

Multi-day Hikes on the Mi'gmaq Trail - A Guide

November 1, 2018

<https://www.migmaqtrail.ca/en>

Introduction: The Mi'gmaq Trail offers some of the most scenic and diverse terrain in eastern North America. Beginning at a pristine lake near the base of Mt. Carleton, the Maritime's highest peak, the Trail largely follows the Nepisiquit River on its 150 kilometer journey to the seaside municipality of Bathurst. It is remote. It is wild. It is an exquisite opportunity to commune with nature. It is also physically and mentally demanding and potentially hazardous. This document is a guide for those planning a multi-day hike on the Trail. It will help make your adventure a safe and enjoyable one but be aware, **hikers on the Mi'gmaq Trail do so at their own risk.** Great hiking everyone!

State of the Trail (as of Oct 1, 2018): The Mi'gmaq Trail officially opened on August 23, 2018. It is cut for its entire length and identified mostly with blue flagging tape. About 80% of the Trail has also been signed with distinct Turtle markers on clear 4"x5" acrylic (see adjoining photo). Similar sized turtle signs (ie. 4"x5") *on a white background* are used on Access Paths. Where Access Paths join the Mi'gmaq Trail, hikers will see large 8'x10" Access Point signs inscribed with a letter and turtle on a white background. See section below, "Access Points and Paths" for more information.



Turtle Marker in Acrylic

Other signs identifying key locations, kilometer postings, camp sites, etc are in place but only for the 50 km section closest to Bathurst.

Hiking Times 6 to 12 days: To complete the entire Mi'gmaq Trail (150 Km) hiking times can vary between 6 and 12 days depending on the weather, trail conditions and one's individual ability. Plan for delays and allocate extra time. Note as well, the Trail crosses several roads but **there are no towns nor revitalization points what-so-ever for the entire length of the Trail!** In Mt Carleton Park there are no services and the nearest town is 30 km away. You must arrive with all your essentials - camping gear, food, water and of course a full tank of gas.

In addition to the full-length hike, many shorter multi-day hikes are also available on the Mi'gmaq Trail. Among the most popular are treks going in either direction from Access Point L (Heath Steele Bridge) the approximate mid-point of the Mi'gmaq Trail and a 2-3 day outing between Access Point A (Bathurst) and Access Point E (Middle Landing).

Access Points and Paths: Positioned along the Mi'gmaq Trail are 21 Access Points and Access Paths used by day hikers, search and rescue teams and maintenance crews to reach different segments of the Trail. Each Access Point is identified by a letter - A through U. See the Table below. Along the Trail the Access Points are visible on 8"x10" signs with their letter and a turtle. The Access Paths are marked with 4"x5" turtle signs **with a white background** (ie. not clear acrylic backgrounds which are turtle signs reserved for the Mi'gmaq Trail only!)

The distance between Access Points on the Trail varies from 4 to 11 Km. It is extremely important for multi-day hikers to become familiar with the Access Points and their associated Paths *before departing on a multi-day hike*. Make sure you mark them on your maps and GPS device. Many hikers, due to blisters, weather, time constraints, etc are unable to complete their journey and these Access Points provide the best means to exit the trail, find a road and flag down a vehicle.



Sign for Access Point I (Nepisiquit Brook). Note white background.

The easiest Points to exit are R, L and E where the Trail crosses a road with vehicle traffic. Hikers are forewarned that traffic at Points R and L on the Nepisiquit River Road¹ (dirt) is often intermittent and that the wait for a lift may take hours. E is on a well travelled paved road – Route 360.

Exiting via Access Points T, S, Q, P, O, N, and M require wading across the Nepisiquit River which in the spring and fall can be prohibitively high and/or cold. Once across the river only short hikes (50 -500 meters) are necessary to reach the Nepisiquit River Road (dirt) but hikers exiting at T and S remain quite remote and should make their way to R where the Nepisiquit River Road junctions with the Portage Road (also dirt). To repeat, traffic on the Nepisiquit River Road can be intermittent and hikers should be prepared to wait for hours before being able to flag down a vehicle.

Departing the Mi'gmaq Trail via Access Points F, G, H, I, J and K involves hiking along access paths/logging roads 1.5 to 9 km to attain Taylor Brook Road itself a dirt road sparingly travelled (ie prepare for hours of waiting).

Exiting via Point D also involves crossing the Nepisiquit River but it is too deep to wade so, realistically, this access point is for emergency access point **only** and not a practical exit for hikers (unless they happen to be carrying an inflatable raft 😊).

¹ On Google Maps the Nepisiquit River Road is identified as the Knoll Spruce Road.

Access Points

No.	Access Point	Nearby Geographic Feature or Historical Site	Distance Between Access Points (Km)	Sum (Km)
1	U	Nepisiquit Lakes (Mt. Carleton Park)		150.0
2	T	McEwen's Bridge	11.0	139.0
3	S	Pentland Brook	7.0	132.0
4	R	Popple Depot	9.0	123.0
5	Q	Devil's Elbow	10.5	112.5
6	P	Indian Falls Depot	8.0	104.5
7	O	Indian Falls	7.5	97.0
8	N	44 Mile Brook	5.0	92.0
9	M	40 Mile Brook	6.5	85.5
10	L	Heath Steele Bridge	6.5	79.0
11	K	Coles Brook	7.0	72.0
12	J	Across 9 Mile Brook	7.0	65.0
13	I	Nepisiquit Brook	5.0	60.0
14	H	The Narrows	4.0	56.0
15	G	Nepisiquit Dam	8.5	47.5
16	F	Chain of Rocks	7.0	40.5
17	E	Middle Landing	9.5	31.0
18	D	Teepee above Pabineau Falls	7.0	24.0
19	C	Red Brook Road	7.0	17.0
20	B	Pump House	8.0	9.0
21	A	Daly Point (Bathurst)	9.0	0

For more information on Access Points and Access Paths consult Samuel Daigle's report by clicking [here](#).

Who Should participate in multi-day hikes on the Mi'gmaq Trail? Hiking the full length of the Mi'gmaq Trail should only be attempted by persons who are physically fit, have good wilderness navigation skills and are experienced in backcountry travel and backpacking. Terrain on the Mi'gmaq Trail can be challenging especially on the 100 km section between Mt. Carleton Park and the Nepisiquit Dam. You will encounter rocky, steep and often sloped terrain as the trail hugs the river's edge as much as possible. You will need to navigate through mud, bogs, fast flowing brooks and over unstable boulders, deadfall and slick rocks. It is recommended that at least one person in your group have training in wilderness first aid. The area is remote and in case of accidents and injuries, it may take more than 24 hours for help to arrive once word has reached the Bathurst detachment of the RCMP (see section **In Case of Emergency** below).

Multi-day hiking on the Mi'gmaq Trail should not be attempted by novice hikers especially on the section between Mt. Carleton and the Nepisiquit Dam. Individuals who have previously injured their ankles, knees, back, or other joints may experience flare-ups while hiking the Mi'gmaq Trail. To avoid unnecessary problems, test your strength and endurance on shorter, less demanding backpacking trips

prior to hiking the full length of the Mi'gmaq Trail. Hiking with a partner or in a small group is strongly recommended. When choosing a hiking group make sure you choose compatible companions and stay together!

It is highly recommended to be equipped with a GPS and a SPOT or INREACH device. Make sure you know how these devices function and have tested them prior to hiking the Mi'gmaq Trail. **Cell phone coverage for most of the Trail is not available!**

Hiking Direction: The Mi'gmaq Trail can be hiked in either direction although the most popular option appears to be from Mt. Carleton Park to Daley Point largely because of more secure and plentiful parking at the latter.

Hiking Season

- **Spring – mid June to early July**

Before mid-June many of the Trail's brooks (approximately 25) are impassible due to melting snow in the higher altitudes. After mid-June be aware of weather conditions which could impact water levels. Water in the brooks is glacial. Suggest carrying light sneakers for crossings to protect feet from cold and rocks and keep hiking boots dry (er). Frosts are possible. The black flies will make your trip miserable in June without adequate protection.

- **Summer – early July to late August**

For many hikers, summer's warmer temperatures make this the preferred time to hike the Mi'gmaq Trail. Water levels usually drop significantly making fording brooks easier (light sneakers still strongly recommended). Expect some blackflies and mosquitos.

- **Fall – late August to early October**

Cooler temperatures and fewer insects position the fall as an excellent choice for hiking the Mi'gmaq Trail. Expect wetter conditions and possible night frosts later in September and into October.

Reservations – At present reservations are not required to hike the Mi'gmaq Trail. If camping at Mt. Carleton Park is included in your plans please consult their website for availability and fees. (<https://www.tourismnewbrunswick.ca/Products/Parks/MountCarletonProvincialPark.aspx>)

Fees – At present there are no fees to hike the Mi'gmaq Trail but donations made via the "Home" page of the Trail's website (<https://www.migmaqtrail.ca/en>) are greatly appreciated. Funds will be used to maintain and upgrade the Trail.

Registration - At present there is no registration to hike the Mi'gmaq Trail.

Shuttle Service: Hikers doing the full length of the Mi'gmaq Trail will need to arrange return transportation as the start and finish of this Trail are 146 kilometres apart (2.5 hours drive including 16 km inside Mt. Carleton Park to reach the start/end of the Trail). We recommend leaving your car at the finish and arranging for a lift to take you to the start of the route. **Nepisiquit Adventures** of Bathurst, NB can provide a shuttle service (506-252-3050, <https://www.nepisiquitadventures.com/index>).

GPS track files: A GPS track for the Mi'gmaq Trail is presently not available.

Maps: Maps of The Mi'gmaq Trail are best found on the Mi'gmaq Trail Website under the Maps tab. Click here. The trail is broken into 20 segments with a description of each and information on Access Points and interesting features. Topographical style maps of the Nepisiquit River (Mi'gmaq Trail not shown) are available here <http://www.manzer.net/fish/Nepisiguit.htm>.

Trip plan - Before you leave for your hike, prepare a trip plan and leave it with a responsible person (e.g., friend or family member). Detail where you are going, with whom, when you plan to return, and what to do if you do not return as planned. Check out **adventuresmart.ca** for advice on creating a trip plan and sample trip plans.

Tip for following the trail: Regularly monitor your position on the Trail with a map, compass and GPS. When you arrive at intersections, diverging roads, sharp turns or areas with intersecting flagged trails (unfortunately flagging tapes are also used by prospectors, surveyors, etc), take the extra time to look for the next turtle sign in order to take the proper trail. If you don't see turtle signs, you can turn and look back to see if signs have been posted in the opposite direction (some sections of the trail have yet to be signed in both directions).

First Aid - The area is remote and in case of accidents and injuries, it may take more than 24 hours for help to arrive once authorities have been informed of your predicament (see **In Case of Emergency** below). You must be self-reliant. It is recommended that at least one person in the party have wilderness first aid training. Carry a first aid kit suitable for blisters, cuts, sprains, breaks and insect bites.

Think of your Feet - Hiking boots are strongly recommended. Do not break in new boots on this hike. Be able to treat blisters adequately. Apply moleskin to blister prone areas before starting to hike. Take extra socks and assume your feet will get wet.

The Trail has been recently cut and many stumps protrude from the ground. Particularly annoying are the smaller 1-3 cm diameter stumps which can be felt through the soles of lighter footwear and also cause your foot to roll. In this regard, hiking boots with high ankle support are far superior to hiking sneakers or light footwear.



Hiking sneaker (LHS) vs Hiking Boot (RHS)

Equipment: When choosing equipment, your main consideration should be keeping yourself warm and dry. Choose quality, lightweight equipment and clothing designed for possibly cool and wet conditions. Synthetic or wool clothing is best as they provide warmth when wet. (Cotton clothing is highly discouraged!) Keep your clothes and sleeping bag in light weight dry bags. Take extra food in case you get delayed. Have the capability to quickly prepare hot meals and drinks. Carefully select and test all of your equipment.

How Much to Carry: Your pack should fit well and weigh no more than 30% of your body weight for men and 25% for women. Before you leave home, test pack your pack. Reassess your pack contents if your pack is too heavy. Be realistic - every ounce counts. Minimize packaging to reduce weight and garbage.

What to Take:

- Equipment List Core Items
 1. Backpack and waterproof pack cover and dry bags
 2. Lightweight tent with rain fly and groundsheet (Tent should have a minimum 3 season rating)
 3. Sleeping bag and insulating sleeping pad
 4. Stove, fuel, cook set and matches
 5. Water bottle and purification kit (tablets, filter and/or UV)
 6. Food for trip, plus 2 extra days supply of food and fuel
 7. 30' (9 m) of sturdy cord
 8. Litterbag
 9. Map, compass, GPS (with extra batteries)
 10. Toilet paper
 11. Insect repellent/bug head net
 12. Pocket knife
 13. Repair kit for equipment
 14. First aid and blister kits
 15. Flashlight/headlamp and batteries
 16. Whistle for emergencies
 17. Sturdy, comfortable, broken-in hiking boots
 18. Waterproof/windproof jacket and pants
 19. Insulating layers (wool and synthetics are best)
 20. Extra change of clothes and socks
 21. Wool hat and mittens
 22. Sun hat, sun glasses and sunscreen
 23. Bug head net
 24. Signaling device (SPOT, InReach, satellite phone, etc.)
 25. Lightweight tarp (useful in rainy weather)
 26. Bear spray (optional),
 27. Bear proof food canister or sac and a 9 m rope to hang your food.
 28. Bug jacket
 29. Antihistamine (in case of allergic reactions to insect bites)
 30. Trekking pole(s) (helpful in rocky fern covered areas, on steep descents, for crossing brooks, and erecting tarp.)
 31. Light weight shoes (for around camp and crossing brooks)
 32. Gaiters (leg protection against branches, wet ferns, etc.)

Tips : Make sure all gear is inside your pack. Gear hanging off your pack can be

ripped off as you are hiking on the Mi'gmaq Trail. Losing a compass or jacket can be disastrous.

To avoid problems with low hanging branches and insects, shorts are not recommended (during warm weather a swimsuit will be welcome).

Drinking Water: Assume all water is contaminated, you never know what is upstream. All drinking water should be purified, boiled, or filtered. Although you will always be in close proximity to the Nepisiquit River access at times can be difficult or impossible. Prepare for stretches of 4 or 5 km without access.

Camp Sites: At or near Access Points D and F tent platforms and teepees have been built for the use of hikers. No other formal camp sites exist along the trail but flat, well drained ground near water is readily available at McEwan's Bridge (Access Pt. T), Popple Depot (Access Pt. R), below the Heath Steele Bridge (Access Pt. L) and at Middle Landing (Access Pt. E). Otherwise hikers are on their own to find sites along the trail.

Tip: Do not wait until the sun is setting to search for a camp site. Flat, open and dry spots can be found but are not readily available along the Trail.



Teepee at Chain Of Rocks

Wildlife: Hikers along the Mi'gmaq Trail will travel through habitat frequented by animals such as lynx, deer, fox, beaver, mink, fisher, marten and weasel in addition to the those detailed below. A wide variety of birds also breed and migrate through the area. Animals and flies are attracted by smell. Use soaps, deodorants and shampoos with no scents. To avoid animal problems, never leave or bury any food. Overnight stow all things that might attract animals including cooking utensils in a bag and hang it over a tree branch located a distance from your tent and at least 3m (10 feet) off the ground.

Moose tracks abound along the Mi'gmaq Trail but the animals themselves are retiring and tend to stay out of sight. They are generally not aggressive but as with all wild animals, do not approach them and be mindful of their escape route. Moose are less tolerant of humans in the spring and early summer when cows are very protective of their new born calves or in late September to mid-October when bulls are in rut. An aggressive moose will charge in an attempt to drive you away. If this occurs, seek protection behind a tree or large rock. An attack may be imminent when their ears are back, they are licking their lips, the hair on their hump is raised, or the moose is walking stiffly towards you. Back up slowly until the moose turns away and leaves.

Coyote encounters are very rare along the Mi'gmaq Trail. Usually you will just see a coyote in the distance or hear them yipping at night. To prevent unwanted visits from coyotes, keep a clean campsite and never feed them. Should a coyote approach, stand your ground and never run. If the animal comes too close, be aggressive – use a low/deep voice, shout, wave, throw rocks or sticks, keep your eye on the animal and do not turn and run.

Black bear encounters are uncommon. To prevent unwanted visits from bears, keep a clean campsite, never feed them, and cook, store food and garbage away from your sleeping area. Bear spray can be effective but be sure you understand the manufacturer's directions.

Blackflies, mosquitos and other small biting insects are common along the Mi'gmaq Trail. They pose no health risk but they are an annoyance and at times they can be almost unbearable. Some people have an allergic reaction and exhibit swelling in areas where they have been bitten multiple times, especially around the eyes, face, neck, and hands. Carry and use insect repellent. Wear light colour clothing. Cover up. Use a hat or bug head net, wear long sleeves and pants (tuck pants into socks). A bug jacket can be useful. Bring antihistamine if prone to allergic reactions.

Low Impact Visitor: Be a low-impact Hiker. Hike only along the marked Trail. Do not take short cuts. Leave flowers and plants for others to enjoy. Do not damage trees or strip off bark. Leave the Trail cleaner than you found it. What you carry in, you must carry out including leftover food and toilet paper. Take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints. Sections of the Trail are located in a Protected Natural Area and a Provincial Park. Open fires are prohibited. Forest fire risks are too great and the gathering of firewood very destructive. All cooking should be done over a lightweight portable stove.

Please dispose of human excrement and used dishwater at least 60 meters (200 feet) away from the campsite and all water sources.

To dispose of excrement, please dig a hole at least 15 cm (6 inches) square and deep. Cover it over after use.

In Case of Emergency: Hikers and those entrusted to sound an alarm if a hiker has not returned within a pre-agreed upon time, should direct their emergency requests to the Bathurst detachment of the RCMP (contact info below). They will coordinate all responses including activating Search and Rescue Operations.

Bathurst RCMP,
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