

7 December 2009

Hey Sladds,

I read Aydin Perese's story about your cedar-strip canvas canoes. I'm shocked! Shocked and appalled! No cans? No canvas tents or packs? *Waterproof* raingear? These boys are not getting the proper Voyageur experience that will turn them in to hairy-chested MEN. My most memorable trip in my entire Pathfinder career was a 12-day trip with 11 days of rain where I had to carry the tent pack. They were canvas tents in a canvas pack with rusty cans of food wedged into the crannies. It weighed 70 pounds when we left and 470 pounds by day three. That was a REAL trip! (As I recall, Mike, you were on that trip.)

What today's campers need are Camperiffic Misery Kits, one to be issued to each tripper at the start of every trip. Each kit contains a sleeping bag with insulation in only half the bag, sox with a lump sewn randomly into the sole, a hole-punch to put proper leaks into the tents and raingear, honey-laced peanut butter to smear on the food packs to make them easier for the bears and raccoons to find, and the traditional Voyageur mosquito repellent made of skunk oil and bear grease, which smells vile and is almost completely ineffective. And, to top it off, or bottom it out, a ballast rock to balance all the nylon and provide proper dead weight to the packs. The rocks should be placed near the bottom of each pack, preferably so they chafe the camper's back. And, with a nod to modern light-weight tripping, they include one freeze-dried meal – liver stroganoff. That will do the trick! Trippers will leave camp happy boys and return angry, blistered, bloody and itchy, but stinky, tough and manly men.

Now, Aydin is right about the canoes. They are perfect. They are things of beauty that glide with grace and purpose through the majesty of the Park. The organic connection of canvas canoe, paddler and water draws out one's soul to connect with nature in a place and in a way that has become vanishingly rare in our world.

Keep it up and cool runnin'.

Andy

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