

GETTING HERE VIA SOUTH CANOL ROAD



Detail description of the journey from Whitehorse to Frances Lake

The adventurous option via South Canol Road: On the Alaska Highway 130 km east to Johnson's Crossing (1.5 h driving time). Afterwards along the South Canol Road (Hwy 6) 220 km north just before Ross River (about 5 – 7 h driving time) and another 180 km east along the Campbell Highway (Hwy 4) to Frances Lake (about 3 h driving time). **All in all 530 km or 10 – 12 h driving time.**

The South Canol Road is a narrow and winding mountain road. Take your time and allow 2 days for the entire trip; there are nice campgrounds along the way.

From Whitehorse, you will make good progress on the paved **Alaska Highway** until **Johnson's Crossing**, where an impressive steel bridge leads up high across the Teslin River. With a span of 540 m this is the third longest bridge along the entire Alaska Highway. Shortly after the bridge, on your left, there is the turn off to the South Canol Road.

Although the **South Canol Road** from Johnson's Crossing to Ross River provides the shortest distance between Whitehorse and Frances Lake, it requires the longest driving time of any route, due to its narrow and winding course. Depending on current road conditions, you won't be driving much faster than 30 – 50 km/h. The gravel road is little maintained and is closed for most of the year except a few months in summer (and even then it can be closed at times). *Get up-to-date road information before heading out* in a Yukon Visitor Information Centre or online at www.511yukon.ca.

From Johnson's Crossing the road soon climbs up above the tree line and then continues parallel to the Nisutlin River down to the deep blue basin of Quiet Lake. Later, along the bubbling Rose River it climbs back up into the mountains, leads across a high plateau past the Lapie Lakes and finally drops along the Lapie River back into treed areas. The route is very scenic and offers some *nice campgrounds*: two along *Quiet Lake* and a basic one at the *Lapie Lakes*. Also "wild camping" is possible without any problems.

Normally, the road is passable for conventional vehicles and is allowed with rental cars and campervans. Four-wheel drive is not necessary, but you are advised to have a sturdy and reliable vehicle. A full-size spare wheel, personal equipment and enough food and water for a night in case of a breakdown are essential. There is very light traffic along this road (only few cars per day, if any) and roadside service is hard to organize, as cell phone coverage is only available near towns and communities.

A short distance before Ross River, the South Canol Road merges into the Campbell Highway. From this junction, it is 8 km west along the Campbell Highway and another 10 km north along an access road to Ross River. **Ross River** has a gas station, a shop and offers other basic services. Worth seeing are the *suspension bridge and ferry across the Pelly River*, just north of town. Back on the Campbell Highway, it is worthwhile heading west for 1.5 km to the bridge across *Lapie Canyon*. Immediately afterwards is the turn off to the Lapie Canyon Campground, which offers a nice rest area. A side trip to Ross River is likely necessary just for filling up gas, as the entire distance from Johnson's Crossing via South Canol Road to Frances Lake and on to Watson Lake is 600 km long without a gas station!

In order to continue the drive to Frances Lake, take the **Campbell Highway** east to Watson Lake. The well-maintained gravel road leads along the *Pelly River* (with various access points to the river, especially at the *Hoole River* bridge) and over a nice plateau past *Finlayson Lake*. About 200 km east of Ross River you'll finally get to **Frances Lake**. There is neither a town site nor a road house or telephone here, just an unmanned campground and a few wooden sheds. Don't expect to meet any other people here — except us!

Access to the boat ramp at Frances Lake

The Campbell Highway doesn't lead directly to the lake, but offers access to a short road that will connect you to it. **About 200 km from Ross River, at Km 172 from Watson Lake**, just past the **bridge across Money Creek**, on your left-hand side you'll see a **signpost for „Frances Lake Campground“**. Turn left (in direction of the lake) and drive **1 km STRAIGHT AHEAD** through dense forest to the concrete boat ramp (the access road to the campground proper turns off left shortly before you get to the boat ramp; DO NOT take this turn off). At the boat ramp, you can park your car safely and we will take you by motorboat to the lodge (a 30 min. ride). Unless otherwise arranged, 5:00 pm is our pick-up time at the boat ramp.

Normally we are on time. In case we are delayed, please wait on site. Should you be behind schedule, we normally wait for one hour before we return to the lodge and will come back later in the evening. We may also leave a note on the back side of the boat ramp sign. If you have the opportunity, please announce a big delay as early as possible by phone (1-406-206-4396, leave a voice mail message) or by e-mail (info@franceslake.ca).

Make sure to **get up-to-date road information** before heading out in a Yukon Visitor Information Centre or online at www.511yukon.ca. Especially backcountry roads can be closed for one or several days due to storm damage or forest fires.