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## **WHITEHORSE TO FAIRBANKS** *(odd numbered years)*

**Mileages and times given are based on dog team speeds. They are estimates; we trust you will find them reasonably accurate. The Trail may vary slightly from year to year.**

### **Dawson City to Eagle: (Approx. 150 miles)**

The next 50 miles from Dawson are on the Yukon River. The first 20 miles are usually fairly fast and smooth—likely to be overflow at the mouth of the 15 Mile drainage, (It is recognizable as the only large drainage coming in on the N.E. side, Right-hand) The trail crosses back and forth across the Yukon and may use several bush trails for short distances, depending on ice conditions. The 40-mile hospitality stop is a long 50 miles most years. This is a good place to stop; adequate parking. A few miles farther on is another hospitality stop at Clinton Creek (Sandy and Earls place)—just up the 40 Mile River by the bridge.

Leaving the old town of 40 Mile; you turn immediately onto the 40 Mile River; you will be on the 40-Mile for 45 miles. It is a narrow, winding river that is most often cold because of the deep canyon with little sun. The trail usually is very good unless there has been a recent heavy snow—then expect overflow. You will be leaving the river at the Taylor Highway MP 113 crossing. You climb up the boat ramp on the left bank, turn right on the highway which is not plowed during the winter months. Crossing the bridge it is 49 miles to the checkpoint of Eagle at MP162. Highway running on good trail, with lots of ups and downs for this section.

Your first potentially windy summit of the trail is American Summit; if it's breezy in the trees below the summit expect possible whiteout conditions on top. You begin your climb just past milepost 135 and will get above timber a few miles further on. The summit is almost always side-hilled and badly sloped. Trail markers can be frosted over, even in the wind. Expect the full range of alpine conditions from hard, drifted snow to soft team swallowing drifts. You are on top for about 3 miles before beginning your 17 mile descent to Eagle. The long gradual descent is mostly uneventful; you will encounter some potentially nasty overflow stretches as you near the town of Eagle; the worst of them between 4-8 miles out.

The Eagle Checkpoint (M.P. 162) is the old schoolhouse on your right hand as you come toward the center of town. Well marked. Good parking for dogs, good facilities for mushers.

### **Eagle to Circle City; (approx. 162 miles)**

The Yukon River ice can be rough. Prior to race start check on the ice conditions so you will be prepared. The trail along the river is mostly flat running though there may be some side slopes depending on river levels at freeze-up. Prevailing winds come down the Yukon River. You will be on the river the entire way to Circle with the exception of a few short portages. Whether the trail uses the portages or not, depends on ice conditions at freeze-up. Andy's homestead at mile 12 is your first landmark, Tatonduk River (Sheep Creek) comes in from the right at 28 mile, Nate and Ruby's a few miles further, and at 43 miles downriver from Eagle you will reach a hospitality stop at Trout Creek (Mike Sager cabin). It is on a short cut-off left from the main trail—there will be a sign. Good warm-up spot, parking for more than 6 teams will be tight.

Leaving Trout Creek you will head north down the Yukon River, expect an icy trail with minimal snow for 5-6 miles. Glen Creek cabin at mile 63 on your left is usually hard to access because of a steep cutbank. Near Washington Creek, mile 70 is another usually windblown and icy section of trail. The mouth of the Kandik River is considered to be the halfway point between Eagle and Circle. It is 37 miles from Trout Creek, approx

80 miles from Eagle, another 80 to Circle. There is a small warm-up cabin here; good firewood available, easy to heat. 18 – 20 miles from the Kandik mouth is Slaven's Roadhouse. Good facilities for mushers, fair spot for dogs. You are 100 miles from Eagle and it is around 60 miles to Circle.

From here it is 17 miles to Richard Smith's cabin which is large and hard to heat, on the north bank and 19 more to Brian's cabin in the mouth of a slough. (This cabin is very rough, and should be considered an emergency stop only) Both cabins will be marked. It's about 21 miles to Circle from Brian's, count on rough ice for much this trail into Circle. You will see the light from the airport beacon prior to reaching town. The checkpoint is on the main street in the middle of town. There is fair parking for dogs, good facilities for mushers. Expect it to be cold.

### **Circle City to Central; (approx. 75 miles)**

Leaving Circle you are on the road for ¼ mile, then off on a trap line trail, (right side), for 6 miles to Birch Creek. Expect it to be 15 degrees colder on Birch Creek than in Circle. 15 miles of Birch Creek will bring you to Carl Cochran's place which is not open to mushers. A little over a mile further you cross under the highway bridge, (MP 147 Steese Highway); you are 23 miles from Circle it's another 53 miles to Central, 30 of which is on Birch Creek. It is winding, endless, and almost always the coldest section of the Yukon Quest. Be prepared for minus 60. Expect overflow and beautiful Northern Lights...

Birch Creek will narrow and soon you leave the creek on the west bank for a 11 mile run to the Circle Hot Springs road; much of this run is through exposed swamps. Medicine Lake is just past half-way. You cross the Hot Springs airstrip and parallel the road for 8 miles on the power line to the Central checkpoint. Good parking for dogs, good facilities for mushers.

### **Central to Mile 101; (approx. 28 miles)**

You leave Central on the highway, make a small detour off the left side a mile out to avoid a blind corner, cross the road and run a 13 mile section thru swamps, firebreaks and mining areas. Expect overflow where the trail travels on Crooked Cr. At the base of Eagle Summit you will cross the Steese Highway (M.P. 116.5) and again be in a mining district while gradually climbing 8 1/2 miles toward the summit. There is an important dogleg in this climb; ½ mile below the top you will come to the first of 13 large tripods which mark the route. You will angle right, keeping the higher slopes of the mountain on your left and slightly drop before turning sharply back left and climbing the last ¼ mile on the steepest section of the trail. This is almost always very hard windblown snow. Remove booties for traction, some mushers carry ice cleats for their boots for here. The top of Eagle Summit is less than ¼ mile wide, windblown with tundra showing.

Braking down the 101 side is fair, however, and it is not as steep. It is 6 miles to Mile 101, straight down the valley. Watch for windblown ice, overflow, and bare gravel. There are fair facilities here for dogs and mushers, it can be windy. You are just shy of 39 miles to Chena Hotsprings Rd., a bit over 41 to the next checkpoint.

### **Mile 101 to 52 Chena Hotsprings Rd; (approx. 41 miles)**

Leaving 101 you will follow along the road for 7 1/2 miles, in and out of the ditch or on a parallel trail depending on overflow. Near MP 94 of the Steese, you leave the edge of the road and drop into the Birch Creek headwaters. There will be a few icy overflowed creeks over the next 9 miles as you travel up the valley. You cross Birch Creek one last time and begin the long ascent toward Rosebud; it is a 3 ½ mile steady climb to tree line.

Rosebud Ridge is 3 ½ miles of roller coaster short climbs and descents, it usually is pretty good traveling with fair braking on the down hills. The steepest is short but catches many teams by surprise. The last and longest descent drops you into the timber at the head of the N. Fork of the Chena River, through burned timber; watch for tree roots that catch your brake; avoid trees when possible..... It's about 14 miles to Chena Hotsprings Rd. from the pass, another 3 to the checkpoint at mile 52 of the Hot Springs Rd. You will have an 8-hour mandatory layover here. Use it wisely and remember that you are around 72 miles from the finish line.

### **Angel Creek area to Fairbanks; (approx. 72 miles)**

Watch for recreational teams, snowmachines and skiers from here to town. 2 miles out from the checkpoint you pass Angel Creek. The trail crosses under the Chena Hot Springs road two times---the first crossing is 28 miles from Pleasant Valley, the second 24 miles. This section of trail is well-traveled and relatively fast; expect overflow at the creeks as everywhere.

2 miles before Pleasant Valley Store you will cross over the Chena Hot Springs road. Watch for traffic. The trail runs parallel to the road past the store and turns left to run down Pleasant Valley road. This is a subdivision road with occasional traffic; it is plowed and icy---tough to hook down. You will go straight off the road and then turn right on to a very well-maintained dog trail which leads 15 miles west before turning south 2 miles and dropping onto the Chena River. You are then on the river all of the way to the finish. You will cross under the Nordale Road Bridge about 5½ miles after reaching the Chena River; it's another 17 miles to downtown Fairbanks and the Banner.