

ELY CANOE ROUTES

C.L. SOMMERS CANOE BASE

Following are some typical canoe routes both for the Quetico Provincial Park and for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Many other routes are possible. Both areas are beautiful and similar in terrain. One of your first choices to make is to decide in which area your crew wishes to travel. Please check the information in the Expedition Planning Guide and the Resource CD to help you make your choice.

Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Routes FROM ELY

Route Name: Bear Loop

Location: BWCAW

Entry Point: Moose Lake

Shuttle: None Required

Distance: 55 miles

Longest Portage: 105 Rods (.3 mile)

Number of Portages: 27

Maps Required: Fisher F10, F11

Main Features: Eddy Falls, Variety, July 4th blow down area, mostly short portages, Eagle's Nest on point between Newfound and Sucker Lake, Wisini Hilton campsite, pictographs on Jordan, Isle of Pines (Dorothy Molter's former homestead site)

Difficulty: Moderate

Itinerary:

Moose Lake, Newfound Lake, Splash Lake, Ensign Lake, Ashigan Lake, Gibson Lake, Cattyman Lake, Jordan Lake, Ima Lake, Hatchet Lake, Thomas Lake, Fraser Lake, Gerund Lake, Ahmakose Lake, Wisini Lake, Strup Lake, Kekekabic Lake, Pickle Lake, Spoon Lake, Bonnie Lake, Knife Lake, Carp Lake, Birch Lake, Sucker Lake, Newfound Lake, Moose Lake

Route Description:

This is a popular route with our crews and has many variations. It is very suitable for shorter treks. The route can be reversed, changed, extended, or shortened in many ways. You will be likely to see lots of groups on this route and you should plan to get a campsite early. It is a pretty area and well suited for short trips or crews new to canoe tripping. This loop is very representative of the BWCAW and offers a lot of variety.



Route Name: Bear Trap River Loop

Location: BWCAW

Entry Point: Moose Lake

Shuttle: None Required

Distance: 90 Miles

Longest Portage: 340 Rods (1.1 mile)

Number of Portages: 22

Maps Required: Fisher F9, F10, F16, F17

Main Features: Pictographs, Waterfalls, and Rivers

Difficulty: Moderate to Strenuous (moderate for a 10 day trek, strenuous for 8-9 day treks)

Itinerary: Moose Lake, Wind Lake, Basswood Lake (Wind Bay, Hoist Bay, Back Bay, Pipestone Bay, Jackfish Bay), Sandpit Lake, Mudro Lake, Fourtown Lake, Boot Lake, Fairy Lake, Gun Lake, Gull Lake, Thunder Lake, Beartrap Lake, Beartrap River, Sunday Lake, Beartrap River, Iron Lake, Crooked Lake, Basswood River, Basswood Lake (Merriam Bay, Bailey Bay, Inlet Bay), Sucker Lake, Newfound Lake, Moose Lake



Route Description: This popular 9 to 10 day trek returns along the U.S. Canadian border and takes your crew past famous Curtain Falls, Basswood Falls and Wheelbarrow Falls, as well as seeing a large portion of the immense Basswood Lake. There are many ways to vary the route, especially in the Beartrap River section. Most of the portages are quite short, except the long but relatively easy 340 Rod portage around Basswood Falls. Plan to get your campsite early, as you will most likely see other people along this route.

Route Name: Grand Portage

Location: BWCAW

Entry Point: Moose Lake (25)

Shuttle: From Grand Portage back to Sommers. Fee: \$320.00.

Camping Fees: Required at Grand Portage Campground.

Distance: 125 miles (9-10 days recommended for this route)

Longest Portage: 8.5 MILES

Number of Portages: 31

Maps Required: Fisher F10, F11, F19, F20, F12, F13, F14, E115

Main Features: Very historic route, many scenic spots, ends at National Monument

Difficulty: Strenuous

Itinerary: Moose Lake, Newfound Lake, Sucker Lake, Birch Lake, Carp Lake, Melon Lake, Seed Lake, Knife Lake, Ottertrack Lake, Swamp Lake, Saganaga Lake, Granite River, Gneiss Lake, Granite Bay, Clove Lake, Pine River, Gunflint Lake, North Lake, Height of Land Portage, South Lake, Rat Lake, Rose Lake, Rove Lake, Watap Lake, Mountain Lake, Fan Lake, Vaseux Lake, Moose Lake, North Fowl Lake, South Fowl Lake, Pigeon River, Grand Portage, Lake Superior

Route Description: This very historic route was the highway for the 'voyageurs,' who traveled these waters with their trade goods several centuries ago. There are numerous scenic bluffs along the route, as you cover such portages as "Monument Portage," the "Height of Land," and of course, the grand finale, the 8.5 mile Grand Portage. This route is strenuous, as there are several longer portages. It works well from the point that the longest portages are at the end of the route, when the packs are lightest and the legs are strongest. The trek ends at the Grand Portage National Monument, where your crew can sign the register for crossing the portage, and then tour the monument area, which has a lot of historic information about the area. There is also a special Grand Portage Trek patch for purchase from the Trading Post.



Route Name: Horse River Loop

Location: BWCAW

Entry Point: Moose Lake (25)

Shuttle: None Required

Distance: 55 miles

Longest Portage: 340 rods (1.1 miles)

Number of Portages: 17

Maps Required: Fisher F10

Main Features: Large Lakes, 2 rivers, scenic waterfalls

Difficulty: Easy

Itinerary: Moose Lake, Wind Lake, Basswood Lake (Wind Bay), Indiana Lake, Good Lake, Basswood Lake (Hoist Bay, Back Bay, Pipestone Bay, Jackfish Bay), Unnamed Creek, Tin Can Mike Lake, Horse Lake, Horse River, Basswood River, Basswood Lake, Wind Lake, Moose Lake

Route Description: An easy route for a shorter treks, this route has numerous large lakes and bays. Please note that many of the large bays do allow motorboat use. This scenic route, traveling down the Horse River and up the Basswood River has many excellent fishing locations along the way.



Route Name: Height of Land Route

Location: BWCAW and Superior National Forest

Entry Point: Moose Lake

Shuttle: None Required

Distance: 135 Miles



Longest Portage: 100 Rods (0.3 mile)

Number of Portages: 38

Maps Required: Fisher F10, F11, F13, F19, F20

Main Features: Following the traditional Fur Trade Route, crossing the Height of Land portage, Isle of Pines ("Root Beer Lady" Dorothy Molter's former homestead), eagle's nest on point between Newfound and Sucker Lakes, Benny Ambrose homestead's site on Ottertrack Lake.

Difficulty: Strenuous (because of distance)

Itinerary: Moose Lake, Newfound Lake, Sucker Lake, Birch Lake, Knife Lake, Ottertrack Lake, Saganaga Lake, Granite River, Gneiss Lake, Cove Lake, Magnetic Lake, Gunflint Lake, North Lake, Gunflint Lake, Magnetic Lake, Cove Lake, Gneiss Lake, Granite River, Saganaga Lake, Ottertrack Lake, Knife Lake, Birch Lake, Sucker Lake, Newfound Lake, Moose Lake

Route Description: This long route is fairly easy as far as portaging goes. This is suited for experienced crews on 10-day trips wanting to paddle long days on big lakes and to follow the U.S. – Canadian border and the historic fur trade route to the Height of Land. Voyageurs crossing the height of land portage were allowed to dip their paddles in red paint and to take part in a special ceremony, signifying they were "true" Voyageurs. This route takes you through some scenic lakes both in and out of the BWCAW (expect to see a few motorboats and cabins). Although the route begins and returns the same way, it always looks different in reverse. The trip can be altered to return by several different routes, but these all require more portaging.

Route Name: Little Saganaga Loop

Location: BWCAW

Entry Point: Moose Lake

Shuttle: None Required

Distance: 80 Miles

Longest Portage: 240 Rods (0.75 mile)

Number of Portages: 54

Maps Required: Fisher F10, F11, F12

Main Features: Variety (Rivers, Small Lakes, Big Lakes), uncrowded, beautiful scenery

Difficulty: Moderate to Strenuous (because of number of portages)

Itinerary: Moose Lake, Newfound, Sucker, Splash, Ensign, Ashigan, Gibson, Cattyman, Jordan, Ima, Thomas, Cacabic, Alice, Kawishiwi River, Kivaniva, Anit, Pan, Panhandle, Makwa, Elton, Little Saganaga, Mora, Tarry, Crooked, Gillis, Fern, French, Peter, Gabimichigami, Agamok, Mueller, Ogishkemuncie, Annie, Jenny, Kekakabic Ponds, Eddy, South Arm Knife, Sema, Spoon, Dix, Skoota, Missionary, Trader, Vera, Ensign, Splash, Sucker, Newfound, Moose.

Route Description: This route is best for a crew on a longer trip that wants a degree of challenge in return for traveling in a beautiful and remote area of the BWCAW. There is one 240 rod portage and several 180 rod portages, but most are relatively short. As with most canoe routes, there are many ways to alter this main loop to make it shorter, lessen the number of portages, or make it even more challenging. For example, a crew could return by way of Knife Lake from the South Arm, cutting out seven portages although this would put you back on the main traffic route. Many people consider the Gabimichigami and Ogishkemuncie Lakes area to be one of the most beautiful in the BWCAW.



Route Name: Scenic Lakes Loop

Location: BWCAW

Entry Point: Moose Lake

Shuttle: None Required

Distance: 70 Miles

Longest Portage: 180 Rods (0.56 mile)

Number of Portages: 28

Maps Required: Fisher F10, F11, F19

Main Features: Waterfall, cliff-lined lakes, nice campsites, Isle of Pines ("Root Beer Lady" Dorothy Molter's former homestead site), Benny Ambrose's homestead site, Osprey Nest on Kekekabic Pond east of Kekekabic Lake, eagle's nest on point between Newfound and Sucker Lakes



Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

Itinerary: Moose Lake, Newfound Lake, Sucker Lake, Birch Lake, Carp Lake, Seed Lake, Knife River, Knife Lake, Ottertrack Lake, Ester Lake, Hanson Lake, Cherry Lake, Topaz Lake, Amoebur Lake, Knife Lake, South Arm Knife Lake, Eddy Lake, Kekekabic Ponds, Kekekabic Lake, Pickle Lake, Spoon Lake, Dix Lake, Skoota Lake, Missionary Lake, Trader Lake, Vera Lake, Ensign Lake, Splash Lake, Newfound Lake, Moose Lake

Route Description: Fairly easy route, perfect for a 7 or 8 day trek. Expect to see people along this route, but solitude can be found in many locations by portaging away from the main route to camp.

QUETICO PROVINCIAL PARK ROUTES FROM EIY

Route Name: Agnes Lake Loop

Location: Quetico Provincial Park

Entry Point: Kahshahpiwi Lake (53). If you reverse this route you can use the Agnes Lake (61) entry point.

Shuttle: None Required

Distance: 80 Miles

Longest Portage: 212 Rods (0.66 mile)

Number of Portages: 24

Maps Required: Fisher F10, F11, F18, F25.

Main Features: Pictographs, Louisa Falls, Agnes Lake, Kahshahpiwi Lake

Difficulty: Moderate

Itinerary: Moose Lake, Newfound Lake, Sucker Lake, Prairie Portage, Basswood Lake (Inlet Bay, Bayley Bay), Burke Lake, Burke Creek, Basswood Lake (North Bay), Isabella Creek, Isabella Lake, Side Lake, Kahshahpiwi Lake, Keefer Lake, Stark Lake, Kahshahpiwi Creek, Cairn Lake, Kahshahpiwi Creek, Kawnipi Lake, Keewatin Lake, Agnes Lake, Meadows Lake, Sunday Lake, Basswood Lake (Sunday Bay, Bayley Bay, Inlet Bay), Prairie Portage, Sucker Lake, Newfound Lake, Moose Lake

Route Description: This popular 8 to 10 day route is the quintessential Quetico Route as immortalized in the "Far Northland" song of the Northern Tier ("... from Lake Agnes by Louisa to Kawnipi I will go..."). You will travel up the middle of Quetico Provincial Park and have the experience of sitting in the "bathtubs" under Louisa Falls. Although there are 24 portages, only four are longer than 100 rods. Some of these are a challenge however. You will find more solitude as you travel north. Don't miss the pictographs on Agnes Lake, and the only known petroglyphs (carvings) in the park.

Route Name: Argo Lake Loop

Location: Quetico Provincial Park

Entry Point: Basswood River (51). If you reverse the direction of the route you would use the Sarah Lake (52) entry point.

Shuttle: None Required

Distance: 85 Miles

Longest Portage: 340 Rods (1.1 mile)

Number of Portages: 27

Maps Required: Fisher F10, F17, F18

Main Features: Basswood Falls, Pictographs, Argo Lake

Difficulty: Moderate to Strenuous (depending on length of trip)

Itinerary: Moose Lake, Newfound Lake, Sucker Lake, Prairie Portage, Basswood Lake (Inlet Bay, Bayley Bay), Basswood River, Crooked Lake, Argo Lake, Darky Lake, Darky River, Brent Lake, McIntyre Lake, Sarah Lake, Side Creek, Side Lake, Point Lake, Nest Lake, Basswood Lake (North Bay), Burke Creek, Burke Lake, Basswood Lake (Bailey Bay, Inlet Bay), Prairie Portage, Sucker Lake, Newfound Lake, Moose Lake



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are some frequently asked questions to help you in planning your Northern Tier wilderness canoeing expedition.

1. What is a portage?

A portage is a trail to connect lakes or to travel around obstacles. This is an important aspect of your expedition and you should not be afraid of planning a trip with a considerable number of portages. People have been portaging in canoe country for thousands of years. On a busy route you will probably see numerous "senior citizens" happily walking the trails with a canoe on their shoulders. The way we do portages at the Northern Tier is quick, professional, and efficient. We pack to enable most crews to do a portage in a single trip. Here are a few positives about portaging:

- Stretch your legs
- Answer calls of nature
- Travel to more remote areas
- Sense of accomplishment
- See wildlife
- Walk along streams and rapids
- Historical - footsteps of the Native Americans and voyageurs
- Great stories

2. I notice portages are sometimes marked in rods. What is a rod?

A rod is a traditional method of measurement that is often used for portages. A rod is 16.5 feet or about a canoe-length. There are 320 rods in a mile. It is fairly unusual to have a portage as long as 320 rods. The average portage is going to be 80-120 rods. More important than the distance are other factors such as steepness and amount of bog, swamp, rocks, and roots.

3. How many miles can we expect to cover in a day?

There are many factors that affect this including wind, paddling skill, and number of portages. A well-paddled canoe will cruise at about 4 mph. You can usually cover a portage, single portaging, at about 2 mph. You also need to factor in lunch breaks, fishing, sightseeing, and wildlife viewing. We advise people that 10 miles per day is a safe number to use for estimating your travel distance. This will usually get you into camp at 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. With good conditions you can travel 20 miles in a day if you keep at it. Of course, on a windy day you may have to layover or may find it difficult to paddle even 5 miles. This is why we recommend a conservative estimate of 10 miles per day.

4. What other costs may we expect?

Trips from the Atikokan base or the Ely base may involve Quetico Provincial Park permit and camping fees (different charges if going from Atikokan south or Ely north), and Canadian government charges for Remote Area Border Crossing permit fees and work permit fees for Ely staff. Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness permit and user fees, and United States Forest Service Guide / Outfitter fees may apply for U.S. trips. These are in addition to the Northern Tier trip fees. This can be confusing when trying to figure your actual trip costs and choosing options.

You should review the fee calculator on the Resource CD that came with your "Expedition Planning Guide" to estimate these costs. Also note that for 2007, the U.S. Homeland Security Department is requiring passports for anyone flying from Canada to reenter the United States. Check the link on our web page for current information.

5. Which routes qualify for the "Northwest Voyageurs Brigade" Historic Trails Award?

There is a national Historic Trails award for certain routes in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and in Quetico Provincial Park. This award is available through the Voyageur's Area Council in Duluth, MN.

Each crew attending the C.L. Sommers base in Ely and the Donald Rogert base in Atikokan will receive information about how to apply. In this guide look for the symbol below, which indicates routes that may qualify for this award.

