

The Allagash Adventure

2010 First Place Amory Adventure Winners

by the 1st Gondola Point Venturer Scouts



Our company has a tradition of undertaking one considerably adventurous trip annually. Having accomplished two challenging backpacking hikes previously, we agreed that this year a canoeing adventure would be an excellent idea. The rich history of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway through the north of Maine, as well as the lush scenery and unspoiled wilderness would certainly fit the bill. After a lengthy meeting looking at maps, we finally worked out our route and established the parameters. The advisors would hold back a day, following us as back-up in case of emergencies. For the next eight days we would be on our own.

Wind, Water and Moose

Our route led us across vast lakes, winding rivers, up waterfalls (and down again) and over numerous portages. We discovered that the maps were best used as a general guideline, as the many inlets and bays made locating landmarks tricky at best. One piece of information given to us at the start was correct – if you don't like the wind, wait a while and it will be different. And it was. In fact, the wind was a factor we hadn't counted on, and most of the time it was against us. At times we felt like we were paddling as hard as we could and never moving!

Being in a wilderness area, wildlife encounters were frequent. Once, we were confronted by dangerous adversaries, terrifying in their unexpected and repeated assaults. While crossing some open water between Gravel Beach and Donnelly Point, we were startled by the close

passing of a white missile. We looked to the sky and only saw a couple of gulls, calmly circling. Then seconds later, one dipped its head and dived straight at us. It pulled out of the dive early, but its cohort carried out their devious plan by attacking us from behind. Gulls were often seen over the lakes, but never had any attacked us before. Paddling hard, we left them behind in peace.

Closer to the end of our trip, we were rudely awakened by a large, lumbering visitor to our camp. Thankfully the moose wasn't interested in our tents. Most of the moose we witnessed calmly lifted their heads and watched us as we passed by in our canoe. One baby kept mommy safely between us and him, as he peeked out around her. Otters, geese, ducklings (at least 30!) and worst of all, leeches, were all common sights as we traversed the waterway.

Trains in the Woods

The wilderness surrounding the Allagash was once one of the major forested areas in the United States. In 1926, a railway ran from Eagle Lake and spanned thirteen miles to Umbazooksus Lake to assist in the transportation of logs. We couldn't imagine how difficult it must have been to build the railway line, bridges and dams to support a logging operation in such wilderness. Within six years the operation ended and the trains were deemed useless. Remains of the conveyer, trestle and boxcars were still visible – an extraordinary sight to see.

All too soon, our eight days passed and we paddled to the pull-out spot. Five hours later, our advisors arrived, and we were soon on our way home. And so our great adventure came to an end. Over eight days, we had traveled a total of 98 miles (not counting the many twists and turns of the river) – an impressive feat. Given the opportunity, any of the four of us would have left the tents standing on that last morning, built a fire by the shore and spent another week sitting and talking about life. X

— 1st Gondola Point Venturer Scouts, New Brunswick: Alexander Colwell, Dave MacFarquhar, Joey Landry and Scott Macdonald.