

A TRAIL FOR ALL SEASONS

The Blue Water South trail stretches from Old Pinawa to Great Falls. Where might it lead *you*?

The Trans Canada Trail is the world's longest network of trails, stretching from St. John's, Nfld. in the east to Victoria, B.C. in the west, to Inuvik, NT in the north. Canadians and visitors are using the trail to hike, cycle, ski, snowshoe, horseback ride, canoe, and snowmobile. And did you know Lac du Bonnet has its very own portion of it?

The Border to Beaches project is a trail completion initiative of Trails Manitoba supported by the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) and local trail associations. The goal is a fully-built, high-quality trail winding 370 kilometres from the rugged terrain of eastern Manitoba to the sun and sand of Lake Winnipeg's beaches. The trail will showcase two of Manitoba's tourism gems: Grand Beach Provincial Park and Whiteshell Provincial Park.

The portion of the TCT in the Lac du Bonnet area is called Blue Water South, and it extends from the Pinawa Dam Provincial Park to Great Falls, a distance of approximately 37 kilometers. The Lac du Bonnet Trails Association has been working with the Border to Beaches committee to complete our section of trail by 2015, with construction planned to begin on some gaps in 2014.

The Pinawa Dam site contains what remains of the first year-round operating hydroelectric generating station in Manitoba, and is located midway between the towns of Pinawa and Lac du Bonnet on the Pinawa Channel.

From the Pinawa Heritage Park, the trail heads west along Pinawa Hill Road, then heads north, then west again to follow the edge of the Lee River Wildlife Management Area. The trail winds northeast through Crown land and crosses Tower Road, where it continues north through another section of Lee River WMA. This section of trail is boreal forest, with rock outcroppings and black spruce providing ample opportunities for wildlife viewing.

At the north end of the Lee River WMA, the trail takes a turn east, then heads north, crossing Hwy. 313 and continuing north until it gets to Old Pointe Road. The trail heads west along this municipal road, arriving at the Winnipeg River bridge. This is the location of Bridge Park, complete with a boat launch, parking lot, picnic tables, and washroom facilities.

The trail continues across the bridge on the pedestrian walkway, heading west on the north side of Hwy. 313 until it arrives at Blueberry Rock Drive. At this point it heads north on the municipal road, winding through an area that was excavated for clay years ago, eventually arriving in the parking lot of the Blueberry Rock hiking trail system.

The Blueberry Rock hiking trails are favoured by locals for their granite rock ridges, lookout tower that provides a view of the Winnipeg River, picnic tables, fire pits and



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accessibility to the town of Lac du Bonnet. The north end of the trail crosses Blueberry Rock Drive and follows Mackenzie Point Road, a short municipal road that leads to the dike along the Winnipeg River.

The dike is a perfect place to ride a bike or a horse, or just go for a walk alongside the wide expanse of the Winnipeg River. The trail stays on the dike for approximately five kilometres before turning west at Crescent Bay Road to cross Hwy. 11, then turns north to continue along a hydro transmission road for about another five kilometres before it heads east to cross Hwy. 11 once again, arriving back on the dike. From here the trail stays on the dike right into Great Falls, which is the northern boundary of the Blue Water South trail.

The dream of construction of the Trans Canada Trail to unite all Canadians from coast-to-coast started in 1992. The goal for completion is 2017, its 25th anniversary, the 150th anniversary of Confederation, and the 100th anniversary of the Rural Municipality of Lac du Bonnet. What better way to commemorate these significant events than to hike, cycle, ski, ride a horse, snowshoe, or snowmobile on the national legacy that is the Trans Canada Trail?

For more info on the Blue Water South trail, visit: trailsmanitoba.ca/explore-manitoba-trails/border-to-beaches/blue-water-south/

-Kathy Picard is president of the Lac du Bonnet Trails Association