In-camp Procedures

Establish a buddy system and tell your buddy if you are leaving camp. Keep in mind that most canoe tripping accidents happen in camp and on portages.

Other

Will the lakes be frozen to access rivers when you plan to arrive? Do you have a contact person in the area of the trip to check on this, water levels, fire hazards, etc. Do you have a backup plan? What will the trip cost? How will equipment packing, meal planning, shopping, food packing, and equipment rental be divided and arranged? How will trip procedures be organised?

What Will You Bring?

ORCKA publishes a number of brochures that can help you decide what to take. Look for:

- *Canoe Trip Equipment*
- *Canoe Trip First Aid Kit*
- *Canoe Trip Repair Kit*
- *Canoe Trip Food and Menu Planning*

The Ontario Recreational Canoeing and Kayaking Association (ORCKA) promotes the development of safe, competent and knowledgeable recreational paddlers.

ORCKA has developed standards and instruction programs in introductory canoeing, Canadian style paddling, canoe tripping, river running and moving water canoeing and canoe tripping. ORCKA has also developed a dynamic kayaking program covering introductory kayaking, coastal kayaking, moving water kayaking and kayak tripping. From beginning paddlers to expert instructors, the ORCKA paddling Programs are used throughout Ontario and recognised nationally.

Take a canoeing or kayaking course with one of the many organistions using the ORCKA programs.

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Canoe Trip Planning

ORCKA

Ontario Recreational Canoeing and Kayaking Association

You have decided to go on a canoe trip. To get the most out of your canoe tripping experience requires appropriate skills and knowledge and careful planning. This brochure was written to help you plan; it does not cover every detail, but asks some important questions and provides a few answers and suggestions for answering others.

Why Are You Going On A Canoe Trip?

This may seem like an obvious question, but it is one that must be addressed. Some answers to the question might be: We want to try this type of recreation. We want to see a part of the country only accessible by canoe. We want to do some fishing. We want to draw, paint and/or photograph. We wish to pit ourselves against the elements. You should establish primary and secondary objectives. For example, your primary objective may be to paddle the whitewater on the Petawawa River in high water. This does not exclude secondary objectives such as photography or fishing. Everyone who is on the trip must know what the objectives of the trip are and make it clear to the group what his own secondary objectives are. With objectives stated and agreed upon, there is less likely to be disagreement on the trip.

Who Will Be Invited?

The personal objectives of the trip participants need to match the trip objectives. Participants must also be competent to meet the trip objectives. Problems will occur is a participant with no whitewater experience is attempting a river rated for experts or if one person's objective is a relaxing trip with lots of fishing but the overall trip objective is a difficult trip of long days and many portages. When selecting trip participants, consider the following:

Ability

A three-week Arctic whitewater trip is no place for a novice canoe tripper or an inexperienced whitewater paddler. Realistically judge participants' abilities. Ask where they have canoed, with whom, what courses they have taken. Don't be afraid to say no.

Number in Party

This may vary with the objectives. If quiet and solitude are your objectives, a smaller group may be better. A larger party often takes longer to cover the same distance. Parties should be kept small to minimise environmental impact, but large enough for safety.

Compatibility

Certain people just do not get along. Many times this is caused by a perception of unfair duties. A pre-trip meeting is necessary with all participants to discuss such things as: what and whose equipment to use; how pre-trip meal planning and packaging will happen; how camp chores will be divided; what time do we get up; and how late in the day will we paddle. Discussing these points prior to the trip will make the trip go smother, will identify any problems in your planning, and will cause decreased friction on the trip.

Valuable Information

Gather the following information from each party member: name, address, phone number, emergency contact and phone number, medical insurance, medical conditions, allergies, special dietary needs, if they carry spare medication, etc.

Leadership

Who, if anyone will be the trip leader? Who will be the backup leader? Will leadership rotate throughout the trip? Will everyone listen to and respect the appointed leader?

Where Will You Go?

By reviewing your trip objectives, many locations will be eliminated and a few will be left to be decided upon. Sources of information on possible canoe routes are: the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Provincial Parks, Conservation Authorities, Canoe Clubs, and Outfitters. Books are also a good source of information, such as: *Canoe Routes of Ontario*, *Canoeing Ontario's Rivers*, *Cottage Country Canoe Routes*, *Temagami Canoe Routes*, and *Rivers of the Upper Ottawa Valley*. There are also guides describing specific canoe routes.

Once the location is selected, try to gather as much information on the route as possible. Obtain topographic maps, trip reports or descriptions from other paddlers, Canoe Clubs, ORCKA and the MNR. Aerial photos may also be useful. On the topographic maps, identify: access points, emergency exits (logging roads, hydro lines, etc.), distances per day, portages, possible camp sites, interesting features or side trips, rapids, waterfalls, river gradient, etc. Identify "handrails" on the, maps which are easily identified on the trip so that you will know your exact location.

When Will You Go?

Again, this will depend upon the objectives of the trip. A three-week Arctic trip should only be done from July to mid-August. Inexperienced trippers may be better enjoy warmer summer months, expanding to spring and fall with increased experience. Photography and sketching trips may be suited to the fall for the brilliant colours. Whitewater trips are more appropriate in spring and early summer when water levels are higher from spring runoff. May and June may be plagued by blackflies and July by mosquitoes. Possibly rainy seasons and shorter days in the early spring and late fall may also be factors when considering the best time for the trip. Often, "when" is decided by the participants' holiday time.

Other Questions

Transportation

How will you get to the access point: car, train, plane? How many vehicles are needed and who is supplying them? If your trip does not start and finish at the same location, you will have to arrange a vehicle shuttle. How will transportation costs be shared?

Pre-trip Procedures

Leave a detailed itinerary and travel plan with a "Guardian Angel". Decide on a "search date". If not back by that time, your "Guardian Angel" will notify the authorities and others.

Possible Trip Procedures

Establish signals and communications to be used throughout the trip. Establish lead and sweep canoes and no one goes in front of the lead or falls behind the sweep. Maintain voice contact with each canoe. The rate of travel should be determined by the slowest canoe. Shorelines should be followed as much as possible to increase safety and to view more of nature. Use common sense.

Possible Portaging Procedures

Maintain lead and sweep. Lead, at any point of confusion on the portage, stops and assigns a following person to stay and point the way until the sweep arrives. Sweep checks the portage for any remaining gear and is last across the portage. Establish a buddy system. Will you portage everything in one trip, two trips or one and a half trips? Decide who has to come back for the extra gear.