



## Dave Rayner and Bruce Davidson

### Manicouagan Reservoir Day eight



We woke up this morning, had a simple breakfast and started to pack things up. The weather was a little iffy so we decided to head home today. All of a sudden it feels like the week has gone by awfully fast. On the water, we launched the sail and tried to take advantage of the light tailwinds. With barely any wind we were still able to sail at 4-6km. – not bad at all. The wind did die out after an hour so we started paddling to the mainland. We had a major bite on the trolling rod – so big that the heavy rod actually bent back – so we were sure we had a major lunker on the line. Bruce reeled it in but it got away during the retrieve. Bummer! Once we got to the other side we took a pitstop and checked out a whacky rock formation – massive intrusions, iron stains, and quartz deposits. It reminded us of how this whole area was formed by a meteor impact. Got back on the water just in time because it started to drizzle – surprise, surprise, surprise. Somehow it seemed fitting that we should finish our trip in the rain. Bruce almost made Dave pee his pants by re-telling highlights from comedy movies. We finally came around the last bend in the inlet and saw our take-out area. Again, it was funny to think that we were finished. We hadn't seen anyone but ourselves for 7 nights and all of a sudden we were going to be re-joining greater society.

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## Postscript

The Manicouagan Reservoir is vast. I think we'll always look back on this trip and think of it that way. So much spruce, rock and water. That landscape did not change much throughout our trip. This is a hard land and we can only imagine from the weathered trees what their winters must be like. Our weather, while wet, was relatively warm – so we feel like we were lucky. If it had been wet and cold this trip would have been a lot harder,

The kayak. What a great vehicle for this land. As mentioned previously – you could actually bring a sailboat up here and have a blast – although moorings could be challenging without a dinghy. So, in that sense, the kayak really is the ideal vehicle – especially with a sail.

The food. It's amazing how much you'll eat when you're working hard and wet! I'm glad we brought what we did because we certainly didn't come home with much. With the wet weather it might have been nice to have more instant snacks – like powerbars, granola bars and chocolate bars – things that we could have placed directly in our PFD pockets.

The shelters. The mantis tarp was invaluable what with the poor weather. We spent a lot of time in there sheltered from the rain and bugs. We'd bring it again in a heartbeat. Any tent would do – but our Moss Thunderdome was sweet – albeit a little heavy and bulky.

At any rate, we had a lot of fun. It was great to go somewhere new and have a real sense of adventure. In terms of sea kayaking – places like Georgian Bay, Lake Superior or the coasts, offer more in terms of changing landscapes and animal life. That being said, we got to see Northern Quebec and we'll always be glad that we saw it if only once. This is, after all, a big, wild, space – something that's getting harder and harder to find.

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## Manicouagan Reservoir Day seven

Bruce woke up in the middle of the night cold, but was quickly warmed by the sight of a bright moon and some stars- the first time in 4 days. A toque and fleece took care of the physical cold. All of Bruce's rustling around woke Dave, and we talked excitedly about the potential for a sunny morning of eating pancakes and lazing in the sun.

The dream came true at 6:40, when we work to a cold but sunny morning. Clear blue skies and only the remnants of the Southern system greeted us as we got out of the tent. You could feel your batteries recharging in the sunlight. The sun was amazing! We made pancakes with butter and cranberries. We drank mochas and packed away our dry (!) gear. After that we pulled out the sail and did some dry-land training to make sure we had our rigging and de-rigging systems working properly. The sail looks like it was born to fly and we can't wait to use it – especially since it looks like we might have a west wind today.

Finally got on the water and started paddling towards "South Point" – what we've been calling the most southerly part of the island. Yeee-hah! No gloves, no rain jackets, no rain pants – just shorts and t-shirts and sunscreen, how sweet it is!

We paddled about 10km to our lunch spot. We found a nice pebble beach and ate canned fish, rye bread, gorp and fruit gummies. We saw some very social birds that we could not identify – they looked like small gray jays, but with darker markings.

After lunch we started going more less east/southeast with a 3km/hr tailwind – not quite enough to sail, but still helping us along. We had a bite on the bow-rod – a big lunger from the feel of it – but it got off the hook just as Dave was bringing it in. Dang!

At one point we could see down the south bay towards the Manic 5 dam. We're still amazed at how big the bays can be – it's not unlike the scale of the Great Lakes, or the wide sections of Georgian Bay. You could easily sail a keel boat up here with plenty of room to maneuver and very few obstacles.

We were also very happy to see that the logging up here was not a dominant feature of the landscape.

Got to our campsite and had a Mexican burrito night. Re-fried beans, salsa, Mexican rice,

mozzarella chesse and Tabasco sauce. All of these ingredients laid onto heated tortilla shells – man that was good. Healthy portions of whisky and wine, too.

After some campfire chatting we cleaned up and went to bed under starry skies at around 10pm

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## Manicouagan Reservoir Day six

We woke to a light rain gracing our tent fly. We napped for another half hour, hoping the rain would stop during that time. When we got up around 6:30 all around was cloudy, foggy and breezy. A light drizzle was falling. The clothing we had left out the night before- hoping it would dry- could not have been any wetter. We had a warm breakfast of leftover fish and choffee, a mix of coffee and hot chocolate. After packing up it was around 8:30 when we were out on the water. We were quickly chilled by our wet clothes so we paddled hard to stay warm. Light rain fell on and off all morning.

If we weren't lucky with the sun, we were with the fishing this morning. As we paddled along, the exciting buzz of our trilling rod brought us to attention. Bruce reeled in a roughly 5 lb pike that offered a good fight. This fish was released back to the depths. Shortly after as we paddled along, another hit! This time the largest yet of the speckled trout was reeled in to the boat, somewhere around a 6 lb fish. This fish was cleaned, bagged and kept for supper.

Around 10:30 we stopped for a break for some food and to untangle one of our lines that had become knotted in a snag. We quickly chilled and headed out on the water to get moving and warm up. When putting the boat back in the water Dave tripped backwards, falling in to the water up to his neck. If he wasn't wet before, he sure was now. Dave's adrenaline warmed him up as he sat soaked in the boat. He had almost pulled the loaded boat right over his torso, which could have spelled serious injury. Phew, he was alright. We launched into small surf, somewhere around one foot, keeping most of the water out of our cockpits and our boat from being damaged on the rocky shore.

The theme of the day was paddle for a couple of hours in the rain, stop briefly for washroom and snack breaks and get back on the water as soon as possible. This proved to be the best formula for our soaked and cool conditions.

During another fishing line fiasco, we got a bite while trying to sort out the lines. As we reeled in we found the lines to be inextricably wound around each other. After cutting one line and retrieving both on the loaded reel we lost the fish. It is easy to take losing a fish when you already have one in the boat for a generous dinner. As we tidied up the lines the winds were quickly changing. The rains became heavier with the growing winds. The day's weather had been wet and from the south with good winds. The wind changed almost 180 degrees in 15 minutes and picked up in strength. We were right on the line between two weather systems, with gusts of around 40kmph. The water was a confused mess of waves from the south and new waves from the north clashing. Despite the mess of the waves and the rain, it was the first time on the trip that we enjoyed a tailwind. As we crossed a large bay we were going the fastest yet, probably doubling our speed. The waves were quite large, somewhere around 3 feet. Some of these waves we surfed down, others poured over our bow, washing right over Bruce's sprayskirt. This was quite a feat in such a long boat. Even in these conditions the boat was quite stable and confidence-inspiring. Dave worked the rudder consistently at the boat veered to port or starboard depending on the waves. She was running a little loose.

After completing the exiting crossing we rounded a point into the calf waters of a bay. This sheltered area offered our campsite for the night. AS we came ashore the rein stopped. We focused on setting up the Mantis tarp immediately. A change of clothes and some freakin' sweet vegetable and porcini soup make us feel human again. One of the ongoing discussions of the trip was those of "Papa". They went something like this: "Papa, tell me what it was like when people wore dry clothes" or "Papa, tell me what it was like when the skies were blue". It was funny then. Dave worked on setting up the tent while Bruce filleted the fish and built a clothesline. The sun briefly came out through the clouds, a moment we'd been waiting for for what seemed to be days.

Thinning clouds quickly took that away, but overall this weather system from the North seemed to be an improvement. You could see thinning clouds chasing out the dark rain clouds.

With our sopping wet cloths on the line, we started making a dinner of Katmandu Curry by Backcountry Gourmet (recommended, yummy) and butter fired trout (delicious). Dave has mastered the art of crispy fish. Some wine, laughs by the lantern and celebrating the lack of rain saw us through until it was time to turn in for the night. We went to bed, hoping that this weather system would bring clearer days and some much missed sunshine. The prospect of dry clothes was quite alluring as well.

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## Manicouagan Reservoir Day five

We're sitting here on a shallow sandbank under the Mantis tarp as the rain continues to patter down. It's 6:00pm. We've had one round of soup and there's another round on the stove. Bruce is filleting the second of two trout that we caught earlier today. We're now just below the "equator" of the island after about 33km of paddling. So, how did we get here?

Earlier today we woke up – it was around 6:30am. Some scattered showers we're in the area but we got up after a break in the weather. We ate some Cream of Wheat with dried cranberries, and hot tea. The black flies also woke up in a hurry so we packed up relatively quickly. In doing so we noticed a leaking wine tetra pack – transferred what we could to a nalgene, and downed the rest right there on the spot like true buccaneers.

We went southeast along the shoreline, trolling along for fish and keeping an eye out for animals and neat landscapes. No animals but there sure are a lot of spruce up here!

It wasn't long before we had a fish on the trolling rod. Bruce landed another 5lbs. trout for dinner.

Not long after that there was another bite but it broke the line just as it came to the surface.

We than stopped for lunch and gobbled up some GORP, chocolate almonds, cheese, pepperoni and ice tea. Our appetites have definitely kicked in! We left after about twenty minutes though due to rain. Nothing like some fuel to refresh the body. We paddled onwards, approaching the west point of the island. Before we made it we had a bite on the muskie lure – later named the "gothic temptress", a massive spoon dressed with red and black hairs – and Dave pulled him in for tomorrow's breakfast.

Other news – unfortunately still no sailing. The wind continues to be forward of us no matter what direction we take! Bummer – we hope that'll turn out so we can take advantage of Bruce's engineering marvel! Also – the rod holder on the bow deck snapped – so we'll fix that in the morning. The last hour of paddling was pretty entertaining. There was an amazing air battle between what looked liked a tern, and a seagull. We were also approached by a mother loon that tried to distract us from her 3 kids. Dave sprang a nose bleed. Bruce says it bled like he got punched in the face. What a pain – not totally surprising though – since, Dave had been fighting a nasty cold for the last 3 days. Speaking of colds, Bruce now has the pesky little virus – but no worries, we'll beat it silly with our meds, throat lozenges, a good attitude, and maybe some scotch ;)

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## Manicouagan Reservoir Day four





We woke up early to a nice sunrise. There is no wind, less moisture in the air and clear skies. We fished for a bit before breakfast in a small channel next to our island but with no luck. We cooked up a simple breakfast of scrambled eggs and managed to partially dry out many of our wet clothes on a line strung off the tarp. We packed up the boat and were on the water around 8:30. A light headwind in a NW direction kept us working. Some trolling too near to shore led to an epic line tangling on the bottom. Both lures were caught up on logs. After many different efforts we thought we would lose the lines, but Bruce managed to pull up the lines- logs and all. One of the logs may maybe 6" in diameter and 6' long, truly a massive catch. After cleaning up the fishing mess we continued westward to a quick break on a sand beach. A good stretch and snack left us feeling good for the next leg of paddling. We moved on, aware that we should take advantage of the light headwind and small waves. We paddled for another two hours to a rocky beach where we had a lunch of meat, cheese and rye bread. There were fresh moose tracks on the beach but no moose to be seen. We napped in the sun for 10 minutes before pushing onwards. We realize now that we do best with planned breaks at approximately two hour intervals. With this schedule travel the fastest and feel the best. Our afternoon break was cut short by ferocious black flies, our first of such encounters on the trip. The black flies lived up to their reputation- big, hungry and numerous. Within 5 minutes of stopping we were back on the water. The scenery on this North channel has been rugged, with rocky beaches, dense hilly forests and occasional cliffs and scree. We had great visibility today and were able to see for miles all around. With easy water conditions and lots of time on our hands, our conversations turned to the what ifs, such as: countries to rule, lunch with whom, assassination plots, etc. This kept us entertained and the kilometers slipped by. As we rounded a bend we saw a large point far in the distance, our goal for the day. This was the NW corner of René. Like men possessed, we pushed at an Olympic rate for the last 20 minutes, arriving at camp around 7:00 pm. This new site is the best yet- we're on a rocky and sandy point with some shrubs. There are a series of sandy tiers up from the beach, we chose the uppermost for our camp as it was the flattest and closest to the ample firewood. Another driftwood fire was assembled to warm us as we set up the rest of camp and cooked a delicious dinner of smoked pork chops and mashed potatoes with gravy. Was that ever good! Salty, filling, and hot- just what the doctor ordered. We covered around 35km today; the daytime high was around 18 degrees- pretty nice. As we went to bed clouds were rolling in. We are hoping for sunshine again tomorrow and a North or Northwest wind so that we can sail.

August 27, 2007 | [Link](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

### Manicouagan Reservoir Day three

[View image](#) Woke up after a good sleep. Very overcast with light rain – at times barely able to see across the water. Had some tea and some prepared eggs with chives and cheddar. After that we started to pack up camp. Then we got in the kayak and left the shelter of the island and headed due north along the shoreline. We are definitely struck by the scale of the area – this is BIG country! We paddled on through the rain and increasing headwinds – we were slowed substantially

by the building waves. Some of the waves were about two feet high. We trolled for about an hour and unfortunately got two lines hung up on the bottom – and had to abandon them. After 2 more hours we pulled over to re-set our fishing gear, eat, and pee. ...Still raining with a long leg ahead. That being said, our spirits were good and bodies were strong! We did have a discussion about how hard it might be to complete the loop in time and agreed to always keep evaluating how we're doing. But, we both want to push on and get'er done if at all possible – even if it comes down to longer days than forecasted. After the break we got a second wind and paddled another 3 hours through strong winds till we reached the leeward side of a small rocky island where we stopped for lunch. Lunch was rye bread with old cheddar and dried Hungarian sausage. Deeee-lish! We also purified some water, with Pristine chlorine dioxide, for the big push to the campsite. Fished a bit more to no avail. At last! The sun came out and we lay on the rocks and re-charged. After being so wet it was wholly rejuvenating! So we relaxed a little while longer then got back in the boat for a northwest haul. By this time the winds had died down to about 5km/hr so we made good time. Then – we heard the drag let loose on the trolling rod. We assumed our fishing battle stations and then Bruce reeled in a 5lb. trout. We pulled it up on the boat and cleaned it and thanked the fishing gods for our good luck. After that we continued on to what we called "Rene's Forehead" – the Northeast tip of Rene Levasseur Island. As we rounded the tip we saw amazingly steep cliffs that loomed over the water. The rock itself was extremely fractured, dark and wet, with spruce growing where they could. After passing up a few good campsites we settled on a large pebbled beach. The beach was huge – you could have played a major soccer game on it! We had just finished setting up the tent and Mantis tarp when a wave of rain came sweeping across the water. Once it hit we took shelter in the Mantis to wait out the storm. The rain came down but not hard enough to put out Bruce's wood-fire. After some chillin' we set our minds to dinner. So we fried up the fish after dipping the fillets in flour. We matched it with some freeze-dried curried rice - wow it was so good. The fish was unbelievably fresh and after the long day on the water we were able to eat it all in one sitting. I'm always amazed at our appetites when we're working this hard. We then tidied up and relaxed in front of the fire. Then we watched the moon rise, and saw a few stars despite the overcast skies. Also, at least for now, the wind has shifted to the west. It'll be interesting to see what the morning brings – but it looks promising. It's now 10:45pm and time for bed.

August 26, 2007 | [Link](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

## Manicouagan Reservoir Day two

We woke up around 6:15, showered (for the last time until we return) and were out of the hotel around 7:00. The boat hadn't gone missing overnight. Next time we'd bring a lock for any overnights on the road. We went to MacDonald's for some breakfast and Tim Horton's for some coffee. We hit the open road, unfortunately not the correct open road. We intended to head along highway 389, north towards Labrador City and the Manicouagan Reservoir. Instead we continued along the 138, following the Fleuve. We had some great views of the water, but the last straw in our turnaround decision was seeing a tanker. Surely we were going the wrong way. We turned around and got on the 389 with 20 minutes of pleasant sightseeing under our belts.

Winding roads through rolling hills brought us to the Manic 5 dam where we stopped for gas. This is where the road turns to gravel. The dam is huge, and the switch backed road that makes its way up the right side is quite steep and exposed. After making it to the top we enjoyed the fast and smooth gravel roads for the 100 km to Relais Gabriel, a gas station, motel, outfitter, restaurant, etc, etc, etc... At Relais Gabriel we asked for directions to Pourvoyeur du Prospecteur and got some vague idea of where we might be heading. After driving 20km and finally turning on the GPS we realized that our best bet was to put in at Relais Gabriel. We turned around and drove to the waterfront opposite the Relais. The put-in is along a short, steep dirt road that heads down to the water. This was perfect. We headed back up the road and inquired at the Relais if we could use the put-in and park our car for the week. We explained our trip to the nice owner, Benoit, who was happily obliged.

While loading the boat we met Lise and Jean-Marc from Pourvoirie Boreal 51, hunting and fishing

outfitter situated on the Reservoir. Jean-Marc took a look at our fishing setup and gave us a few pointers on lures that might catch some fish. Apparently blue Rapalas are what's needed. Lise gave us warnings about scale of the Reservoir and how large the waves can get. They told us of a couple who had been there in a kayak the previous summer who had taken most of a month to get around the reservoir. Our 8-10 days started to sound short. Lise and Jean-Marc gave us the number for their satellite phone at their camp should we need assistance, a very nice offer. We drove the car back up to Relais Gabriel, said our goodbyes and made the short walk back down to our loaded kayak.

We were finally on the water around 4:00 PM. It felt great to be moving after 1.5 days in the car and so much talking about the trip. We moved smoothly out of the calm inlet towards open waters. There was only a light headwind and the waves were small, great conditions for crossing. After months of looking at maps and dreaming it was great to finally be here in person. Spruce, outcrops of rock surrounded us as we made our way among islands. New growth by the water's edge was bright green; we suppose that the waters have been lower for the last number of years. We were happy with our rate of travel and satisfied that everything fit in the boat. We had feared that without trying out the boat we might have too much equipment or food but we squeezed it in. The boat is fast and sleek, but due to the headwind our sail stayed furled. We kept our fishing lines out of the water as well, focusing on crossing towards Île René Levesque. We nicknamed the island René for ease over the week, and the mainland Bourassa (for silly, random reasons).

The crossing was smooth but exposed. As we crossed around 8km we were surprised at how big the reservoir was. From our unique perspective out in the middle the water went seemingly forever at our 9:00 and 3:00, allowing us to see almost half of the reservoir. We got in to a good rhythm, feeling good about our pace and work together. Navigation was easy with such massive land features and we found our Google Earth photos to be useful as others have found before us. We used our compass to confirm our direction; the GPS unit was kept stowed.

We finished the crossing at a large island, rounded its southern edge and headed north until we found a sandy beach we selected as our campsite for the night. We landed smoothly on the sand and set up camp, lit a fire and enjoyed a scotch. If tonight is any indication, finding firewood on this trip will be a breeze. There are large piles of dry driftwood all along the high water line. This wood is beautifully sculpted by waves, sand and bleached white by years in the sun. We assume that all this driftwood is from the initial flooding of the reservoir in the 1960's. We tried our luck at fishing but had no luck. The lunkers will sleep well tonight, tomorrow will be different. Back by the fire we cooked up a dinner of marinated rib steaks, garden rice and glasses of great red wine. The steaks were barbecued to perfection on the grill over a bed of coals. This life is hard to beat as we sipped wine, watching the sun set over pristine calm waters. Opposite our site are René, and the massive Baie Memoire. We packed it in around 10:00 PM after relaxing by the fire.

August 25, 2007 | [Link](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

## Manicouagan Reservoir Day one

[View image](#) After months of planning we're off! Our plan- to sea kayak around the magnificent Manicouagan Reservoir in Northern Quebec. We met downtown at 8:30 AM. Dave's mother saved the day by loaning us her station wagon after a catastrophic mix-up with the rental car agency the night before. It looked gloomy for a while- no transportation, no trip- but Mrs. Rayner came to the rescue of our Big Wild challenge. We arrived at MEC Montreal around 10:30 AM. We said hello to Patrick, the store manager, and loaded the sweet boat that we would be using for our trip. It's a Seaward Passat, a 22 foot long tandem sea kayak. The boat matches the car's paint colour perfectly. We look a little too co-coordinated. After a visit to the washrooms and a last minute purchase of extra batteries and lantern mantles we hit the road. We drive to Quebec City and stop for an oil change and some food. Apparently 22' boats need to be removed from your car before the mechanics can put them on the lift. I'm glad we found that one out the easy way. An hour later we were back on the road, pushing along the beautiful North shore of the St. Lawrence River. We hit the free ferry to Tadoussac just as it was about to leave. The timing was beautiful. We had just

come to a stop on this ferry that crosses the Saguenay River and it was moving away from the docks. We stopped for some fuel in Tadoussac then continued towards Baie Comeau in drizzle and fog, with occasional glimpses of the Fleuve St. Laurent. We rolled in to Baie Comeau around 8:30 PM and found a motel room at the Econo Lodge. The motel was almost vacant, but our room was tucked on the far side of one of the detached sections of the motel- bizarre! We pulled the car up close to the window of the room with the boat visible, so that Dave could see the boat through the curtains if he woke up during the night. After a dinner of takeout St. Hubert and watching the Miss Teen America pageant on the tube we hit the hay. Bruce's pick in the pageant did better than Dave's. Dave's pick bombed her chances of the win in the interview portion.

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