



The Algonquin Outfitters Canoe Trip Planning Guide

• About this guide

The *Algonquin Outfitters Canoe Trip Planning Guide* is a general overview of some of the main steps required to plan an Algonquin Park canoe trip for people using the services of Algonquin Outfitters. Rental rates, descriptions of our outfitting programs and a great deal more information can be found on our web site, www.algonquinoutfitters.com, or in our annual *Rates and Information Brochure*. You will notice a number of URLs throughout this article, which are also summarized at the end. There are many Algonquin Park related sites, blogs and discussion forums on the Internet, making it a very useful tool for information gathering and trip planning. With a little searching you can find our site, map suppliers, official park information, unofficial park information, park history, route descriptions, trip reports and more.

The major steps in canoe trip planning

- Gathering information and maps
- Getting a group together
- Setting trip dates
- Choosing a route
- Basic park regulations
- Reserving camping permits
- Deciding which Algonquin Outfitters base to use
- Deciding what type of outfitting you require
- Reserving outfitting needs
- Arranging transportation
- Getting to the access point and back again
- Accommodation
- Questions?
- Useful links for trip planning

• Gathering information and maps

If you are reading this, you have completed part of the first step of planning a successful trip: get some basic information about Algonquin Outfitters and Algonquin Park.

If you need information quickly, all the info you have requested can be found on-line. Check out our web site at algonquinoutfitters.com. Along with a lot of great information, all rates are listed there and there are maps to our four locations. Our canoe rental and outfitting rates can be downloaded directly at:

http://algonquinoutfitters.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/ao_rates.pdf

If you prefer a “hard copy,” call, write, fax or e-mail with your name and address and we will send our brochure. This includes descriptions and pricing of our partial and complete outfitting rates (for our Oxtongue Lake, Opeongo Lake, Huntsville and Brent bases), guided trip packages, day trip packages and Opeongo water taxi rates. You can call us year round with questions or to request information. Call toll-free at 1-800-469-4948 (705-635-2243); send a fax to 705-635-1834 or e-mail info@algonquinoutfitters.com.

An Algonquin Park Canoe Routes Map is an essential tool for planning a trip. It shows the entire park, all access points, campsite locations, portage distances and the many canoe route possibilities. The back side of the map should be required reading for anyone planning a trip to Algonquin Park. It contains a great deal of useful and important management information, including park

regulations, permit details and planning tips. You can order the Algonquin Park Canoe Routes Map, along with other maps, guide books and many other useful park publications, on-line at: <http://store.algonquinpark.on.ca/cgi/algonquinpark/index.html>

If you have selected a route and would like more detail, you may want to order the 1:50000 scale topographic maps for the area or the richly detailed and waterproof 1:80000 Adventure Map series at www.chrismar.com or the latest “jeff’s map,” found at <http://www.algonquinmap.com/>. Please call for more information on which maps are relevant to your route.

The Friends of Algonquin Park maintain the ‘official’ Algonquin Park web site, www.algonquinpark.on.ca, which contains a wide range of essential park information and regulations for canoe trippers, campers and day visitors.

For general park information, call 705-633-5572, or visit the park web site. General park information can also be found in the Algonquin section of the Ontario Parks web site: www.ontarioparks.com.

• Getting a group together

This step can be fairly easy or really frustrating. You may already have a family, scout troop or group of friends committed to going on a trip on a certain date. On the other hand, if you end up being the trip coordinator for a loosely committed group of friends, you’ll probably end up juggling holidays and spending a lot of time on the phone. Algonquin Outfitters does its best to accommodate changes in trip plans. Once you have made a reservation with us, you can change trip dates, canoe requirements or people numbers at any time. Our cancellation policy allows for a full deposit refund up to 72 hours ahead of your trip. The best plan is to make a reservation based on a core group of firm participants as soon as possible, then change later if necessary.

The same approach works for camping permit reservations. A reservation fee is charged when you make a reservation, based on the length of your trip and the number of sites required. See “Reserving camping permits” below for more information.

• Setting trip dates

The canoe season in Algonquin Park normally runs from May to October. For an overview of all the seasons, see the “Seasons” section at www.algonquinoutfitters.com (Algonquin Park > Seasons). If your schedule is flexible, plan your trip during the quieter mid-week periods and/or “shoulder seasons.” If you crave solitude, avoid holiday weekends, or at least plan your trip so that you are well in to the park’s interior when the weekend crowds arrive.

Here are a few “best and worst” points that may give food for thought:

- Best lake trout fishing - late April to mid-May
- Best brook trout fishing - early May to early June
- Best smallmouth bass fishing - late June to mid July
- National black fly month - late May to late June
- Hottest weather – late July
- Best stargazing - August meteor showers
- Best chance of hearing a wolf howl - mid August to late September
- Fall colours peak - late September
- Highest water levels - May
- Lowest water levels - August
- Busiest long weekend - first Monday in August
- Busiest time period – first two weeks of August
- Best time to see moose - June
- Earliest ice out in memory – March 29
- Latest ice-out in memory - May 12
- Most likely time to combine warm weather and few people - June (prepare for bugs) or early September (just after Labour Day weekend)

• Choosing a route

The Algonquin Park Canoe Routes Map gives advice on route selection but does not give specific route plans (and gives good reasons why!).

You can order the Algonquin Park Canoe Routes Map (along with guide books and many other useful park publications) on-line: <http://store.algonquinpark.on.ca/cgi/algonquinpark/index.html>

Lots of trip planning information, route ideas, trip logs and other related links can be found the very comprehensive 'Algonquin Adventures' site at <http://www.algonquinadventures.com>.

Descriptions of many Algonquin routes can also be found at the Canadian Canoe Routes web site's Algonquin page: <http://www.mycr.com/content/algonquin-provincial-park>

There are excellent guidebooks available that can help you with canoe trip planning. *A Paddler's Guide to Algonquin*, by Kevin Callan, has some excellent route descriptions and canoe trip tales. Don Lloyd's fine book, *Canoeing Algonquin Park*, is another very useful resource for trip planning. Different areas of the park are described and mapped so that you can put your own trip together. A great deal of historical information and natural history is also presented. You can order these books on-line at: <http://store.algonquinpark.on.ca/cgi/algonquinpark/index.html>

If you are still unsure about where to go, we will gladly give route advice to people using our canoe rental or complete outfitting services. The best way to get route advice is to call, preferably on a weekday, *with a canoe route map in front of you*. Let the route planner know the dates of your reservation, which outfitting plan you are using, the size and makeup of your group and what previous canoe trip experiences you have had. He or she will probably ask you more questions before suggesting a route. Because of the type of background information a route planner needs, and with so many variables influencing route selection, it is very difficult to give useful route advice to most written requests. The best way to give good long distance route advice is over the phone, where questions can be asked and confusion easily straightened out. The time you spend on a long distance call will be an investment in reliable, accurate and appropriate route advice.

• Basic park regulations

Like in any park, there are many special laws and regulations affecting the users of Algonquin Park. While these are summarized on the Algonquin Park Canoe Routes map, we felt it would be worthwhile to list a few of the key rules affecting canoe trippers.

- *Access Points:* Interior canoe trips must start from one of the 29 official access points in Algonquin Park. Some are easier to get to than others but all are accessible by road and have parking. Most permit stations are right at the access point. Others are on the road in and may serve several access points. See the Algonquin Canoe Routes Map for details. Interior camping permits and fishing licenses are available at permit stations.
- *Can and Bottle Ban:* All non-burnable, disposable food and beverage containers and eating containers (ie. glass) are prohibited in all interior areas of Algonquin Park. Returnable metal beverage containers (ie. cans) are banned, but not containers designed specifically for repeated use. Containers of medicine, insect repellent, fuel or other items that are not food or beverages are permitted.
- *Party Size:* A maximum of nine people is permitted to camp on one interior campsite. Larger groups may travel together but must split up to camp on separate sites.
- *Camping permits:* Anyone camping in the interior of Algonquin Park must purchase an interior camping permit from Ontario Parks. Camping fees are paid at the office supervising each park access point. Parties driving to our Brent base should purchase their permits at the permit office just south of Hwy. 17 on the Brent Road. Camping fees and regulations are government controlled and subject to change.

• Fishing licenses

Anyone fishing in Algonquin Park needs a valid Ontario license. Licenses are available at any park permit station or access point in Algonquin Park. You can also get a license on-line, by following the link below. Algonquin Outfitters does not sell fishing licenses. Ontario residents under 18 and over 65 do not require a fishing license (youth must be fishing with a licensed adult).

There are some special catch limits and different seasons in Algonquin Park. Anglers should refer to the Ontario Sport Fishing Regulations for details. Conservation licenses have lower catch and possession limits. Details are available where you purchase your license.

Up-to-date Ontario fishing license fees, regulations and information can be found at: <http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/LetsFish/index.html>

• Reserving camping permits

Permits are required for all park use, year round. Each access point has a limited number of Interior Camping Permits it can issue each day, based on the number of available campsites on each lake. Your camping permit secures you a site on each lake you intend to camp on. You must specify your route, indicating which lake you intend to camp on each night, when reserving and purchasing a permit. Specific interior sites cannot be reserved.

Once you have a route selected, the next step is to make advance reservations for camping permits. The biggest challenge for most new visitors is dealing with Algonquin Park's permit reservation system. While permit reservations are not required, we highly recommend having permit reservations well in advance for interior trips any time in July and August, on weekends in September and on all holiday weekends. Large groups requiring more than one interior site (the limit is 9 per site) should have a reservation no matter when their trip takes place. We recommend having a permit reservation before making an outfitting reservation.

Permit reservations can be made year-round, up to 5 months ahead of your trip. To make a permit reservation, you must know the access point you intend to start at, which lakes you intend to camp on each night of your trip, the number of people in the group and the number of nights you will be spending in the park. See the Canoe Routes Map for more information on permits. The Ontario Parks permit reservation phone number is 1-888-668-7275. Have a credit card handy. Reservations for interior campsites will require payment of a \$50 deposit, in addition to the non-refundable reservation fee of \$11.25. Therefore, the total fee payable at the time of reservation would be \$61.25. There are cancellation fees and "no-shows" fees, so make sure you understand the financial consequence of canceling a canoe trip at the last minute. Check the Ontario Parks site for details

http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/reserve_rules.html.

Please note: the balance of the permit fee is paid on arrival at the access point. These costs are paid directly to Algonquin Park and are not included in our outfitting or guided trip charges. The balance of the permit fee, which is based on the number of people in your group and the number of nights camping, is not paid until you arrive at the permit office to start your trip. If you are planning for a large group, remember that Algonquin Park regulations restrict the number of people on interior campsites to nine per site. Larger groups may travel and eat together, but you will have to organize supervision and sleeping arrangements to accommodate using several campsites. Most lakes in Algonquin Park have sufficient campsites to handle a group requiring two or more sites, but it is important to book these well in advance of your trip. If you feel that you must have your whole group in one place, you should consider using Algonquin's Whitefish Group Campground. You can get more information about this at

<http://www.algonquinpark.on.ca/campcan/moreinfo/whitefish.html>.

Interior reservations must be made by telephone. Roadside campground reservations and bookings for provincial parks other than Algonquin can be made on-line at www.ontarioparks.com. For more information on permits for Algonquin Park see the Canoe Routes Map or the [Friends of Algonquin Park](#) web site.

To check campsite availability in advance of making a reservation or get route advice, call the Algonquin Park information line at 705-633-5572.

• Deciding which Algonquin Outfitters base to use

Algonquin Outfitters has four canoe trip outfitting bases in and around Algonquin Park. Which one you use depends on your choice of route, the amount of equipment you need and where you are traveling from.

Oxtongue Lake: Our main base, and original location, is located in Oxtongue Lake, just outside the major western entrance to Algonquin Park. It is about 25 minutes from Huntsville on Highway 60, on Oxtongue Lake, near the village of Dwight. Established in 1961 by Bill Swift Sr. and his family, the Oxtongue Lake base maintains the largest selection of outfitting equipment, canoes and camping supplies. Centrally located to canoe route access points both along Highway 60 and on the west side of the park, this base also offers outfitting and rental services for backpacking, white water paddling and mountain biking. Most people pick up canoes at our Oxtongue Lake store and transport the boats themselves, using car top carriers that we rent. We even rent roof racks so that you can carry two or even three canoes on one vehicle.

The Oxtongue Lake base is also the summer home of the [Swift Canoe and Kayak Company](#), where a wide variety of canoe and kayak models are available for sale and test paddling.

Opeongo Store: The Opeongo Store and water taxi service is located on Opeongo Lake, the park's largest body of water. This location offers excellent access to the east side and central areas of Algonquin Park. At the end of a 6 km (4 mile) road off Highway 60, the Opeongo Lake area is well known for some of the best trout fishing in Algonquin. For canoeists or sea kayakers wishing a

trip with no portages, the many campsites dotting the bays and islands of the big lake offer a unique alternative to a traditional lake and river route. A water taxi ride can give your trip a head start by eliminating the 15 km paddle to the main portages at the far end of the lake. Canoe, sea kayak and bike rentals are available and the store is well stocked with groceries and basic camping supplies. Our Opeongo Store offers a discounted canoe rental rate for roadside campground users: call them toll-free at 1-888-280-8886 and ask about the "campground special."

Brent Store: The Brent Store is located on Cedar Lake, on the northern side of Algonquin Park. Although situated at the end of a 40 km (25 mile) gravel road, the drive to Brent is worth it. This small, rustic base is the starting point for canoe routes journeying into the more remote and less traveled northern and central regions of the park. It also offers the best access to the only area of the park where walleye (yellow pickerel) can be found. Canoe rental reservations are essential at Brent and should be made through our Oxtongue Lake base (call toll-free 1-800-469-4948). White water enthusiasts planning trips on the Petawawa River should note that white water canoes and shuttles are not available at the Brent store. Call Oxtongue Lake for white water canoe rentals and information on shuttle options.

Huntsville: Our base in the town of Huntsville is conveniently located for canoe trippers using access points on Algonquin Park's west and north-west sides. The store carries a complete selection of camping gear, along other sporting goods like alpine skis, snowboards, skateboards, surf gear and a fully equipped bicycle shop. Due to the smaller number of canoes and kayaks available there, we highly recommend reservations for any rental from the Huntsville base. Complete outfitting is not available in Huntsville.

• Deciding what type of outfitting you require

Algonquin Outfitters offers two main outfitting options, *complete outfitting* and *partial outfitting*.

Complete outfitting

A complete outfitting package provides all food and equipment required for a safe and comfortable canoe trip. A variety of packages and options are available, including "food only" and "equipment only." This service is used by novice and experienced canoe trippers alike and reservations are required. If you don't have your own camping equipment or, for various reasons, find it simpler to show up with a toothbrush and change of clothes and let us do the planning and packing, this is the package you need. People traveling by air or those on a tight schedule will find this a very convenient option. Complete outfitting is not available in the winter.

Partial outfitting

This is the ideal plan for people who already have most of their own equipment, but may need to rent a canoe, an extra sleeping bag or other bits and pieces of equipment. Many of our regular canoe rental customers are very experienced trippers and possess every imaginable bit of camping gear, but continue to find it more convenient and cost effective to rent a canoe. Renting also allows you to try different types of canoes and leaves the problems of storage and maintenance to us.

If the choice is not immediately clear, read the descriptions of our various outfitting packages and our list of rental equipment. If you start to think that you might need an extensive list of equipment to round out your own gear, you will probably find that complete outfitting is a better value. We also offer two packages that strike a happy medium, Food Only Outfitting and Equipment Only Outfitting.

• Reserving outfitting needs

People's schedules for trip planning vary greatly. While you can make an outfitting reservation as far in advance as you like, here are some recommended minimums for key dates and programs:

Canoe rentals -

- (For times not listed, you can generally get a canoe without a reservation)
- July, August, September long weekends - at least six weeks in advance
- Other weekends in July and August - three weeks in advance
- Other weekends in September - two weeks in advance
- Mid-week in July or August - two weeks in advance
- Group canoe rentals requiring transportation - four weeks in advance

Complete outfitting -

- July, August, September long weekends - at least six weeks in advance
- Other weekends in July and August - three weeks in advance

- Other times - two weeks in advance (except for Brent Store reservations – must be at least four weeks ahead)
- Large group outfitting - four weeks in advance
- Menus: please submit at least three weeks ahead of your trip

Guided trips -

- July and August - at least six weeks in advance
- Other times - four weeks in advance

• **Arranging transportation**

How do I get there by public transportation? For those without a vehicle, getting to Algonquin Park can be a challenge. Anyone flying should arrange to land at Toronto's Pearson International Airport, where a variety of transportation options are available. All major car rental services can be found there, along with bus and taxi connections to the downtown core. Ontario Northland offers both bus service from downtown Toronto to Huntsville. There is no public transportation from Huntsville to Algonquin Park, but taxi services in Huntsville will take you there (for a price!). We have inexpensive overnight camping at our Oxtongue Lake base and can then drive you to one of several canoe trip access points in Algonquin Park (cost varies). Please inquire by e-mail for more details on transportation. In July, August and September, a unique service called the ParkBus offers transport from Toronto directly to Algonquin Park: <http://www.parkbus.ca/>

How do I get a canoe to the access point and back again? Canoe trips can start and end at any of the 29 Algonquin Park access points. Most people use their own vehicle to transport themselves and their equipment to the access point. Canoeists using the Opeongo and Brent bases generally start their trip right there. Customers using the Oxtongue Lake and Huntsville bases usually transport canoes themselves, using the car top carriers we have available (car top carriers are also available at Opeongo). Our foam block sets carry one canoe on any car. We also rent Yakima roof rack systems that carry two or even three canoes on most vehicles. For a minimal fee, our staff will install the car top carrier and tie down the canoes. We also show you how to tie all the knots so you can return the canoes safely at the end of your trip. For group rentals or outfitting customers without their own transportation, we can deliver canoes, equipment and people to many access points. Due to insurance regulations, our transportation services are available only to our outfitting customers. Canoes can be picked up at one base and left at another, but there is a repositioning charge of \$20 per canoe for transfers between Oxtongue Lake, Huntsville and Opeongo and \$40 per canoe between Brent and any other base. Please call for rates and details.

• **Accommodations before or after the trip**

Outfitting customers wishing to spend the night before and/or after trips in our area have several options. The Oxtongue Lake base offers rustic tent cabins at \$10 per person per night or a campsite at \$5 per person per night (minimum charge is \$10 per night per group). The tent cabins are large canvas wall tent with cots inside. Each one sleeps up to six people. We have six tent cabins and showers and washrooms are available. We can also e-mail you a list of the phone numbers or addresses of popular motels, resorts or B&B's in the area. The only accommodation available at our Brent base is the MNR roadside campsite or the Brent bunkhouse at \$15 per person per night. There are no motels or restaurants within 25 miles (40 km) of Brent. There are no accommodations or prepared meals available at our Opeongo base but the nearby town of Whitney has several motels and restaurants.

• **Questions?**

If your question has not been answered here, remember that Algonquin Outfitters is open almost every day of the year, so if you have a question at any time during the trip planning process, call 705-635-2243, during regular business hours. In North America, call toll-free: 1-800-469-4948. You can also reach us by e-mail at or through our web site at www.algonquinoutfitters.com

• **Useful links for trip planning:**

Here are a few Internet destinations that will help with your planning (all links working as of Nov. 2012):

General information:

- Algonquin Outfitters web site: www.algonquinoutfitters.com
- E-mail to Algonquin Outfitters: info@algonquinoutfitters.com
- Algonquin info on the official Algonquin Park site: www.algonquinpark.on.ca
- Ontario Parks site: www.ontarioparks.com

- Campsite reservations information (Algonquin Interior reservations cannot be made on-line): www.ontarioparks.com/english/reservations.html

Rules and Regulations:

- Boating safety equipment and related regulations for canoes and kayaks in Canada: www.tc.gc.ca/eng/marinesafety/debs-obs-quick-quick_human_powered-308.htm
- Find out about fishing and fishing regulations in Ontario: www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/LetsFish/index.html
- http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/marinesafety/debs-obs-quick-quick_human_powered-308.htm
- Algonquin Park rules and regulations: www.algonquinpark.on.ca/visit/camping/backcountry-canoes-trip-regulations.php

Algonquin Park maps

- Find out about Adventure Maps for Algonquin Park: www.chrismar.com
- Find out about Canadian Government Topographic Maps: www.fedmaps.com
- Purchase Friends of Algonquin Park maps and publications: <http://store.algonquinpark.on.ca/cgi/algonquinpark/index.html>
- Algonquin Park Canoe Routes Map on-line: www.algonquinpark.on.ca/virtual/canoe_routes_map/index.php
- jeff's map: www.algonquinmap.com/

Private Algonquin Park Info Sites

- Algonquin Adventures: www.algonquinadventures.com
- Virtual Algonquin page: www.doe.carleton.ca/~ngt/algonquin/intro.html
- Descriptions of many Algonquin routes can also be found at the Canadian Canoe Routes web site's Algonquin page: <http://www.myccr.com/content/algonquin-provincial-park>

Weather forecasts

- *Huntsville/Oxtongue Lake area:* http://weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/city/pages/on-88_metric_e.html
- *Central Algonquin Park and Opeongo Lake area:* http://weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/city/pages/on-29_metric_e.html
- *Brent area:* http://weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/city/pages/on-1_metric_e.html
- *Local weather radar map:* http://weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/radar/index_e.html?id=WBI
- Satellite weather image for eastern Canada: http://weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/data/satellite/goes_ecan_vvi_100.jpg

Information for visitors to Canada (entry rules, passport requirements, customs info & more):

- Practical information for visitors to Canada: www.canada.travel
- Visa/passport information for visitors to Canada: www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/index.asp
- Border crossing tips for US citizens traveling to Canada: www.noto.net/bordercrossing