

# Trip by Royals Kate and William expose secrets of NWT's natural beauty

By *Dean Bennett*

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YELLOWKNIFE \_ It took a royal canoe ride by William and Kate on the emerald waters of Blachford Lake for the rest of the world to discover what Canadians already know about the Northwest Territories.

Whether it's at the Blachford Lake Lodge or any of the other getaway spots north of 60, Mike Freeland says nothing beats sitting in a canoe at dusk, hearing the distant cries of loons and watching the shimmering lights of the aurora borealis as they arc through the sky and dance on the water.

"The aurora dance so much you'll never see the same aurora again," said Freeland, owner of the lodge.

"It can be pretty special."

He said it's just one of many memories awaiting travellers to the barrenlands of the North.

Tourists from the United States, Germany, Australia and the United Kingdom, as well as Canada and other nations, have buzzed in by floatplane to Blachford since Freeland started it with one cabin in 1981.

They come to the lodge, 220 kilometres east of Yellowknife on Great Slave Lake, to fish, canoe, kayak and walk nature trails. At night, they sit by the campfire or relax on the decks.

During the summer aurora season (late August to October), they'll sit at night in the hot tub as the midnight sun turns the sky from bright yellow to dusk and wait for the light show.

Sometimes, they'll take guided midnight walks along the nature trails, collecting memories that can't be squeezed into a scrapbook.

"We just get to a rocky point (on the trail) and I say, 'OK, can everybody be quiet,'" said Freeland.

"If the wind isn't out, the only thing you're going to hear is your own heartbeat."

