



Photo: Malak

Dog races are just one of the traditional events that take place at "rendez-vous" — an annual Whitehorse celebration to help break the winter blues.

they provided were replaced by road traffic. Only remnants of the old piers remain along the waterfront, and the horses' manes have not blown since the construction of the Whitehorse Rapids Hydroelectric Dam. Nonetheless even old memories remain active in modern-day Whitehorse.

Each March, the city happily and nostalgically welcomes its place as a terminus of the "Yukon Quest" — one of the longest and toughest sled dog races in the world. Following the Yukon River between Whitehorse and Fairbanks, the Yukon Quest attracts international competitors who cover the 1 600 km in as few as 12 days. With only six resupply points and carrying at times unwieldy 136-kg loads, mainly of dog food, drivers and dogs find the race a test of endurance.

For Whitehorse the Quest is a celebration of a way of travel severely eroded by the snowmobile, car and airplane. It is a modern tribute to the Yukon pioneers, miners, missionaries, mail carriers and Mounties who followed the same route as they ventured in and out of Whitehorse along one of the most famous water highways in the world.

Similarly, in February of each year, Whitehorse holds a 25-year-old ritual to combat "cabin fever" — that feeling of lethargy born from a winter that seems endless and living quarters too cramped. In the ritual, called "rendez-vous," Yukoners emerge from cabin, home and office tower to dress in turn-of-the-century costume and throw themselves into one week of celebration and competition. Dog races, fire building, log sawing, and snowshoe races are just some of the more traditional events to break the winter blues.

Still, for all the traditions that Whitehorse holds to, it is very much the quintessential modern city. A thriving business area holds an array of banks, retail stores, restaurants and office buildings. The city is also the seat of government for the Yukon's 16-member legislature.

In addition, Whitehorse is the supply centre for much of the Yukon's thriving mining industry — an industry that has remained a mainstay of the Yukon economy. Together hard rock and placer mining production was valued at \$440 million in 1987, largely from the recovery of gold, silver, lead and zinc. Many of these products are increasingly bound for Pacific Rim countries contributing to closer trading relations with the Yukon.

Since 1960, there has been an average annual growth rate of 12 per cent in the tourist industry. In 1987, an estimated 400 000 people visited Whitehorse, bringing in revenues of around \$82 million. Today, there is much optimism for the industry's future, much of which is based on the tourist potential of the compelling northern landscape.

As Whitehorse has entered the international tourism market, a rapidly growing number of travellers from around the globe and especially west

European countries are flying or motoring to Whitehorse for a Yukon holiday or adventure experience. Here they have a choice of world-class restaurants some of which offer a "country food" menu of reindeer, caribou, arctic char, broad whitefish and muskox.

A number of Whitehorse theatre companies offer productions of contemporary plays, Indian legends, and vaudeville period pieces. Local tour operators assist visitors in planning river trips by raft, canoe and motor launch; hikes to the internationally renowned Kluane National Park; photo tours by airplane; or coach tours to historic sites.

All of these amenities and services combined with a small population, the close proximity to the Yukon's magnificent lakes and rivers, and untouched alpine reaches make Whitehorse the ultimate playground for residents and visitors alike.

The poems of Robert Service and the stories of Jack London mask an environment that in Whitehorse is more temperate than severe, more friendly than hostile. Whitehorse has relatively dry weather with warm southerly winds moderating most days throughout the year. From early June to the end of

August, Whitehorse has about 82 frost-free days allowing most people to cultivate prize-winning flowers and vegetables.

While the famous Yukon winters are consistently cold, they are still warm enough to allow enjoyment of Whitehorse's world cup cross-country ski facilities and trails. And the 24-hour darkness that communities further north experience is absent in Whitehorse. For Whitehorse, compensation for the short days of winter comes in the long warm ones of summer (almost 20 hours in June) when the fishing is superb and the landscape splendid.

The self-reliance, friendliness and spirit of adventure that Service chronicled 80 years ago remain in Whitehorse today. A modern city steeped in tradition, Whitehorse boasts the best of modern technology and communications while preserving a heritage of which it is deeply proud. The best of its colourful past and present is caught in this dynamic city which continues on an adventure that is both old and new.

Whitehorse: the seat of government for the Yukon's 16-member legislature.



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