

Moms Have Questions ... Camp Has Answers

Does my Camper need a camp trunk? Where do I get one?

The trunk is essential camp luggage. It becomes a dresser, stepstool, seat and table for your Camper. You have two ways to go here. An inexpensive trunk is the Rubbermaid storage trunk, which has a hinged lid and snap closures. It can take a padlock. Pretty good solution. Not quite as much storage capacity as a trunk. The other option is to get a quality camp trunk. Some have a tray inside to hold small stuff, kinda nice. If you don't find one easily around town, order it online from <http://www.cnmfg.com/camp/> where they have good products and make donations back to camps for each trunk they sell.

A packing tip: you can roll up pants, shirts, sweats etc and stand them upright in the trunk. That way, your Camper can see everything without tearing apart stacks of clothes.

What other luggage is recommended?

A duffel bag or hockey bag is for extra gear like your sleeping bag, pillow, raingear, towel, life vest and more clothes. Also, a day pack or small hiking pack is a good idea, for extra items, and for taking bike, hike and day trips at Camp. A school pack works well for this.

What is a Dry Bag? How does my Camper use it?

Your Camper will use Pathfinder trip packs for his canoe trips, and his personal clothes and sleeping bag will stuff into his waterproof Dry Bag for use in those packs. Get a 30-litre SEALINE bag. You can buy it at an outdoor store, or get it from Pathfinder.

Can I help him to keep track of his stuff?

YES - LABEL EVERYTHING! Campers tend to leave their stuff around. A rain jacket or sweatshirt gets forgotten at one activity area if the weather improves. Dirty trip socks get left in the TP and end up in the lost and found. Even though the Staff try hard, it's likely things will get left behind or into someone else's trunk, unless you label, label, label. Mark his ball cap, his rain jacket and pants, his life vest, his SmartWool socks, his pillow, his fishing rod, as well as his clothes and towel.

Will you do my Camper's laundry?

Yup! Once a week he can put his laundry bag on the boat, and have it back next morning washed and folded. Send a labeled drawstring laundry bag, and he will put his dirty stuff in it day to day. Most campers do just 1 or 2 laundry's while at camp.

Does my Camper need sheets and blankets, or just a sleeping bag?

This is purely preference, but many boys like having sheets and blankets on their camp bed, then the sleeping bag is available as a comforter, and for trips. He doesn't have to live in the bag all summer, he can air out a trip bag on return from the trail, and nothing feels better than clean cotton sheets after a trip. Our camp beds are twin sized.

Does my Camper need expensive, specialized clothing and gear?

Not at all. Send play clothes and old sneakers that can get dirty. Make sure to include some long sleeves and warmer layers. Choose good basic trip boots, sleeping bag, raingear and life vest.

What should be top-quality? – a 30-litre dry bag, flashlight batteries and Smartwool socks! You can always ask Pathfinder for advice and help, and we can obtain some key items at cost for you. Life jacket, dry bag, sleeping bag. This is only a convenience for you, and not a money-maker for Pathfinder.

We have more details. Be sure to read the clothing/equipment page on the web site.

<http://www.camppathfinder.com/info-for-parents/equipment-clothing/>

What will the weather and the water be like?

July and August are gorgeous months in Algonquin Park. The lakes warm up in mid-June and swimming is terrific all summer. Summer days alternate between hot and humid just like home, to cool and breezy if a cold front is coming through from the northwest. The occasional thunderstorm rumbles through in July. Afternoons tend to be windier than mornings. Nights are balmy in July and gradually become cooler in August. With no light pollution, the night sky at Pathfinder is indescribable. Think of weather as similar to summer weather in the northeast US, but since we're all living 24/7 in the outdoors it's smart to pack some warm layers, even a hat for the rare chill mornings.

Will the bugs be terrible? What will happen if my Camper gets bug bites?

Honestly, the bugs are not bad. By early July, the black flies are gone, and mosquitoes are a hassle mostly at dawn and dusk, and on certain parts of portage trails. The Island is breezy, which keeps bugs away. The counselors will use a small piece of Pic, a bug-repellent incense, in the lodges for a half-hour at night to drive them all away. Choose a bug repellent lotion for your Camper, and avoid high concentrations of DEET. Expect some bites, but the key is to relax about bugs and avoid scratching. We will have the Nurse help a boy who may scratch in his sleep. We have some after-bite and stop-itch creams. Coach your Camper to wear long sleeves early and late in the day. Please know that there are no mosquitoes in Algonquin that carry the West Nile virus.

My young Camper still has a stuffed animal and blanket. He might still wet the bed. Very common with younger Campers and not a big deal. Absolutely bring that favorite animal or blanket. For those who are concerned about possible bed-wetting, send pull up pants and a mattress pad. Have the Camper use sheets/blankets rather than sleeping bag in camp. Our counselors are very wise about helping these boys without any fuss or upset. Bedtime routine: no drinks after 7:30pm, use the washroom right before bed, put on the nighttime pants; if something happens, the counselor will handle it discreetly.

What if there's an accident and my Camper's sleeping bag is soiled?

Camp will loan him a fresh sleeping bag, and have the soiled one completely cleaned.

What should my Camper NOT bring to camp?

No electronics ... no iPods, cel phones, game machines.

No using a cel phone as a camera.

No highly valuable items to Camp, things like expensive watches or heirloom pocket knives or expensive clothes or sunglasses.

No flip-flops or open-toed sandals can be worn around Camp or on trips.

No canoes, kayaks, climbing gear, bikes, etc. We supply all necessary equipment.

No inappropriate knives. Choose a small folding or sheath knife. We supervise.

Don't let your Camper bring aerosol cans, lighters, matches, open flame lanterns.

Don't let your Camper bring food and beverages to Camp. There's plenty of food here!

What kinds of things are OK to bring to Camp?

Camera ... binoculars ... lacrosse stick / ball glove ... musical instrument ... books ... canoe paddle ... sunglasses ... fishing rod ...

How will you take care of my Camper's important documents?

Passports, birth certificates, airline tickets and other documents should be given to the bus counselors along with medications, or if you drop your son at camp personally give them to the counselor or a director to place in the camp office. We do not have the Campers keep their documents during the camp session.

Medications – What should I do?

DO send your Camper's prescription meds to us in the original containers and specific instructions written on his health form. If you send over-the-counter meds as well, be sure to give us specific instructions. DO NOT pack these things in his trunk. Have them in a Ziploc bag with his name on it, and hand it right to the counselor in charge, or the camp nurse. DO NOT tell your Camper to self-administer OTCs like Advil, Tums, cough or cold or allergy remedies, etc. Campers with an albuterol inhaler may keep it with them. Campers with an epi-pen may do the same. The nurse will phone if any questions.

We're not sure if our Camper is allergic to nuts or bees. What should I do?

If there is no specific diagnosis, relax. Pathfinder staff are specially trained to handle severe allergy or asthma episodes and carry benadryl/epi-pens on all outings.

What if my Camper gets sick?

Please do not send your son to camp if he is sick on departure day. He will just infect a bunch of other boys. Wait a day or so until he's not contagious and we'll arrange a way to get him up to camp. You will be doing a favor to all of us Parents, Campers and Staff.

If your son gets ill while at camp, he will be cared for by the Camp Nurse. Either he will stay in his own lodge, or move into the Infirmary for some special TLC! Lots of rest, fluids, and monitoring. If necessary we will take him for an appointment with the doctor in Huntsville. Camp pays the bill and charges you. You submit the bill to your HMO for reimbursement. We have excellent facilities and doctors in Huntsville. If an X-ray is needed, or a throat culture, or a prescription, it is all taken care of. The Nurse and Director will phone you to check in all through the process.

Is help nearby in case of emergency?

Yes. Pathfinder is served by the local EMS system, including ambulance and air ambulance response. Our Camp Nurse and Staff First Responders are always at hand, and our trip guides are all certified in wilderness emergency care and evacuation procedures.

Will my Camper wash and brush his teeth?

Definitely. Teeth are brushed after breakfast and before bed each day. The young guys are supervised. Boys age 13+ are reminded. We are very fussy about everyone washing hands during the day. Soap bath is required of a Camper on return from any trip and on Sundays. Swim Staff will have a Camper bathe if he needs it any other time. You have to pass the Swim Staff clean inspection! This is an important Pathfinder tradition. Staff automatically report any cut, scrape, bruise, sunburn or rash to the Camp Nurse as well.

Will he be able to eat the food? What are meals like at camp? On trip?

Even picky eaters love Pathfinder food. It's home style cooking, there's plenty of it, and the kids are hungry from all the outdoors activity. A boy can always have a PB/J sandwich and some fruit if he does not care for a given meal in camp. Campers sit at tables with staff supervision, and everyone is encouraged to try foods, to eat and drink healthy amounts, and even to maintain good table manners. It helps! If your Camper has a food allergy/intolerance, or is a vegetarian, please be sure we know so the Chef can make arrangements. There are so many delicious trip meals at Pathfinder. In fact, the first five days of a trip use all fresh and staple ingredients before we ever delve into freeze-dried trip meals!

Check out some of our camp meals on the web page:

<http://www.camppathfinder.com/info-for-parents/faqs-for-parents/>

How will my new Camper get involved in Pathfinder canoe trips?

All our boys, new and veteran, do trip training activities together during the first few days of a session. This is when boys learn paddling, canoe safety and rescues, swim skills, and how to pack, portage, camp and maintain low impact on the environment. At the same time, the boys are making new friends and are helped to form their own trip groups. This is specifically a time for new boys to be brought into the family!

Should my Camper ride the bus or should I drop him off?

The bus trip is a good value, its cost is shared between all families who choose it. The more who use it, the cheaper it is. It is also a great way to help your Camper meet friends right away! About half our families drop their sons off in person. This is a chance to tour the Island, meet the Staff, and chat with Sladds or the Nurse.

Can parents drop off their Campers?

Sure! This is the perfect time to see Pathfinder in action.

How do we get to Source Lake? How do we get to the Island?

Getting to Algonquin Park is super-easy, and you can find directions to Camp on our web page. Call when you are close to our Camp Road. A boat will pick you up at the car park/boat landing. A 5-minute boat trip will bring you to Pathfinder Island.

Are there parent visiting days?

No. Drop off and pick-up days are our parent days at Pathfinder. This is a wise tradition for many reasons.

Can my Camper call home?

No calls out.

Can I call my Camper?

Yes. Be mindful that a Camper's independent spirit can be undercut by calls from home. Of course you may call him if you wish. A suggestion: you can call the Director for a quick update and know that he's o.k.

What about letters?

Send him letters often, and start early, it takes 7+ days to reach the Island from the US. Send a fun, encouraging letter before he leaves for Camp! As for your Camper, he will be writing you a letter each Sunday. You can send him with paper and envelopes, but don't put stamps on if you are in the US, they won't work from Canada. We supply all these items, and we help younger Campers write and read letters.

Can I get a letter to my Camper quickly?

You may fax your letter to camp and we'll include it in the lunchtime mail call. Camper letters come to you only by snail mail.

Can I send care packages?

Please do not send food packages. Magazines, comics, letters, etc. are great. Food is not great, as it attracts unwanted animals and unwanted social competition. Your Camper has plenty of access to treats via the Pathfinder Candy Store and our dessert menu!