



## **The Race to the Midnight Sun**

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### **84 teams slated for 12<sup>th</sup> annual Yukon River Quest start at Rotary Peace Park in Whitehorse on Wed. June 30 at Noon**

**“Race to the Midnight Sun” will feature some of world’s top kayakers; Texans back to defend overall title; “Paddlers Abreast” celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> year, welcomes Australian voyageur team of breast cancer survivors.**

The preliminary race roster is set for the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Yukon River Quest, which will begin on Wednesday, June 30 in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Canada. This year’s field will feature up to 84 teams with 188 paddlers from all over the world.

The Yukon River Quest is one of the longest canoe and kayak marathons in the world. Except for two mandatory rest stops totaling 10 hours, paddlers race non-stop over approximately 740 kilometers (460 miles) to Dawson City. Held annually in the north during the last week of June (around the summer solstice), it is a true “Race to the Midnight Sun” where many of the world’s best paddlers gather.

For the 2010 event, teams will compete for \$36,500 in prize money in various categories, but most do the race for the personal satisfaction of staking his/her claim to a coveted finisher pin.

The YRQ has grown in popularity since its gold rush centennial beginnings over a decade ago. After a slight dip in registrations last year, when 73 teams started the event, the number of teams registered is back up this year. As many as 89 were registered by May 1, but a few dropped before a withdrawal deadline of May 15.

Eight countries will be represented this year. Coming from outside North America are paddlers from Australia, Austria, Great Britain, Finland, France, and South Africa. The USA will be represented with paddlers from Alaska, California, Florida, Maine, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, and Washington. Finally, Canada will have team members from Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and the host Yukon Territory, which has 35 paddlers in the race.

The 2010 YRQ will have stiff competition in most categories:

- Solo canoe (C1): 4 teams – This should be a faster class this year that includes Tim Hodgson of Whitehorse, a member of the winning 2008 voyageur and 2009 tandem canoe teams, and “Bumbazer” Joe Evans of Oregon who is back for his fourth race; they will be challenged by last year’s C2 runner-up Gaetan Plourde of Ontario, and Rod Price of Florida who competed in last year’s inaugural Yukon 1000.

- Solo kayak (K1): 19 men, 6 women – including Carter Johnson, the 2009 and 2006 YRQ champion, 2008 champion and K1 record holder Brad Pennington of Texas (featured in 2009 NBC World of Adventure program), and renowned African/European champion Martin Dreyer of South Africa. Multi-year women’s K1 champion Ingrid Wilcox of Whitehorse will be challenged by the largest women’s solo field the race has ever seen.
- Tandem kayak (K2): 13 men’s teams, 6 mixed teams, 1 women’s team (which will compete in the mixed class) – There are no past champions, but a highly international mix should make this class fun to watch. Watch out for the British team of Kerry Blandin and Ian Anderson, the South African team of Colin and Nichola Burden, a pair of Australian teams, and several from all over Canada in the men’s division. The mixed division will see Maine couple Dawn and Brad Krog, who placed third in mixed canoe last year, and several other pairs who have goals like “remain engaged” and “finish smiling.”
- Tandem canoe (C2): 15 men’s teams, 8 mixed, 3 women’s – Watch out for the mixed teams of Jason Doucet and Kam Davies of Whitehorse who won last year’s Yukon 360, Mary Houck and John Ders of New York, and the race’s perennial threat, Larry Seethaler of Anchorage, Alaska, back for the 14<sup>th</sup> time (all 12 YRQs and both Dyea to Dawson races) paddling with partner Brenda Forsythe. The women’s field will be all-Yukon with Pauline Frost/Jody Linklater, Jessie Thomson-Gladish/Tiffany Duncan, and Wendy Morrison/Cynthia Friedrich; The men’s canoe race could be wide open, but watch for YRQ veteran Terry Ramin of Prince Rupert paddling with Jean-Francois Latour of Whitehorse, and the ageless team of Bob McBeath and Dan Cantrell of Washington. Noteworthy in this class is the team of Oliver Pollard and Tom Booth of England who are raising money for British military personnel who have been injured in war.
- Voyageur canoe (VC): 6 in the open class (including 1 mixed team that switched to open), and 3 women’s teams. The Texans (2007 and 2009 overall champs) are back with their usual crew of Texas Water Safaris veterans and have added past K1 and K2 champion David Kelly of California. The women’s field will feature the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of “Paddler’s Abreast” from the Yukon and Team WHOA from Toronto. The Yukon team will have three original team members on board, and this year they will welcome the Australian cancer survivor team, “Yukon Buddies”, who were recently honored in their country’s parliament. A 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary event will be held at the Yukon Arts Centre prior to the race on June 23<sup>rd</sup> from 7-9 p.m. The 2007 film “River of Life” will be shown and there will be a performance of the Whitehorse Community Choir and a silent auction.

The race organization invites spectators to gather in Rotary Peace Park and along the waterfront on the morning of Wednesday June 30 to witness the spectacular start. The racers line up for introductions at 11:30 a.m. with the historic SS Klondike looming in the background. Then the race horn blows at 12 noon and the participants run a short distance to their boats. Watching all the colorful boats leaving Whitehorse is truly one of the most spectacular sights in the north. Then it’s a long paddle on Lake Laberge, through the waning light of the midnight sun on the Thirtymile heritage section, and then on to Carmacks and the first rest stop of 7 hours. After some sleep, they head down Five Finger Rapid, past historic Fort Selkirk, and on to the final rest stop at Kirkman Creek for 3 hours. That gives them energy for the last 100 miles to Dawson City. Teams will finish sometime between the afternoon of Friday July 2 and Saturday July 3 just before midnight, the official finish time for the race.

Complete team bios and a race schedule are online at [www.yukonriverquest.com](http://www.yukonriverquest.com) and will appear in a special Whitehorse Star race supplement on June 28.

In addition to the Star, major logo sponsors of the event are: Yukon Emergency Measures Organization – Whitehorse, Faro and Carmacks SAR, , Kanoe People/Clipper Canoes, Air North, yukoninfo.com, Northland Beverages, Norcan/ Klondike Motors, Up North Adventures/Spirit of the North, Klondike Visitors Association, Gold Trail Jewellers, and Yukon Brewing.

Businesses small and large are welcome to sponsor a bib on one or more of the 188 paddlers in the event. Cost is \$250 for a solo paddler, \$400 for a tandem team, and \$700 for a voyageur team. This is the event's major fund-raiser. Bib sponsors receive a name on the bib, photo certificate of your paddler(s), and recognition at the start, in thank-you ads, and on the race's popular website. Bib forms can be downloaded from the site, or call the race phone at 867-333-5628. Deadline is June 1. A recent Yukon Government study found that the YRQ brought in nearly a quarter million dollars to the territory. The race is organized by the non-profit Yukon River Marathon Paddlers Association.

Of course, the backbone of the Yukon River Quest is the more than 120 volunteers, safety boat teams, and various support crews at its eight checkpoints. If you would like to help and join the fun of a truly great Yukon event that is the envy of the paddling world, click on the Volunteer link on the website and check out the list of tasks and locations where help is needed, or call 867-333-5628.

Those interested in seeing some of this year's Yukon and Alaskan teams can watch the 28-km. Icebreaker Race on Saturday May 29th from Marsh Lake dam to Schwatka Lake. Teams should be going through Miles Canyon between 1 and 2 p.m.

RACE SCHEDULE, RESULTS & MORE INFO: [www.yukonriverquest.com](http://www.yukonriverquest.com)

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