

Canadian Canoe Trip Gear Buyer's Guide

Canoe trips are some of the most incredible adventures you can experience. Each trip is unique, and it makes a world of difference to be prepared and have the right equipment for the job. What follows is a buyer's guide for some of the gear that is both required and optional for a Canadian canoe trip (refer to the equipment list to determine what gear is required and what gear is optional). The gear and prices listed are based on what I found on the REI website (and some manufacturer's websites) in December of 2022. Prices and inventories change, and I highly recommend going to your local outdoor gear store. SHOP THE SALES. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at jacob@campchippewa.com.

Sleeping Bag

One of the few pieces of gear you will use every single day without fail. If taken care of they can last over a dozen years and sometimes longer. Sleeping bags typically come in one of three shapes: rectangular, mummy, and spoon. Don't bother with the rectangular ones, they are usually cheap, bulky, and of poor quality. Mummy bags are more common; spoon bags are for people who move a lot in their sleep.

Sleeping bags are also rated for different temperatures (degrees Fahrenheit). The temperature listed on the sleeping bag indicates the temperature at which one could comfortably sleep WHILE on top of an insulated sleeping pad AND wearing a hat and long underwear. 4-season bags are too warm for Canadian summers. 3-season bags are just right. Sleeping bags rated from 30-40 are good if you *do not* easily get cold. Sleeping bags rated from 20-30 are good if you *do* easily get cold.

Finally, sleeping bags are filled with one of two materials: synthetic or down. Synthetic material packs slightly larger than down, dries quickly if it gets wet, and is generally less expensive. Down packs very small, but it takes a long time to dry if it gets wet and is expensive. Down sleeping bags also have the potential to leak feathers if not manufactured *and* taken care of properly.

No matter what kind of sleeping bag you get, DO NOT STORE IT COMPRESSED IN THE STUFF SACK. Store it spread out like you are about to sleep in it. I store mine under my bed.

Suggested products

Marmot Trestles Elite Eco 30 Sleeping Bag - \$159.00 and up

The North Face Cat's Meow 20 Eco Sleeping Bag - \$179.00 and up

REI Co-op Down Time 25 Sleeping Bag - \$229.00

*There are other bags past this price point; ask your local outdoor equipment specialist if they are right for you!



Marmot Trestles Elite Eco 30



The North Face Cat's Meow 20 Eco

Sleeping Pad

They keep you comfortable and warm. Sleeping well on the trail is very important, and a quality sleeping pad will help make that happen. Sleeping pads need to be able to pack down to a pretty small size, so only select pads suggested for backpacking as they tend to be space-efficient. Sleeping pads can be closed-cell, self-inflating, or air pads. Closed-cell pads are bulky, less comfortable, relatively inexpensive, and *not* recommended for canoe trips.

Self-inflating pads pack down relatively small and are both comfortable and durable (if you take care of them). Air pads are comfortable and pack down very small, but are prone to leaks. Nothing is worse on a canoe trip than a leaky sleeping pad.

No matter what kind of sleeping pad you get, DO NOT STORE IT ROLLED UP. Store it spread out like you are about to sleep in it, but keep the air nozzle open to prevent interior mold growth. I store mine under my bed underneath my sleeping bag (which is also spread out).

Suggested products

Therm-a-Rest Trail Scout Sleeping Pad - \$69.95 and up

Sea to Summit Ultralight SI Sleeping Pad - \$89.00 and up

Therm-a-Rest Trail Lite Sleeping Pad - \$99.95 and up

Therm-a-Rest ProLite Plus Sleeping Pad - \$109.95 and up (this is what I use)

Sea to Summit Ultralight Insulated Air Sleeping Pad - \$149.90 and up



Therm-a-Rest ProLite Plus



Sea to Summit Ultralight Air Insulated

Rain Gear

Jacket and pants required. Quality rain gear will keep you dry, warm, and safe. Poor rain gear is the quickest and easiest way to being uncomfortable and cold. The jacket must be able to fit over a PFD/life jacket, and the pants must be able to reach the tops of your feet WHILE SITTING DOWN so your feet stay dry while canoeing in the rain (yes, we canoe in the rain).

There are many different kinds of rain gear, but the kind you get must be completely waterproof (water-resistant is NOT waterproof) and non-insulated. Insulated rain gear causes dangerous levels of overheating in the summer; do not buy it. "Water-resistant" clothing will not keep you dry if it rains; do not buy it.

Gore-Tex is the gold standard for a waterproof and breathable material. It is also expensive. There are other materials similar to Gore-Tex made by other brands, so do your research. Laminated nylon also works, but it is not as breathable thus making thermoregulation more difficult. Go to your favorite outdoor equipment vendor and ask them to help you select the rain gear that is best for you. Let them know you will be going on a 7- to 21-day canoe trip and that will help them get a better idea of what you need. Again, you need both a jacket and pants. No insulated rain gear. No water-resistant rain gear. NO PONCHOS.

Suggested products

REI Co-op Groundbreaker Rain Jacket - \$69.95

Columbia Hikebound Jacket - \$80.00

The North Face Venture 2 Jacket - \$99.00

REI Co-op Rainier Rain Jacket - \$99.95 (this is what I use)

REI Co-op Essential Rain Pants - \$59.95 (this is what I use)

REI Co-op Rainier Full-Zip Rain Pants - \$99.95

Marmot PreCip Full-Zip Rain Pants - \$100.00

REI Co-op XeroDry GTX Pants - \$149.00



REI Co-op Rainier Rain Jacket



REI Co-op Essential

Boots

The whole point of wearing boots is to protect your feet from getting hurt. Rocks, sticks, hatchets, saws, and the ever-dreaded “wet feet” are all things your footwear should protect you from. Boots do not prevent rolled/sprained ankles. Similar to rain gear, Gore-Tex boots are both waterproof and breathable (and expensive). The higher the boot, the more of your foot and leg is protected. Get something waterproof (again, not water-resistant) and comfortable, and try them on in the store before purchasing.

Suggested brands

KEEN
Lowa
Merrell
Oboz (this is what I use)
Salomon
Timberland
Vasque

*Boots can cost anywhere from \$50-200. In general, you get what you pay for. Higher quality boots that work better and last longer will cost more. That being said, you can find high quality boots for excellent prices. Shop the sales!



Oboz Bridger Mid Waterproof Hiking Boots

Shirts / Pants

Lightweight, quick drying, and extends to wrists/ankles. Long sleeves and pants prevent sunburn and work way better than bug repellant. Cotton shirts and denim jeans take longer to dry and soak up much more body heat. Polyester, nylon, and spandex blends are all better choices than cotton or denim.

Suggested brands

Columbia
Outdoor Research
REI Co-op
The North Face

*There are many other brands, just make sure it is lightweight, quick drying, extends to wrists/ankles, and is NOT cotton or denim.

Dry Bag

When it comes to staying organized and taking good care of your gear, dry bags are a tremendous help. They come in a variety of sizes. Depending on the size of your sleeping bag and pad, both should be able to fit in a 25-35 liter dry bag. Spare shirts, pants, socks, underwear, toiletries, and a book should be able to fit in a 15-25 liter dry bag. True dry bags are made of a 100% waterproof material and have buckle/clip closure system.

A 100 liter dry bag sold by AquaQuest perfectly lines the inside a Duluth pack. It fits two sleeping bags, two sleeping pads, spare clothes, and a tent with room to spare. If you do not feel like owning a 100 liter water proof sack, then I would go for something around the 30 liter option. AquaQuest makes quality gear at half the price of SealLine or Sea to Summit. Their dry bags and other products are available at <https://aquaquestwaterproof.com>.

Suggested products

AquaQuest Rogue Dry Bag (this is what I use, and I HIGHLY recommend it over SealLine and Sea to Summit)

SealLine Discovery Dry Bag

Sea to Summit Big River Dry Bag



SealLine Discovery Dry Bag 30L



Sea to Summit Big River Dry Bag 35L

Bug Jacket / Head Net

There are days in Canada where black flies and mosquitoes can be quite annoying. It is on days like that where a bug jacket or head net comes in handy. Head nets are relatively cheap and do a great job of protecting your head, face, and neck. Bug jackets are more expensive and cover your entire upper body with drawstrings at the waist and both wrists. Bug jackets tend to be more durable, but both need to be taken care of in order to last.

Suggested products

Sea to Summit Head Net - \$11.95 (this is what I use)

The Original Bug Shirt Original Style - \$79.00

The Original Bug Shirt Elite Edition - \$90.00



Sea to Summit Head Net



The Original Bug Shirt Elite Edition

Day Pack

A day pack is a dry bag with backpack straps. Day packs allow for the storage of gear in a convenient and waterproof location. Cameras, rain gear, fishing tackle, and sunscreen all need to be accessed at any time throughout the day, and day packs cater to that need. An alternate to the more conventional canoeing day pack is a school or backpacking pack with a dry bag inside acting as a liner.

Suggested products

AquaQuest Himal Backpack 30 Liters - \$69.00 (this is what I use)

SealLine Big Fork Dry Pack 30 Liters - \$159.95



SealLine Big Fork Dry Pack

Tent

Nothing beats getting into a clean, dry tent after a day on the trail. Especially if that tent belongs to you. Tents open up a whole new world of backcountry camping options, and the amount of care you invest in a tent of your own will pay off as it lasts for decades. Take care not to store them wet or dirty, and try not to leave them out in direct sunlight for too long. There aren't many things on this planet that can endure long-term direct UV radiation.

Tents range between one- to six-person (1P-6P), but anything larger than a 3P tends not hold up well in the backcountry. 4-season tents are too hot for the summer, so only invest in one of those if you plan on doing some serious winter camping. Any good tent will have a vestibule for keeping your packs and boots dry without having to store them inside where you sleep. Not all tents include a footprint; make sure you get one if sold separately.

Suggested products

The North Face Stormbreak 2 - \$185.00

REI Co-op Trail Hut 2 - \$199.00

The North Face Stormbreak 3 - \$220.00

Marmot Tungsten 2P - \$249.00

NEMO Aurora 2P - \$279.00

REI Co-op Half Dome SL 2+ - \$329.00 (this is what I use)



REI Co-op Trail Hut 2



NEMO Aurora 2P