



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®
PATRIOTS' PATH COUNCIL

Sabattis Adventure Camp

Long Lake, NY

Preparing For Your Adirondack Trek

A Note to the Adult Leaders



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Prepared. For Life.™



Dear Adult Leader(s),

So you've decided to take your troop on trek at Sabattis Adventure Camp. Congratulations! You have made a decision that will offer your Scouts an experience that will remain with them for a lifetime and an opportunity to form bonds and share camaraderie that will last just as long. Now the big question: How do you best prepare Scouts (and, of course, the leaders) for such a unique wilderness experience?

It is our feeling that the best way to prepare for a wilderness experience is to gain experience. Here's how to prepare:

Get Everyone Out In A Canoe

If you do nothing else to prepare for a canoe trek, get everyone out in a canoe. Pick a date, then beg, borrow, or steal some canoes and equipment and get out for a couple of hours. (Stealing canoes and equipment is generally illegal and is not condoned by Sabattis Adventure Camp, the authors, or the BSA 😊) Once you have set your date, stick to it. Your trek will go on regardless of weather (except of course, lightning and/or swarms of locusts); so don't cancel your practice canoe trip on account of any less than desirable weather.

Practice Carrying A Canoe

The next thing that Voyageurs wish every crew would do is practice a canoe carry with all of the items that you intend to bring on trek. Try to carry all of your gear and your canoe for at least a half-mile. Nearly all canoe treks have at least one carry in excess of 1 mile in length. Try to make the carry in one trip while taking plenty of breaks along the way. Bare-minimum, carry just your gear for a mile. For enthusiastic crews, get a 16-foot long 2x4 or 2x6 board from the lumberyard, hoist your packs and with two people carrying the board on their shoulders, take a few laps around your local running track. Remember 4 laps is a mile on most tracks, so after a few laps you'll get a great feel for what a carry actually is like. This exercise will hopefully accomplish a number of things:

1. The participants will come to the realization that the more they pack; the more they have to carry.
2. It will be obvious who needs to re-pack. Think slim and trim. Gear strapped on the outside of a pack is asking to get snagged on tree branch or come loose on the trail creating a hazard for those following.
3. Demonstrates that canoes are meant to be in the water and not carried. The quicker you come to this understanding, the quicker you will have a realistic expectation of what a carry will be like on the trek.

Build Up Some Muscle

Give each participant a calendar and instructions to do a couple of push-ups, sit-ups and chin-ups every morning and evening before bed. Use a push mower in the yard rather than the rider. Dig a hole with a shovel, hopefully someone needs the hole, but still, get out and do some manual labor! Mark all of this on a calendar and keep track of your progress. You'll find that if you do a bit of preparation strength wise you'll have a lot fewer sore muscles at the beginning of the trek.

Have a Shake Down Meeting

At this meeting, all participants will need to bring their packs packed exactly how they want them to be on trek. Work your way down the equipment list found in the Trek Guide and be sure that everyone has the items they need and nothing more. This is not the time to show off that cool gadget you received for your birthday unless it's on the list. For each item, have the participants (adults included) hold up what they intend to bring on trek. Pay particular attention to rain gear. What we see each summer are at least two people per trek who show up with a dollar store poncho. If you see this in your shake down immediately destroy it. This type of gear gets destroyed on a trek and makes everyone miserable. You don't need to buy anything top of the line or pricey Gore-Tex, but you do need to have a jacket with sleeves and a zipper. Ponchos are entirely unacceptable. We cook, paddle and eat in the rain. Don't overlook this important piece of equipment.

Footwear is also extremely important. We don't beach our boats! Plan to get your feet wet with each load/unload, remember these are Kevlar canoes! Budget choice is old sneakers that have exceeded their life span. They have good sturdy ankle support and a sole to protect you from those hidden rocks underwater and on the portage trail. Water socks don't provide any support at all and leave you looking like a raisin with feet full of sand. Open-toed sandals like Chaco's work ok, but be wary of toe stubs and underwater rocks. These are good for in camp use with a nice comfy pair



of socks! The ultimate choice is a pricey pair of water shoes from the brand name companies. But the Keen or Teva or Salomon style knock-offs from Wal-Mart work surprisingly well! The bottom line is to bring a pair of shoes that can get wet and are easily paired with some wool/synthetic socks for around camp and day hikes.

Another thing that makes treks flow much smoother is efficiency in setting up and tearing down a campsite. This requires teamwork, knowledge of the gear, and most of all, practice! During the shakedown meeting, get out a stopwatch and have everyone "set-up camp". Set up tents, unroll sleeping pads and bags, and unpack your evening clothes and flashlights and eating gear. This is the first thing that will happen when you arrive at a campsite and the first thing that will happen in reverse when you wake in the morning. You should be able to do this in 30 minutes or less. Take time to debrief this activity and identify the trouble spots.

After taking care of the personal gear you need to move into the group gear. Each day your Voyageur will assist you in assigning the following jobs, Two Cooks, Water Filtration Specialists, Bear Rope Riggers, Sanitation Engineers (dishes and sump hole), and Dining Fly/Firewood Engineers. Everyone will be expected to participate in these roles throughout the week. These duties will rotate with each breakfast and dinner. Thinking ahead is the key to successful treks. Planning the route each day, the meals, the water needs for hydration and meals, and determining who will do what saves a lot of stress! Practice lighting stoves, using water pumps and setting up tents. A solid crew can have their campsite up and down in less than an hour. This is important for the following reasons:

1. Though we have a camping permit, campsites are not guaranteed and are first come – first served. We are not the only group of paddlers taking the common paddling routes each week. Getting on the water each day at a reasonable time is important.
2. Weather – there is less wind, less chance of rain and reduced chance of getting caught in a thunderstorm if we get on the water earlier in the morning.
3. Motorized watercraft are not usually an obstacle in the early morning. They're more of an afternoon crowd and we really like to avoid them.
4. The faster you set up and take down your camp the more you can sleep in and take afternoon naps!

Come With an Open Mind

Chances are that your Voyageur will show you how to do a number of things that you've never thought about before. When was the last time you dug a hole in the ground to brush your teeth over? Odds are, unless you have been on a trek before, you have never had to do it. We adhere strictly to Leave-No-Trace Outdoor Ethics and a lot of things go into the ground and are done in ways that most campers aren't even aware of. These things may seem strange or foreign to you; please mentally prepare for this.

Canoeing skills, carrying skills, shakedown, set-up, take-down, openness to experience...these are all things that we look for that you can work with your crew on right now!

The last part of keeping an open mind is to remember that the reason for adults being on trek is the Scouts. Whether you have received some form of adult leader training or not, you should know by now that the intent of the Scouting program is for the Scouts to gain leadership experience. Your Voyageur has been trained in very detailed ways by a group of dedicated Scouters and outdoor professionals to work with the crews and BSA expectations. He or she has the final word unless you see a potentially life endangering situation unfolding. Please use tact and thoughtfulness when expressing concerns to your Voyageur, and never do it in front of the Scouts.

Our Golden Rule

We have but one very serious Golden Rule. **Adults are there for Health And Safety.** At our pre-trek meeting for leaders on Sunday, the Trek Director in camp will remind you of this. All decisions on things like route, campsites, and meal times are to be made by the Scouts. Your Voyageur is there to help them learn how to make these decisions with health, safety and personal comfort in mind. This will test the adult leaders' patience, you will get hungry, and many things will not be done in the manner in which you'd prefer. But they will get done. Remember, adult leaders are on vacation. They're giving up time with their families and using precious time out of work to be on this trek. The role of the adult leader is to intercede in matters where health and safety may be compromised and to assist with any discipline issues that may arise. We encourage the adult leaders to willingly follow instructions from the Scouts or sit back and read a



book. Mistakes will be made and are a part of the natural learning process. This is not a license for the adults to do no work while on trek. They are expected to carry their fair share of the food and gear in addition to their personal gear and canoe. Adults must also meet the same pre-trek expectations as the Scouts.

Your Voyageur

As someone who spends countless nights in the woods, your Voyageur will be tempted to step in and pick up the slack for the crew. Please don't let this happen. The proper protocol for demonstrating outdoor skills is to demonstrate once, and after that, only verbal instruction should be used. The Voyageur will show you once and watch every time after that.

What can you expect from your Voyageur? First and foremost you can expect a dedicated individual who comes with a plethora of experiences and wilderness knowledge at their disposal. Each Voyageur must be certified in wilderness first-aid, lifeguarding, and CPR before they can even attend the mandatory National Camp School Voyageur certification course. These are trained individuals. While experience may vary, they have been run through a classroom and wilderness immersion course that tests their ability to work with people, medical emergencies, Scouting aims and methods, and camping/canoeing skills.

Sabattis Adventure Camp is very selective in choosing who is allowed to lead treks. Numerous Voyageurs from Sabattis have gone on to serve on the BSA training team for future Voyageurs and even work as professionals in the industry year round. We are proud of our Voyageurs. You should feel comfortable traveling into remote country with these individuals. By virtue of the nature of their work, Voyageurs may come off as quirky or odd. This depends on the individual, but please recognize that he or she will probably address problems and see the world a bit differently than you. Their world in the summer tends to be a bit smaller than that of those who are coming into the wilderness for just one week.

If the Voyageur has done their job properly, he/she will spend the in-camp time after you arrive and portions of the first day on trail demonstrating new skills. After that, your Voyageur will start to step back to watch your crew's skills develop. He/she is there for knowledge of the route, equipment, health, and safety. Please ask them questions, they tend to know a lot more than they reveal about the wilderness and even the things they do in life when not leading treks.

There is a method to the madness: if your Voyageur suggests the group or an individual do something, there is usually a reason. This may not immediately be obvious to you. If you don't understand something please ask. If there is an issue of health and safety or a general concern please don't express this in front of the group. Pull him or her aside and discuss it like adults. It is inappropriate and demeaning to chew out your Voyageur in front of people. Please be reasonable, if you know how to do something more efficiently or safely there is a time and place to discuss this. In the end, he or she is the final decision maker. If something is/was horribly awry please talk with the Trek or Camp Director on your return to camp. But never, ever express anger or distrust in front of the Scouts.

Use your Voyageur for all he or she is capable. Most of them have come up through the Scouting program; insist that they deliver a motivational speech to your crew. Keep in touch with them after the trek, share photos, stories and let him or her know that you appreciated their hard work. Remember, they work from Sunday morning to Friday night without any time off. Be honest in your final appraisal, we do look at this information and use it to improve our staff and program even in the one day between treks each week.

Hopefully, you have absorbed some of this advice on how to prepare for a trek and what expectations to come with. Most of getting it right comes down to practice. The treks that go the smoothest are the ones that have practiced the above items more than once.

So get out in a canoe, practice your J-stroke, carry your pack, do a shakedown, time your campsite set-up and take-down, and come to Sabattis Adventure Camp with an open mind and ready for the experience of a lifetime.

The trek will become what you make of it!

With Kind Regards,

The Trek Staff at Sabattis Adventure Camp