



BOUNDARY WATERS *Packing Guide* AND CHECKLIST

Whether or not this is your first time venturing into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), this guide will help you start planning the ultimate family camping adventure. With tips and tricks from seasoned experts who once stood in your shoes, you and your family will be ready to expect the unexpected and tackle whatever the wilderness might decide to throw at you.

We checked in with a few Cook County outfitters to learn more about some great beginner BWCAW trips. If you're not sure where to begin your planning process, we recommend starting here for ideas.

Kelso Loop – Tofte, MN

Recommended By: Sawbill Canoe Outfitters, Tofte

Entry Point: Sawbill Lake

The Kelso Loop is perfect for BWCAW beginners looking for an adventurous and fun daytrip or an easy overnight excursion. Groups of all experience levels can enjoy 4-6 hours of leisurely paddling through Kelso, Alton and Sawbill lakes. Bring your swimsuits, your fishing gear and your sense of adventure. You're sure to encounter some wildlife along the way – if you visit in June, you may catch a glimpse of the rare and beautiful Moccasin Flower orchid.

Seagull to Saganaga – Upper Gunflint Trail

Recommended By: Seagull Canoe Outfitters & Cabins, Gunflint Trail

Entry Point: Seagull Lake

This loop is a great introduction to the wonders of the BWCAW. Kick off your adventure from the docks of Seagull Canoe Outfitters on Seagull Lake. Drop a line to catch walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike and lake trout, and check the famed Palisades on the northern shore. A flat 104-rod portage connects to Alpine Lake, which has incredible fishing and campsites. From there, you'll portage 48 rods into Red Rock Lake. Continue on to Red Rock Bay and into the large, beautiful Saganaga Lake. After two more short portages, you'll be back at Seagull Lake.

Duncan & Rose Lakes – Central Gunflint Trail

Recommended By: Hungry Jack Outfitters, Gunflint Trail

Entry Point: West Bearskin Lake

Duncan and Rose lakes are perfect for beginners to explore. They're easily accessed and hold a big reward for all the people in the group. Take a break from paddling to explore hiking trails with overlooks and a fantastic waterfall. Anglers might catch bass and lake trout. If you're looking to camp, these lakes offer excellent campsites, clear clean water and the potential to catch a glimpse of moose and otters.

Snipe Lake Loop – Upper Gunflint Trail

Recommended By: Tuscarora Lodge, Gunflint Trail

Entry Point: Cross River

This Boundary Waters canoe route starts at the Tuscarora Lodge driveway and makes a small loop through the BWCAW, bringing you back to the Tuscarora Lodge dock on Round Lake. Easy to moderate portages are offset by small, winding lakes giving a good introductory taste of what the area has to offer. This route is seven miles in total with 6 portages and can be done in either direction as a day trip or as a multi-night trip. Be sure to bring your fishing pole for walleye, smallmouth bass and northern pike.



Working With an Outfitter

Some of the best BWCAW planning resources are our local outfitters and guides. These folks live and breathe the BWCAW, and they're full of ideas, tips and trade secrets that will help you plan an incredible wilderness adventure. Nothing gets them more excited than helping more people access and enjoy the BWCAW.

Working with an outfitter means you'll have access to quality gear, transportation to and from your entry point and a wealth of knowledge to answer all your last-minute questions. From insight on how to navigate using a map and compass to the best way to hoist a canoe onto your shoulders – and everything in-between – local outfitters are a one-stop-shop for everything you'll need to know before embarking on your camping adventure.

Leave No Trace

Help keep this unique wilderness area pristine for generations to come by following the *Leave No Trace* rules. The Leave No Trace philosophy can be summarized as “take only photos, leave only footprints.” Remember, no cans or glass bottles are permitted in the boundary waters.

Before you go - BWCAW Trip Planning Guide Timeline

3+ MONTHS OUT

- Choose the perfect route
- Select trip dates and request time off at work
- Secure a BWCAW entry permit* (can be obtained from many local outfitters directly)
- Assess gear and equipment needs – make any reservations for *rental and outfitting* needs
- Book accommodations* for the night before and/or after canoe trip
- Arrange transportation to and/or from your entry/ending points

1-2 WEEKS OUT

- Get maps of your route
- Make your camping trip menu

WEEK OF

- Purchase a fishing license
- Pack personal items and gear
- Finalize meal plan and purchase remaining items



BOUNDARY WATERS PACKING

Checklist



ITEMS SHARED BY THE GROUP

- Canoe
- Canoe seats (optional)
- Paddles
- Ropes
- Canoe packs with liners
- Waterproof map (at least one per canoe)
- Compass and/or GPS
- BWCAW permit
- Toilet paper
- Tent with rainfly
- Tent stakes
- Ground cloth
- Tarps with ropes
- Water purification system or iodine tablets
- Saw/hatchet
- Foodpack with bear proofing kit
- Camp stove with fuel
- Biodegradable dish soap
- Sponge
- Coffee pot/press
- Fry pan/pot
- Aluminum foil
- Cooking knives and utensils
- Filet knife
- Cutting board

- Personal meal kits:
 - Plate
 - Cup/mug
 - Bowl
 - Fork
 - Knife
 - Spoon
- Spice kit (salt, pepper, garlic, other)
- Cooking oil
- First aid kit
- Repair kit (duct tape, super glue, etc.)
- Ziplock bags
- Matches/lighter
- Firestarters
- Sunscreen
- Biodegradable soap
- Toothpaste
- Bug spray
- Deck of cards and/or dice

GEAR FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL

- Life preservers
- Sleeping bag
- Sleeping pad/air mattress
- Pillow (optional)
- Water bottle/Nalgene®
- Pocket knife

PERSONAL ITEMS

- Dry sack/stuff sack
- Hiking boots
- Wool socks
- Camp shoes/sandals (i.e. Tevas or Chacos)
- Lightweight, breathable pants
- Lightweight, breathable shirt
- Shorts
- Swimsuit
- T-shirts
- Fleece/sweatshirt
- Underwear/bra
- Long underwear
- Towel
- Rain jacket
- Rain pants
- Hat/baseball cap
- Bandana
- Sunglasses and/or prescription glasses/contacts
- Work gloves
- Prescription medications and toiletry needs
- Toothbrush
- Headlamp/flashlight
- Fishing license (if planning on fishing)

BONUS ITEMS

- Binoculars
- Camera/cell phone
- Field guides
- Hand sanitizer
- Fishing gear: pole, reel, tackle, net, bait
- Hammock
- Small cooler
- Dry clothing and shoes left in your car for when you return
- Camp chair (Crazy Creek)

Returning to Civilization

The trip doesn't end the moment you hop in the car. In fact, the memories of your time in the BWCAW will live on forever. Spend some time reliving the trip through your photos and print some favorites to frame. As you leave the wilderness behind and return to civilization, reflect on what worked really well and what you could do better next time. Make note of any gear you wish you'd brought on this trip and also anything that may have been unnecessary.

Be sure to come back soon and often. The BWCAW is always there waiting for you, so start planning your next trip right away. Think bigger, further, more challenging and more fun!