



GOODS FOR THE LONG HAUL

THE NORTHERN FOREST CANOE TRAIL IS 740 MILES LONG, WITH 53 MILES OF PORTAGES. HERE'S WHAT ALAN AND MARYPAT KESSELHEIM ARE TAKING.

1. THE CANOE:

Wenonah Spirit II in Tuf-weave

Wenonah's most versatile, all-around canoe, the Spirit II finds that balance between tracking across lakes and maneuvering through whitewater. The Tuf-weave fiberglass blend is durable, less expensive than Kevlar, and relatively light at 58 pounds. (With Royalex canoes no longer available—the supplier has ceased production, and most canoe builders are already out of stock—we may be seeing a lot more boats in Tuf-weave and similar layups from other manufacturers.) Stable, efficient, roomy, the Spirit II is made for the NFCT. (17', 58 lbs., \$2,049, wenonah.com)

2. THE PACKS:

Hyperlite Mountain Gear Southwest Pack

There's nothing worse than humping a one-size-fits-all driesack with a couple of questionable shoulder straps across a swampy, mile-long trail. Hyperlite's pack series (ranging from the 2400 cubic inches/40 liters to 4400/70) offers comfortable suspension systems in three frame sizes, and the lightweight Cuben sailcloth material adds remarkable durability. We're taking three different-sized packs for clothes, gear and food. While the sailcloth material is waterproof, the seams are a bit problematic. Back it up with waterproof stuff-sacks for vulnerable gear (Hyperlite makes these, too) and you've got dry gear on lockdown. Most lightweight gear is also fragile gear. Not so with Hyperlite. I'd put their sailcloth up against any pack on the market, at any weight. (2400, 3400 and 4400 packs, 28-35 oz., \$275-\$345, hyperlitemountaingear.com)

3. THE PADDLES:

Bending Branches Cruiser Plus

Again, varied conditions require a paddle that is comfortable doing it all. My favorite is the Bending Branches Cruiser Plus.

I'm a die-hard fan of bent-shaft paddles, which are efficient for that day-in, day-out pace. The Cruiser Plus has the smooth ergonomics to handle miles of flatwater, and the laminated power face provides reassuring control when it's time to maneuver. Rockgard and fiberglass-wrap protection keeps the blade wear to a minimum, and the standard palm grip hasn't given me a blister in thousands of miles. It doesn't hurt that it's beautiful to boot. (23 oz., \$110, bendingbranches.com)

THE SECRET WEAPONS:

Portage Wheels by Seattle Sports (4a) and Wike (4b)

Sixty-three portages! The good news is that a great many of those carries are on roads or wide trails, suitable for wheeled carts. We're actually taking two portage wheel systems. First, the Seattle Sports Nemo Extremo. It's light, it's compact, rated to 250 lbs., and the airless tires are maintenance-free. Second, the Wike Woody trailer, which I wouldn't trust on rugged, bumpy terrain, but is an absolute dream to pull on roads or wide, dirt trails with its 20-inch bicycle-style tires and aluminum frame. We'll carry it across the top of the boat, ready for use, or break it down to a more packable size.

(Nemo Extremo – 7 lbs., \$1345, seattlesportsco.com; Wike Woody trailer – 13 lbs., \$200, wicycle.com)

5. THE RELAXATION STATION:

Grand Trunk Hammock Kit (not pictured)

As the name suggests, the NFCT is forested. One of the luxury items we're taking is the hammock/hanging kit from Grand Trunk. Made out of rugged nylon, rated to 400 pounds, complete with tree-protecting sleeves and its own compact stuff sack, it will be our relaxation station in camps all across New England. After all, expeditions shouldn't be all toil and pain. (20 oz., \$65, grandtrunkgoods.com)

LOOK INSIDE THE BAGS: Go to CanoeKayak.com to read more about Alan and Marypat's NFCT gear choices and reviews, including Alan's comprehensive test of five portage cart systems.

GET TECHNICAL

SOLAR-CHARGED EXPEDITION ESSENTIALS

GOAL ZERO has established a welcome niche in the world of expedition electronics, offering power packs and solar panels to keep the juice flowing into your expedition-critical devices. While their kits come in many shapes and sizes, we like this small double-panel kit for charging small items such as a phone or POV camera. In direct summer sunlight, the Nomad 7 brought a drained iPhone 4 to max charge in less than two hours. Combine with the Lighthouse 250 Lantern (pictured far right) to shed some light onto the subject. Charging via USB, optional solar panel or hand crank, this lantern pumps out a max 250 lumens of bright LED light, can charge your USB device and is dimmable for those wanting to conserve electricity or simply set the mood. (Both \$79, goalzero.com) *Sunny days not included.

NIKON is the first to offer a completely waterproof camera with interchangeable lenses. The Nikon AW1 is submersible to 49 feet, and can accept two waterproof lenses; an 11-27.5 mm zoom (equivalent to 30-74 mm in 35 mm format) and a 10 mm prime. This camera also works with all of Nikon's non-waterproof Nikon 1 lenses. It features a 14.2 MP sensor, 1080 Full HD video and shoots

stills at 15 frames per second. This shock/freeze/dust/water-proof marvel can survive anywhere you can, and bring home the photos to prove it. (One-lens kit \$750, nikonusa.com)

No paddler should venture offshore without a reliable VHF radio. We like the powerful HH350 from **COBRA**. It floats, has background noise cancellation and offers a selection of 1-, 3-, or 6-watt transmission modes. Access all your NOAA weather channels, monitor emergency channels and, if needed, call the good guys in orange and white. (\$100 per radio, cobra.com)

Although we maintain that the best navigation tools are a map and compass, it never hurts to have a GPS. The **GARMIN** Oregon 650t is waterproof and offers a 3-inch touchscreen. It comes preloaded with US TOPO 100K maps and employs a 3-axis compass plus accelerometer, barometric altimeter and dual battery system for charging in the field. Forgot your camera? No worries; this unit even takes 8 MP geotagged photos and serves as a remote for Garmin's VIRB ELITE POV camera. (\$550, garmin.com)



PHOTO: AARON SCHMIDT