



## Our fabled north

by Tony Sloan

In the Yukon and Northwest Territories there are massive mountain ranges, great forested valleys, swift-flowing rivers leaping over mighty cataracts and sweeping vistas of open tundra. Each summer, thousands of visitors come from the south to this wild and beautiful country via plane, rail, bus, car and camper.

### The Yukon

You can get to the Yukon via the Chilkoot Pass, the rugged and tortuous route taken by the gold seekers in 1898 when the Klondike gold rush exploded into virgin territory. Today, it's the route of the White Pass & Yukon Railway from Skagway on the Pacific coast to Whitehorse. Or if you prefer, you can take the fabled Alaska Highway from Fort Nelson, B.C. for 1408 km to Whitehorse. It's quicker by air via CP Air scheduled services.

Although its population is less than 15,000, Whitehorse provides more restaurants, clubs and lounges than many cities three times the size in the south. Other attractions include the Frantic Follies, museums, boat cruises (daily up and down the mighty Yukon River) and shopping. Stores offer a good variety of Indian handicrafts.

Further north on the Klondike Highway or via a seven-day cruise down the Yukon, is Dawson City, the centre of the gold rush. 80 years ago, it had a population of 30,000, the largest city north of San Francisco in western North America. Today's population is approximately 1,000 who welcome around 65,000 visitors each summer in a new gold rush.

There are good motels, restaurants and campgrounds in this unabashed boom town, informal and totally enjoyable.

There's the Flora Dora Hotel and Cafe, Eldorado Hotel, the Sourdough Saloon: nightly performances in the Palace Grand Theatre; and gamblers standing three deep at the blackjack tables in Diamond Tooth Gertie's. You may visit Robert Service's cabin and Jack London's cabin. There are tours of the gold fields, gold panning, the S.S. Keno riverboat and museums depicting one of the most exciting times in Canadian history.

Hikers will find the alpine grandeur of Kluane National Park an unforgettable experience. Anglers can combine fantastic scenery with great fishing at the Kluane Wilderness Lodge. Whitehorse has everything you need to outfit wilderness canoe trips. If you would like more information on Yukon vacations write: Tourism & Information, Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Y1A 2C6.

### Northwest Territories

The Mackenzie Highway will carry you from Edmonton to Yellowknife or you can go by air. This high northern wilderness of mountains, tundra, lakes and rivers caps the northern boundaries of the four western provinces and extends northward to the tip of Ellesmere Island, 845 km from the North Pole.

Far left: Dance Hall, Whitehorse, Yukon. Centre: Donjek Falls, Yukon. Above: Canada Day, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

There are no roads connecting the far flung and isolated villages.

Yellowknife, on the northerly shore of Great Slave Lake, started as a gold mining town in the 30s. Today it has a population of 10,500 and in addition to gold mining is also a trade and transportation centre and jump-off point for summer visitors seeking outdoor wilderness adventure in the great northern shield country.

Charter air services fly anglers to any one of a string of fishing lodges at widely separated locations on Great Slave Lake. The Great Bear Lake area boasts an equally impressive list of famous fishing lodges. Trout Lake, south of Fort Simpson, now has a sportfishing camp. The lake is noted for its large lake trout, walleye and great northern pike. Bathurst Inlet Naturalist Lodge on the Arctic Ocean is used by scientists interested in observing arctic fauna and the Inuit way of life.

There are river cruises and canoe trip outfitters who paddle the famed Coppermine and Thelon Rivers. Westward, where the mighty Nahanni River courses through the towering canyons of the Mackenzie Mountains, outfitters schedule 14-day raft trips and run shorter power-boat sightseeing trips to Virginia Falls, one of the most spectacular in the world.

Due to the cost of air transport and supply considerations, Arctic vacations are more expensive than in the holiday resorts of the south. Therefore, it is important that you plan your expedition carefully and well in advance. Most lodges and tours can accommodate a relatively limited number of guests. For more information on a vacation in the Northwest Territories write: Travel Arctic, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, X1A 2L9. □