

The Dempster Highway

One of the world's unique drives, and Canada's only all-season public road to cross the Arctic Circle, the Dempster is famous for its colourful alpine tundra landscapes, wildlife, scenic vistas and memorable driving adventures.

Driving Route

The drive begins in Dawson City with a short trip to the Dempster Corner where this unpaved, two-lane highway begins. The road heads north through a sub-arctic landscape to the Arctic Circle. After two river crossings by ferry, and remote landscapes, the road arrives in Inuvik in the Northwest Territories.

Itinerary Planning

Suggested Itinerary:

Day 1 Dawson City
Day 2 Dawson City
Day 3 Eagle Plains
Day 4 Inuvik
Day 5 Eagle Plains
Day 6 Dawson City

Duration:
6 days (return trip)

Season:
June - early September

Total Distance:
1546km/960mi

Road Surface:
Gravel

* See special notes below



Sightseeing

[Dawson City Museum](#)
[Discovery Claim National Historic Site](#)
[Dredge No. 4 National Historic Site](#)
[Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre](#)
[Forty Mile, Fort Cudahy & Fort Constantine Historic Site](#)
[Robert Service Cabin](#)
[Jack London Museum](#)
[Diamond Tooth Gertie's](#)

Activities

[Parks Canada Tours](#)
[Gold Panning at Free Claim #6](#)
[Klondike Spirit cruise on the Yukon River](#)



Days 1 & 2: Dawson City

An official National Historic Site, Dawson City still evokes the heartbeat of the greatest gold rush in history, with its boardwalks and vintage false-front buildings. First Nations cultural experiences and wilderness adventures are also part of today's Klondike experience.

Suggested Day Tours

Tour the Goldfields

Visitors can spend the day exploring the goldfields with a visit to Dredge No.4 National Historic Site and the Discovery Claim National Historic Site. They can also try their hand at gold panning.

The Stories of Dawson City

Many of Dawson City's historic buildings are managed by [Parks Canada](#) who offer a range of walking tours. From the Commissioner's Residence to the Palace Grand Theatre, interpretive guides bring to life the stories of Dawson. There are also poetry readings at the Robert Service Cabin or guided hikes that incorporate learning about the bard and listening to some of his poems. The perfect way to finish the day is at Diamond Tooth Gertie's to take in a can-can show.

Day 3: Drive from Dawson City to Eagle Plains

After leaving the North Klondike Highway at Dempster Corner, the road heads north through Tombstone Territorial Park and the Blackstone Uplands to Eagle Plains. There is a motel, restaurant and some services at this busy mid way point on the Dempster.

Distance: 406km/252mi 6.5 hours



Tombstone Territorial Park

Located about an hour north of the Dempster Corner turnoff, [Tombstone Territorial Park](#) is a unique wilderness of rugged peaks, permafrost landforms and abundant wildlife. The highway traverses the park and offers subarctic scenery, excellent hiking options and opportunities for wildlife viewing. Good spots to stop for roadside rambles are North Fork Pass and Two Moose Lake. Interpretive signs provide information about the Hän and Gwich'in people, who have hunted, camped and traded here for centuries. The park is especially beautiful in late August when the fall colours appear.

Tombstone Interpretive Centre: Knowledgeable staff at the impressive Tombstone Interpretive Centre offer travel information, interpretive programs, park registration and guidebooks. This is a place where visitors can pass hours exploring exhibits, sipping mountain tea and hanging out with other travellers. There are guided walks as well as art, culture and natural history special events throughout summer.

Day 4: Drive from Eagle Plains to Inuvik

The road continues north through a mountainous, almost lunar landscape, crossing the Arctic Circle and into the Northwest Territories. Descending from the Richardson Mountains, the Dempster crosses the Peel and MacKenzie rivers - each with free river ferries - then passes through the delta towns of Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic before arriving in Inuvik.

Distance: 367km/228mi 7 hours

Days 5 & 6: Return to Dawson City

Return on the same route with an overnight stop at Eagle Plains

*Distance: 1546km/960mi
13.5 hours driving time*

Safety

This gravel highway runs through remote wilderness with very limited services. Drivers are encouraged to take special precautions before setting out.

An enjoyable, safe journey on the Dempster Highway involves careful planning - ensure a well-running vehicle, spare tire and full gas tank, and it's recommended to drive at a 'slow and steady' pace.

Drivers should plan for roadside camping or pre-book accommodations at Eagle Plains, the half-way point on the Dempster. There are garages, stores and service suppliers in Whitehorse and Dawson City.

Arctic Circle

The Arctic Circle viewpoint at 66° 33' North latitude offers breathtaking views. Around the time of the summer solstice (21 June) visitors at the Arctic Circle or further north can watch the sun circle the sky and never set.

Changing seasons on the Dempster

Early summer brings a flush of young animals, mid-summer heralds long days under the midnight sun, and late summer visitors are treated to crimson and gold tundra vegetation. An iconic experience is to travel the Dempster in winter when the two river crossings become ice bridges and it is possible to continue further north from Inuvik on the Ice Road (see ** note below).

Special Notes

* Car rental is only available from Whitehorse on a return basis (car rentals cannot be dropped off in Inuvik). Some tour operators offer fly/drive options.

** We do not recommend clients drive the Dempster in winter alone, but instead join one of the small group tours offered by local operators. Contact your preferred wholesaler for details.



This route can be combined with:
Klondike Kluane Loop