waypoint NT-1).</p>
2	Top of Western Brook Gorge (Waypoint NT-1) 21U 455550m E / 5506083m N	to Campsite: Gilley Pond (Waypoint NT-3) 21U 454729m E / 5507890m N	2.5 km	180 m/-125 m	<p>From the top of the rock slab, take the small valley to the northwest. At the back of the valley, climb and descend the saddle (UTM 455545m E /5506764m N) (Waypoint NT-2) and hike around the eastern side of the unnamed pond. Continue to the northwest passing another two ponds. The last pond is Gilley Pond and the campsite (Waypoint NT-3) is on the northeast corner of the pond. The campsite is equipped with a bear box but no tent pads.</p>

2a	Optional Side trip Waypoint NT-2 21U 455545m E / 5506764m N to View of Western Brook Pond (Waypoint NT-2a) 21U 454906m E / 5506665m N	600 m (optional)		<p>If time permits, there is an incredible view of Western Brook Pond at UTM 454906m E / 5506665m N (Waypoint NT-2a), approximately 600 metres from waypoint NT-2. Take a northerly route around the pond to the viewpoint. Caution, the cliffs are very steep here!</p>
3	Campsite: Gilley Pond (Waypoint NT-3) 21U 454729m E / 5507890m N to Campsite: Triangle Pond (Waypoint NT-6) 21U 449777m E / 5512197m N	8.5 km	480 m/-380 m	<p>This section of the route traverses a series of rocky ridges. Between each ridge you will cross linear strips of <i>tuckamore</i> and boggy areas. Look for natural leads through the <i>tuckamore</i>. There are few distinguishing land marks along this section. To stay on track, generally head perpendicular to the ridges and use your map to reference the ponds as you pass them. It is a good idea to continuously scout your route from each high point. On this leg of the route, there are few sites suitable for camping. Plan on reaching the campsite at Triangle Pond in one day.</p> <p>From Gilley Pond head in a northwest direction to a ridge at UTM 452772m E / 5510353m N (Waypoint NT-4). Descend off the ridge in westerly direction before resuming a northwesterly course to Triangle Pond. There is a natural lead through the <i>tuckamore</i> starting at UTM 450846m E / 5511330m N (Waypoint NT-5) which will lead to the top of the hill overlooking Triangle Pond. Follow the north shore of the pond to the campsite at UTM 449777m E / 5512197m N (Waypoint NT-6).</p>
4	Campsite: Triangle Pond (Waypoint NT-6) 21U 449777m E / 5512197m N to Top of North Rim access trail (Waypoint NR-4) 21U 444783m E / 5513271m N	6.5 km	100 m/-205 m	<p><i>Tuckamore Tangle</i></p> <p>This section of the route is the most difficult to navigate as it traverses extensive tracks of <i>tuckamore</i>. There are few viable routes through this area and hiking through dense <i>tuckamore</i> is extremely difficult and should be avoided. Many hikers have become lost in this area or have spent an unplanned night camped in the <i>tuckamore</i>. If the <i>tuckamore</i> becomes too dense, be prepared to back track and look for an alternate route. The suggested Parks Canada route follows natural leads and game paths through the <i>tuckamore</i>. Moose and other game animals often maintain paths between open areas of bog or rocky barrens.</p> <p>Finding routes around or through this <i>tuckamore</i> can be very challenging and should not be attempted when visibility is poor. There is little access to water along this section of the route. Take sufficient water to get you to Snug Harbour. Get an early start and give yourself plenty of time to complete this section. If you must push your way through the <i>tuckamore</i>, be sure everything is securely fastened to your pack or risk losing it!!</p>

				<p>Start by heading west from the campsite to the end of Triangle Pond. At the end of the pond continue west staying in the bottom of the valley. The <i>tuckamore</i> here is relatively open and finding a route should not be too difficult. After about 1 kilometre past the pond you will come to a rocky river bed (often dry) at UTM 447802m E / 5512153m N (Waypoint NT-7). Follow the brook northwest for approximately 400 metres to UTM 447436m E / 5512301m N (Waypoint NT-8). From here head southwest finding natural leads through the <i>tuckamore</i> to a rock outcrop at UTM 447263m E / 5512014m N (Waypoint NT-9).</p> <p>From waypoint NT-9 head west along the rocky ridge for about 1 kilometre, avoiding most of the <i>tuckamore</i>. Small patches of <i>tuckamore</i> can be avoided or look for game paths through them. At UTM 446025m E / 5512046m N (Waypoint NT-10) you will find a game path leading through a section of <i>tuckamore</i>. This game path leads to a small bog at UTM 445799m E / 5512147m N (Waypoint NT-11). From this point follow the narrow bog in a southwesterly direction and find the game path through a band of <i>tuckamore</i> to UTM 445665m E / 5511957m N (Waypoint NT-12). From here the terrain is open and easy to navigate. Take a northwesterly route for about 1 kilometre until UTM 444699m E / 5512866m N (Waypoint NR-5) then head north for about 500 metres, descending the hill to the start of the North Rim access trail leading to Snug Harbour. The start of the trail is marked by a large boulder at UTM 444783m E / 5513271m N (Waypoint NR-4).</p>
4a	<p>Optional Side trip</p> <p>North Rim plateau (Waypoint NR-5) to North Rim viewpoint (Waypoint NR-6) 21U 444699m E / 5512866m N 21U 444525m E / 5512029m N</p>	2.0 km (optional)		<p>If time permits and visibility is good, a short side trip to the North Rim viewpoint overlooking the gorge of Western Brook Pond is worthwhile. At UTM 444699m E / 5512866m N (Waypoint NR-5), head south for about 1 kilometre towards the viewpoint at UTM 444525m E / 5512029m N (Waypoint NR-6). Take care to navigate around patches of <i>tuckamore</i> and when nearing the cliff edge, approach with caution. Six hundred metres is a long drop. Continue to Snug Harbour by retracing your route to UTM 444699m E / 5512866m N (Waypoint NR-5) and the start of the North Rim access trail at UTM 444783m E / 5513271m N (Waypoint NR-4).</p>

5	Top of North Rim access trail (Waypoint NR-4) 21U 444783m E / 5513271m N	to	Campsite: Snug Harbour (Waypoint NR-2) 21U 442364m E / 5513790m N	4.0 km	15 m/-570 m	The access trail descending to Snug Harbour is not maintained. The trail is rough often very muddy and slippery in steep sections. In places, yellow markers have been placed on trees to help guide you. The trail ends on the shore of Western Brook Pond at UTM 442726m E / 5513801m N (Waypoint NR-3). The Snug Harbour campsite is about 50 metres west along the shore.
6	Campsite: Snug Harbour (Waypoint NR-2) 21U 442364m E / 5513790m N	to	Western Brook Pond outflow (Waypoint NR-1) 21U 439644m E / 5515421m N	4.5 km	65 m/-65 m	The route from Snug Harbour to the outflow of Western Brook Pond is unmarked and requires wilderness navigation skills. The route follows a combination of shoreline and an unmaintained and unmarked trail. The trail is in poor condition and in places is very muddy and overgrown. Once at the outflow of the pond (UTM 439644m E / 5515421m N) (Waypoint NR-1), you will need to ford the brook to reach the Western Brook Pond trail. Hikers are advised to ford the brook just above the outflow from the pond where the water is at its shallowest and the current at its weakest.
7	Western Brook Pond outflow (Waypoint NR-1) 21U 439644m E / 5515421m N	to	Western Brook Pond Trail Head 21U 437068m E / 5515346m N	3.0 km	30 m/-40 m	After crossing the brook it is an easy 3 kilometre walk to the Western Brook Pond trail head and parking lot.
Total				33.0 km	1430 m/-1445 m	