

Canadian Canoe Trip Gear Buyer's Guide

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Every canoe trip is a unique adventure, and it makes a world of difference to be prepared with the right gear for the job. What follows is a thorough guide for most of the gear used on a Canadian canoe trip (refer to the packing lists in [CIT](#)). The gear and prices listed are based on what was found on the REI and other manufacturers' websites in December of 2025. Prices and inventories change monthly, and we recommend going to your local outdoor gear store if possible. Amazon is a bad place to get good outdoor gear. Jeff Bezos probably doesn't like camping.

Pro tip: Shop those sales! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us 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 bags, 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 pretty quickly if it gets wet, and is generally less expensive. Down packs very small, but it is more expensive and takes a long time to dry if it gets wet. Down sleeping bags also have the potential to leak feathers if not manufactured well and taken care of properly.

Pro tip: Don't store your sleeping bag squished in the compression sack. Store it spread out like you are about to sleep in it. I store mine under my bed.

Suggested brands/products

Big Agnes, Marmot, Mountain Hardwear, Kelty, NEMO, REI Co-op, Sea to Summit, The North Face, Therm-a-Rest

Marmot NanoWave 45 Sleeping Bag - \$89.00 and up

REI Co-op Trailmade 20 Sleeping Bag - \$119.00 and up

Marmot Trestles Elite Eco 30 Sleeping Bag - \$149.00 and up (this is what I use)

Kelty Cosmic 20 Sleeping Bag - \$169.95 and up

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



REI Co-op Trailmade 20



Marmot Trestles Elite Eco 30



Kelty Cosmic 20

Sleeping Pad

A quality sleeping pad equals quality sleep on the trail. And who doesn't love quality sleep? Sleeping pads need to be able to pack down to a pretty small size, so choose a pad suitable 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 and not very comfortable, so we don't recommend them for canoe trips. Self-inflating pads pack down relatively small and are both comfortable and durable. Air pads are very comfortable and pack down very small, but are highly prone to leaks. I've never been able to repair a leaking pad while in the backcountry.

Pro tip: Don't store your sleeping pad rolled up. Store it unrolled, spread out, and with the air nozzle open to prevent interior mold growth. I store mine under my bed underneath my spread out sleeping bag.

Suggested brands/products

Big Agnes, Exped, NEMO, REI Co-op, Sea to Summit, Therm-a-Rest

Therm-a-Rest Trail Scout Sleeping Pad - \$77.95

Sea to Summit Camp Self-Inflating Sleeping Pad - \$89.00

REI AirRail Plus Sleeping Pad - \$115

Therm-a-Rest Trail ProLite Sleeping Pad - \$134.95 and up (this is what I use)

Sea to Summit Ultralight Air Sleeping Pad - \$139.00 and up



REI AirRail Plus



Therm-a-Rest Trail ProLite



Sea to Summit Ultralight Air

Rain Gear

Waterproof jacket and pants required. Quality rain gear will keep you warm and dry. Poor rain gear is the quickest and easiest way to being cold and uncomfortable. The jacket must be able to fit over a PFD or life jacket, and the pants should be big enough to feel comfortable while seated.

There are many different kinds of rain gear, but you'll make a good choice if you keep the following two things in mind: Water-resistant does not equal waterproof, and insulated rain gear is not good for the summer. Insulated rain gear is for winter use and causes overheating in the summer. "Water-resistant" clothing will not keep you dry when it rains.

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 gear 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. ***Pro tip: Ponchos and Frogg Toggs make for terrible rain gear.***

Suggested brands/products

Arc'teryx, Columbia, Marmot, Outdoor Research, Rab, REI Co-op, The North Face

REI Co-op Trailmade Rain Jacket - \$69.95

Columbia Hikebound II Jacket - \$80.00

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

Marmot PreCip Eco Rain Jacket - \$120.00

REI Co-op Trailmade Rain Pants - \$69.95 (this is what I use)

REI Co-op Rainier Rain Pants - \$99.95

The North Face Antora Rain Pants - \$100.00

Rab Downpour Mountain Waterproof Rain Pants - \$150



REI Co-op Trailmade Rain Jacket



REI Co-op Trailmade Rain Pants

Footwear

Camp Chippewa practices wet-footing while canoeing. You heard correctly, we load and unload canoes while standing in the water. Why? Fewer injuries from slipping and falling on rocks trying to keep your feet dry. And fewer injured canoes from being punctured while precariously perched on pointy pebbles (or big, sharp rocks).

Footwear protects your feet from all those rocks and sticks. Your canoeing footwear should be comfortable and dry quickly after getting wet from loading/unloading a canoe. Waterproof footwear takes too long to dry, which can be unhealthy for your feet on canoe trips. Trail runners, lightweight/quick-dry boots (typically with a synthetic mesh upper), water shoes, or old running shoes are a great place to start. Stay away from leather.

Your campsite footwear is meant to stay safe and dry in your portage pack during the day. Once at the campsite, off come the wet canoe shoes and on go the dry campsite shoes. Old trainers, Chacos, Tevas, Keens, and Crocs all work well as campsite shoes. No flip flops!

Footwear can cost anywhere from \$10-300. In general, you get what you pay for. Higher quality footwear that works better and lasts longer will cost more. That being said, you can find high quality footwear for excellent prices if you shop the sales. If you truly need to buy new canoe shoes, take a look at the suggested brands/products below, but old running shoes do work well. ***Pro tip: Try everything on in the store before purchasing.***

Suggested brands/products

Altra
Asolo
Astral
Chaco
HOKA

KEEN
La Sportiva
Lowa
Merrell
NRS

Oboz
OTB Boots
Salomon
Teva
Topo Athletic



NRS ATB Wetshoes- \$109.95



Astral TR1 Mesh 2.0 - \$149.00



OTB Boots Abyss - \$200.00

Shirts & Pants

Remember the big three: Lightweight, quick drying, and extends to the wrists/ankles. Long sleeves and pants prevent sunburn and keep the bugs off much better than any bug repellent. Cotton shirts and denim jeans get very cold when wet and take a long time to dry. Polyester, nylon, and spandex should be your fibers of choice.

Suggested brands

Columbia
Outdoor Research
REI Co-op
The North Face

There are many other brands, just make sure whatever you buy is 1) lightweight, 2) quick drying, 3) extends to the wrists/ankles, and 4) is ***neither*** cotton ***nor*** 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 that are puzzlingly, or conveniently, in liters. Which size should you get? Well, it depends on the size of your gear and how much stuff you want to keep completely dry.

A sleeping bag and sleeping pad should both 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. Two sleeping bags, two sleeping pads, spare clothes, and a tent can fit inside a 100 liter dry bag with room to spare, plus it fits perfectly inside a portage pack.

True dry bags are made of a 100% waterproof material and have buckle or clip closure system. AquaQuest makes quality gear at great prices, and they have sales periodically through the year. Their dry bags and other products are available at <https://aquaquestwaterproof.com>.

Suggested brands/products

ALPS Mountaineering, AquaQuest, NRS, REI Co-op, Sea to Summit, SealLine

REI Co-op Lightweight Dry Sack 25L - \$25.95

AquaQuest Coastal Dry Bag Set (5L, 10L, 20L, 30L) - \$89.99

AquaQuest Rogue Dry Bag Set (10L, 20L, 30L) - \$89.99 (this is what I use)

SealLine Discovery Dry Bag 30L - \$54.95

Sea to Summit Big River Dry Bag 35L - \$64.95



AquaQuest Rogue Dry Bag



SealLine Discovery Dry Bag



Sea to Summit Big River Dry Bag

Day Pack

Where to put your camera, rain gear, fishing tackle, and sunscreen so it stays safe but is easily accessible throughout the day? Introducing the day pack! Canoeing day packs tend to be a 20-40 liter dry bag with backpack straps on it. An alternate to the more conventional canoeing day pack is a school or backpacking pack with a dry bag inside acting as a waterproof liner. Both work well!

Suggested brands/products

ALPS Mountaineering, AquaQuest, NRS, Sea to Summit, SealLine

ALPS Mountaineering Torrent Dry Bag Pack 50L - \$54.99

AquaQuest Himal Backpack 30L - \$79.99 (this is what I use)

Sea to Summit Big River Dry Pack 30L - \$139.95

SealLine Big Fork Dry Pack 30L - \$184.95



AquaQuest Himal Backpack

Bug Shirt / 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 shirt or head net comes in handy. Head nets are relatively cheap and do a great job of protecting your head, face, and neck. Bug shirts are more expensive and cover your entire upper body with drawstrings at the waist and both wrists. Bug shirts tend to be more durable, but both need to be taken care of in order to last.

Suggested brands/products

Ben's, Outdoor Research, Sawyer, Sea to Summit, The Original Bug Shirt

Sea to Summit Head Net - \$16.95 (this is what I use)

The Original Bug Shirt Original Style - \$89.95

The Original Bug Shirt Elite Edition - \$98.95



Sea to Summit Head Net



The Original Bug Shirt Elite Edition

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 tent tends to 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 shoes 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 brands/products

Big Agnes, Black Diamond, Marmot, Mountain Hardwear, MSR, NEMO, REI Co-op, The North Face

Marmot Tungsten 2P - \$249.00

Marmot Limelight 2P - \$299.00

NEMO Aurora 2 - \$299.95

Big Agnes Blacktail 2 - \$299.95

The North Face Trail Lite 2 - \$325.00

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

MSR FreeLite 2 - \$464.95



REI Co-op Half Dome 2