

## GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The name Snake derives from the Gwich'in and is literally translated as "worm hairy river". It refers to a myth where a giant snake swallowed all the large boulders of the river. In fact there are no snakes in the river or in the Yukon.

The Snake is the tributary of the Peel which is the most easterly of its watershed. From east to west, we find the Bonnet Plume, the Wind, the Hart, and the Blackstone. The source of the Snake takes in the Wernecke Mountains and it runs for nearly 300 km before flowing into the Peel, only 65 km from the Arctic Circle. The Snake is located in a wild and mountainous area very close to the border with the Northwest Territories. Conditions are favorable for hiking from the river. From the Peel, it is possible to continue for 200 km to reach Fort McPherson.

## TECHNICAL SHEET

Recorded length 290 km

### General rating

Intermediate, especially because of the distance from civilisation and the risk of broaching in the first RII, which is 3 km long, as well as the many sharp turns along the river. The strong current requires good anticipation in the rapids with loaded canoes. The only way to be evacuated is by helicopter

### Portage

A 2 km portage is mandatory from Duo Lake to reach the Snake River. The trail is fairly easy to follow, but some sections are muddy in the last third of the portage.

### NAVIGABLE PERIOD

Ice breakup normally occurs in late May or early June. The best time to do the Snake is mid July: the water level is about right and there are many fewer flies.

### ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

The water is turquoise and clear until the junction of Milky Creek where it becomes milky due to sediment carried from the mountains by the creek. Temperatures oscillate between 20° and 25° C during the day with temperature peaks above 30° C. The nights are rarely below zero and are close to 5° C. The sun and the moon merge and from 3:00 AM, the sun regains its vigor. A frontal is almost superfluous!

### Treks

There are lots of beautiful hikes to do. Weather permitting, it is good to do some fixed camping to enjoy them. The level of difficulty varies from easy to difficult and the duration from a few hours to several days.

### Wildlife

It is quite abundant, and there are in particular grizzly bears, caribou, moose, black bears, wolves, and sheep etc. However, there are few fish.

### Flora

Alpine vegetation for the first few kilometers. Later on spruce, birch and alder trees quickly populate the shores.

### CAMPING SITES

There are numerous campsites on pebble and sandy beaches along most of the length of the river. In general, it is quite easy to find driftwood. Note, however that there is hardly any wood at the Duo Lake campground and mostly bushes. Try to avoid camping in the grass as flies love to hide there.

### SHUTTLE BUS

Access to the Snake River is only by seaplane either from Mayo in the Yukon or from Norman Wells. Each starting point has its advantages and disadvantages. Return is normally by seaplane, but it is possible to continue by canoe down the Peel to the Dempster Highway junction or to Fort McPherson and take a long land shuttle.

Departure from Mayo to the Yukon:

You need to get to Whitehorse first, then get to Mayo by land shuttle. Alkan Air, formerly Black Sheep Air, has a seaplane base providing access to departures from the river. It is possible to transport all your equipment by land to Whitehorse. Several companies offer this service. The cost of transporting canoes is prohibitive., It is less expensive to rent them in Whitehorse

Departure from Norman Wells:

Canada North and First Air offer four to six flights per week to Norman Wells from Yellowknife. Note that there is no road that goes directly to Norman Wells, so ground transportation of baggage is not possible and must be done by plane. Canoes can be rented at Norman Wells. There is also a seaplane base for transportation to the start of the river.

Back to Mayo or Norman Wells:

A few years ago it was possible to take a river shuttle at the end of the expedition to Norman Wells. fSince the death of the owner of Mountain River Outdoor Adventures, this is no longer possible to our knowledge. It is therefore necessary to take a seaplane for the return either to Mayo or Norman Wells. If you leave Mayo and return to Mayo there is no problem for the return of the canoes, but otherwise you have to come to an agreement with the renter for the repatriation of the canoes to Mayo. The flight back to Mayo can be problematic in uncertain weather conditions as you have to fly over the Mackenzie Mountain Range. Flying in a Caravan seaplane solves this problem as it is certified for instrument flight. On the other hand, you cannot put two canoes on the floats unless you nest them one inside the other.

In case of delay for the return to Mayo, it is very important to come to an understanding before the departure for the expedition with the person who will provide the ground shuttle to Whitehorse to be sure that he will come to pick you up even if there is a delay of a day or two. A satellite phone will be very

useful for communicating with the people concerned in these cases. It is therefore important to include buffer days in your itinerary to compensate for bad weather. The return flight to Norman Wells is much shorter and less prone to the vagaries of the weather.

## FLOW

Because of the permafrost and of the topography, precipitation abruptly changes the level of the river. After a few hours of rain, the water level can rise by several tens of centimeters the same day or the next day.

There is no longer a probe to measure the flow on the Snake. To obtain an approximation of the flow of the Snake it is possible however to use that of the nearby Bonnet Plume by consulting the Environment Canada site. The station number to enter is 10MB004. A flow of around 70 m<sup>3</sup> s on the Bonnet Plume corresponds to a low level.

## REALIZATION-DISTRIBUTION Statement

Bernard Goutier: 2021 (low level)

## MAPPING / LAYOUT

Bernard Goutier : May 2022

## TRANSLATION

We wish to thank Alan Anderson for help with the English translation.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Some information comes from the book Wild River of the Yukon's Peel Watershed by Juri Peepre and Sarah Locke.

## BASIC TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS

(SCALE 1: 50,000)

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106C08	106C09	106C10
106C14	106C15	106E16
106F02	106F03	106F05
106F06	106F11	106F12
106F13	106F14	106K04
106L01		

## WEB SITES

- [Alkan Air seaplane \(Mayo\)](#)
- [North Wright Airways](#) seaplane (Norman Wells)
- [Canoe North Adventures](#) (Norman Wells canoe rental)
- [Up North Adventures](#) (Whitehorse canoe rentals, not reliable for shuttle)
- [Nahanni Wild](#) (Canmore canoe rental)

## DISTRIBUTION









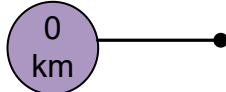

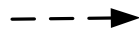

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## WARNING

This map was produced on a voluntary basis by paddlers who laynot claim to be reliable and experienced. The authors are not responsible for any prejudice, damage or accidents that

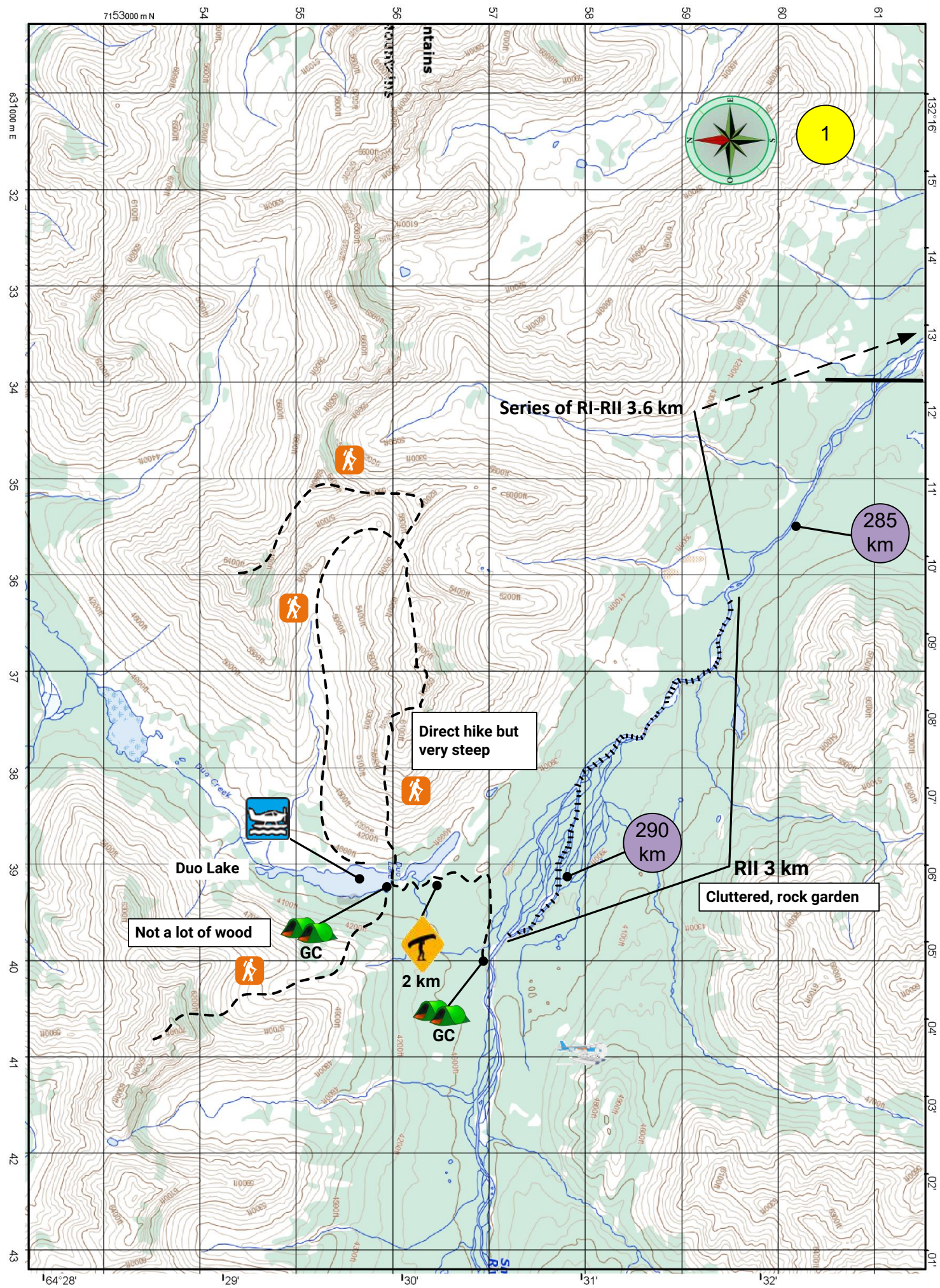
may result from the use of this card. Omissions or errors are always possible, and we would appreciate it if you could communicate any corrections you may notice to us.

## Map legend

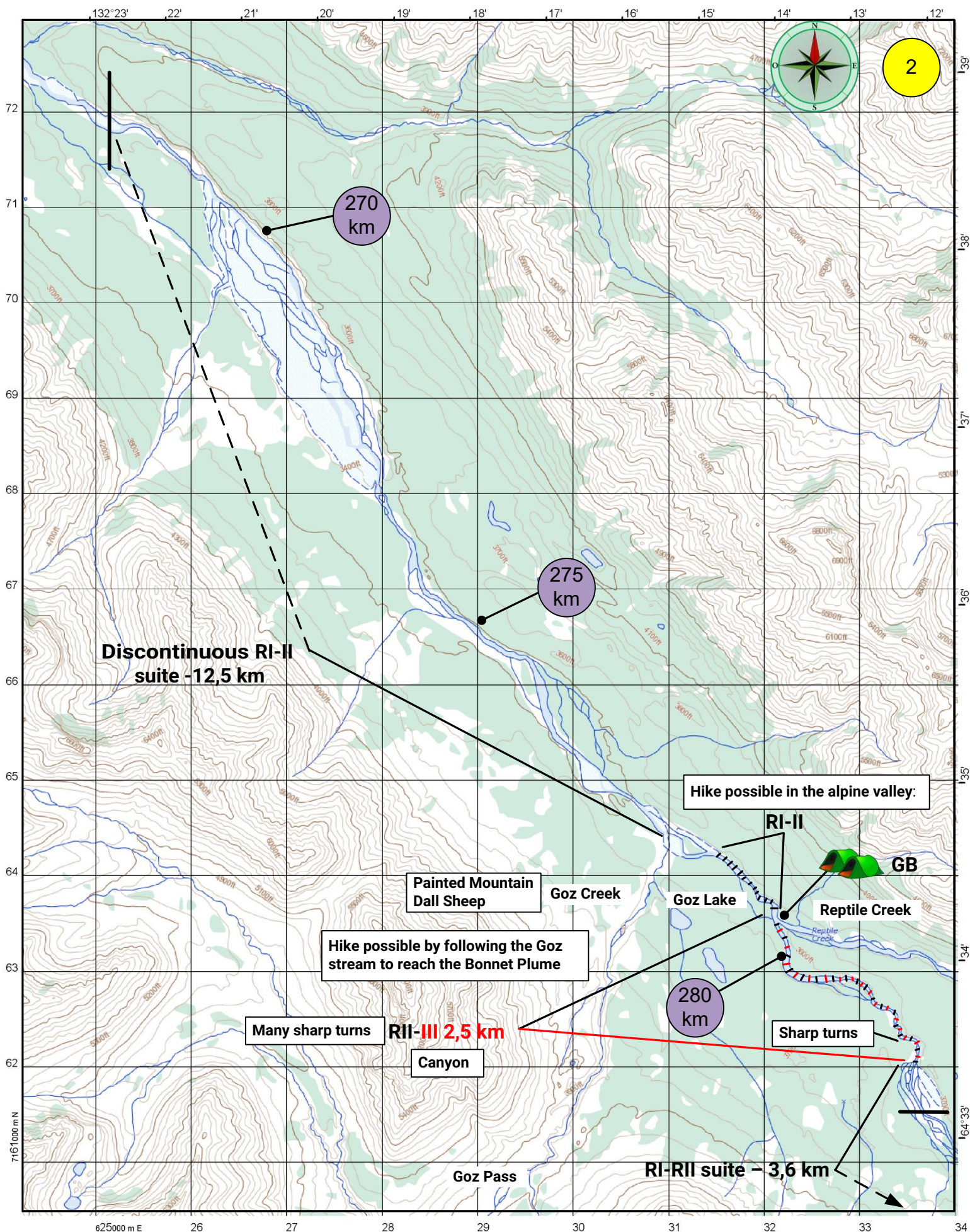
Rapids:	The distance to the rapid is indicated in meters (m) or kilometers (km).
SW	Swift water
RI, RII	Rapid with class of difficulty.
<b>RIII, RIV, RV, RVI</b>	Rapids with difficulty class, in order to draw attention to more difficult rapids which generally require reconnaissance, rapids RIII and + are indicated in red on the maps.
LII	Ledge with class of difficulty.
<b>LIII, LIV, LV, LVI</b>	Ledge with difficulty class, in order to draw attention to more difficult ledges which generally require reconnaissance, ledge SIII and + are indicated in red on the maps.
<b>C</b> 	Waterfall
<b>K</b> 	Cascade
	Put in or put out by seaplane
 2 km	Portage with distance in (m) or kilometer (km).
 3C	Indicates a camping site, the number indicates the number of tents from 1 to 5, the letter that follows indicates the quality of the campsite.
 GC	Indicates a group campsite, more than five tents, the letter that follows indicates the quality of the campsite.
Campsite quality:	A excellent B good C correct D passable E emergency
	Hiking trail
	Page number, 1 indicate the first page of the map river
	Indicates the mileage on the river in increments of 5 km, km 0 corresponds at the mouth of the river.
	Orientation of the map relative to True North.
	Indicates that the rapids section continues on another page.
	Indicates the map overlap limit, plus or minus 1 km for each map.

The maps are presented from upstream to downstream, so whatever is on the right on the map is also on the right of the paddler as they descend the river. The base maps are at a scale of 1:50,000 (1 cm = 500 m).

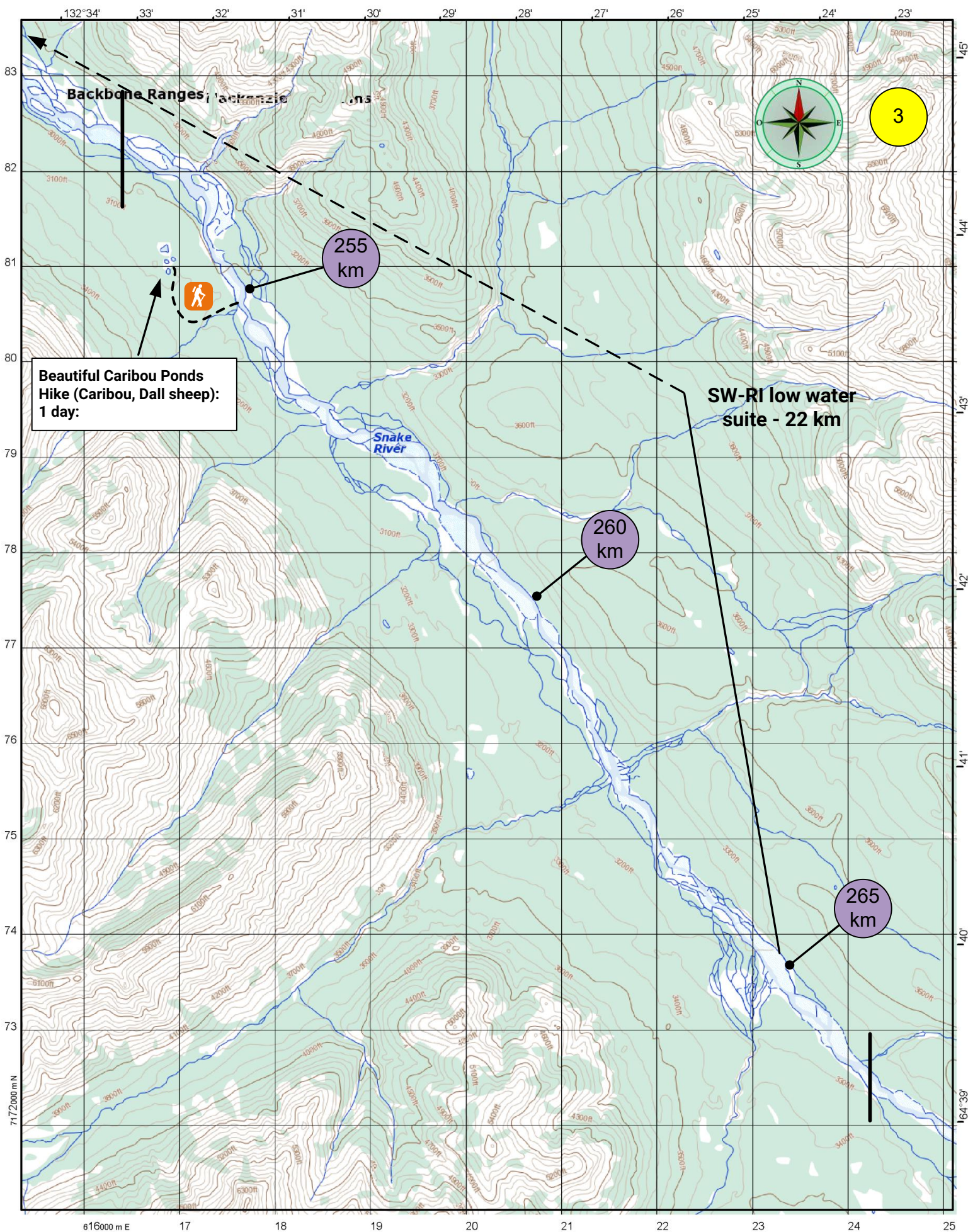




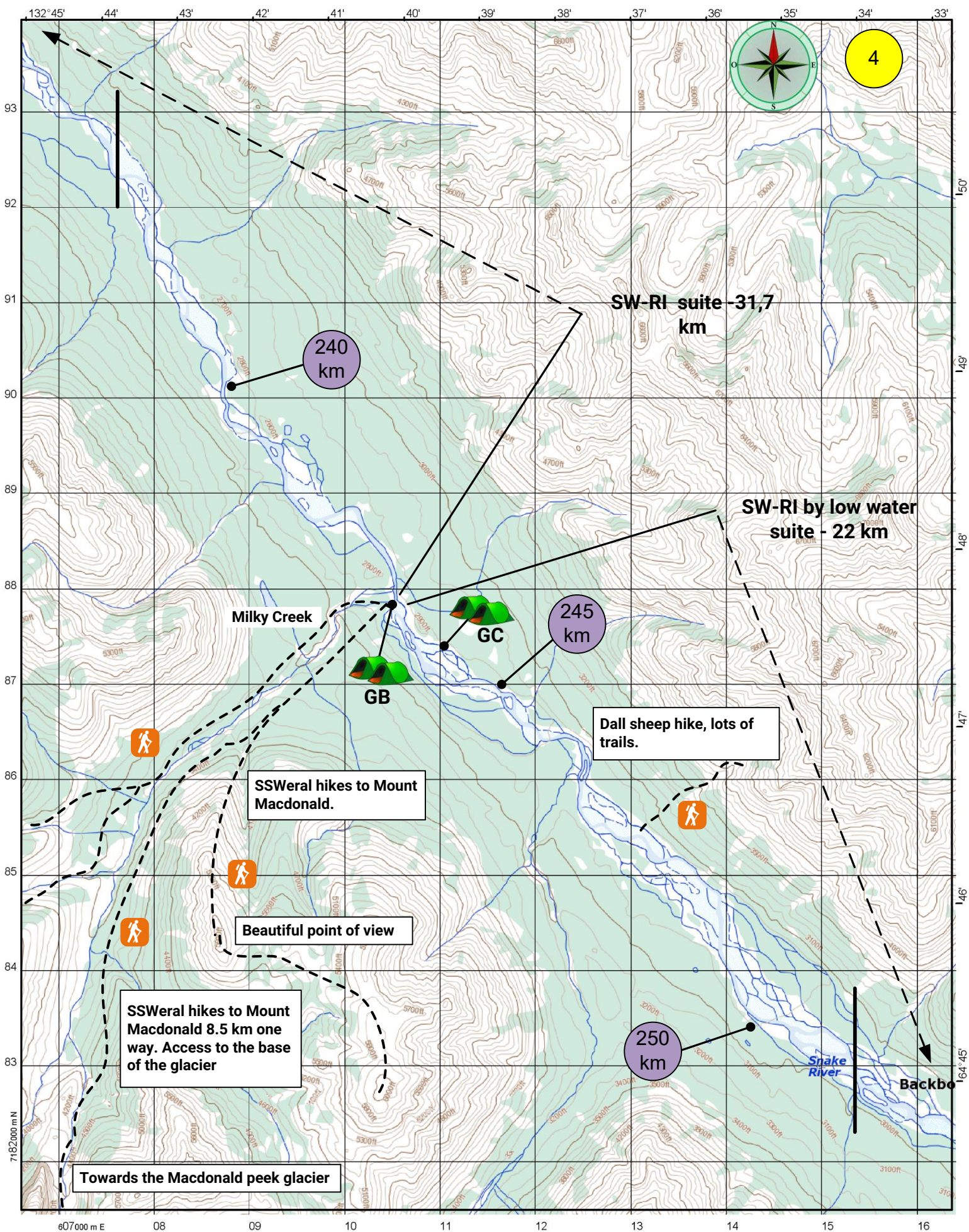




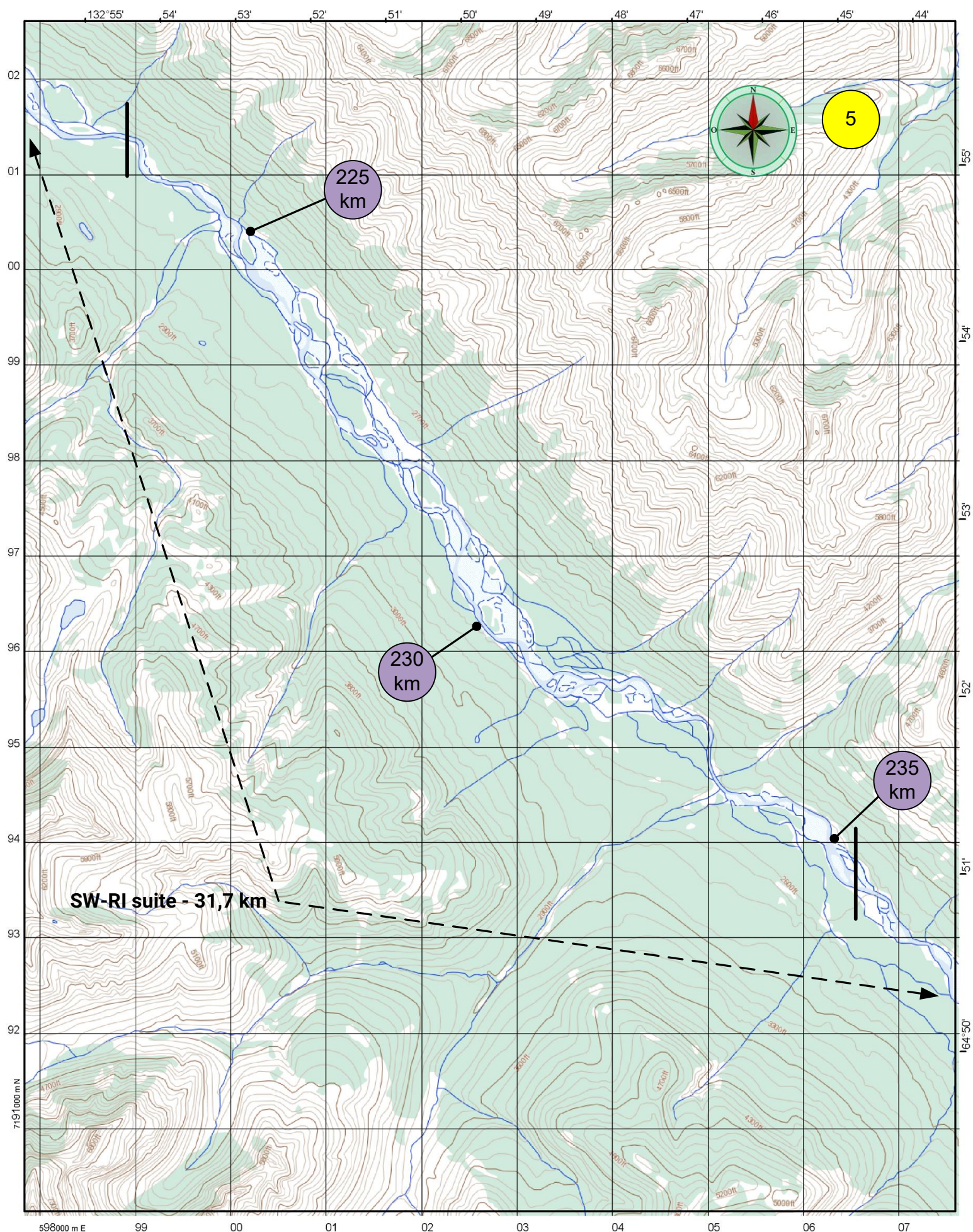




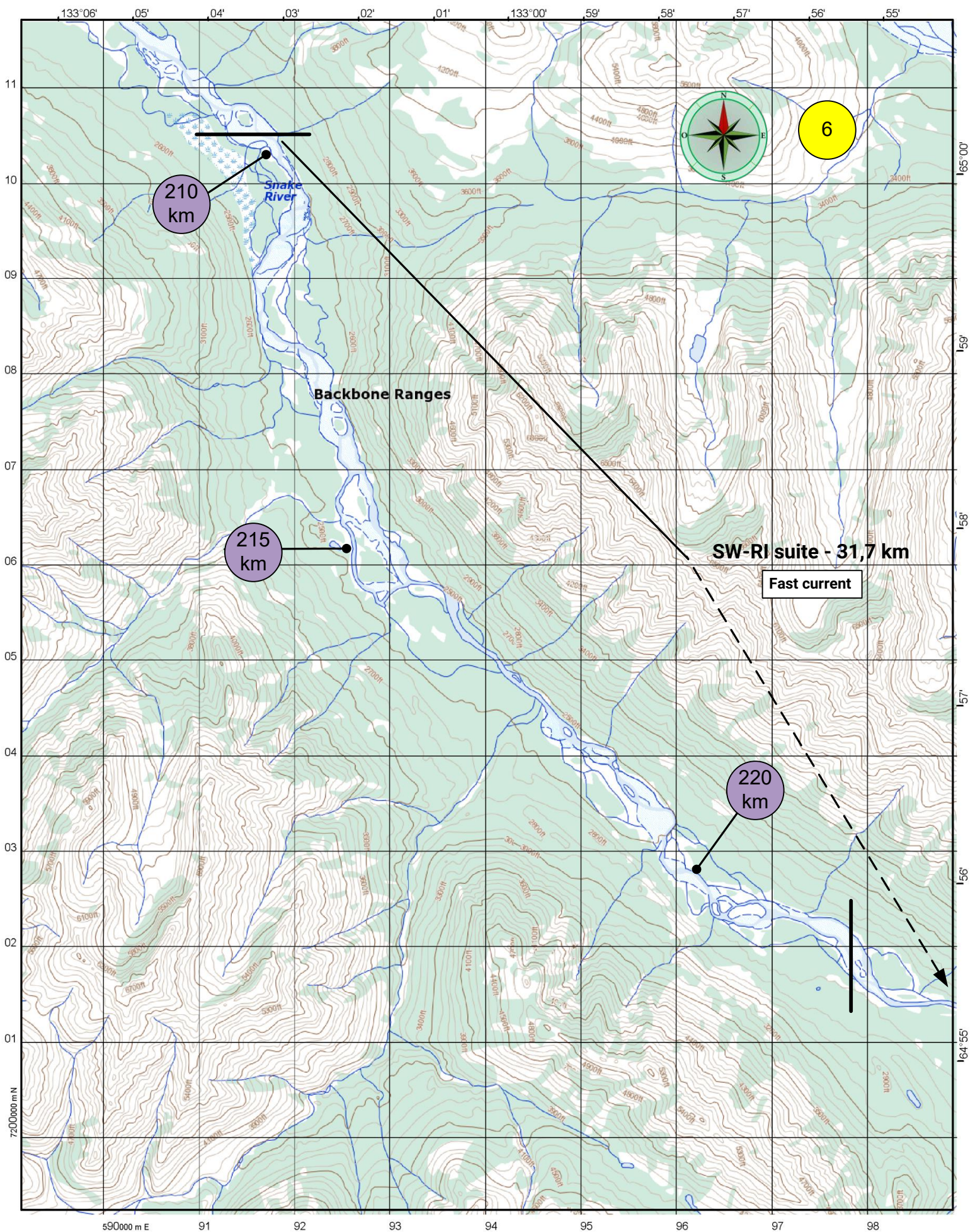








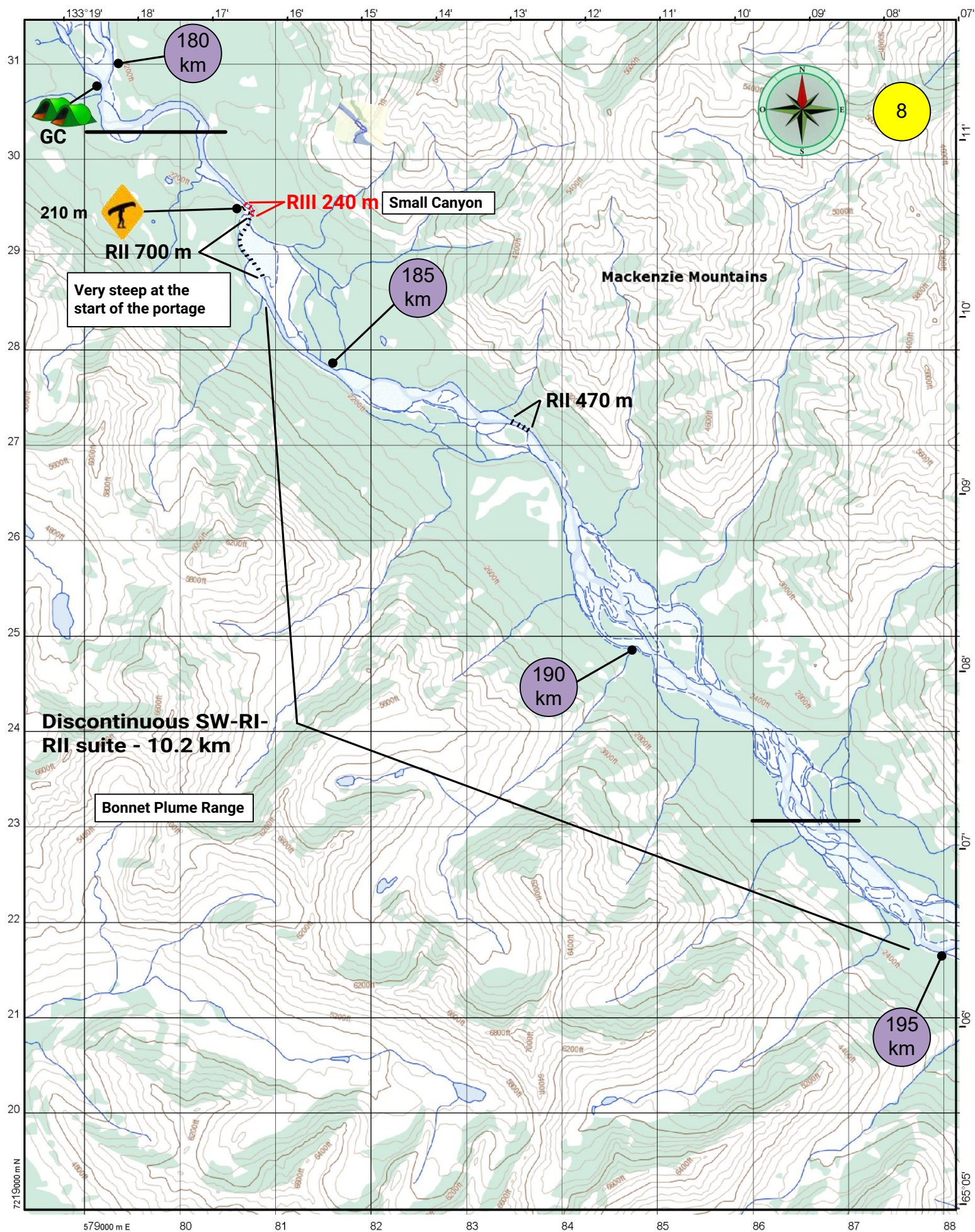




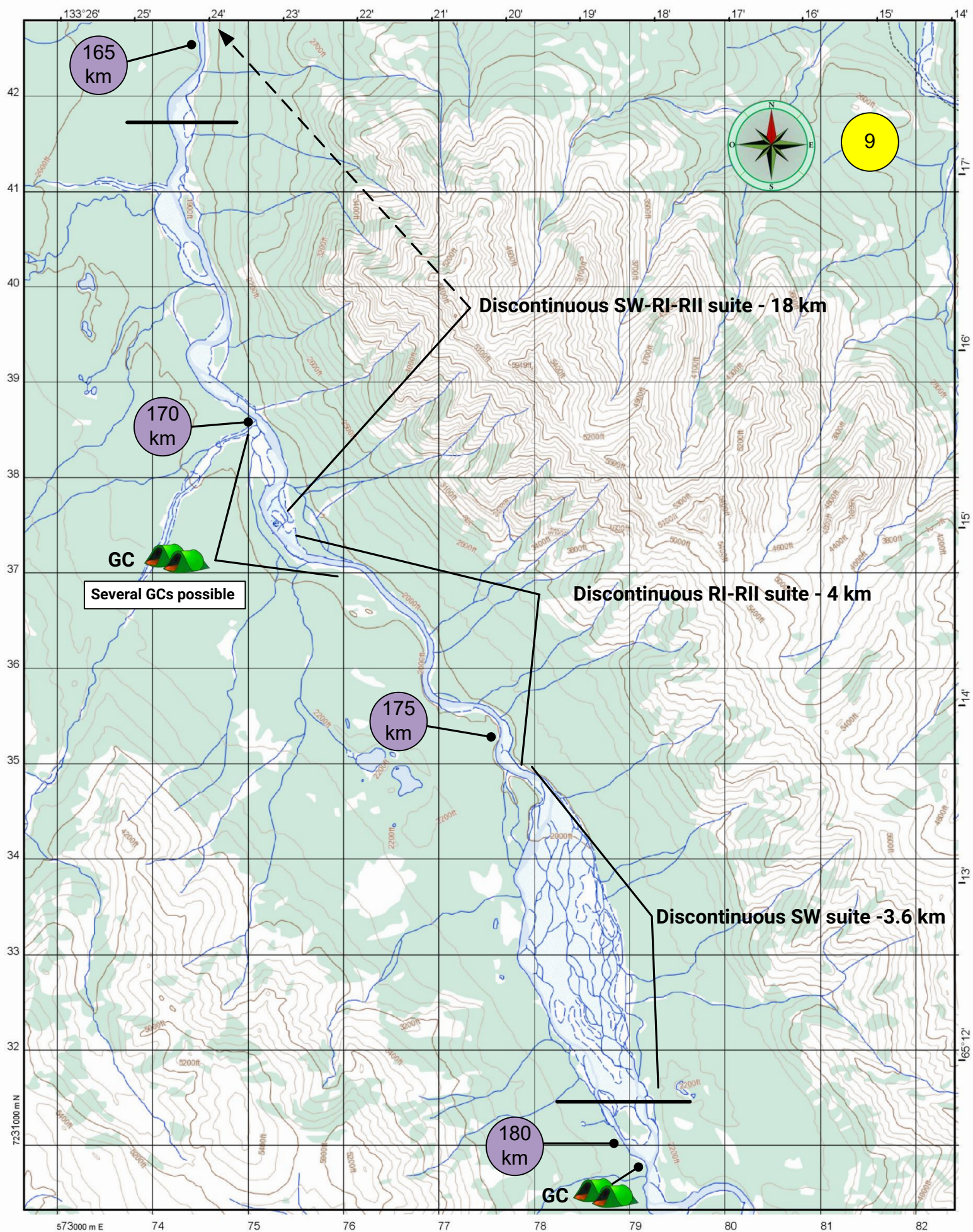




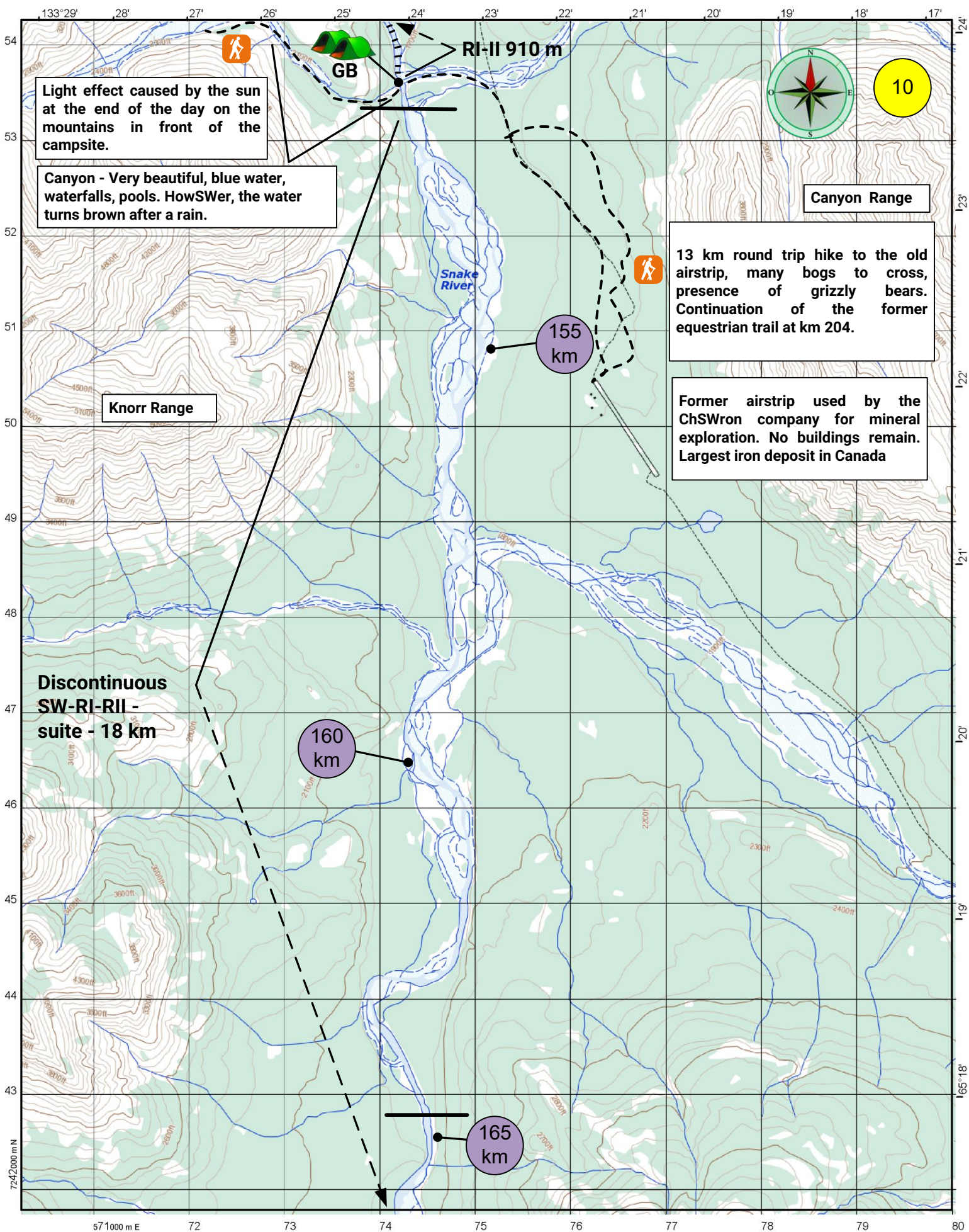




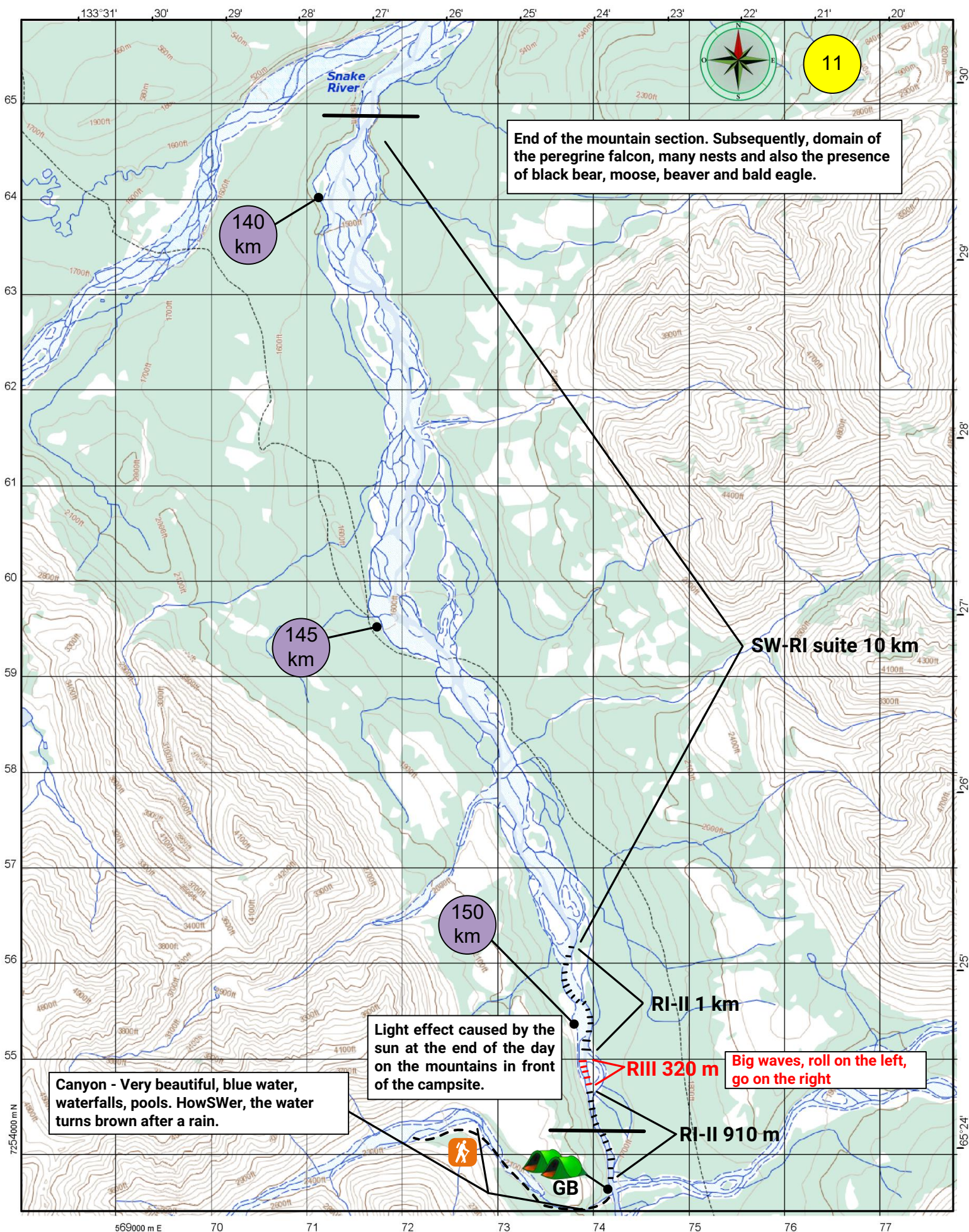




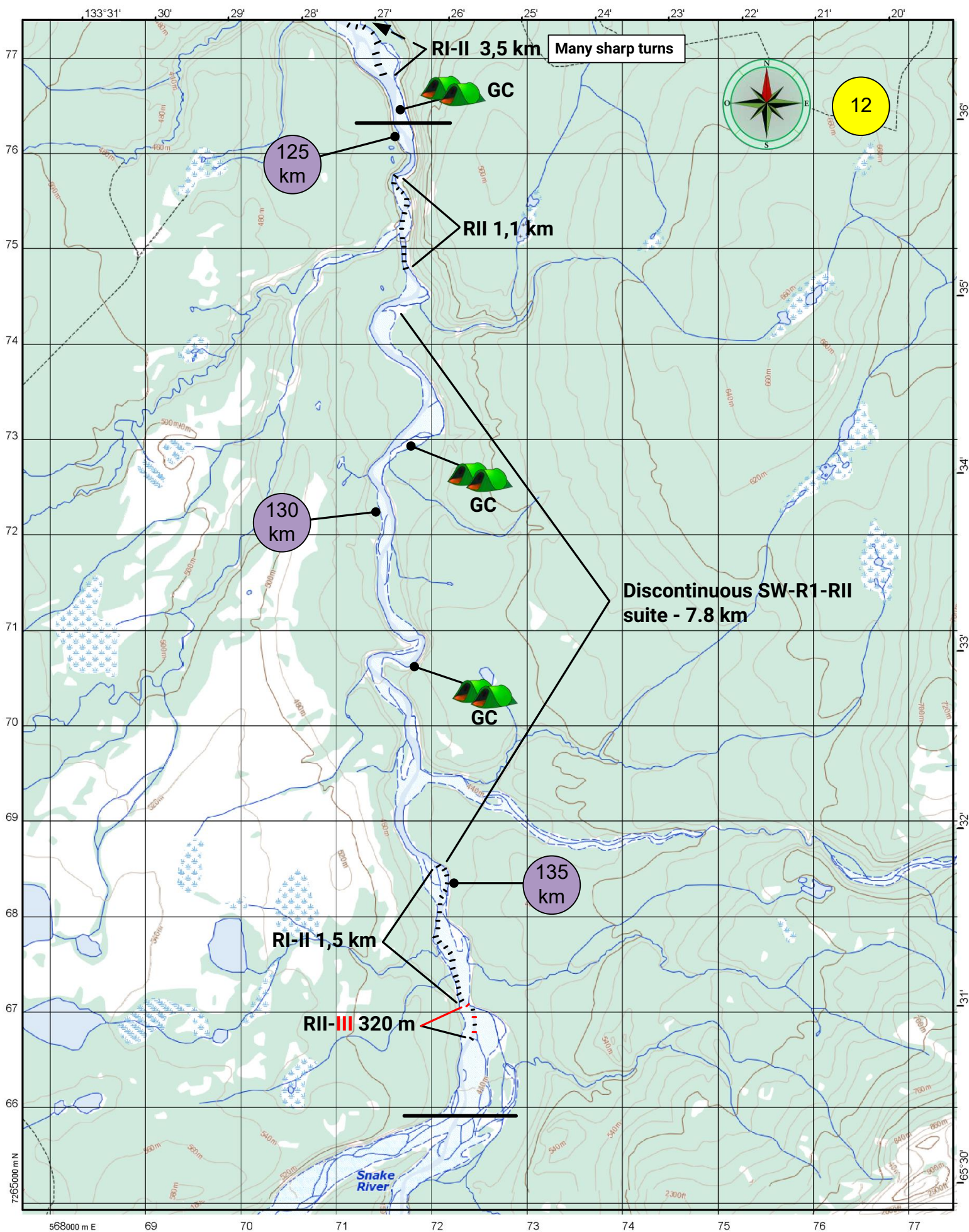




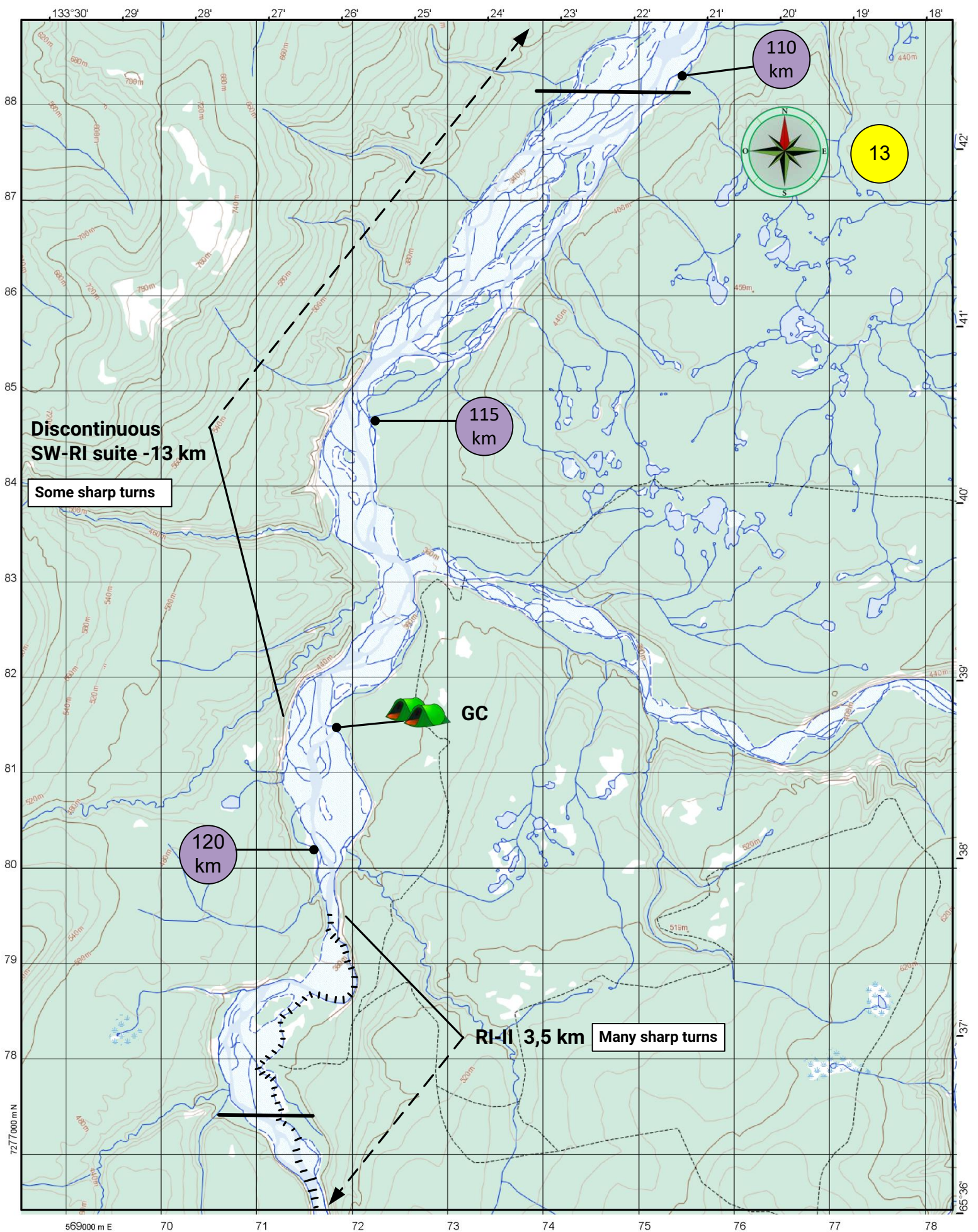




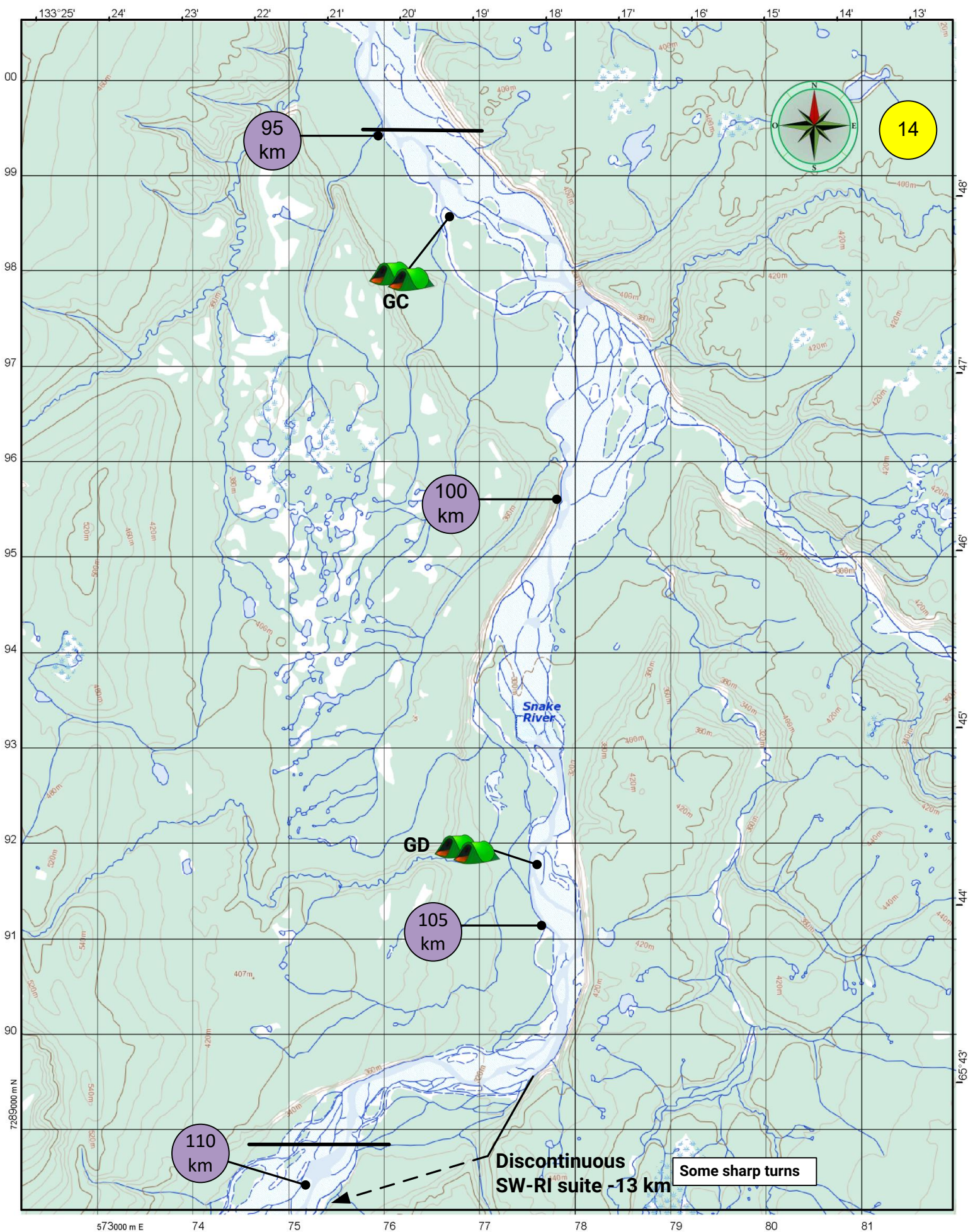




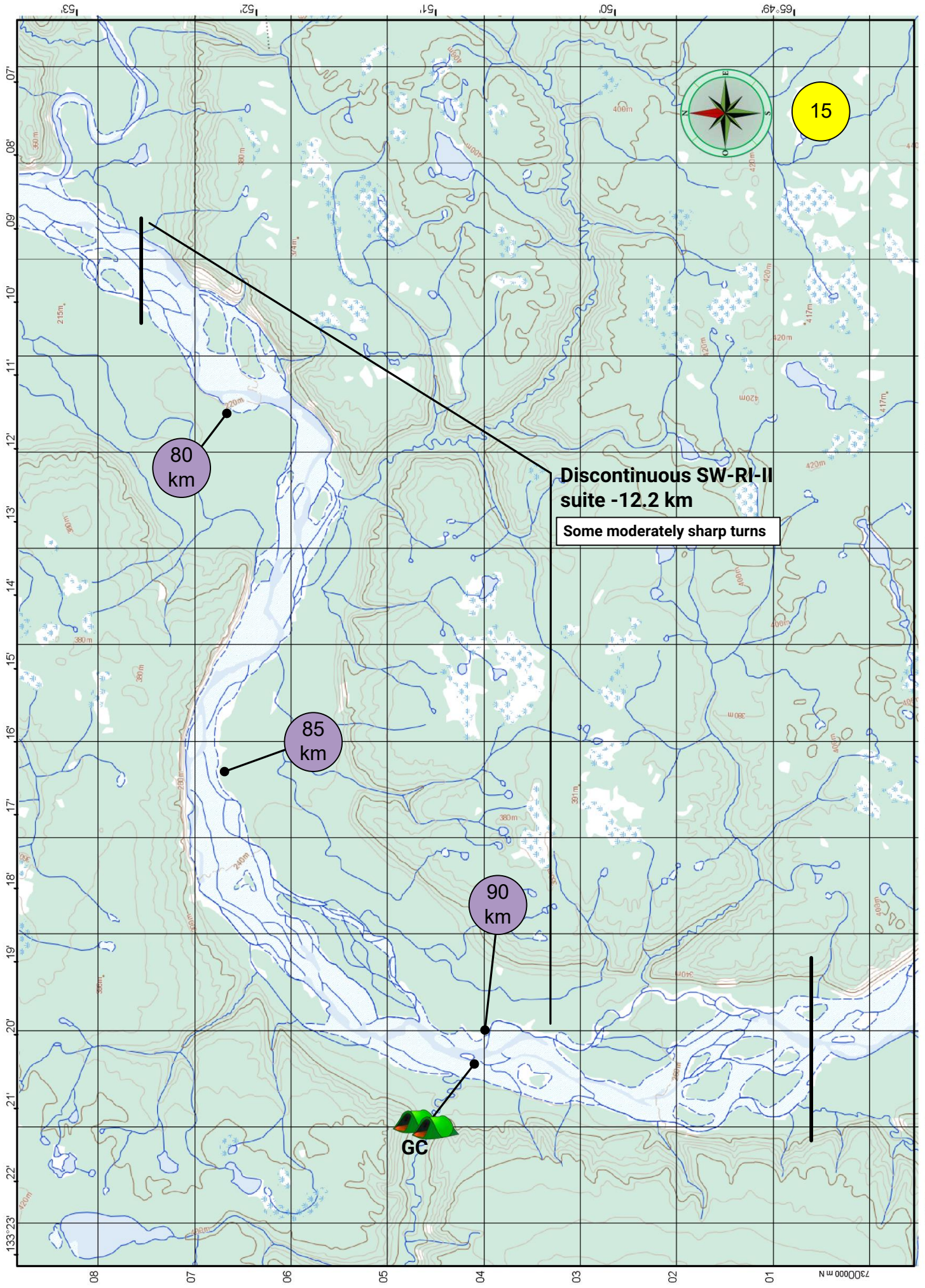












Discontinuous SW-RI-II  
suite -12.2 km

Some moderately sharp turns



