



## Choosing Your Campsite

If you have ever been on a BWCA or Quetico Park canoe trip before, you undoubtedly have one, if not several, favorite campsites. What was so special about it? Was it the tall pines, the spectacular view, or the ease of finding an ideal tent site? Maybe it was because of great fishing right from the campsite! For whatever reason, it will probably be a spot you will remember for a lifetime.

There are, however, certain criteria that should be considered when selecting a site. Here are a few items that you should consider and look for in a campsite while in the Boundary Waters or Quetico Park.



### BUGS

One of the most common reasons, according to the United States Forest Service, for having a less than enjoyable canoe trip are insects. Campsite selection can help minimize the annoyance of these pests. If your trip falls in the height of the bug season (end of May – beginning of July), consider sites on points that will enable even a light breeze to aid in preventing mosquitoes & black flies from "settling in." A site with thinner underbrush helps, too. Pay attention to the surrounding terrain. Continuous low terrain is much more likely to hold standing water, a must for breeding mosquitoes. Large expanses of Cedar trees are a dead giveaway that the area is marshy or swampy. The later in the season, the less important this situation becomes. By mid-August, bugs do not pose a problem.

### WEATHER

There is one constant in the canoe country, weather... we always have it. Inclement weather can be anything from an inconvenience to life threatening. During early spring and fall trips, look for protected bays and thick underbrush. These areas offer protection from blustery winds. After a cold front moves through an area, the winds typically turn to a north, northeasterly, or northwesterly direction. This ushers in much cooler weather. Early or late season trips can easily see temperatures that drop into the 30s, 40s, and sometimes even below freezing. It is important to have a campsite that offers protection from the northern winds. This is especially important if the wind is accompanied with precipitation. Choose a campsite on the protected shore of the lake. Weather fronts move through our area on a continual basis. The possibility for thunderstorms always exists. High winds can accompany thunderstorms but are not usually sustained over a long period of time. Lightning that is associated with these storms is a much more serious threat. Although pine trees are as much a part of the canoe country as anything, don't set up where you simply cannot avoid being at the foot of the biggest, tallest pines around! Equally important is to notice big tree roots that lightning can travel through. Avoid tiny island campsites in the middle of the lake which make you the highest point around. Though lightning is very unpredictable, do things to put odds in your favor, not against.

### BEARS

One of the quickest ways to end a trip is to lose your food to a bear. When looking for a campsite, scope out the area for good trees from which to hang your food supply. We always recommend hanging your food. Also, take heed to reports of areas or individual sites that have had excessive black bear activity.

### OTHER FACTORS

If you like to fish, remember that wind doesn't always let you get out on the lake. A site with good walk around space where you can fish from shore still lets you wet a line even if not from a canoe. If you'd like a chance to see northern lights, a site on the southern side of the lake offers a better view of the northern sky. For larger groups, consider several large tents rather than numerous small tents; campsites generally have only two to three tent pads.

At certain periods during the canoe season (peak season), campsite selection should be done earlier in the day for more choice, especially closer to entry points. All things considered, it may be a bit challenging to find a site that is 100% perfect, but consider your situation on an individual day basis. Also remember that often any place you camp in the canoe country could very well be better than where you are now.