

Preparation for your Canoeing Adventure

Hints & Tips

Poor equipment, improper clothing, and lack of conditioning will not only limit your ability to enjoy your experience and compromise your safety, but will also impact others in your group.

Much of the enjoyment and success of your trip will depend on packing the appropriate clothing and equipment. It isn't necessary to purchase expensive or trendy items. Remember that function is more important than style. If you do decide to shop for clothing and equipment, do so at outlets that specialize in these. Ask questions. Anything you need to know about the proper equipment is an important question. Take your time to decide. All reputable outdoors stores are more than willing to take the time to ensure that you are outfitted properly. There is a direct correlation between the functionality/comfort of your equipment and price. It is not necessary to buy the top of the line (unless you can easily afford it) but you can be assured that if you buy the cheapest piece of equipment you'll end up regretting it.

CLOTHING

There are three categories of clothing; outerwear, insulation and under layers. In each of the categories there are a number of materials available.

Outerwear

This layer should be loose fitting to accommodate the insulation layer. It is advisable not to buy insulated outerwear. The idea is to add warmth with the insulation layer as it becomes colder and vice versa when it becomes hotter.

Freedom of movement is essential, especially in the neck and arms. Make sure there is a hood and that it is roomy enough to allow for a hat to be worn at the same time. The hood protects the neck and head from the worst weather conditions. Ideally the hood will be brimmed but, if not, a brimmed cap should be included in your gear. A brimmed hat will keep the rain from interfering with your vision, especially if you wear glasses.

The jacket should be longer than waist length to offer greater protection to the thighs and the rear in the rain and cold.

A jacket made from Goretex is a sound buy. Ideally it is desirable to have rain pants that are also made from Goretex. But, be prepared, it can be expensive, depending on how Goretex is incorporated into the coat, number of pockets, and other bells and whistles. You should determine, with trained assistance, what's best for you. The advantage of Goretex is that it "breathes". It allows body moisture to escape while retaining warmth and waterproofness.

Nylon is wind resistant, quick drying and comfortable against the skin. Shorts, pants or shirts made of lightweight nylon are suitable for paddling in warm to moderate conditions. Nylon pants that convert into shorts are especially useful for paddling environments where temperatures change frequently.

We strongly advise against wearing jeans when paddling. Denim is a heavy material that, when wet, will become heavy and certainly more uncomfortable.

Insulation

The best all-around materials are pile, fleece or bunting. They trap body heat while absorbing little water. The warmth to weight ratio easily surpasses wool.

Underlayer

Polypropylene and treated polyester (Capilene, Thermax) are your best bets. They transport perspiration away from the skin while providing some insulation. Wicking fabrics are available in both tops and bottoms, with different thicknesses for varying temperatures and levels of activity. The underlayer should be snug, not baggy or skin-tight.

Cotton is breathable, making it ideal for warm-weather activities. But it's also very absorbent and slow to dry. When wet, cotton holds the moisture next to your body, cooling you as it evaporates. This can be comfortable on a hot, sunny day but becomes dangerous in colder conditions. For all but very warm environments it's best to leave the cotton at home.

It is difficult to recommend how many articles of an item of clothing to bring, as individual preferences vary. Some people are content with wearing the same outfit during the entire trip (they usually make few friends), while others change daily.

Head

Look for a hat with a wide brim to block the sun/rain and a retention strap so you don't lose it in rough conditions.

Hands

Wearing gloves not only protects hands from the elements but can prevent blisters, especially in newer paddlers who may tend to have a tighter grip on their paddle. Paddling gloves made of neoprene, nylon or Lycra® spandex provide good grip and protection.

Footwear

Sport sandals, water slippers, or even old tennis shoes work just fine. **In colder conditions, wet feet mean cold feet.** You can keep them completely dry in calf-high rubber boots or with Gore-Tex® socks worn inside boots or shoes. Or opt for thick-soled neoprene booties which will allow your feet to get wet but will keep them warm. Pack an extra set of durable, lightweight and comfortable footwear for onshore activities. Store this back-up footwear in a waterproof storage bag until needed.

	Cotton	Wool	Merino wool	Polyester	Polypropylene	Nylon
Water Retention	High	High	Medium	Low	Lowest	Medium
Drying Time	Long	Long	Medium	Short	Shortest	Short
Heat Conduction	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Comfort Level (Dry)	High	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium
Shrinkage	High	High	Medium	Low	High	Low
Durability	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Low
Colour Choice	High	High	High	High	Low	High
Packing Suitability	Low	Low	High	High	Medium	Medium
Hiking Suitability	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium

SLEEPING BAGS

The insulation or "fill" inside a sleeping bag largely determines a sleeping bag's weight (and thus its "warmth-for-weight" ratio), compressibility, and durability.

Down

Down is the wispy, fluffy undercoating found just beneath the outer feathers of geese and ducks. This natural fiber is an extraordinary insulator.

Plus side:

- It offers tremendous warmth for surprisingly little weight
- It can be compacted into very small sizes.
- Its effectiveness outperforms synthetic insulation by years—decades, even.

Downside:

- If it gets wet, it is of no value until it dries—and in the field, that can take a long time.
- It is expensive but in the long term more economical.

Synthetic

Synthetic materials are basically plastic threads. The threads are most commonly a continuous filament (a long, single strand). The most popular synthetic material in use is Polarguard®.

Plus side:

- It's less expensive than down.
- It's non-allergenic.
- It still provides some insulation when wet; plus it dries fairly quickly.

Downside:

- It's bulkier than down (so it takes up more space when you're carrying it).
- It's heavier (it takes more weight to get the same warmth down provides).
- The filaments gradually degrade over time.
- Does not drape over the contours of your body as effectively.

It is extremely difficult to recommend a bag as there are so many considerations. Where will you be using the bag? During which seasons? Do you like to move around allot inside the bag or do you like a snug fit? How much money are you prepared to spend?

Do you get cold easily? You should consider the following if you are going to purchase a bag:

- Down works well for just about everyone except people who frequently find themselves in rainy conditions.
- Women often value down's warmth, softness and minimal weight. (Note: Some bags are cut to accommodate a woman's body shape and preference for extra insulation.
- There is no correlation between weight and warmth. One bag may be double the weight of another yet have the same temperature rating. (It is important to note that the temperature rating designated on a bag is not set by any independent standard. The rating assigned to a bag is the manufacturer's.)
- An important consideration when selecting a sleeping bag is how claustrophobic you are. Bags are either rectangular, mummy, or tapered (comprise between rectangular and mummy). The rectangular bag allows the sleeper to move and turn inside while the mummy bag restricts movement. Mummy bags are very popular and have many advantages.

However, if you hate to be confined, it's not the bag for you. When the salesperson is discussing the merits of the different bags ask if you can try out the sleeping bag.

- Mummy bags are narrow, close-fitting bags are designed to save weight and maximize heat retention. They start narrow at the feet, get wider toward the shoulder, then taper to an insulated, fitted hood. Nearly all backpacking bags are mummy-shaped. **Positives:** The slim cut increases efficiency and saves space and weight. Hoods retain a lot of warmth.

Negatives: The narrow shape can feel restrictive to some people and inhibit sleep.

- Rectangular bags are warm-weather sleeping bags built to be roomy. As a result, they let a lot of body heat escape. Many rectangular bags can be unzipped and used as comforters. Few have hoods. **Positives:** Lots of interior wiggle room.

Negatives: They're inefficient insulators, too heavy/bulky for most weight-conscious backpackers.

- Tapered models are narrow at the feet, broad at the hips and shoulders. You get more space than a mummy supplies, but also more weight and bulk. Some offer hoods. **Positives:** Good heat retention and a little more room to maneuver.

Negatives: More room means your body has more space to keep warm; some thrashers still find them restrictive.

- Loft in combination with shape and size have a great bearing on warmth. A reasonable loft for our trips is 11 to 14 cm. (3 season bag). Remember, however, some people sleep warmer than others. You may require a greater loft.
- Make sure the sleeping bag is long enough to accommodate your body. Here's the general rule: If you are no taller than 6 feet, choose a regular length bag. If you are up to 6-feet-6, you want a long bag. If you are right on the border, maybe right at 6 feet or maybe half an inch taller, it's a judgement call on your part. If you choose a bag that's too short, you might tend to stretch a bag to make it cover you. Doing so flattens the bag (and its insulation) in spots, reducing its effectiveness. Sleeping in a bag that's too long means your feet have lots of space to heat up.

PACKING

Almost any general equipment bag can be used to store and haul gear. Bags made of water-resistant materials should be lined with plastic trash bags for added protection.

Keeping your sleeping bag dry is extremely important. Do not rely on the manufacturer's claim that the sleeping bag stuff sack is waterproof. Insert a plastic garbage bag in the stuff sack and then stuff the sleeping bag in. As additional protection, place that whole affair in another plastic garbage bag and twist tie it shut. One very important question to continually ask yourself when packing is whether you will really need that item. If it's not on the packing checklist that we provide, it's probably not necessary.

Nylon Stuff Sacks

Basic nylon stuff sacks keep gear and clothing safe from occasional splashes and drips. They also help organize small items such as clothing, food and camping gear inside larger packs or dry bags. Nylon mesh bags are great for storing wet gear.

Ziplock Bags

They're watertight, come in a variety of sizes, and are easy to open and close.

Dry Bags

Dry bags are tough, waterproof storage sacks made of coated nylon or PVC (a durable, rubberized fabric). They come in a number of different styles and sizes, from large backpack-sized models with built-in shoulder straps to simple, clear-plastic sacks designed to keep small items dry.

Bowron Lakes

It will be necessary to transport your personal gear on your back during portages. As such we will provide a dry bag pack with shoulder straps. However, if you want to use your own backpack, then place personal items in Ziplock or garbage bags to protect against things getting wet. Twist tie and double bag anything you don't want to get wet.

CONDITIONING

Preparing your body is as important as preparing with the right equipment. Proper conditioning can put an older person in better shape than someone half his/her age. You will feel better and perform better when you are in good shape.

Common sense needs to be your guide. Start with a trip to your doctor. He/she can best advise you as to whether it is healthy for you to undertake the activity you have selected. He/she will offer suggestions on how to best proceed with a program of physical training. **We strongly recommend that you discuss our conditioning suggestions with your doctor to ascertain their suitability to your medical circumstances.**

There are no shortcuts. Getting into shape requires work. At least one month before your scheduled trip, you should begin a regimen which focuses on building stamina, strength, and endurance. Four days a week is plenty.

Stretching

Stretching 10 minutes before and after daily workouts will help you stay limber and avoid muscle soreness. Stretches should be slow and gentle, breathing consciously. Hold each stretch for 30 - 60 seconds:

- Lay flat on your back. Extend your arms as far as they'll go above your head and at the same time point your toes as far as they'll go away from your body. Inhale as you stretch.
- Sit up on the floor. Exhale as you reach for your toes.
- Sit up on the floor. Spread your legs as far as comfortable. Inhale and exhale as you reach forward along the floor, first along one leg, then the other.

Conditioning Program

Each set of exercises has been developed into three successive stages: **Beginner, Moderate, and Advanced.** Advance to each subsequent stage as you feel prepared to do so.

Beginner: develops range of motion and some muscle tone.

Moderate: increases range of motion and develops some strength. Repetitions are increased, and resistance is added.

Advanced: develops a full range of motion and maximum strength. Greatest resistance and the largest number of repetitions.

Hand, Wrist and Forearm

Beginner: Start by squeezing a hand full of modeling clay or similar material, 5-10 repetitions, increasing the repetitions as grip feels stronger.

Moderate: Squeeze a rubber or tennis ball, 5-10 repetitions, increasing the number as strength increases.

Advanced: Use a wrist roller, a round piece of wood 15" long and 4-6" in circumference. Drill a hole through the piece at the centre. Put a 4' piece of cord through the hole and tie a knot at one end to keep it from pulling out. Hold the Roller in both hands (backs of hands up), with the arms extended, turn the roller away from the body to wind the rope up slowly. Then reverse the process slowly to lower the rope. Repeat this 10 -20 times then as strength increases tie a 5 lb. weight to the end of the rope and increase the number of repetitions and weight as strength improves.

Elbow and Shoulder

Beginner: Do push-ups while kneeling. For more strength push up and lower the body stopping at various positions.

Moderate: Do regular push-ups 10-30 times as strength improves, stop and hold at various positions. At various levels of static contraction.

These variations will increase your ability to brake and hold the canoe. Do several push-ups with your feet on a low stool or the 1st or 2nd step of a staircase.

Total Shoulder

Beginner: Exercises 1-5 with no weight and 5-10 repetitions.

Moderate: Exercises 1-5 with 5-7 lb of weight and 30 repetitions (3 sets of 10)

Advanced: Exercises 1-5 with 10 lb of weight and 50 repetitions.

Exercise 1: Start in a standing position with arms and hands at sides. Swing both arms forward up to a position parallel with the floor but not above the shoulder. Then slowly return them to your sides.

Exercise 2: Assume a military stance (feet 12") apart. Raise arms out to the sides to shoulder level, parallel to the floor, palms down then slowly return them down to your sides.

Exercise 3: Bend over forward at the waist and place hands on knees. Then let your arms hang down relaxed under your shoulders. Pull your arms up alongside of your body. It is very important that your arms don't fly out away from the body. Slowly return to the starting position.

Exercise 4: Lying on your back on the floor, with your arms outstretched forming a "T" assume a starting position. Bring both arms up parallel and at right angles to the floor, keeping the elbows straight. Then slowly lower to the starting position.

Exercise 5: Assume a starting position by lying face down on a table or bench. This can also be done with the chest resting on the seat of a chair and kneeling on the floor. At right angles to the spine, from the shoulders let your arms hang down, keeping the elbows straight, Raise the arms outward to shoulder level and slowly lower.

Shoulder Girdle and Upper Back

Beginner: Standing in military position, without weights, pull the shoulders up and roll forward, and let them down to the starting position.

Moderate: Same as beginner but with 5-10 lb in each hand.

Advanced: Same as beginner but with 25 lb in each hand, then use barbell. The basic exercise remains the same.

Total Back

Beginner: On your hands and knees in a swayback position, raise your back up like an angry cat then lower.

Moderate: Lying on the floor face down raise your arms and legs and lower. For further development keep your arms and legs raised and rock on your stomach. For a variation, raise opposite arm and legs then reverse.

Advanced: Assume a face down position, with your waist, hips and legs on a table or bench and arms in a push-up position on the floor. Have someone sit and hold your legs down or tie them. Placing your hands behind your head raise your head and shoulders as high as possible, then return slowly and repeat 5-10 times.

All this preparation will pay dividends when you finally begin.

BEFORE LEAVING

- Clip all fingernails and toenails. You will be grabbing and clutching along the way. A bent or broken fingernail can be very painful.
- Leave rings, bracelets, and necklaces at home.
- Carry a cheap watch or none at all. You may enjoy the freedom of not being tied to a watch.
- Leave behind any unnecessary credit cards. Bank cards and Visa/Mastercard are usually a good thing to carry. The means to access extra cash for unexpected needs may be welcomed.
- Post our equipment/clothing list on the front door. As you are about to leave your home, make a final check.
- Remember to pack personal medication. **Additional backup medication should be given to the guides in the event yours is lost.**

- Let someone know when you are due home. Leave a copy of the itinerary, with corresponding dates, with this person.
- If you are from out of town, let someone know where you will be staying when you get to your destination/origin.
- Stricter border enforcement will require that U.S./International citizens carry picture ID and either passport or birth certificate.
- We recommend that some form of travel or health insurance be purchased for the length of stay in Canada. It is a good idea that it covers medical evacuation, especially by air.
- It is best to convert currency to Canadian before entry. You will probably receive a better value from financial institutions than from individual merchants.

SAFE In The SUN

Most sunscreens currently on the market effectively block only UVB rays, not UVA. The concern is that people using high number sunscreens that block only UVB rays may still get high doses of UVA if natural warning signs, such as sunburn, are suppressed by these sunscreens.

Recognition of the damaging effects of UVA rays has set the wheels in motion for the reformulation of sunscreens to more effectively block UVA rays as well. Sunscreens contain various agents which have been proven to protect against the rays of the sun. Para-aminobenzoic acid or PABA, PABA esters, and cinnimates are all agents which effectively protect against UVB rays. Benzophenones and Parsol 1789 are effective in protecting against UVA rays. So, to be totally protected, select a sunscreen with a combination of two of these agents, one for UVB rays and one for UVA.

Theoretically SPF simply means the factor of time greater than normal that it takes for ultraviolet light from the sun's rays to burn the skin. For example, if the unprotected skin burns in one minute, an SPF 15 sunscreen would allow 15 minutes of sun exposure before sunburn. An SPF greater than 15 provides diminishing returns.