

Packing for a Canoe Trip [from: BSA Canoeing Merit Badge Pamphlet #35867]

Canoe camping is a lot of fun and gives you an opportunity to use your paddling skills. Even though the capacity of a canoe allows you to carry plenty of cargo, you should pack light and tight.

Packing a Canoe

How much a canoe can hold is based on its length, height, and width. The U.S. Coast Guard measures capacity by loading a boat until it has 6 inches of *freeboard*—the distance between the water surface and the gunwales. A canoe should never be loaded so heavy that less than 6 inches of freeboard remains or loaded beyond the manufacturer's suggested weight limit.

If a canoe is balanced in the water from end to end and side to side, it is said to be *trim*. If your canoe is not trim, it will be unstable and difficult to maneuver. A good way to judge the trim of your canoe is to take a step back and look at the loaded canoe from the front and side. Make adjustments as necessary to ensure that your canoe is trim.

When packing your canoe, place everything that must stay dry in a waterproof container. Secure all items to the canoe so that nothing will fall out. Try to fit dry bags or Duluth packs under the thwarts and clip the straps to them. Use cam straps, bungee cords, and pieces of rope to secure items. Secure your equipment so that if the canoe were to capsize the equipment would not fall out past the gunwales.

Look for a U.S. Coast Guard-approved capacity plate that gives a canoe's maximum total weight of passengers and gear.



Basic Essentials

- Pocketknife
- First-aid kit
- Extra clothing
- Rain gear
- Water bottle
- Flashlight
- Trail food
- Matches and fire starters

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- Sun protection
- Map and compass

Ponchos, a longtime favorite of backpackers, are a poor choice for canoeing. If your canoe were to capsize, it would be very difficult to swim in a poncho. A quality rain suit (hooded jacket and pants) will keep you dry.

Personal Overnight Camping Gear

Here are some suggested items for your personal camping gear; some items are strictly optional. * Lighten your load by taking only those items you cannot live without. As you plan your packing list, consider how long your trip will be, the weather conditions and time of year, and the activities your group has planned.

- Long synthetic-blend or wool pants (no cotton jeans or sweatpants)
- T-shirts
- Long-sleeved shirt
- Underwear
- Socks (medium-weight wool or thin polypropylene ones)
- Warm wool or fleece pullover or jacket (no cotton sweatshirts)
- Rain gear with hooded jacket
- Hooded parka or coat
- Gloves
- Shoes with nonslip tread that can get wet and will dry quickly
- Sneakers or light running shoes to wear in camp
- Hat with a brim in summer; woolen cap for cold weather
- Swimming trunks*
- Personal toiletries (comb, lip balm, toothbrush, toothpaste, metal mirror, medications)
- Small towel and washcloth
- Insect repellent
- Mesh head net to ward off insects from your face
- Sunglasses with eyeglass strap
- Personal utensils (bowl, plate, cup, spoon)
- Sleeping bag or bedroll in waterproof stuff bag
- Ground cloth Sleeping pad
- Water bottle
- Water treatment tablets or filter system Biodegradable soap
- Flashlight with extra batteries and bulb
- Water-resistant watch Whistle
- Butane lighter or matches stored in a waterproof container
- Fire starters
- Paper and pen or pencil
- Emergency coins
- Camera*
- Don't forget to pack at least one extra paddle.

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Group Equipment

Group equipment should be evenly distributed among all the canoes. Here is a general list of equipment.

- Tents with poles, ground cloths, lines, and stakes
- Dining fly with lines and stakes
- Nylon cord (50 feet)
- Butane lighter or matches stored in waterproof container
- Toilet paper
- Backpacking stoves and fuel
- Cook kit (pots, pans, spatula, large spoon, ladle, plastic sheets)
- Cleanup kit (biodegradable soap, sanitizing rinse agent such as bleach, scouring pads, trash can liners, toilet paper in plastic bag)
- Repair kit (duct tape, thread, needles, safety pins)
- Group extras (tongs, camp shovel, saw or ax, collapsible water container, grill)