



Wilderness Canoe Tripping – Crew Selection Questions

Please answer honestly and feel free to elaborate. Your responses will remain confidential and help us build a safe, compatible and effective wilderness travel group.

1. Personal & Health

Describe your age, physical condition, and any health factors that could affect your safety or the group's safety on the planned trip (e.g., injuries, medical conditions, allergies, medications, smoking habits, etc.). This information is essential for planning a safe trip.

2. Experience, Skills & Comfort Zone

Summarize your wilderness canoeing experience (recent routes, skill level). What are your strengths, and what situations on a trip push you outside your comfort zone (e.g., long portages, rough water, long days, isolation, bugs, weather, uncertainty, small group, etc.)?

3. Goals & Expectations

What does a successful trip look like to you?

4. Route, Pace & Daily Rhythm

What pace, distance, or daily schedule do you prefer? Are there specific conditions that affect your enjoyment or sense of success?

5. Decision-Making, Leadership & Risk

How do you prefer decisions to be made in a group? How do you approach leadership vs following? What level of physical or emotional risk are you comfortable with on a trip?

6. Adaptability & Problem-Solving

Describe a time on a trip or outdoor adventure when things didn't go as planned. How did you handle the situation and what did you learn from the experience?

7. Group Dynamics & Conflict

How do you typically handle disagreements or tension in a group setting?

8. Contribution & Responsibility

What strengths do you bring to a group (e.g., navigation, cooking, morale, technical skills, social)? How do you approach shared responsibilities?

9. Personal Needs & Considerations

Are there any phobias, pet peeves, or essential needs we should know about?

10. Additional Information

Is there anything else you'd like us to know that has not been addressed above?



WCA members come from all over Canada, United States, Europe, and elsewhere and you don't always have the opportunity to do a pre-trip paddle with them to do an in-person assessment of their compatibility in the group.

To help you and your group members you can ask these 10 questions to build a safe, capable, and compatible canoe tripping team.

They help us understand each person's health and physical readiness, ensuring we can plan appropriately and manage risks. They also give insight into experience levels and skill sets, so we can match people to a route and group that fits their abilities.

The questions explore goals, expectations, and preferred pace, which helps align the trip style and avoid mismatches that can lead to frustration. They also assess how individuals approach decision-making, leadership, and risk, which is critical in remote environments where good judgment matters.

We also look at adaptability, problem-solving, and group dynamics, since challenges are inevitable and teamwork is essential. Understanding how people handle stress and conflict helps build a cohesive group. Finally, the questions highlight what each person can contribute, along with any personal needs or considerations, so we can plan effectively and support everyone.

Overall, the goal is to create a group that is safe, well-balanced, and able to work together for a positive wilderness experience.

The questions can be tailored as required if you have a specific topic.

A follow up on Zoom call with potential trip partners can walk down the questions and answers and create a framework to generate a two-way dialogue between the potential person to join the trip and trip leadership/other trip members.

Afterwards trip leadership and members already confirmed on the trip can voice their options positive and concerns. A round table discussion helps flush out any showstoppers.

Sometimes space is limited and only 1 or 2 people can be selected out of a group of 10 potential people.

Look at this as potentially doing research for future trip partners.



The following two examples of answers to these 10 questions. It is up to your group to decide what best fits the group members on your trip.

Here's a realistic, expedition-level sample response for a 3-week arctic barren lands canoe trip on the Coppermine River. This reflects a strong, prepared paddler suitable for remote Arctic travel.

1. Personal & Health

I am in excellent physical condition with strong endurance and experience in sustained outdoor activity. I regularly train for multi-day expeditions (cardio, strength, and load carrying). I have no medical conditions that would compromise safety in a remote Arctic environment. No severe allergies. I do not rely on medications requiring strict schedules or special storage. I do not smoke. I understand the physical demands of cold exposure, fatigue, and extended self-sufficiency.

2. Experience, Skills & Comfort Zone

I have advanced wilderness canoe tripping experience, including multi-week remote river expeditions with whitewater, lining, scouting, and long sections without access points. I am comfortable on Class I–III water, managing variable flows, and making conservative river-running decisions.

Strengths: endurance, efficient paddling, risk awareness, strong camping systems, and calm decision-making under pressure.

Comfort challenges: prolonged exposure to cold/wind, extended isolation, and consecutive high-output travel days—but I am prepared and conditioned for these.

3. Goals & Expectations

A successful trip is defined by safe travel, strong group cohesion, and good judgment in a remote environment. I'm motivated by the scale and isolation of the barrens and want to contribute to a disciplined, efficient expedition. My goals include improving expedition efficiency, strengthening river judgment skills, and contributing positively to group dynamics over a long duration.

4. Route, Pace & Daily Rhythm

I am comfortable with an expedition-style pace that varies significantly based on river conditions and weather. Some days may involve long continuous travel (8–10+ hours), while others may require layovers or delayed movement due to wind or water conditions.

I expect flexibility in schedule and prioritize safe decision-making over strict daily mileage targets.



5. Decision-Making, Leadership & Risk

I prefer experienced leadership supported by open communication within the group. I am comfortable contributing to decisions, especially around river travel, scouting, and campsite selection.

My risk tolerance is moderate but disciplined—I am comfortable with wilderness risk when properly assessed, but I strongly support conservative decisions in remote environments where rescue is limited and consequences are high.

6. Adaptability & Problem-Solving

On a previous extended trip, changing water levels and weather conditions required us to adjust daily plans and delay river sections. I helped with scouting, adjusting load distribution, and maintaining group morale during delays. I focus on staying flexible, calm, and solution-oriented when conditions change.

7. Group Dynamics & Conflict

I handle group stress and conflict by prioritizing clear communication and direct but respectful conversation. I understand that fatigue, weather, and isolation can affect people differently over a 3-week expedition, and I aim to stay patient and constructive throughout.

8. Contribution & Responsibility

I bring strong physical capability, consistency, and reliability over long durations. I contribute actively to paddling, portaging (when applicable), camp setup, navigation support, and group logistics.

I take responsibility seriously and aim to be proactive rather than reactive, especially in high-demand situations.

9. Personal Needs & Considerations

No significant phobias or limitations. I am comfortable with insects, weather extremes, and extended isolation. I function best with clear communication and shared responsibility. I value occasional downtime for recovery but do not require significant personal space.

10. Additional Information

I understand that a 3-week barren lands expedition is a high-commitment, high-responsibility undertaking with significant environmental and logistical challenges. I am prepared for the physical, mental, and social demands and am committed to contributing to a safe, efficient, and well-coordinated team throughout the entire journey.



Here's a realistic, well-balanced sample response tailored to a 1-week Algonquin flatwater canoe trip. It reflects a typical intermediate paddler who's capable, cooperative, and safety-minded:

1. Personal & Health

I'm in my mid-20s to mid-30s and in good physical condition. I stay active through hiking, paddling, and general fitness. I have no major medical conditions that would affect my safety or the group. No severe allergies. I don't take medications that would impact the trip. Non-smoker.

2. Experience, Skills & Comfort Zone

I have intermediate canoe tripping experience, mostly on flatwater routes in Algonquin Provincial Park and similar environments. I'm comfortable with paddling, basic navigation (map and compass), portaging, and backcountry camping.

Strengths: steady paddler, good endurance on portages, organized in camp.

Comfort challenges: very long portages back-to-back, strong headwinds on big lakes, and multiple days of poor weather—but I can manage these with a good attitude.

3. Goals & Expectations

A successful trip for me is safe, well-organized, and enjoyable, with a good mix of travel and downtime. I value a positive group dynamic and shared effort. My goals are to enjoy the environment, improve efficiency on portages, and contribute to a smooth group experience.

4. Route, Pace & Daily Rhythm

I prefer a moderate pace-steady travel in the morning and early afternoon, with time to relax at camp later in the day. Comfortable with 10–18 km travel days depending on conditions and 1–3 portages per day. I appreciate a rest or lighter day if the trip allows.

5. Decision-Making, Leadership & Risk

I prefer collaborative decision-making with clear communication. I'm comfortable taking the lead when needed (navigation, organizing camp tasks), but also happy to follow. I have a low-to-moderate risk tolerance—comfortable with normal wilderness challenges but prefer to avoid unnecessary risk (e.g., crossing large lakes in unsafe wind conditions).



6. Adaptability & Problem-Solving

On a previous trip, we had to adjust our route due to strong winds and couldn't safely cross a large lake. We changed plans, took a longer but sheltered route, and adjusted our campsite goal. I stayed flexible and focused on keeping morale up while helping with navigation and timing.

7. Group Dynamics & Conflict

I handle disagreements by listening first and aiming for practical, respectful solutions. I try to stay calm and keep communication open. I value a cooperative group where everyone contributes and supports each other.

8. Contribution & Responsibility

I bring solid paddling consistency, good organization in camp, and a positive attitude. I'm comfortable helping with navigation, cooking, and gear management. I take shared responsibilities seriously and try to contribute fairly across all tasks.

9. Personal Needs & Considerations

No major phobias. I can get frustrated with poor communication or uneven workload, but I try to address that constructively. I value getting enough sleep and having a bit of quiet time at camp when possible. No dietary restrictions (or list if applicable).

10. Additional Information

I'm reliable, easygoing, and motivated to be part of a strong team. I'm looking forward to a week of travel, good campsites, and a positive group experience in the backcountry.

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