



Voyageur Canoeing

Features of the Voyageur Canoeing Trip

- Participants entering 9th or 10th grade. Minimum age: 14
- Group size: 4-5 participants and 1 leader
- 9 days canoeing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness
- On the water paddling most days for up to 12 hours
- Designated campsites
- Weather dependant challenges; high winds, waves, temperatures, etc.

Voyageur canoeists spend their nine days traveling through the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). Boasting approximately one million acres of wilderness, the BWCAW offers campers the opportunity to experience pristine waters, natural and cultural history, and awe-inspiring skies. The groups will paddle and portage through some of the picturesque 1000+ lakes that make up this spectacular natural area.

What you will take away from the trip

The purpose of the trip is to develop group collaboration skills and leadership abilities including but not limited to humility, empathy, awareness, resourcefulness, resiliency, optimism, adaptability, and respect. Participants also gain exposure to wilderness skills including camping, hiking, and risk management, and explore the ecology of the area.

Each participant will practice giving and receiving feedback, reflecting on their leadership, camping skills, backpacking techniques, and working as a group to overcome challenges. Leaders will teach these skills before gradually turning the leadership of the trip over to the participants. Each day participants will take over more of the daily responsibility of the trip.

Wilderness Skills

Wilderness skills involve camping, canoeing and Leave No Trace practices. These skills allow the participant to gain confidence and a level of comfort that make all of the above possible. Participants can expect to learn the following wilderness skills:

- Leave No Trace techniques
- Basic paddling strokes; forward, reverse, sweep, draw, low and high braces
- Basic self and assisted rescues
- Portaging techniques
- Safe group travel and use of safety equipment
- Importance of equipment care
- Organization and packing of group and personal gear
- Map and compass reading including route selection
- Campsite selection and set up including tents and tarps
- Cooking meals independently including stove use and trail baking

Challenges of the trip

Trips can expect rain, wind and waves coupled with cold weather. On the other hand, it can just as easily be 80 degrees and sunny where the biggest challenge is staying cool. Wind and weather can create conditions that have the power to adjust itineraries.

As the bear population is present in the BWCAW, it is vital to practice safe bear camping principles. The groups will keep a meticulously clean cooking area and store food away from sleeping areas

The Boundary Waters has thousands of small lakes. This means that paddling throughout the day is often punctuated by portages, some quite arduous. With this in mind your pre trip fitness goals should focus on being able to sustain a moderate level of exertion for hours on end. Most active teenagers find themselves in great shape for the trip. Portages are tough on ankles, knees and backs while paddling and be difficult for those that have shoulder issues.

Depending on the weather, bugs have the potential to be particularly fearsome on this trip. It is recommended that you bring lightweight long sleeve shirts and pants and be able to comfortably paddle in buggy, hot conditions.

Camp Manito-wish YMCA works hard to ensure that each trip leader has extensive experience in wilderness travel, youth development and risk management. For the success of the group however, it is imperative that each participant has a positive attitude, makes conservative risk management decisions, works well with others who they do not get along with, and has a willingness to challenge themselves.

Time at Camp Manito-wish YMCA

The time spent at Camp allows the group to begin to form and prepare for the time spent on trail. They will have two full days of structured time in preparation of departure on the third full day. While at Camp, participants will be staying as groups in the rustic Voyageur tent village. These are large canvas walled tents with bunkbeds tucked away in the woods near an outhouse and group fire ring.

The first day is spent introducing community standards and getting to know groupmates. During the next two days, the group will cover basic first aid and emergency procedures, pack their food and equipment, spend time on the low challenge course and get out on the water to go over basic paddle strokes and rescues. After these first three days, groups will drive to the BWCAW and embark on their adventure!

Participant Expectations

We expect each participant to best support their group and their own growth by maintaining the following:

- Embraces challenges
- Make conservative risk management decisions
- Work productively with everyone in the community
- Sets personal goals leading to personal growth as relates to self-awareness

- Develops communication skills by identifying what appropriate communication in relation to needs, effectively communicating their own needs to the entire group and listening and understanding each individual's needs
- Accepts feedback by applying and discussing suggestions from others and begins to give feedback.
- Create a safe and inclusive atmosphere
- Take initiative in group tasks and self care

Risk Management

Our participants are active players in risk management. Actively teaching and relying on participants for risk management minimizes injury and illness and we hope these skills translate to healthy decisions in areas outside of Camp. Objectives include:

- Recognize what group dynamics and how behavior within the group affects safety
- Understand the multitude of risks faced in the wilderness, be able to identify them and distinguish between healthy and unhealthy/unsafe risks
- Practice good personal hygiene, proper waste disposal and proper food handling situation
- Understand First Aid Kit contents and other safety equipment and be able to use basic supplies if necessary.