

2023



Horseshoe Canyon

ARMIT RIVER FISHING PACKAGE



As one of the most remote trout rivers in the area, the Armit River is seldom visited despite its unique angling opportunities and stunning landscapes. The river originates at Armit Lake and meanders northerly through the Porcupine Provincial Forest, The Armit Meadows Ecological Reserve, and the Red Deer Wildlife Management Area until eventually flowing into Red Deer Lake. Angling opportunities exist throughout the system and up into the many feeder tributaries of the river. The River meanders along the Manitoba and Saskatchewan Border and crosses multiple times. Anglers are urged to study the maps thoroughly and understand the border as angling regulations and license requirements differ on each side of the border. The areas found with the best trout fishing opportunities and habitat exist from the Armit Meadows Ecological Reserve to Highway 3 (Saskatchewan).



THE FISHERY:

The Armit River and its tributaries home a naturalized population of brook trout and is supplementally stocked with brown trout and brook trout by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment. Saskatchewan stocks trout at one primary location approximately 10km southeast of Armit, SK. This location would be considered the primary access point in Saskatchewan and is within the Upper Armit River Representative Area. In 2022, SVSFE conducted presence/absence surveys in preparation for this document. Angling was the primary method of catchment including one day of backpack electrofishing on the Manitoba side of the border. Targetable brook trout were found in all reaches of the system from the Ecological Reserve to the primary stocking/access area in Saskatchewan. Brook trout were also found in Meadow Creek within the Armit Meadows Ecological Reserve. Angling was not attempted south of the stocking location to Highway 3 or beyond. While conducting surveys, native species were also identified to inhabit certain deep pool habitats including northern pike and walleye. No brown trout were angled or observed in 2022.



Brook trout caught near MB/SK border



THE RIVER:

Beginning at the headwaters at Armit Lake the river is generally slow moving and dominated by black spruce bog. This area was not mapped in 2022 because of very poor access. Although one can assume brook trout inhabit these areas, it would be very difficult

to navigate due to the assumedly many downed trees, hummocky terrain, and lack of access trails. The river begins to change near the outflow of Muskeg Lake. This area, also known as the Armit Meadows Ecological Reserve is ecologically protected with a total area 263 hectares. Within, the Reserve provides stunning landscapes with relatively easy trekking and excellent trout habitat. This Reserve has unique biodiversity including ~7 hectares of isolated and endangered fescue prairie ecosystems. Manitoba permits passive, non-consumptive visits on foot to this Ecological Reserve. Continuing downstream into the Armit River Canyon the river becomes dominated by run, and high-quality pools through this area are less abundant. Travel through this boulder strewn section becomes increasingly difficult with fewer trout angling opportunities, however the views and massive cutbanks within the canyon area make the trip well worth it. The Canyon section ends not far downstream from the Armit



Armit River Canyon Lookout

Canyon Lookout Access Trail. In this area travel becomes easier again and trout fishing opportunities increase. This area continues beyond the Saskatchewan Border to an area identified with “the Ancient Creek Bridge”. The section was perhaps where some of the best brook trout fishing opportunities were found. The area is dominated with deep pools, excellent trout habitat, and easier river travel. Beyond this area and continuing to the primary access point within the Upper Armit Representative Area the walking gets considerably easier yet again, and holes get deeper and further apart. It is within this area where there was increased evidence of native species. It is likely that from this area and continuing north, the closer you get to the Red Deer Lake the more likely trout will have to compete with native species for high quality habitat. Known species within Red Deer Lake include – walleye, pike, sucker, creek chub, freshwater drum, and bullhead.

PLANNING A TRIP



Riverbank along the Armit Meadows



TIME OF YEAR:

In Manitoba, trout streams are closed to angling from November 1st to and including April 15th. In Saskatchewan, fishing is not permitted from April 1st - May 4th. In spring, high levels of discharge often make the rivers unfishable. Generally, by early-June flow has slowed and the water has cleared enough to allow safe travel. Angling opportunities exist from this point until freeze up (or Nov 1st in MB). By late fall fishing quality seems to decrease when brook trout become focused on spawning and migrating to wintering areas. The best time of year to fish the Armit River is between mid-August and mid-October when the water starts to cool, and the bugs are becoming less abundant. It is not advisable to plan trips immediately following heavy rainfall events as water levels are known to increase considerably making travel and angling more difficult.



GETTING THERE AND AWAY:

Most of the access roads and trails are active and inactive logging roads, therefore conditions and accessibility can change significantly depending on time of year and current logging activity. Roads are often closed or decommissioned to protect wildlife populations from hunting traffic. For this reason, it is advised to contact either SVSFE or one of the local governing entities to gain knowledge on road/trail conditions while planning your trip. The primary river accesses exist south of PTH 77 (Highway 3 - Saskatchewan). In Saskatchewan the primary access location can be reached by 4x4 truck off Highway 980. Watch for signs directing you to the Armit River. In Manitoba the primary access trails begin from the National Mills Road. In MB, all these accesses require an ATV to find the river. To find the upper reaches and the Armit Meadows Ecological Reserve the trails are rough and non-maintained old logging roads. Even using these old trails still requires a bushwack on foot to access the river. In Manitoba, the middle reaches can also be accessed directly by ATV, however, are non-maintained old logging roads. The “Armit River Trail” connects the Saskatchewan side to the Manitoba side, however requires crossing the river. In 2022, these trails were travelled without issue. The future condition of these trails remains dependent on traffic and outdoors folk upkeeping them. Utilizing digital river access information will enhance your experience and offer the capabilities of adjusting your trip as need be. Data files come in the form of .gpx or .kmz and can be uploaded onto smart devices or GPS units for offline applications on the SVSFE website.



River Trail

Visit www.swanvalleysportfishing.com/lakes/armit-river/



WHAT TO BRING:

The crucial consideration for any river expedition is to **pack light!** River trekking can be much more challenging than most expect. Some vital gear to consider; trekking pole(s), good hiking boots with ankle support, quick dry pants, hiking and/or neoprene socks, good polarized sunglasses, compass, GPS or equivalent, emergency communications device, water filter, ice fishing/telescopic rod that can pack down easily, tackle of your choosing, bug control, survival/first aid kit, and miscellaneous backpacking/camping gear for overnight trips (sleeping bag, tent, tarp, hat, headlamp, dehydrated meals, etc.). Note the river possesses multiple tent sites in addition to the ones identified in the Armit River Mapbook.



Camp in the Armit River Canyon



FISHING:

When angling streams for brook trout the first places to look are areas with cover. Cover can come in many forms including depth, water turbulence, undercut banks, overhanging vegetation, boulders, and of course, instream woody debris. Perhaps the best advice would be to do more looking than actual fishing. In the Armit River brook trout are everywhere, but the shallower areas with little cover will be dominated with little guys. Larger, adult fish are usually found in the best habitats which include plunge pools on bends, behind large boulders, beneath downed trees, and within beaver floods. There are no guarantees in stream trout fishing. On many occasions the best habitats will yield nothing (likely because of angling pressure and/or natural predators), while some of the smaller overlooked pools will yield the biggest trout of the day.

The next step is catching them, and the first consideration is what type of rod to use. Most anglers prefer a spinning rod, while some anglers prefer a fly rod. Bait and technique combinations are endless. From a fly-fishing perspective some of the best methods are using underhand pitches and bow-and-arrow type casting precisely into tight places with lots of cover. Local stream trout fly anglers say that the go-to flies include stone fly nymphs and caddisfly larva nymphs in spring/summer and terrestrial patterns in the fall. With regards to using spinning tackle, perhaps a simple worm on a hook with a splitshot has accounted for more brook trout than any spoon, spinner, and fly combined. Another tried and true method is a #0 in-line spinner or small spoon. Polarized sunglasses and the lightest possible line (6lb or less) will improve your success considerably.

Technique is arguably more important than lure selection. A common misconception is that stream trout are easy to catch; this could not be further from the truth. Approaching a potential fishing location should be done with care. After spotting a pool be as quiet as possible and avoid casting your shadow into the pool at all costs. Approaching from downstream often minimizes the risk of being spotted because fish are usually facing upstream ready to ambush incoming prey items. Try and precisely cast as close to the cover as possible. There have been endless times when anglers have stung a trout on the first cast because of an imperfect retrieve, and sent the fish into hiding. If you accidentally spook a pool, it could take at least a half-hour before the fish will consider biting again.



Class 1 fishing hole along the River Trail MB side

TRIP OPTIONS

The Armit River provides many opportunities for multiday and shorter day trips. Create your own trip using the maps/data files provided or choose from the following. There are many opportunities to complete short day trips in the lower reaches, while the upper reaches are more frequently explored through multi-day trips.

1. THE WHOLE SHEBANG

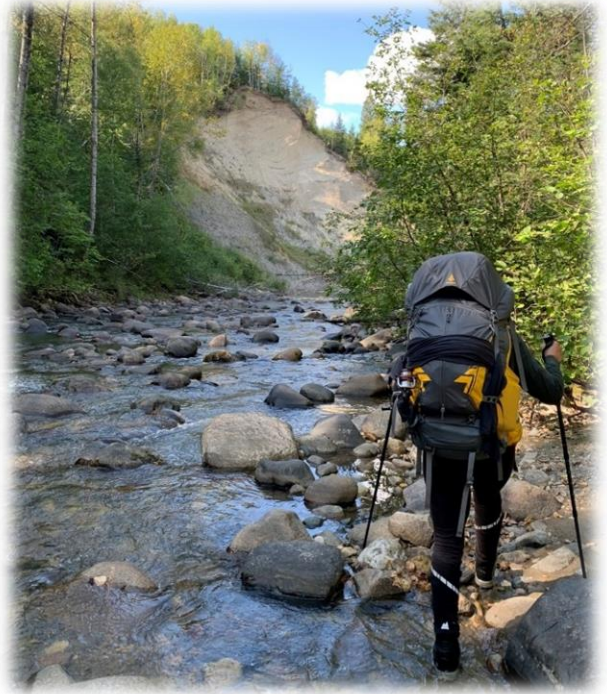
(Armit Meadows to SK Access Location)

Distance: Approx. 19km

Difficulty: Strenuous

Time: 4-5 days

Summary: This is the quintessential backpacking trip to explore the Armit River. Have somebody drop you off at *Meadow Cut-blocks* and pick you up OR stash a vehicle at the *SK Access Trail* parking location. Reaching the *Meadow Cut-blocks* is challenging itself therefore it's best to allow a full day just to reach the river. Avoid going early in spring when water levels are high or mid-summer when bugs are in full force. This trip will bring you through the meadows, the canyon, and some of the best fishing areas the Armit River has to offer. Best to plan for 4 days of travel minimum to fully enjoy the river.



2. THE MEADOWS ECOLOGICAL-RESERVE

Distance: Out-and-Back

Difficulty: Strenuous

Time: 2 – 3 days

Summary: This is a seldom travelled area with little angling pressure because it is very difficult to get to. Sizeable brook trout have been found throughout this area. To reach the meadows you must ATV as far into the *Meadow Cut-blocks* as possible. From this point it'll be a full-on bushwack to the Ecological Reserve. Set-up camp and explore the beautiful fescue meadows and fishing opportunities and within the feeder tributaries. Travelling downstream will bring you into canyon country, which is a place worth seeing on its own.



3. THE CANYON RETREAT

Distance: Out-n-Back

Difficulty: Strenuous

Time: 2-3 days.

Summary: This route would be the best for anglers eager to explore the Armit River Canyon and the fishing it has to offer. Quad to the *Canyon Cut-block* landing and bushwack west down into the Canyon. Once hitting the river you're basically at the centre point of the Armit River Canyon. Trek upstream or downstream admiring the breathtaking landscapes, cutbanks, and ample trout fishing opportunities. There is an excellent 1-2 tent campsite near the access location on the big bend which also has an excellent fishing hole at the campsite. If hiking the banks, you may find evidence of historical logging activities in the canyon.



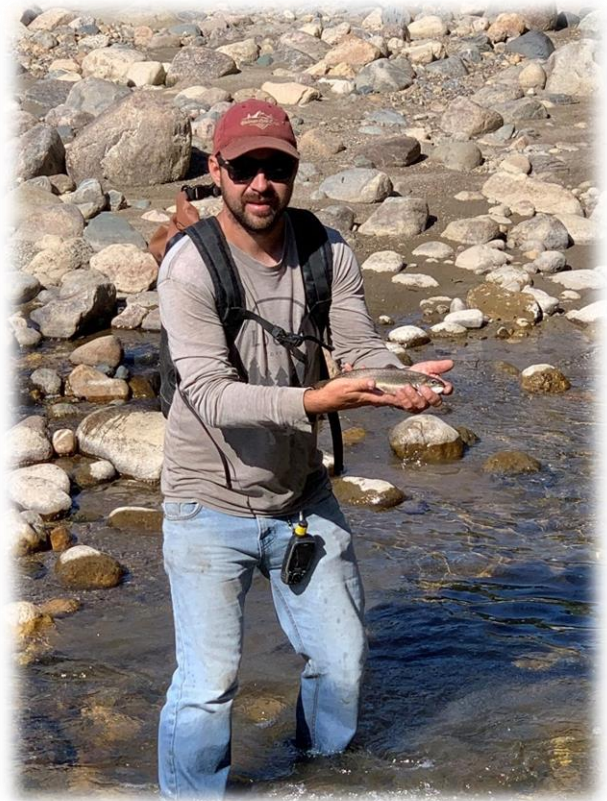
4. THE FISHERMAN'S ROUTE (Loop from Canyon Trail)

Distance: Approx. 7.5km

Difficulty: Strenuous

Time: 2-3 days

Summary: This route will bring you through sections of the river with some of the best angling opportunities. The loop can bring you back to your starting point using various ATV trails. Travel with an ATV to the *Armit River Canyon Lookout* (which also doubles as a campsite). Scale down the cutbank and fish the various holes downstream until you reach the *Armit River Trail*. From here you can hike back to your stashed ATV. In 2022, there was a beaver flood along this route that made the full loop impassable by ATV, but easily crossable by foot. This route can be reversed if anglers prefer to travel upstream. Park your ATV at the beaver flood and return via the *Canyon Trail*. This option also avoids quadding through some difficult and steep terrain.



5. CANYON LOOKOUT:

Distance: Out-n-back

Difficulty: Moderate

Time: 1-2 days

Summary: This section will bring you to the most stunning areas and views of the *Armit River Canyon*. Travel by ATV to the *Canyon Lookout* and travel upstream or downstream as you wish. Be sure to fish the many pools and take in the stunning view of the massive cut banks. If doing a day-trip ensure you leave early to maximize your time on the river. The last 1.3 km of the trail to the lookout is extremely steep and difficult to ATV. Some may prefer to hike this portion.



6. ARMIT TRAIL DAYTRIP (MB):

Distance: Out-n-Back

Difficulty: Easy-Moderate

Time: 1 day

Summary: Travel from the *National Mills Road* ATV to the *Armit River Trail* through various old cut-blocks. This trail parallels the east side of the Armit River and has multiple access points to the river along it. Fish the various pools along the route or get off and walk if you desire. Be careful as the trail can easily bring you across the border where different angling regulations apply.



7. ARMIT TRAIL DAYTRIP (SK):

Distance: Out-n-Back

Difficulty: Easy-Moderate

Time: 1 day

Summary: From the *Woody Lake Road* follow the signs to the Armit River. From here cross the river to access the *Armit River Trail* which parallels it along the east side of the river all the way to the Manitoba Border (and beyond). This trail has multiple bushwack access points to the river along it. Fish the various pools along the route. Be careful as the trail can easily bring you across the border where different angling regulations apply.



8. THE BEGINNER'S TRIP:

Distance: Out-n-back

Difficulty: Easy

Time: 0.5-1 Day

Summary: This is perhaps the best route to take youth or to explore the Armit River for the first time. A motor vehicle can bring to Saskatchewan Access point and primary trout stocking location east off the *Woody Lake Road* (HWY 980). From here there is ample fishing opportunity, however this is probably where the river receives the most fishing pressure. Follow the river up or downstream and look for high quality fish habitat and cast away! It is probably a good idea to bring a 4x4 truck as this road could be muddy in spring or after rainfall.



DISCLOSURE

The travel times in the package are estimated for folks with peak physical ability and good health. Anglers should be aware that a river kilometer is much different than a trail kilometer in terms of the effort/time required to travel it. It is highly recommended that before venturing out on any Armit River excursion, that you are well prepared and equipped with the proper gear to backcountry camp for multiple days. River distances on maps are distances between campsites while trail distances are measurements between trail junctions.

It is important to remember that the roads and trails advertised in this package are used by many different land users and stakeholders. These include outfitters, trappers, logging operations, snowmobile user groups, and anglers alike. Travelling logging roads during times of active logging can be extremely dangerous. In these circumstances travel should not occur without the use of a radio to communicate with logging equipment and trucks. Local outfitters may also have active bear baits in the area. In Manitoba (Zone B), there are two bear seasons – late April – late June, and late August – early November. During these times it is strongly advised to refrain from travelling down unmarked side trails as they may lead to active bear baits. Trail etiquette is extremely important as well. This includes refraining from travelling down unmarked side trails, avoiding wet areas/rutting at all costs, packing out whatever litter you pack in, and respecting permitted structures on the land including warm-up shacks and trapper's cabins. Please note, there are several trails other than the ones illustrated on the maps. Downloading the data files will help users navigate as even some of the map trails are very grown over. If you come across a downed tree restricting travel, take time to remove and clean up the barrier - the other trail users will appreciate it.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

For up-to-date information on trail conditions, logging operations, and weather reports:

Swan River District Government Office

+1 (204) 734 3429

Hudson Bay Government Office

+1 (306) 865 4405

For dated information on the fishery:

Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement Inc.

swanvalleysportfish@gmail.com

This promotional package was created by SVSFE in 2023 as an effort to provide anglers with the information required to help plan trips and explore the fishery that is the Armit River. Access information, trail conditions, and trail barriers are subject to change over time. Users are required to educate themselves on all provincial regulations related to their activities including angling, backcountry camping and ATVing for the areas they plan to explore. Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement Inc. will not be held liable for any damages or injuries, offenses that may occur from anglers using the promotional information. Thanks to the Manitoba Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund for supporting this project.



