

CANOE TRIP EQUIPMENT

While Northway tripping has remained relatively unchanged over the past 100 plus years, the equipment associated with backcountry camping has made incredible progress. Many of these advances allow for a more dry, warm, efficient and generally successful tripping endeavor. For many returning campers who have experience with backcountry camping this information will be familiar, but we hope that it may be helpful for families and girls coming to Algonquin for the first time. All of the following information should only be taken as a suggestion. New equipment can be expensive and there is by no means a need for your daughter to come to camp equipped with the highest-end gear. This information is essentially a loose guide for anyone who may be in the market for new equipment. Most importantly, the best advice is to head to your nearest outdoor outfitter to do your own research, try things on, and speak with a real expert. You can always search for sales and order online, but it's best to do the original research in person.

Trip Pack:

The trip pack is possibly most central to a happy trip (other than the canoe, of course). A few things about packs:

- **Fit:** Pack technology today can be almost overwhelming, but the key will always be fit. This is why going to a store to have a salesperson fit you is so crucial.
- **Frames:** There has long been an internal vs. external frame debate, but we believe that general agreement is in the direction of internal frames. We feel that they tend to distribute weight better, and also fit into canoes much more easily.
- **Size:** Both height and volume are important considerations. The appropriate size will depend on your daughter's age and subsequently length of trip, as longer trips require somewhat more clothing and food. The age suggestions below are also flexible however, as fit is the most important consideration. Additionally, for older campers who have interest in continuing tripping activities outside of camp in years to come, a pack designed for women can often provide a better fit.
- **Pricing:** As packs get larger prices go up, and a new pack can be a fairly expensive commitment. First of all, do not feel that your daughter needs to arrive at camp with the newest or most expensive equipment. Borrowed packs from neighbours or older siblings work just as well as a brand new pack, as long as they fit. If your child is going to use her pack frequently, however, the investment in a new pack might not be a bad idea.
- *For Younger Campers (9-11 years old)* An outdoor daypack will work well, as your daughter will not be carrying large quantities of food. These packs will not be large enough to need an internal frame, but should be somewhat larger than a school backpack and should have at least a hip strap, if not both hip and chest straps.
- *Middlers (or girls around age 12-13)* A good pack for a 4 or 5-day trip will be somewhat taller than these daypacks, but are still often listed as day or "weekend" packs. At this size, it's not a bad idea to start looking at packs with internal frames.
- *Seniors (ages 14-16)* These packs are fairly large. Don't feel the need to go too large—the lack of comfort will certainly not make up for any increase in capacity.

Sleeping Bags:

Sleeping bags are far less complicated than packs, and most any bag will work well. The biggest things to keep in mind are:

- Temperature rating (colder than 10°F or –12°C are probably too warm for camp)
- Material: Down or synthetic are both great, but heavy materials such as flannel linings can take quite a long time to dry and are very heavy when wet
- Pack-ability: Bags that pack down small are best, and stuff sacks or compression sacks help with this

Hiking Boots:

Our canoe trips take girls through some of the most beautiful wilderness. On long portages, good hiking boots are really a must. Waterproof boots stay dry as long as water doesn't come over the top and get inside the boots, in which case they take a while to dry. Breathable and quick-dry boots get wet easily, but also dry easily. It's really just a matter of preference. As always, good fit is the key.

Dry Bags:

These are completely optional, but many of our campers have started to find that dry bags are one of the more effective ways to pack for a canoe trip. Camp provides plastic bags for all campers, but dry bags are both completely water resistant and also a good way to compress all items on a trip and save space. SeaLine is the main manufacturer of the bags, and most outdoor outfitter stores will sell various sizes. If you are interested in a dry bag, you'll need to make sure the dry bag fits inside your pack and is large enough to fit a sweatshirt, campsite pants, t-shirt, changes of socks and underwear, a flashlight, a book, camera or other small items for a trip that will need to stay dry.

The best advice on all counts is to shop around, ask friends and experts, try various options, and maybe even have your daughter do a dry run of packing her trip pack before she comes to camp. No matter what equipment your child has, however, we promise that she will have a summer of amazing trips and even more amazing friendships and experiences.