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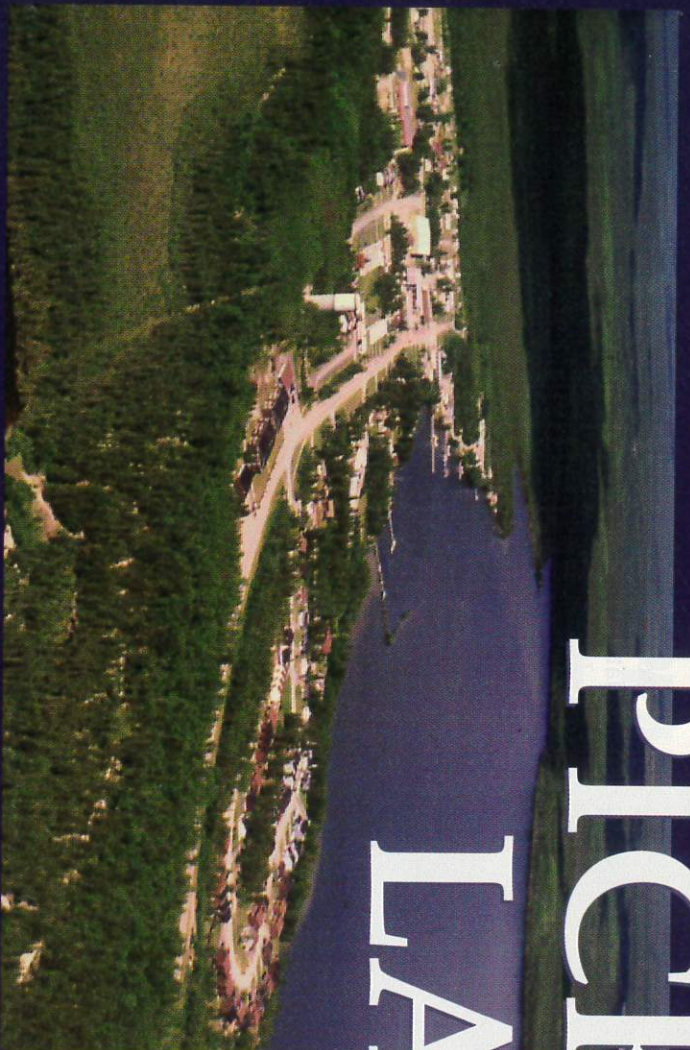
Bear Country

The In-Flight Magazine of Bearskin Airlines and Our Passengers



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PICKLE LAKE • MANITOUWADGE • THE JOURNEY OF LUKE SAGUTCH



PICKLE LAKE

*"where the
pavement
ends"*

BY: BRYAN EDDINGTON

Residents of Pickle Lake are proud to live "where the pavement ends" — 290 miles north of the Trans Canada Highway.

Drivers who head further north find lonely bush roads and remote native communities stretching all the way to the chilly waters of Hudson Bay.

Like most mining communities Pickle Lake has experienced booms and busts, yet the town has always survived. Now the construction of Placer Dome's Musselwhite Mine, 140 kilometers northeast of Pickle Lake, could bring yet another boom.

The Musselwhite Mine, combined with continued exploration, provides opportunities for entrepreneurs in a wide variety of support services. Karl Hopf, supervisor of Pickle Lake, said the town is encouraging new businesses such as metal shops, tire dealerships and garages.

Hopf hopes to see 25 per cent of Musselwhite employees living in Pickle Lake and infrastructure will be needed to support them. Low taxes, low housing costs and the

outdoor life will be the attractions. "Living here will be cheaper," confirmed Reeve Jim Dalzell, who is also manager of the town's North West Company store. "And busing employees from here would be cheaper than flying them in."

There are also opportunities for entrepreneurs in Pickle Lake's role as a regional transportation center. All-season gravel roads carry vehicles north as far as Bearskin Lake and Big Trout Lake. During winter a 2,400 - kilometer road network, built on snow and ice, carries everything from building supplies to groceries and furniture to more than 20,000 people on 16 remote reserves.

Pickle Lake's airport is one of Northwestern Ontario's busiest with scheduled flights by Bearskin Airlines to Thunder Bay, Sioux Lookout and remote northern communities. There are now six flights each week to Thunder Bay, and 17 scheduled flights into the north. Other flights carry passengers daily to Sudbury, Kenora and Winnipeg. Several airlines offer charter flights.

Pickle Lake is only starting to develop its regional tourism and this means the area remains unspoiled. Blessed with thousands of clean rivers and lakes, the region teems with walleye, pike, lake trout, speckled trout, and whitefish.

Services vary widely to suit every visitor.

Sheltered sites on remote lakes allow anglers to fly in and rough it for a week while they fish.

Outpost camps offer cabins with bunk beds and cooking facilities. Full-service lodges provide all modern conveniences.

Several camping spots, established along Highway 808 north of Pickle Lake, are now managed by the town. These provide dry toilets and firewood. The nearest site is at Badasdawa Lake (Mud lake) some 40 kilometers north of the town. A second camping spot is at Menajos Lake, 105 kilometers north, and a third is at Pipestone, some 50 kilometers further north. Rates are just \$2.50 per person per day and all three sites provide access to



good fishing.

Non-residents camping in the area, but not using these spots, must have a permit from the Ministry of Natural Resources.

In Pickle Lake an RV park welcomes campers.

Located near a public beach and playground beside Pickle Lake, this campground has hydro hook-ups, water, barbecue pits and a waste disposal site. Rates are just \$10 per vehicle per night.

"Visitors can go for a swim in the morning, cross the road for breakfast, and then go back to the lake to fish," said Hopf.

For a real challenge, the visitor can canoe Ontario's last frontier. The famous Albany River system starts at Lake St. Joseph, just 35 kilometers from Pickle Lake. It then passes through 1,080 kilometers of violent rapids and quiet lakes to end at James Bay. Other rivers such as the Pipestone offer gentler alternatives.

For the ecotourist there are vast areas of virgin forest harboring moose, caribou, wolf and black bear. Overhead soar bald eagles, ducks, geese and song birds. Wild rice and mushrooms abound.

"Our tourists used to be fishermen and hunters who flew in," said Hopf. "But now many are driving and they are bringing their families to enjoy our wilderness."

"Pickle Lake is a town of young people," added Reeve Dalzell. "It's quiet and it's very friendly."

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