



River trips lasting several days in a canoe, kayak or raft, involve certain risks. This activity takes place in natural settings, which are, as a consequence, farther away from emergency services. This can cause delays in the event of incidents requiring immediate care or an evacuation.

Be sure you have the necessary skills and abilities and the appropriate equipment for practising this activity. Paddlers must be aware of the potential risks, which include the possibility of material damages, injuries and drowning. We advise you to read this document attentively.

You should always choose an excursion based on your abilities, fitness level and river skills. A river's level of difficulty is classified into five (5) levels, ranging from Level 1 (very easy) to Level 5 (very difficult). Paddlers must consider these classifications along with the classification of the river's rapids before making a choice. The number of portages and the distances involved are also part of the equation.

For general information about the different rivers and for maps, call 1 800 665-6527. To better plan your activity and for additional information and preparation advice, we suggest you call Fédération québécoise du canot et du kayak at 514 252-3001 or visit their Web site at www.canot-kayak.qc.ca, and read the "Sécurité" section. You can also contact the Office of Boating Safety at 1 888 649-6292 or www.tc.gc.ca/marinesafety/debs/obs/menu.htm.

It is important to note that these trips are not guided, and that you are responsible for your own safety. There are no patrols on the rivers or along the banks. Expenses for search and rescue operations are your responsibility (make sure that your insurance covers these risks before leaving on your trip).

We suggest that you read the *Careful by Nature* brochure, available at our reception offices, and give a friend or relative a copy of your itinerary, making sure to let this person know your return date, with instructions to call emergency services (911) if you do not arrive on the expected date. To prevent false alarms, call this person as soon as you get back.

FORMALITIES

Before making your reservation, get information about the characteristics of the project you're planning (how long the trip takes, degree of difficulty, departure and arrival points, services).

Read the documentation that comes with your reservation to become familiar with the details about the activity.

You must register at the establishment's reception office and have your park entry fee pass and stay authorization on hand when you arrive for your trip.

If you plan on fishing, first make sure that fishing is allowed. If so, bring along your fishing licence and find out how many catches are allowed per day.

SAFETY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Rivers have a number of natural dangers: differences in water level and the strength of rapid currents, many obstacles such as tree trunks and branches on the surface, whirlpools, ice jams, rapids, overhanging and densely wooded banks, mobile beach ridges of gravel and rock. Paddlers must inform themselves about the potential dangers before undertaking an expedition and must remain vigilant.

In white water (class III or higher rapids), wearing a helmet, a buoyant heaving line at least 15 metres long and an extra life jacket are recommended.

Tips

- *Make sure that your life jacket conforms to the 65-GP-11 Standard for Personal Flotation Device, published by the Standards Council of Canada.*
- *If you are unable to swim, tell the people you are travelling with.*
- *Take the time to secure your watercraft to a tree or rock when you are on land.*
- *Designate an experienced member to remain behind the group and stay with the slowest members until they reach the spot you have chosen to set up camp for the night.*
- *The isolation of the areas and the topography of certain valleys limits the use of cell phones or satellite. Despite this fact, we recommend that you bring a communications device with you.*

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Weather conditions can change quickly and cause abundant precipitation, which can significantly increase the degree of difficulty of certain key passages of a river.

Wet weather and temperatures close to the freezing point can increase the risk of hypothermia and death.

Tips

- *Before your departure, it is important to find out about the river's water level and the weather forecast for the river's entire drainage basin.*
- *Heavy precipitation at the head of a river can have consequences on its level of difficulty for many kilometres downstream.*
- *In stormy weather, to protect yourself from lightning, take shelter in a wooded area.*

CLOTHING

No matter what the air or water temperature, cotton clothing should be avoided. Wear clothing made of synthetic fibres such as fleece, polypropylene, nylon, polyester, spandex or neoprene. It is very important to always wear appropriate clothing.

Because of weather conditions or the time of year, the water temperature in certain rivers can be very cold. Falling into cold water can provoke hypothermia. The first indication is full-body trembling. Take heed! Dry clothing, a hot non-alcoholic beverage and food are adequate remedies.

Neoprene socks or booties keep your feet warm. Shoes with thick soles will facilitate your movements on the ground.

Finally, you must not dress for the air temperature, but for the temperature of the water on which you will be navigating. When the air temperature is lower than 37°C, it is dangerous. Wearing isothermal clothing is necessary in such cases.

Tips

- *Before starting off through a challenging passage, make sure that your clothing is firmly closed in order to reduce water infiltrations in case of a false manoeuvre.*
- *Fogged up glasses generally indicates that the body temperature is too high or that it has varied too quickly. If this happens, you can reduce your paddling intensity, remove layers of clothing, or simply open some air vents in your garments to let some fresh air come in under your waterproof clothing.*
- *If you have to take a portage trail, take the time to remove some of your clothing so that you'll be more comfortable and avoid damaging your waterproof gear.*

ON THE RIVER

A change in weather conditions (temperature, precipitation) or your physical condition can greatly alter the level of difficulty and your reflexes when navigating rapids.

Rivers and portage trails are usually indicated with signs or markers. However, vegetation or high water can make the signs or markers less visible. Canoeers can therefore easily lose their way. It is essential for one person in the group to be familiar with reading topographical maps and using a compass and/or GPS, as well as interpreting currents and indicators of more difficult passages (the body of water is becoming narrower, sounds, a change of colour on the water surface, etc.).

Tips

- *Choose a route that takes your fitness level into account as well as your experience, the weather, and the river's water level. Respect your technical skills.*
- *Rather than risk capsizing while trying to cross a rapid, a portage is often the safer choice.*
- *Leave early, travel with a group (min. 2 boats) and travel only during daylight hours.*
- *Everyone aboard the watercraft must wear an appropriately sized individual flotation device or a life jacket licensed for sale in Canada.*
- *Wearing sunglasses and a hat allows you to have a better view of the water and potential problems.*
- *Before tackling a difficult passage, take the time to examine the area by parking your watercraft upstream of it. Decide where you would like to cross and identify markers (a large rock that appears on the surface, tree beside the river, etc.).*
- *Investigating a difficult stretch of water from the land must be done safely. Your shoes could be more slippery than hiking shoes, and vegetation can hide holes between roots or rocks by the river. Always go with a partner.*
- *Do not underestimate the energy you'll need to cross a portage.*
- *If you would like to risk a difficult passage, make sure to identify the safest route to take. Ask one of your companions to wait for you downstream, and if you capsize to help get you and your boat to safe ground.*

- *Before crossing a delicate passage, make sure the whole group is together.*
- *It is important for your baggage to be well secured inside your boat so you won't lose anything if it capsizes. The weight of your baggage will also make the boat more stable for crossing more difficult passages.*

FOOD

If you eat well and stay hydrated, it will be easier to maintain a comfortable body temperature. This way, you will have more energy for your trip and be more alert when facing the unexpected.

Tips

- *Be sure that your food and beverages are easy to reach while you're on the water.*
- *Drink at least 2 litres of water per day.*
- *Warning! Even if the water in the river is clear, it may not be potable. It may contain harmful micro-organisms, which can cause gastrointestinal problems. For your safety, we recommend that you boil, treat, or filter the water.*
- *Once per hour take the time to stop in a comfortable place or enjoy a peaceful spot while you eat and drink.*
- *Never take or be under the influence of drugs or drink alcoholic beverages while doing the activity.*

TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

No matter what the brand name, model or price of the different technical equipment you use during your excursion, it is important to be familiar with them before your trip.

Boating regulations require you to have the following safety equipment aboard at all times:

- *An individual flotation device for each person, which conforms to the 65-GP-11 standard of the Standards Council of Canada,*
- *One buoyant heaving line no less than 15 m (49 ft) in length,*
- *Oars or paddles,*
- *A sound-signalling device (whistle),*
- *A bailer.*

It is extremely dangerous to overload your boat, whether with passengers or equipment. This can have serious consequences. The number of people your boat can safely carry depends on the type of boat and how the weight is distributed.

Tips

- *Choose watertight bags or containers based on the weight and volume of your baggage.*
- *Spreading the weight evenly in the boat improves its stability, ability to glide on the water, and the way it handles in more difficult spots.*
- *A few days before your departure, do a practice run by putting everything into the boat you are planning to take with you. This is a good way to find out if it all fits into the watertight bags or containers and how much weight will be added to your weight in the boat.*
- *Plan how to attach the baggage inside your boat and how you will carry it during portages.*
- *Ideally, a downriver trip of several days should be preceded by one or more day trips so that you can better assess your fitness level, abilities and interest in such an activity.*
- *Attach your glasses to your head just in case!*

PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Boaters should bring all of their garbage out with them. This rule is in effect on the water, on the portage trails and in the campsites.

The forest environment must be preserved, so do not cut down or mutilate trees.

During your trip downriver, you will be travelling through the habitats of a number of wildlife species. By nature, these animals are not very aggressive, but if you try to get too close to them, their survival instinct could be expressed by dangerous behaviour.

Tips

- *Avoid bringing useless packages that increase the weight and volume of your baggage.*
- *Use biodegradable soap and rechargeable batteries.*
- *Be sure to make the least possible impact on the environment during your stay.*
- *During a portage, if you notice evidence that bears have recently been in the area, continue hiking and make plenty of noise (raise your voices, ring a bell, etc.).*

When a wooden platform is available, you must install your tent directly on top of it. The tent must be self-standing. You might need to tie it down with rope.

There is a pit toilet near the campsites or tent platforms.

Near the accommodations site, you will find a water supply point. This water may not be potable. For your safety, we suggest that you boil (20 min), treat, or filter it.

Fires are prohibited near huts, primitive camping platforms and along the trails.

HOW TO PREVENT...

A fracture, dislocation or a sprain

- *We suggest that you move slowly, without straddling over obstacles. On rugged or slippery surfaces, it is best to use a walking pole. Despite these precautions, if you have an accident, apply cold compresses and stabilize the injured part of the body.*

Blisters

- *Don't leave on a hike without having walked for about fifteen minutes, several times, in your new shoes. At the time of the hike, keep your feet dry and protect the areas susceptible to blisters with an elastic adhesive bandage. Despite these precautions, if you get a blister, apply a bandage so the blister won't burst in order to keep the area sterile and give the skin time to heal. If the blister bursts, disinfect the wound and cover it with antibiotic cream and a bandage.*

Snow blindness

- *Wear sunglasses with adequate UV protection, even when the sky is overcast. Despite this precaution, if you get snow blindness, keep your eyes in darkness.*

Serious or benign wounds

- *We recommend wearing simple clothing and adjusting your backpack before leaving. You should also always handle equipment such as knives, axes or stoves with care. Move slowly but surely over rugged or slippery surfaces. If an accident occurs despite these precautions, disinfect the wound with an antiseptic and protect it with a bandage. Serious wounds must be protected from infection by sterile compresses, and they require medical attention.*

Leaving a friend alone in the forest

- *We recommend going on your trek in a group of at least three people. Despite this precaution, if this happens, never abandon an injured person except in the case of a force majeure. Use your energy to comfort the injured person and make a fire to identify your location with smoke.*

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET LOST

To prevent this situation, never leave the trail and check your location regularly, using your map. If you are not sure where you are, stay calm, stop and take a few minutes to analyze the situation. Then, return to a spot that is easily identifiable on the map: a road intersection, a body of water, a bridge, a building or a direction sign. Analyse the situation again. If you are lost, stay where you are and wait for help. However, if you are absolutely sure of your route, make the decision to continue on or to turn back.

Warning! Off the trails, hikers always have a tendency to over-evaluate their hiking speed. It rarely exceeds 2 km/h.

WHAT TO BRING

FORMALITIES

Stay authorization	
Park entry fee pass	
Fishing licence (if necessary)	

SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION

Individual flotation device that conforms to the 65-GP-11 standard of the Standards Council of Canada	
Buoyant heaving line no less than 15 m (49 ft) in length	
Bailers	
Extra paddles or oars	
Safety helmet	
Sound-signalling device or appliance (whistle)	
Communication device (Cellular or satellite phone)	

FOOD

Bring enough food for the trip	
Water filter	
Canteen for drinking water	
Thermos for hot liquid	
Camp stove and fuel (naphtha recommended)	
Kitchen utensils and mess kit	

TRAVELLING

Topographical map specific to your itinerary (in a watertight cover)	
GPS, extra batteries, instructions for use	
Compass with magnetic declination of the area you are visiting	

ACCOMMODATIONS

Tent	
Sleeping bag	
Insulating ground mattress	
Candle lantern (hut)	

METEOROLOGY

Thermometer	
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CLOTHING

Sun hat	
Extra clothing in a watertight bag	
Pants and jacket (external shell)	
Shoes for the portages	
Isothermal clothing	
Socks/sandals	

TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

Sun glasses	
First aid kit	
Sun screen	
Waterproof matches	
Expedition backpack	
Lip balm	
A kit repair for your type of boat	
Multi-purpose knife	
Survival kit	
Watertight bags or barrels	
Personal items (toilet paper)	
Watertight flashlight or 3 flares	
Insect repellent (28% DEET)	
Tarpaulin	
Cords or elastics	
Bell (bears)	

ENVIRONMENT

Biodegradable soap	
Bags for carrying out your garbage	
Rechargeable batteries	