

VUNTUT

National Park of Canada

Pronounced "Voon-toot"

Climate

Climate has a dramatic effect on the degree and severity of natural hazards found within the park. The weather is variable and can change quickly. Strong winds can pick up suddenly and temperatures can rise or fall as much as 15°C in a few hours. Snow can fall at any time of the year. Be prepared for delays due to weather and carry extra food, fuel and clothing. Know the signs and symptoms of hypothermia and be prepared to treat it.

Geology

Vuntut, which means "among the lakes" in the Gwitchin language, encompasses 4 345 km² of wilderness in the northwestern corner of the Yukon Territory. The park is bounded by the height of land and Ivvavik National Park to the north, the international boundary and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the west, Black Fox Creek to its confluence with the Old Crow River to the east, and the Old Crow River to the south. The Old Crow Flats are a vast interior plain, covered with 2 000 shallow lakes and ponds and meandering streams and rivers. To the north are the British Mountains, the only extensive non-glaciated mountain range in Canada, and gently rising hills called pediments. Valleys show the characteristic V-shape of river activity.

Location

Vuntut National Park was established in 1995 after extensive negotiations through the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation's Final Land Claims Agreement between the Vuntut Gwitchin of Old Crow and the Government of Canada and the Yukon.

Location (Cont.)

The closest community to the park is Old Crow. With a population of 300, Old Crow is a true northern community relying on the land for the majority of its sustenance. It is both the most northerly and the most isolated community in the Yukon. The closest road, the Dempster highway, is about 175 km away and as a result most people fly to Old Crow from Whitehorse, Dawson or Inuvik. Old Crow, which is situated along the Porcupine River, is one of staging areas for trips into the park. Vuntut National Park is approximately 50 km by air or 190 km by river north of Old Crow. Vuntut is located in the Taiga Cordillera Ecozone.



Vegetation

In 1982, the Old Crow Flats were designated under the Ramsar Convention as a wetland of international importance. Vuntut National Park was established to protect, for all time, a representative natural area of national significance in the Northern Yukon Natural Region, including representative portions of the Old Crow Flats wetlands and surrounding foothills. Vuntut's vegetation is a blend of wetland, aquatic, meadow, and upland shrub species. Pediments, marked by underlying permafrost, support sedge tussocks, shrubs, and open stands of spruce and tundra. The northern limit of trees follows an approximate line through the area.

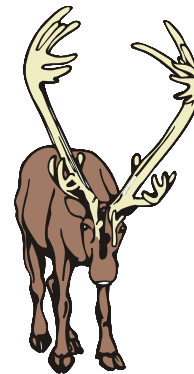
Wildlife

Vuntut National Park, along with Ivvavik National Park and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge represent international efforts to protect a major northern ecosystem defined in part by the Porcupine Caribou herd. This herd is one of the largest in North America numbering approximately 130 000 animals. A portion of the Porcupine Caribou Herd is found in the park at various times of the year. Half a million birds use the Old Crow Flats wetlands each year as a place to breed, molt or stage before starting their fall migrations. Muskrats are also plentiful, inhabiting the numerous shallow lakes and ponds found throughout the flats. Other wildlife found in the park may include: grizzly bears, black bears, wolves, wolverine, marten, mink, foxes, ground squirrels, lynx, moose, muskox, songbirds and raptors.

Activities

There is presently an office in Old Crow staffed with a Parks Canada community liaison officer. There are no facilities or services of any kind in the park. Travellers must be entirely self-sufficient and able to handle any medical or wildlife related emergency on their own. Vuntut National Park offers a variety of opportunities for the experienced back-country enthusiast from canoeing the Old Crow River to hiking in the mountainous part of the park to winter ski trips.

All overnight visitors to the Park are required to register prior to starting their trip and to de-register on completion of their trip. You can either register in person at the office in Old Crow or over the phone with either the community liaison officer or the chief park warden. Visitors are required to delineate their anticipated travel routes and itinerary in advance of receiving a permit. This information will aid in search and rescue efforts should they be needed. When registering you will be notified of any area closures or known hazards along your proposed route. Failure to register or de-register is an offense under the National Parks Regulations.



For more information, contact:
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