

North Woods Trip Tip!

Grabbing the Informative Moment – Making use of your guide’s knowledge.

On any given trip there is always a lot going on that is so normal and part of the day’s progress that it is easy to forget that much of it offers a “teachable” opportunity. Guests often forget to ask about it, and it may be so routine and second nature to the guides, that they forget to highlight something as a bit of history, a physical skill, or a bit of strategy taking place invisibly to all but whoever is thinking about it. All you have to do is ask.

Many things arise naturally on a trip, and some of them require a little coaching such as the strokes for effective quickwater maneuvering, or how to pitch a tight tarp for rain or shade. But often things don’t arise so visibly, but can still be asked about. Another aspect of fluent skill application is it all occurs very fast in the hands of an expert, and thus remains invisible because it seems so obvious and sensible. The following are some opportunities to keep in mind on any trip.

The trips are usually long enough to not only be introduced to something, but practice it. While it is relatively easy to learn enough about paddling to get along pretty well, don’t overlook the opportunity to start learning the fine points that lead to expertise with the North Woods Stroke. Occasionally poling opportunities arise, or can be created for those wishing to try, and be introduced first hand to the joys of ascending or descending shallow quickwater.

A lot of things are going on all the time. Firestarting, especially in wet weather; tarp pitching; knots. All of these have a host of leading questions such as wood types and sources for fires, how to maximize the tightness of tarps for wind and rain shedding, and protecting the kitchen area and “living room”. What are the best and simplest knots for just about everything?

Don’t forget the guides are probably naturalists and know something about trees, botany, medicinal and edible plants, wildlife, habitats, forestry issues, ornithology, mushrooms, the night sky, tracks and sign. Another on-going yet very invisible set of strategies involve attentiveness to the winds on the bigger lakes, navigation, and weather that may influence a host of decisions.

Be alert to your interests and what you wish to know. Remember to ask. If it is not a good time for a thorough answer the leaders will say so and why. The rest of the time, it’s open season; ask the questions, improve the interaction and fun. Gain skills and understanding.