

topographic maps help spot campsites and emergency exit routes. In lake country, try to find a map that shows portage trails. For sea kayaking along the coasts, get charts for the water and maps for the land. Maps and charts in GPS navigation systems may or may not have the needed detail depending on the location and the data loaded.

The itinerary is part of the float plan, along with emergency contact information and contingencies. Refer to the sample form.

What to Take

What to take depends on the location, the duration, and the time of year. The following lists provide reasonable guidelines, but temper them with local knowledge and common sense. Camping from a boat is not that different from camping on a backpacking trip. For some trips you will need a heavy-duty sleeping bag; for others, a lightweight bag will suffice. In some areas, you may be concerned with bears; in other areas it may be alligators. Although gear capacity is limited in some kayaks, canoes and touring kayaks generally make it easier to carry more gear than on a backpacking trip. Even so, take enough to be comfortable, but don't pack gear you will never touch. Always follow Leave No Trace principles. Check the *BSA Fieldbook* for information on camping and the Leave No Trace program.

Paperwork: Group and Individual

- Copies of the float plan
- Route maps
- Permits
- Identification (passports for foreign travel)
- Medical histories with treatment consent
- Fishing licenses
- Cash and credit cards

Boats

- PFD sized for each occupant
- Paddle sized for each occupant
- Sponge, bailer, or pump
- Throw bag
- Painter
- Portage yoke if much carrying is anticipated
- For whitewater, add float bags and a helmet
- For cold water, add gloves and a wet suit

Group Equipment and Provisions

- Extra paddles
- First aid kits
- Emergency communication devices (cell phones, radios) with extra batteries
- Weather radio (hand-cranked versions available)
- GPS system
- Emergency beacon
- Repair kit (duct tape at least)
- Packs or gear bags with waterproof liners
- Miscellaneous straps and cord
- Tents, with ground cloths
- Dining fly
- Drinking water/water purification system
- Food
- Ice chest for short-term storage of perishable items
- Cook kit
- Butane lighters or waterproof matches
- Stoves and fuel*
- Cleanup kit (biodegradable soap, sanitizing rinse agent, trash bags)*
- Toilet paper with pack-out kits as appropriate*
- Small trowel*

*Leave No Trace

Personal Gear

- Medications
- Whistle (attached to PFD while on the water)
- Pocketknife
- Compass
- Water bottle
- Sun protection (hat and sunscreen)
- Sunglasses (prescription, if needed) with strap
- Insect protection (repellent; head net in some cases)
- Rain gear (hooded jacket and pants—no ponchos!)
- Stout, no-slip footwear that can get wet and will dry quickly
- Shoes for camp wear
- Swimsuit or quick-dry shorts
- Change of clothes appropriate for season
- Light jacket or layers in cold weather
- Toiletries
- Eating utensils (bowl, cup, spoon)
- Sleeping bag
- Sleeping pad
- Flashlight
- Camera

How to Pack

The challenge when packing for a float trip is to keep things dry. Water easily finds its way into any opening. For a short day trip, a 5-gallon plastic paint bucket with a sealing lid, available empty at discount outlets, makes a reasonable container. It has enough space for lunch and essentials, and is light, waterproof, and inexpensive. If you like, take off the handle and thread a light line through the hinge for tying to a thwart. If the canoe capsizes, the bucket can be cast free—it will float with a reasonable load.

A bucket, or any other secure container, is difficult to open and close quickly while under way. Waterproof items you need often, such as sunscreen, are better kept in a simple fanny pack that can be tied to a thwart. An underwater camera housing is useful if you want to take snapshots without jeopardizing an expensive mechanism. Some digital cameras have enough water resistance to shake off an occasional splash with no ill effect.

For overnight excursions you can use conventional packs, either with or without a frame. Cook pots need no additional protection, but food, clothes, and sleeping bags do. Individually bag items in zip-lock or heavy-duty plastic garage bags, and then place those within a larger bag. Leave enough room to make a twisted, fold-over goose-neck that can be secured with rubber bands. Make sure to carry plenty of folded spare bags and rubber bands since rips are common. Pack food in clear bags so contents are visible after the outer bag is opened.

You can also purchase special gear bags with various waterproof, or near-waterproof, closing mechanisms, but double layering is still useful for critical items. Special containers fit the spaces beneath kayak hatches easier than generic backpacks will fit.

Once the gear is secured in waterproof containers, place the items in the boat. In a canoe, place the gear on the bottom in the center. Balance the load so that the canoe, paddlers included, stays in trim both sideways and fore and aft. Tie the gear in, particularly any item that doesn't float well, so it is not lost during a capsize. Gear secured well will displace water in a swamped canoe and help float the boat higher. On the other hand, a complicated tie-in system can make it more difficult to empty a swamped canoe.



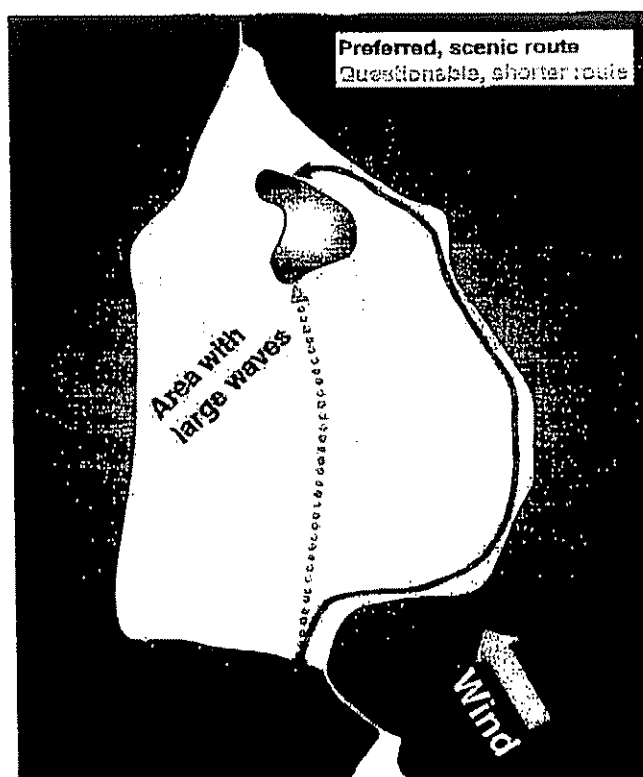
A cruising canoe can hold an amazing amount of gear, as shown in the photo on a previous page. Like to cook in a Dutch oven? There's plenty of room to carry one. However, if your trip involves reaching your destination by float plane, portaging from lake to lake, or moving gear on steep, rough trails around rapids, keep the number and weight of the items small enough that everything can be carried in one trip.

On a backpacking trip, hikers typically carry individual packs. On a canoe trip, it often makes sense to share a pack. That allows one person to portage gear while the other carries the canoe. Split critical group supplies, such as food, between boats. If a boat is lost, including its share of the gear, the group should still be able to continue, although on a shorter schedule, perhaps.

On the Water

Planning needs to include procedures used on the water. Buddies in tandem boats should be matched according to size and skill as well as compatibility. Size is a consideration for proper trim. Pairing those with lesser skill with more experienced paddlers will keep the group moving efficiently while providing valuable training. Buddy boat assignments for solo craft should also pair experienced paddlers with novices. However, make sure the lead and sweep boats have experienced crews. It is particularly important to have someone familiar with the route in the lead boat. A missed portage trail or scouting location could lead the following boats into hazards.

If possible, plan a route that follows the shoreline rather than striking long distances across open water. If a long-distance, open-water segment is desired, for example to reach an island campground, review local and approaching weather patterns before leaving shore. Either wait or take a contingency route if facing strong winds, high waves, or strong currents. Be leery of leaving a shoreline with the wind at your back. While such a wind will help push you in the desired direction, it may also cause increased offshore wave action that makes the path ahead hazardous and the return path to safety increasingly difficult.



When planning a long trip with several portages, try to arrange the route so that longer portages come after the group becomes conditioned on shorter runs. Plus, the weight of food decreases as the trip progresses. Make sure to allow extra time in the itinerary for long or difficult portages.

When stopping at a campsite, make sure to secure all boats against changes in wind or water levels during the night. Normally, that means bringing them completely ashore. Minimalist campers may use the canoe itself as a shelter. An overturned canoe balanced on rocks serves as a makeshift table for food preparation.

