





The valley of the Soper is sheltered from harsh winds and supports a lush profusion of arctic wildflowers as well as unusually tall willows, many more than 3 metres tall and growing faster than similar willows in some parts of central Alberta. In mid-summer, the wildflowers are spectacular, and berries ripen toward mid-August. By early September, the tundra is resplendent in its vivid fall colours.

Wildlife viewing opportunities are superb; caribou may be seen in all seasons, as can arctic foxes, arctic hares and lemmings. Wolves and polar bears are occasionally seen, so having a knowledge of bear safety and having bear deterrents along is advisable. Some 40 species of birds have been seen in the park, and the summer months are a good time to see rock ptarmigan, peregrine falcons, gyrfalcons, snowy owls, as well as waterfowl such as red-throated and Pacific loons, red-breasted mergansers, brant geese, and, toward the end of the summer, migrating snow geese. Small tundra birds are everywhere – snow buntings, horned larks, Lapland longspurs, and northern pipits. Shorebirds probe the edges of lakes and along the tidal flats, and the distinctive alarm cry of the golden plover echoes along the ridges. Arctic terns nest on gravelly

*Inuit call this river the Kuujuaq, or “great river”, and have traveled through this natural inland corridor for centuries.*

shores along the river, and thick-billed murre and black guillemots can be seen on the sea near Kimmirut.

At the southern end, the river flows over Soper Falls into Soper Lake. Along the river there are striking rock outcrops, deeply incised caribou trails, interesting glacial landforms, superb shows of wildflowers, and much more. Geology enthusiasts will be delighted by the variety of outcrops, fossils, and interesting rocks including lapis lazuli, marble, mica, graphite, fossiliferous limestone, and garnets. The mica and lapis lazuli deposits are located on parcels of Inuit-owned land within the park boundaries and require special permission to access.

At the Kimmirut end, where Soper Lake empties into the ocean, there is a set of “reversing falls” that brings salt water into the lake. Here the 10 metre tides on Pleasant Inlet cause the river to actually reverse at high tide, and salt water flows into Soper Lake (also called *Tasiujajuaq*). Care should be taken when paddling this area on a rising or falling tide.

#### **CULTURE AND HOSPITALITY**

Also in Kimmirut, the Katannilik Park Centre, and the Soper House Gallery located in the historic Dewey Soper house next door, offer interpretive exhibits and displays of local art, frequent opportunities to meet the artists, and a place where you can purchase sculptures, prints, and other local arts and crafts. Park centre staff keep track of visitors to the park and will also help arrange drop-offs and pick-ups in the

park. They will also help visitors arrange for home-stay accommodations in Kimmirut. The new **Taqaiqsirvik Territorial Park Campground** provides a place to camp in Kimmirut.

The *Soper River Guidebook* provides detailed information about wildlife and the ecology of the park and good canoeing information regarding rapids, takeout spots, campsites, emergency shelters, and park structures along the route, as well as information as to how to arrange for drop-offs and pick-ups in the park. The guidebook contains fold-out topographic maps with interesting features marked and described in the text. It is indispensable for a trip on the river. Its sister guidebook, *The Itijjagiq Trail*, is also of great value for those considering a trip into this park.

#### **TRAVELLING TO THE PARK**

The Soper is one of the premier canoeing rivers in Nunavut, and is readily accessible from Iqaluit. The large watershed ensures a good flow of water throughout the summer, and about 50 kilometres of navigable waters from July through September. It is not a technically challenging river, so can be enjoyably canoed, kayaked, or rafted by novice paddlers. The great variety of side streams that flow into the valley, offer numerous falls, cascades, and different experiences, making it an excellent 5-7 day trip from Mount Joy.

Paddlers can also be taken by boat on Frobisher Bay to the northern end of **Katannilik Park**, where they can hike in along the Itijjagiq Trail, but, generally,

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paddlers fly in by chartered aircraft to landing sites near Mount Joy or at Livingstone Falls, and paddle the river to Kimmirut. The lower third of the river is level and slow, so it is also possible to fly to Kimmirut where you can rent canoes and gear for a trip on the lower Soper. Operators take paddlers upriver to Soper Falls or Falcon Bluffs, and they paddle downstream to the mouth of the river where they are picked up and taken the final 3 kilometres into Kimmirut.

A trip on the Soper is not a casual day outing. It is necessary to plan carefully to avoid problems with weather or polar bears. You are also required to register with

Nunavut Parks before your trip. Using the services of a guide/outfitter reduces the risk and enhances the experience.

For help in planning a trip, or to find information on licensed operators providing access services or guide services in the park, visit the Nunavut Territorial Parks website at [www.nunavutparks.com](http://www.nunavutparks.com). You can also call the Katannilik Park Centre in Kimmirut or the Unikkaarvik Visitors' Centre in Iqaluit for assistance or recommendations. Call Nunavut Tourism at 1-866-NUNAVUT to request the Nunavut Travel Planner, which lists all licensed tourism operators, accommodations and services. ■



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#### **NUNAVUT TOURISM**

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