

Loop de Loop

Circling Northeastern
Ontario's Lake Nipissing



Utility corridor trail north of North Bay.



Story by Craig Nicholson.
Photos by Martin Lortz for Ontario Tourism.



It seems snowmobilers are hard wired to ride in circles. We prefer to go around than directly there and back. We look for any excuse not to ride the same trails twice and so loop sledding is increasingly popular. That's why Ontario has almost 100 loops in various stages of conception, development and use. It's also why our Snow Goer crew – Dan Carty, Frank Crocco, Jim Heintzman, Jim Reavell and I – set

out for one of Northeastern Ontario best gateway cities, Sudbury. Sudbury is an ideal 360° staging hub, located in the heart of Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) District 12. Can't go one direction? There are three others calling your name and so we headed eastward, toward Northeastern Ontario's other gateway city, North Bay. But who wants to ride there and back, when Lake Nipissing is just sitting there, begging to be ridden around?

Run the RAN

In fact, snowmobilers have been doing just that for years. One of Ontario's oldest loop rides, the Ride Around Nipissing (RAN) Tour is on trails that circumnavigate that lake. As designated by OFSC District 11 (also known as the Near North Trail Association). RAN's published distance of about

400 kilometres assumes a starting point along its designated route, typically North Bay for visiting riders, where we stayed at the Clarion Resort Pinewood

Park. But we wanted to rack up a few more kilometres and did almost 750 over three days of sledding by staging out of Sudbury's Moonlight Inn & Suites. We also deviated from the official RAN route here and there, taking advantage of the various trail options that provide snowmobilers with lots of good choices for sledding in District 11.

I should note that for this tour, Martin Lortz, a professional photographer on assignment for Ontario Tourism, rode with us (his photos embellish this article). A part of

our mission was to assist him in getting a variety of great sledding shots. That meant a lot more stopping, starting and shooting each day with us as his photo subjects, which cut into the available riding time and daily distances totals we would normally do. We still managed to average 244 kilometres a day, but these trails are good enough that you can rack up considerably more if you choose – especially if you luck out as we did and hit nothing but table top trails the whole way!

Three Great Days of Sledding

We rode our loop clockwise out of Sudbury, joining the official RAN route on the north side of Lake Nipissing, from Field to North Bay. Kilometre for kilometre, these trails were the fastest on our ride, including TOP Trail D (large section