

## **Wilderness Traverse 2018 Race Course**

### **Section 1 – 16 km Trek**

After a hearty breakfast courtesy of Grand Tappatoo Resort followed by a 45 minute bus ride, teams will limber up on the shores of Go Home Lake. When the gun goes off, teams will face an immediate decision of a quick 50m swim across a bay and a short bushwhack or a 1km run around on roads. Or will teams opt to try to locate the Five Winds Ski Club trail located to the southeast that would lead them directly to CP1? Your guess is as good as ours. The first trek is highlighted with nice, open forests on ridgelines that run in the direction teams will be travelling. If routes are selected wisely, it could make for speedy off-trail travel. The direct route to CP1 will require a 100m swim across the Gibson River, while a 1 km detour west would provide a dry crossing in a small canyon. The direct route to CP2 would again traverse open ridges, while those less comfortable with the compass may opt to run the Five Winds Ski trail to the west side of McCrae Lake then follow the shoreline to the CP. The big route choice of the leg comes between CP2 and CP3 where the more amphibious may opt to swim and island hop on a direct line south. Those looking for drier terrain have the option of going east or west around the shores of McCrae Lake and picking up trails where they can. Into CP4/TA1, all teams will hike and run on trail past Crow's Cliff and a stunning view back over the terrain they've just navigated.

### **Section 2 – 60 km Mountain Bike**

The 1<sup>st</sup> mountain bike leg will favour teams who are strong technical riders, adept at hopping off and on the bike to avoid the odd beaver pond, and those who can power through on road sections. The ability to quickly fix any mechanical problem could also come into play as some trails are rough with plenty of roots, rocks and sticks looking for a tire to puncture quickly or a rear derailleur to disrupt. Most of the route follows the "C" snowmobile trail, a major artery for the sled-heads in winter. In summer, most sections see limited to extensive use by ATVs which can keep the vegetation down but also create countless mud holes. If the rains have been steady or heavy in the weeks leading up to the race, said mud holes will be full, while if it's been dry there will be edges to quickly ride around. Halfway through the ride, teams will have a short reprieve on a motorboat to cross the Musquash River as the bridge above the Ragged Rapids Generating plant is being replaced, and this was the only way to get them across safely and efficiently. Coming into TA3 on the shores of Kapikog Lake, we're certain most participants will be looking forward to letting their legs rest as they head off on an epic canoe leg through the Moon River watershed.

### **Section 3 – 37 km Paddle and Portage**

Teams with four racers will take two canoes and teams with three racers will share one boat as they launch on Kapikog Lake. It's more comfortable with two paddlers but a strong team of three paddlers can make good time with a single canoe, especially on a route with so many portages. This beautiful Canadian Shield lake is surrounded by thick forest and rocky shoreline, dotted with islands and lined with cottages along its south shore, which the teams will follow. Lead teams will start this section in mid-afternoon but the sun sets around 7 p.m. so even the fastest teams will finish paddling in the dark. Some teams farther back will do the entire paddle in the dark but they'll have the advantage of daylight for their final trek. This is also the cut-off point for

the Short Course. Teams arriving after 22:00 will paddle north directly to the finish line at Grand Tappattoo Resort, taking a different route through a series of lakes and portages.

Portages are not marked between TA2 and the first CP on the paddle route, a distance of 16 km along a chain of narrow lakes and ponds, including five portages totaling 2.5 km. This section has no road access and is not a heavily used canoe route; it feels very wild. It will favour teams with strong navigators who can locate the portage trails quickly and follow them through rocky terrain where trails may not be obvious.

After teams cross the 1260 m portage to the Moon River, they will have a 2 km paddle to CP7 at Curtain Chute. The three portages on the Moon River, CPs 7-9 are well mapped and mandatory, as they take teams around areas with rapids and small waterfalls. Volunteers will be present and will place lanterns to mark the places where teams should bring their canoes ashore. After teams portage past spectacular Moon Falls, they will paddle out into Arnolds Bay and on to Moon River Bay. But they're not out of the woods yet! They still need to portage 770 m into Healey Lake to visit CP10 at the public boat launch then they will follow the mandatory route through Conger Lake and portage to Blackstone Harbour where they will get off the water at the public dock at Pete's Place Access Point in The Massasauga Provincial Park. The leaders should arrive shortly after dark while the final teams are expected shortly before sunrise.

#### Section 4 – 13 km Trek

Teams will be ready to get back on their feet after 5.5 to 9 hours of paddling. From Pete's Place, they'll head north on their way out of beautiful The Massasauga Provincial Park and into an area of Crown Land. Classic Canadian Shield country awaits with often featureless terrain. Teams will find ponds, creeks, beaver dams, towering forests, crystal clear lakes and a surprising amount of rocky climb and descent for a "flat" trek. Several sensitive wetland areas within the Park have been marked out of bounds to protect them from disturbance. Teams will need to plan their routes carefully and watch their compasses as they weave around the wetlands, lakes and creeks in this area where no trails travel in the right direction for long. They will need to be precise to find three checkpoints along the way, CPs 12-14. This could prove tricky in the dark, which is when most racers will be trekking here, and it could be difficult to relocate since one body of water can look much like any other at night! CP15 at the Weeks Gravel Pit on Salmon Lake Road is also TA4, where teams will pick up their bikes.

#### Section 5 – 12 km Mountain Bike

The home stretch! If teams have made it this far and if they didn't damage their bikes during their earlier ride through technical terrain, this short ride on good roads should be a piece of cake – as long as the cramps, sleep monsters and exhaustion from traveling up to 30 hours through 140 kilometres of Ontario's toughest terrain stay at bay. They'll cross the finish line on the sandy beach at Grand Tappattoo Resort where they can get some sleep then enjoy a coffee – or other beverage - on the patio overlooking scenic Otter Lake.