

BEAR RIVER MERCANTILE – BOWRON LAKE BC

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Info Sheet #4 – Four Backcountry Kits

Kitchen Kit, First Aid Kit, Repair Kit & Survival Kit

| The Kitchen Kit

The kitchen kit is one of the most important pieces of your outfit as quick, hot food provides both nourishment and inner warmth. Although traditional cooking over a fire is nice, it can be slow and unhandy. In Bowron firewood is still supplied at woodlots spaced around the chain, but it is often damp, punky and cumbersome, requiring effort, fire starter and a good axe for that evening fire. In the meantime a lightweight stove is far more efficient for putting good, hot food in the belly. Bowron Lake Provincial Park requires that all back-country paddlers must carry a cook stove, and not depend on firewood.

A well-equipped canoeing kitchen depends in part on how fancy you get with the menu. A group that plans to live on dehydrated, pre-packaged meals requires very little in the way of cooking utensils. Groups that prefer fancy meals may go to the other extreme and carry everything from woks to reflector ovens.

Try to avoid metal cups and plates - they seem to be scientifically engineered to burn the hands/laps of anyone attempting to enjoy a hot meal, and once they have finished inflicting second-degree burns, they cool the remaining food in record time. Plates and bowls should be plastic and mugs should be insulated with a lid. Plastic travel mugs are great.

A middle-of-the-road kitchen kit for a group of two to six paddlers might be as follows:

- Stacking Pot Set with 3 or 4 different size pots & lids, (use as water containers, mixing bowls & sink; some lids are also good for rehydrating foods & frying)
- Light weight frying pan with non-stick coating and long wooden handle (or wrap handle with a cloth and secure with cotton string to help prevent burns)
- Coffee pot & perk (or make boiled coffee in a pot and leave this item at home)
- Plate, bowl, mug and cutlery - one set per person (stacking takes up less room)
- Plastic egg flipper, can opener, slotted serving spoon, wooden spoon, sharp knife
- Aluminum foil & ziplock bags (for leftovers, food storage, wrapping foods)
- Garbage bags to carry out what you bring in
- Dish cloths, nylon scrubber, drying towels, biodegradable dish soap
- Small flexible cutting board, (or use a wooden stump and leave this item at home)
- Oven mitts (leather work gloves work great)
- Stove and fuel
- Matches and/or butane lighter & fire starter all in a water proof container

- Collapsible water jug and water purification apparatus
- Good sharp hunting knife
- Axe (big one is better than a hatchet)
- Saw (portable folding)

A handy camp table can be made by turning your canoe over two log rounds presenting a nice flat bottom.

| The First Aid Kit

A well-equipped first aid kit is an absolute necessity when paddling away from "civilization." Where medical help is 'not just a phone call away'. Bowron Lake does not have cell service, though sometimes, if the conditions are just right, cell phones have been known to work at certain places along the west side of the circuit. Other than the Emergency Radio Phones, strategically placed around the 116 km lake chain, which can connect you to the Park headquarters, (again not always dependable) and other park users, you are pretty much on your own. Help can be anywhere from several hours, to a day away. This means that you should be responsible for two things; to have a proper first-aid kit, and to ensure that there is at least one, and preferably several people in your group who know how to use it.

Listed here is a first aid kit typical for canoe tripping in 'semi-wilderness' areas - in other words, a typical three or four day trip, often not more than a day away from medical help. The last 3 items are optional but recommended for trips into more remote areas, or where individual personal needs may deem them necessary. Try to find small travel packs to minimize weight and space.

| Item | Qty | Used For... |
|--|--------|--|
| Alcohol swabs | 6 | Cleaning and disinfecting injuries |
| Adhesive tape | 1 roll | Closing open wounds and fastening bandages |
| Gauze Pads (4" sq.) | 4 | Wound dressings |
| Gauze roll (1" wide) | 1 | Wound dressings |
| Elastic (Tensor) bandage | 1 | Dressing for strains and sprains |
| Assorted Band-Aids, Steri-strips, Butterfly closures | 18 | Dressings for small cuts, scrapes and blisters, closing wounds |
| Moleskin or Second Skin | 1 | Treatment of blisters |
| Latex examination gloves | 1 pr. | Handling of victims with open wounds |

| | | |
|--|-------|---|
| Q-Tips | 8 | Applying antiseptic, cleaning wounds |
| Safety pins | 6 | Fastening dressings |
| Thermometer | 1 | Checking for fever or hypothermia |
| Scalpel or razor blade | 1 | Cutting |
| Tweezers - fine point | 1 | Sliver removal |
| Small flashlight | 1 | For quick access if required (part of personal kit) |
| Lighter or matches | 1 | For quick access if required |
| Liquid soap | 1pack | General cleaning and disinfecting (part of kitchen kit) |
| Polysporin or other antibiotic cream | 1pack | Wound dressing |
| Pain Killer (Tylenol / Motrin etc.) | 1pack | Pain killer for minor aches (part of personal kit) |
| Sunscreen (mini. SPF 15) | 1pack | Sun protection (part of personal kit) |
| Antihistamine Cream or tablets | 1pack | Treatment of insect bites, poison ivy, etc. |
| Dental analgesic (Orabase or Orajel) | 1pack | Toothaches, lost fillings, etc. |
| Laxative | 1pack | To treat constipation |
| Kaopectate or Imodium | 1pack | To treat diarrhea |
| Pepto-Bismol tablets | 1pack | To treat upset stomach or heartburn |
| Antacid Tablets (Tums / Rolaids) | 1pack | To treat heartburn, indigestion |
| Cough / Cold treatment | 1pack | To treat sinus congestion, etc. |
| Calamine Lotion | 1pack | Treatment of poison ivy, poison oak, etc. |
| Tylenol with Codeine or other strong pain killer | 1pack | Control of pain |
| Prescription antibiotic | 1pack | Infection, fever |

| **The Repair Kit**

As in all areas of life, Murphy's Law seems to prevail. If something is going to break, it will never happen while out on a day paddle, or when close to civilization. Instead, the devious piece of gear will wait until two days and three portages into a trip, then promptly fall apart. The likelihood of an item breaking is directly proportional to the distance between you and the tools required to fix it.

That being the case, it is a good idea to bring along a little container with some odds and ends that will help fix whatever breaks. A combination of the items listed below and a bit of ingenuity will keep nearly any piece of equipment operating.

Don't be tempted to save weight and leave it at home, even though it may take years of paddling before you ever need it. It can be a life (or foot) saver, that one time, and get you out of the bush by canoe instead of hoofing it. Here's a basic back-country repair kit.

Duct Tape - A thousand uses, need I say more?

Fasteners - A baby food jar with an assortment of safety pins, nuts, bolts, screws and different sized nails. Good for everything from re-nailing up portage signs to re-attaching that broken canoe seat.

Epoxy Glue & Silicone - A tube each of 5 minute resin and hardener (bonds anything) & water proof sealer.

Snare Wire - A small roll of brass snare wire is great for temporary fastening of straps, canoe seats, whatever.

Needle-Nosed Pliers - For loosening or tightening anything.

Multi-Tool - A great addition - these ingenious devices have everything from pliers, to screwdrivers to knife blades to files on them.

Flashlight Accessories - A spare bulb and extra batteries for that flashlight that dies.

Cable Ties - These plastic straps used by electricians to bundle wires and cables are a great addition. They 'loop' together and never come undone, and they're made of very strong plastic.

Stove Parts - If a hose or O-ring fails, it's nice to have a spare.

Vinyl &or Nylon Patch Kit - Good for those equipment failures that are beyond the duct tape stage.

Sharpening Stone - For camp axes and knives.

Murphy's Law of the Bush.

If anything can go wrong, it will.

If anything just cannot go wrong, it will anyway.

If everything seems to be going well, you have obviously overlooked something.

Left to themselves, things tend to go from bad to worse.

If there is a possibility of several things going wrong, the one that will cause the most damage will be the first to go wrong.

If you perceive that there are four ways that something can go wrong and take action to circumvent these four ways, a fifth will promptly develop.

In nature, nothing is ever right. Therefore, if everything is going right, something is wrong.

Nature always sides with the hidden flaw.

| **The Personal Survival Kit**

As with the repair kit, this isn't something you're going to need very often - hopefully never. 'Survival kit' may sound a bit dramatic - it isn't very likely that you're not going to survive even if you don't carry a kit like this. Unless you stray quite far and get hopelessly lost, you aren't going to be wandering in the bush for months waiting for a rescue. On the chain you only have to sit by a lake and wait for the next canoeist to come along. If it makes you feel better, call this a "comfort" kit as the contents will make spending an unforeseen night in the bush a whole lot more comfortable than if you didn't have it.

Having a kit like this is particularly important if you are paddling solo. If you're in a group situation and you get lost gathering firewood, you can always sit down, yell and resign yourself to the ribbing that you'll receive when the rest of your party finds you. This isn't an option when you're alone. You are entirely reliant upon your own skills and resources. If you get lost, nobody is going to come looking for you until you are late getting home (you did leave a trip plan with someone, didn't you?)

A lot of the stuff on this list will already be in your canoe and camp gear, but it is a good idea to have some these items in a separate fanny pack that can be attached to your waist. No one likes to think about the possibility of losing their gear in the event of a tip-over.... but it does happen! Also the size and weight of this little kit doesn't make it too onerous to strap on and carry while you're day-hiking.

Knife - It doesn't have to be a top-of-the-line knife, but it shouldn't be a piece of junk either. Remember, your survival may depend on this item. At minimum, get a reasonably good lock-blade knife with a 3" blade.

Insect Repellent - You may be like me, and not particularly like the idea of slathering yourself with DEET, but if you're lost and besieged by mosquitoes, you'll probably lose those concerns quickly. Pack a bottle of Muskol, Deep Woods Off, or whatever you can find in the most potent concentration available. Bowron Bugs can be BAD!

Whistle - A plastic survival whistle saves getting laryngitis as you sit there yelling for help. The sound of a whistle also carries much further. Did you know that BC Boating Regulations, require each canoe to have a whistle on board?

Compass - Compasses are not really necessary on the Lake Chain, unless you plan on leaving the lakes for a hike in the bush. Spend \$20 and get an inexpensive orienteering (protractor) type compass. After being lost or disoriented for a few hours, it's amazing how a compass can help regain your bearings. (Hint: a compass works much better with an area map)

Matches - One or the most important items in your kit. Pack good wooden matches tightly sealed in a waterproof container.

Candle - A couple of fat candles will provide a long-lasting source of light, and can serve as an emergency fire-starter as well. The candles designed to fit in candle lanterns are best - they last for six to eight hours.

Metal Tin with a lid - A handy container to put your kit into doubles as a vessel to heat water in and the lid can be used as a signal mirror.

First Aid Items - Just the very basics, a few Band-Aids, some gauze and a bit of white adhesive tape. Enough to patch yourself up if you cut yourself while whittling.

Plastic Poncho - ... or large orange garbage bag, you don't always wander off with your rain gear one. This could make the difference between being fairly dry or sopping wet. The fluorescent orange colour can double as a signalling device.

Space Blanket - These little reflective sheets take up no room, and can help to conserve body heat on a chilly night.

Light-Stick - Of the fluorescent orange or green kind, also makes a great signal device and emergency light. Much easier than a flashlight, its waterproof and needs no batteries.

Hot Drinks - Little pouches of instant coffee, tea bags, bouillon cubes, Cup A Soup, hot chocolate... whatever. Sitting down and having a hot drink on a chilly night can provide a great psychological boost.

Candies or a Power Bar - Like the hot drinks, mainly to provide a psychological boost. None of us are going to die of starvation by spending a night or two in the bush, but it's nice to have a little treat once in a while to keep ones' spirits up.

Purification Tablets - If you're lost, you've got enough problems...you don't need a case of Montezuma's revenge as well. Take the time to purify water before drinking it.

Condoms - Don't laugh - if you want a water container that takes up next to no room, a condom works great. They are tough, stretchable, and they can hold a fair amount of water. (Hint: look for the non-powdered ones).

Fish Hooks and Line - You never know, but even if you don't catch anything, at least it takes your mind off your troubles for a while. Hook can also double as a pin for removing splinters and fishing line is good for snares and all sorts of rigging.

Toilet Paper – No explanation necessary. It also makes great fire starter (Hint: works best if kept in a ziplock bag)

Along with this 'survival kit' packed into a fanny pack, I always carry my canister of bear spray. Even though I have never had the opportunity to use it, it just gives me an added sense of security. For more information about Bears refer to Info Sheet# 5 – Bear Sense.

Remember – your first/survival kits could be considered 'free weight' - they are allowed to be carried inside your canoe while portaging with a cart OVER & ABOVE the 28 kg (60 lbs.) allowable weight limit. These kits should be kept separate from your back-pack gear because you do not need to carry them. See Info Sheet #3 – Packing and Portaging on the Bowron Lake Circuit - for more information on this.

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