

**The James Bay territory, queen of wide-open spaces...**

**The James Bay territory...** Gold, silver, copper and zinc flow from its soil. Majestic structures rise from its bedrock, yielding streams of power. Fish teem in its waters. The largest herd of caribou in the world migrates across its frozen inland seas, defying wolves whose howls blend into the gusting wind. Come discover extreme ranges of temperature, endless expanses of snow and a sky streaked with the glorious shimmer of northern lights! Observe the amazing traces left by the passage of glaciers. Cross covered bridges, remnants of the past, meet artisans and hear Indian legends. Go beyond the 49th parallel and visit a rich territory and its welcoming population.

The James Bay territory encompasses over 350,000 km<sup>2</sup> between the 49th and 55th parallels. Comparing it to Germany, which covers 357,000 km<sup>2</sup>, gives some idea of its size. Located roughly 800 km north of Montreal, the James Bay territory extends from Ontario and James Bay in the west to the Otish Mountains in the east; from Nunavik in the north to the Abitibi and Saguenay–Lac-St-Jean regions in the south. Highway 167 provides access the area from the east. It leads to the Chibougamau-Chapais sector and to Label-sur-Quévillon via Highway 113. Highway 109, the other hand, enters the territory from the west and leads to the town of Matagami. From that point, there are three different roads through the region: the James Bay road, completely paved and 645 km long, connecting Matagami to Radisson; the Northern road, a gravel road, 407 km long, linking the James Bay highway to Chibougamau; and, finally, the Transtaiga road, a 688-km-long gravel road, connecting Hydro-Québec's power stations together, all the way to Caniapiscau dam. There are also flights from Montreal, Quebec and Val-d'Or to Radisson or Chibougamau.

**The James Bay territory – Quebec's natural wilderness**

The James Bay territory has a cold continental climate characterized by significant temperature fluctuations. The long, cold winter begins in October and lasts until April, with temperatures averaging -23°C but sometimes dropping to -50°C. Summer extends from June to September with an average temperature of 17°C, occasionally rising to 34°C. Though the season is short, summer is blessed with long days; the sun rises at 4 a.m. and only sets in the late evening.

All the more reason to take full advantage of the many outdoor activities available: fishing, camping, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, biking, ATV outings, etc. In the fall, hunting becomes the star activity, while in winter, picturesque snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and even dog sledding reveal another facet of the territory's untouched expanses.

Photography and nature enthusiasts will enjoy the many hiking trails developed along roads, rivers and streams that offer unmatched vistas, unique and authentic shots, memories evoking long sighs and thoughts of returning. The luminous horizon of the northern sky will amaze you with its pink and blue opalescence giving way to blazing golden sunsets. Sparkling with a million stars, the moonbright vault lighting your pathway through the night will enthrall you.



©Mathieu Dupuis / James Bay Tourism

You may even be lucky enough to see the celestial dance of the northern lights spreading their shimmering ribbons across the sky. Take the time to intensely experience every minute of your stay here.

**Wildlife and flora to discover**

Two types of vegetation fashion the landscape of James Bay. The forest, almost impenetrable, is sprinkled with groves, hardwoods and a wide variety of bushes and is brimming with edible plants and wild berries. A little further north, the undergrowth thins out, the hardwoods gradually disappear and the spruces become smaller in size and number; the boreal forest gives way to the taiga. Cladonia, or reindeer moss, grows very slowly and takes many years to form the greenish thalli that carpet the shallow acid soil of the James Bay territory. Every year, herds of caribou from the Rivière aux Feuilles and the Georges River leave Nunavik and travel thousands of kilometres seeking new pastures. It is therefore very important not to harm these carpets of lichen, which are a staple of their diet!

For all its calm appearance, the forest is also home to about forty species of mammals, including wolves, lynxes, foxes, bears and moose. In the sky, sheltered beneath the rushes, perched on branches or paddling on the waters, birds make their presence felt and their call heard.



©Mirage Outfitter

Caribou

Ducks, snow geese, snowy owls, eagles, falcons, ptarmigans, Canada geese, and loons figure among the bird life of the James Bay territory.

The abundance of its aquatic fauna is increasingly recognized and the diversity as well as the enormous size of certain specimens make it a real paradise for fishing enthusiasts. Anglers travel a long way to try their luck for walleye, lake trout, brook trout, pike and other species in the crystal-clear waters of the territory's innumerable lakes and rivers. Hudson Bay and James Bay also boast fish and marine mammals such as whales, belugas and seals, down from the Arctic.



Blueberries – ©Ville de Matagami



White partridge – ©Mirage Outfitter



Morel – ©FauneNord.

The James Bay territory has the largest expanses of fresh water in Quebec, real inland seas. Lake Mistassini, for instance, excavated by glaciers, is the biggest natural lake in the province with an area of 2,115 km<sup>2</sup>—nearly three times the size of Lac St-Jean. As for the reservoirs of the La Grande complex, they represent the largest man-made waterbodies; in fact, Caniapiscau reservoir encompasses more than 4,318 km<sup>2</sup>, equivalent to 39 billion cubic metres of water.

**The inhabitants, from past to present**

Two groups live side by side in the area: Jamesians, with a population of about 17,000, and the Cree of **Eeyou Istchee**, numbering nearly 13,000 people.

**Eeyou Istchee  
"Land of the People"**

The ancestors of the current Cree population have occupied the land for nearly 5,000 years. In fact, the Crees of Eeyou Istchee (Land of the People) live along the rivers and around the lakes of the land surrounding the southeastern extremity of James Bay. Their traditional way of life is based on hunting, fishing and trapping. Thanks to their creativity and ingenuity, the Crees have traveled through and become familiar with this huge territory, subsisting mainly on flora and wildlife from the sea and the forest.

Defining themselves as a nation of hunters – Ndoohenou – the Crees followed the seasons and animal migrations. Among big game,

caribou was their favourite prey. It not only supplied them with food but also provided essential elements for making clothing, tools, snowshoes, moccasins and teepees. As for small game, goose hunting in the spring and fall contributed to filling the larder then, and still does today, for two months. During Goose Break, one of the major traditional activities observed by the Crees, the whole family returns to the nomadic lifestyle for two weeks.

In the summer, fishing is in full swing in the coastal bays and river estuaries. At the end of the season comes the long-awaited time for picking berries, small fruits and other plants; the Crees use them not only as food but also as ingredients in medicine and dyes.

The first contacts with Europeans, dating from the beginning of the 17th century, mainly involved the fur trade, which lasted nearly 300 years. With the passing years, the Crees considerably changed their lifestyle. To meet the demands of the fur trade, they gradually set aside big game hunting and their nomadic way of life, and trapping became a major activity. The trading post sites became the location of today's Cree communities.

Though some Crees still make a living from trapping and other traditional activities such as hunting and fishing, modern life has considerably changed the behaviour of hunters and trappers. With longer distances to cover, they now travel by snowmobile or all-terrain vehicle, depending on the season. In fact, the significant transformation of the landscape first caused by mining and logging activities, and all the more by the construction



Cree smile - ©Gaston Cooper



©James Bay Tourism



Cree family

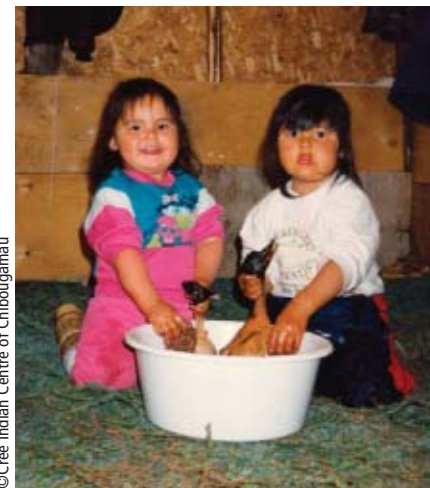
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of huge hydroelectric facilities and roads since the beginning of the 1970s, has significantly affected day-to-day life and traveling related to seasonal activities for the Crees.

Since the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed in 1975, the Crees have moved into the 20th century at the speed of light. A proud people, they are working to revitalize their traditions and language, while providing community members with the benefits of modern

life, especially in the areas of health, education, economics and housing. Provisions of the Agreement also give the Crees exclusive or shared access, depending on the case, to territories they previously occupied alone, where they can practice traditional hunting, fishing and trapping activities.

The long adventure of the first Europeans to come to America mingled with the history of the early occupants of this huge territory. Their exploration of the new continent was fuelled by the search for a new route to Asia and, in 1610, Sir Henry Hudson discovered the bay that bears his name. In 1631, Thomas James published the map of Hudson Bay showing once and for all that it was not the Northwest Passage, the fabled sea route to the Orient. However, people rapidly realized that the region was full of animals whose furs were among the most sought-after in the world. During that period, Pierre-Esprit Radisson and Médard Chouart, Sieur des Groseilliers, developed the fur trade in New France. They first managed to interest the English and, in May 1670, King Charles granted a royal charter to the Hudson's Bay Company, which is still in operation today! Preferring exploration to trade, in 1674, they left that company and returned once more to France to create the North West Company, in direct competition with the Hudson's Bay Company.



©Cree Indian Centre of Chibougamau

Preparing geese

The struggle for control of the fur trade continued until 1713, when signature of the Treaty of Utrecht ended hostilities between the French and the English. The fur market gradually declined; only Natives now practise fur trapping. As for the last of the trappers, they became prospectors!

In fact, interest in the area was revived by the riches in the bedrock of the James Bay territory. Road construction and railway development after World War II made it possible for the mining industry to flourish. A dozen mines went into operation in the 1950s, leading to the founding of the towns of Chapais, Chibougamau and, a little later, Matagami. The infrastructure set up by the mining industry opened the way to another natural resource: the boreal forest. Spruce is used to produce excellent wood framing and its pulp enhances the strength of



Prospectors

certain types of paper. Therefore, the 1960s were the logging years; here as well as elsewhere in Québec, many companies were established and their needs increased constantly.

### The project of the century...

At the beginning of the 1970s, nearly all the rivers near major urban centres had been developed. With the rising demand for power, it became urgent to develop new projects. In 1971, the Quebec Government announced a mega-project: the harnessing of the rivers in

the James Bay territory. In 1972, Hydro-Québec therefore began construction of the La Grande complex, including the largest underground powerhouse in the world, La Grande-2, today renamed Robert-Bourassa in honour of the proponent of the project, the former premier.

In all, eight generating stations, producing more than half of Quebec's hydroelectric power, went up during the two construction phases. Three highways totalling over 1,700 km were built, the James Bay road (Matagami-Radisson), the Transtaiga road (Radisson-Caniapiscou) and the Northern



Giant staircase

Road (Chibougamau-Radisson). Thousands of jobs were created by Quebec's most ambitious society-wide project to date!

"450 miles in 450 days..." Designed by Quebec engineering firm Desjardins, Sauriol (Dessau-Soprin), the James Bay road was part of the major James Bay projects. It took thousands of workers to build it. Wider than "regular" roads, it can bear loads of up to 500 tonnes. Eleven bridges span the rivers; 940 culverts and some 32 kilometres of pipe channel the waters. Part of the roadway was laid over the ancient Tyrrell Sea. Moraine deposits left by the passage of the glaciers are still visible. Like the Transtaiga Road leading to Caniapiscou, the James Bay Road occasionally runs along the sinuous tracks of eskers. This tactic allowed the work to be completed in record time!

### Come to the James Bay territory!

The exotic quality of the James Bay territory has been inspiring challenges and dreams, conquest and adventure for hundreds of years!



©Société d'histoire régionale de Chibougamau

Before the construction of the road 167.

An austere exterior conceals a gentle nature. Fertile, it continues to produce resources for the generations. Generous, it supplies an entire nation with energy. Daring, it allows the most extravagant follies. Valiant, it protects those who cherish it. Its children are said to have hearts as huge as the land. Welcoming, it draws you in with all the warmth of its people!

**Discover its wide-open spaces and Cree culture.**

**Experience the North!**



Français	English	Cri
Bonjour	Hello	Kwey
Bienvenue	Welcome	Wachiya
Merci	Thank you	Chiniskumitin
Au revoir	Goodbye	Wachiya
Je m'appelle	My name is	...nitisinikaasun
Comment allez-vous?	How are you?	Taan aaihtiyin?

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