



YUKON RIVER QUEST

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 1, 2021

Registration opens Feb. 14 for 22nd Yukon River Quest

Yukon and other Canadian teams invited to register for COVID-adapted “Race to the Midnight Sun” and new Half Quest on June 23-26, 2021

WHITEHORSE, YUKON, CANADA – Registrations will be accepted beginning February 14, 2021 for the 22nd Yukon River Quest (YRQ), which will be held June 23 to June 26, 2021. The event was cancelled in 2020 but will go forward this summer under COVID-19 health and travel mandates. As such, race registration will initially be limited to Yukon and Canadian teams only. Yukon teams currently on hold from the cancelled 2020 event will be registered first.

All international teams that were previously registered from 2020 will be withdrawn but will have the option of getting on a wait list for entry if travel restrictions are lifted before the race. They will not lose their spots in the queue.

The 715-kilometer (444-mile) marathon paddling race is run on the Yukon River from Whitehorse to Dawson City in Canada's Yukon Territory during the last week of June. The race passes through the traditional lands of five Yukon First Nations and honours the cultures of those who have lived off the river and nurtured it for centuries.

The “Race to the Midnight Sun” for many years was the world’s longest annual paddling race and remains unique because teams race round-the-clock on a wilderness river and under a sky that never gets dark.

The allure of the Yukon River has made the YRQ a huge success. In the two years preceding the COVID pandemic, more than 100 teams registered, prompting race officials to adjust the team registration limit to 125 teams. During the last race in 2019, a record 117 teams were at the start line, and 86 of them finished.

The 2021 race may be limited in numbers due to health mandates, and several COVID-prevention procedures are in the process of being adopted in order to have a safe event on the river and in our communities.

For example, Canadian teams outside of the Yukon and any support crew members in their bubble currently would have to quarantine in the territory for 14 days prior to the event. It is hoped some restrictions will be modified as we move into summer, but the health of our territory’s residents, along with our volunteers and paddlers, is top priority. For current Yukon and Canada health and travel mandates visit:

Yukon: <https://yukon.ca/en/covid-19-information>

Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

Despite anticipated restrictions, the race will go on. Peter Coates, president of the Yukon River Marathon Paddlers Association (YRMPA), explained the board’s reasoning for moving forward with a race in 2021:

"The race will happen, come hell or high water, preferably high water. People need something to look forward to, and even if it is just a local race it keeps the name alive," Coates said.

Online entry forms are available starting at 14:00 (2 PM) Mountain Standard Time on February 14 via a link under the Register tab on the race website <https://www.yukonriverquest.com>. Entry fees for the full YRQ are: \$650 per solo team (C1, K1, SUP); \$950 per tandem team (C2, K2); and \$1550 for a C4 team, \$2150 for a 6-person voyageur canoe (VC) team, and \$2750 for an 8-person VC. Payment is required at time of registration to secure a spot.

While the overall limit of 125 teams likely will be reduced, there also is a voyageur canoe limit of 15 teams, and a solo team limit of 50 teams. Solo paddlers who have not completed a YRQ must provide a satisfactory paddling resume prior to registration to demonstrate that they have sufficient marathon racing or wilderness paddling experience. Paddling resumes should be e-mailed to the race office at info@yukonriverquest.com. See Register page for more details.

New this year for teams that want to get a feel for the race but not commit to the full YRQ experience is the Half Quest, which will end in Carmacks. A separate set of rules including entry fees is now posted on the website. It is hoped that a lot of local Yukon teams will take advantage of this opportunity to race on the river.

Regardless of which race you choose, you need to be prepared.

"Prospective paddlers thinking about entering need to be aware that this is a race that is tough mentally and physically," Coates said. "Be prepared to be cold and sore, mentally and physically exhausted, out in the middle of nowhere. A very beautiful but unforgiving nowhere. Do not enter on a whim, but only if you are up to the challenge."

All paddlers should become familiar with details in the 2021 YRQ COVID Rules, which are posted in English on the website, along with several preparation tips.

Each team is required to have a SPOT, IN REACH, or similar tracking device mounted on top of their vessel and activated for tracking before the team is officially allowed to race. This requirement allows teams to be able to be tracked during the race from links on the Yukon River Quest website. Following the actual race live online has been hugely popular with spectators all over the world. During recent races, the reach exceeded more than 30,000 via the event's Facebook and Instagram pages.

Total possible prize money for the full YRQ remains at \$42,830, based on 100 teams registered by June 1. The purse is adjusted upward or downward by a percentage point based on the final number of teams registered above or below 100. The top three male, female and mixed teams per class receive prize money as long as they beat another team in its class and finish within 25% of the top team in the class. Bonus prize money also will be given in several areas to: the top 10 teams overall; any team that breaks a record in its class; the top All-Indigenous team; the top Yukon male, female and mixed teams; the top senior team (age 55 and over), and the top young adult team (age 19-24). Several special awards are also donated by Yukon sponsors. A complete prize breakdown can be found in the race rules on the website.

There will be no prize money for the Half Quest in this experimental year.

However, many do the race for the personal satisfaction of staking their claim to a coveted YRQ Finisher Pin (there also will be Half Quest pins). Paddlers who have finished multiple YRQs also now covet entrance into the "Great River Club" which was

unveiled for the 20th anniversary. Racers who have logged 5,000 and 10,000 kilometers are members of that club and receive special pins. For more information visit the Great River Club page <https://www.yukonriverquest.com/great-river-club/>

The full race is all about endurance. Aside from two mandatory layovers at Coal Mine Campground in Carmacks and Minto Resorts (new this year), teams paddle non-stop to reach Dawson City. Teams in the full YRQ will have the option of choosing their rest times at the two layover locations, as long as they add up to 10 hours.

The YRQ course record still belongs to Canadian voyageur Team Kiskeynew's winning time of 39 hours, 32 minutes, 43 seconds in 2008. The 2019 overall winning time was 44:59:10 by the C2 team #wepaddletogether (Mike Vincent and Ivan English) of Saskatchewan, Canada.

The race's continued success depends on hundreds of dedicated volunteers, who are greatly appreciated by our racers and have a good time helping out during the last week of June. Various volunteer opportunities are listed under the Volunteer page on the website, where you can see the various jobs and shifts and sign up online.

Watch for a schedule and more news about YRQ events as we move into spring. YRMPA also welcomes new members.

The Yukon River Quest is the premier paddling event in Canada's North and is widely recognized throughout the paddling and adventure racing world. It has been featured in numerous publications, online, and in shows on NBC-TV, the BBC, and the CBC. The YRQ was named one of the ten toughest races in the world by renowned adventure racer and "Boundless" TV star Simon Donato. The race typically draws an international field, which we hope will be back in 2022. In 2019, 13 countries were represented and the race was featured in an hour-long production on <http://www.supracer.com/chased-by-the-midnight-sun/>

The race was beautifully featured a decade ago in the National Film Board of Canada's critically acclaimed "River of Life" about Paddlers Abreast, a voyageur team of Yukon breast cancer survivors that races every year. In 2021, they will be celebrating their 20th anniversary. Many other worthy causes have been represented as well.

Major logo-level sponsors are: Yukon 1000 Race Timing Software, Gold Trail Jewellers, Paddel Jumper, CKRW-The RUSH, Air North, Kanoe People, Whitehorse Star, PR Services-yukoninfo.com, Pepsi-Aquafina, City of Whitehorse, Up North Adventures, Superior Roofing YT, Total North Communications, Yukon Civil Air Search & Rescue (CASARA), Yukon Wide Adventures, The Coal Mine Campground, Minto Resorts, Fireweed Helicopters, North 60 Petro, and Make IT Solutions.

Many small businesses also have supported the race by sponsoring paddler bibs – see details on the website or contact the race office at 867-333-5628.

For more information, view the pre-registration instructions, rules, and numerous paddler preparation links at www.yukonriverquest.com and watch for updates on Facebook.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

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