

**ORDER OF THE ARROW  
WILDERNESS VOYAGE & CANADIAN ODYSSEY**



**PARTICIPANT GUIDE**

My Brother,

We would like to congratulate you on signing up for OA Wilderness Voyage or Canadian Odyssey! This summer, you will experience Scouting in a way that most people only dream about as you are now a participant in one of the most exciting, challenging, and rewarding high adventure programs in the Order of the Arrow.

As you prepare for this incredible adventure, We ask that you please read all of the provided materials to best “Be Prepared” for your two weeks up here with us. This will give you the opportunity to introduce yourself to a type of camping that few still practice. Therefore, it is very important that you have the correct equipment and knowledge to succeed on your voyage or odyssey. Canoe camping in the vast and remote northern wilderness is very different from car camping or a backpacking trip.

OA Wilderness Voyage/Canadian Odyssey is an amazing opportunity for Arrowmen like yourself to take advantage of. They are specifically designed to challenge you mentally and physically while furthering your understanding and knowledge of the pillars of the Order of the Arrow: Brotherhood, Cheerfulness, and Service. In addition, the program is a wildly fun adventure giving you the chance to explore not only the great lakes and portages of the north, but yourself as well. Enjoying the Northwoods with your brothers promises to be an adventure you will never forget!

We hope you come away from this experience with a similar sense of accomplishment and growth as we did when we were participants! Please feel free to contact us with any questions regarding your preparation and planning. We are looking forward to your arrival!

WWW,

OA Wilderness Voyage/Canadian Odyssey Leadership Team

NorthernTier.OAWildernessVoyage@Scouting.org

[oa-bsa.org/high-adventure](http://oa-bsa.org/high-adventure)

<http://www.ntier.org/>



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## EQUIPMENT

Please review the enclosed Packing List (pages 8-10) designed to help you pack for your trip. Remember, you will be doing physically strenuous work for the first five days of your trek, so be prepared. Northern Tier will provide tents, cooking gear, stoves, packs, and all food necessary for your two-week experience. All gear will be repacked before departure. You will be sharing a portage pack with two to three other participants. In addition to the gear on the Personal Equipment List, please bring your full BSA uniform (pants/shorts, socks, belt, shirt) and your Order of the Arrow sash. Limited secure storage is provided in the form of crew lockers for your clothing and other personal “travel” items that you will not be carrying on the trail. The lockers must hold the entire crew's non trail gear so please be considerate.

## BE PREPARED

**Physically Strong:** We strongly encourage you to follow an exercise regimen in order to have an enjoyable experience canoeing, trail building, and portaging.

**Mentally Awake:** please review the OA ceremonies before your trip Up North as this will enrich your experience.

**Morally Straight:** You are expected to abide by and exemplify the Scout Oath and Law while on your adventure and in your travels.

## LEADERSHIP

Your crew will be under the leadership of a pair of OA Foremen. They are skilled and trained in both conservation and wilderness survival in the Boundary Waters. They will meet you in the parking lot as you arrive at the Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base and guide you from there. These Foremen will assist you in planning and carrying out your wilderness adventure. **You must arrive at the base by 5:00 p.m. the day that your program officially starts.** For example, if your trek is July 6 – 20, you must arrive at the base by 5:00 p.m. on July 6th and you would depart on July 20th.



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## EXPEDITION NUMBER

Your expedition number is important. Your expedition number is based on the day your OA Wilderness Voyage or Canadian Odyssey begins. For example, if your trip begins on June 5, 2025 your expedition number will be OAWV060525 or OACO060525. Please be sure to include your expedition number in all correspondence.

## UNIFORM

Wear your uniform proudly, as it identifies you as a member of the largest youth organization in the world. While at the Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base, the official BSA uniform is appropriate and comfortable. You will wear work clothes on the trail, but while in base camp, full uniform is required. An OA sash is recommended to be brought to base with you, though it is not required to be worn everywhere on base. We show that we are Arrowmen through our actions, not our appearance.

## INSURANCE

The Boy Scouts of America carries accident and sickness insurance coverage for all Northern Tier High Adventure participants from the time they leave home until they return. This policy is secondary to a family policy that might be in effect. The name and policy number of your family's insurance needs to be on the medical form.

## MEDICAL FORM

YOU MUST BRING YOUR CURRENT AND COMPLETED MEDICAL FORM WITH YOU TO THE CHARLES L. SOMMERS CANOE BASE.

**If you arrive at Charles L. Sommers without a physical form you will need to complete a physical in Ely, which will delay your departure into the wilderness and increase the cost of your trip.** Ensure a parent's signature (if you are under 18 years of age), and your personal insurance information is on the medical form.

## SWIM CHECK

Please bring a completed swim check form. Swim checks will not take place at Northern Tier. Form is available in the appendix of this document.



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## TRANSPORTATION

You will be responsible for your transportation to and from Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base. General information based on common travel methods is included below to include shuttle information.

*If Arriving by Airplane* - A shuttle van is available from the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport (MSP) for a round trip fee of \$275.00. Uniformed scouters from the local OA lodge in Minneapolis will greet you when your flight arrives and will help you get to the shuttle. The shuttle leaves the airport at 12:30 p.m. and arrives at Charles L. Sommers at approximately 6:00 p.m. (~ 5 1/2-hour trip). If you plan to arrive via plane, **you must schedule your arrival no later than 12:00 p.m. into the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport.** Allow for time to claim your luggage. The return shuttle leaves at 7:00 a.m. on your last scheduled day from the Sommers Canoe Base, arriving at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport at 1:00 p.m. **DO NOT** schedule your return flight before 2:30 p.m. on the last day of your trek. The shuttle departs from baggage claim level, Door 4 of Terminal 1.

Shuttle arrangements can be made by visiting <https://registration.oa-bsa.org/> and logging in using your ArrowID you created to register. Once logged in click on My Events and select OA Wilderness Voyage or OA Canadian Odyssey and then select the travel link on the left-hand side of the screen, enter your information and then click on the general link on the left side of your screen and then select the Make a Payment button. The shuttle fee needs to be paid before you arrive.

*If Arriving by Private Vehicle* - Private vehicles can be driven directly to Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base, twenty-two miles from Ely, Minnesota. Wilderness Voyage/Canadian Odyssey Foremen will meet you at the stockade next to the parking lot the day your trek officially begins. Participants are **strongly urged** to arrive around 5pm, but any time after 1pm is acceptable. If you are driving up or arriving early, please call Northern Tier at 218-365-4811 and ask for the OA Office.

The Northern Tier High Adventure Base address is:

**14790 Moose Lake Road, Ely, Minnesota 55731**

Participants are strongly encouraged to find a travel companion from their home council to ease the process of traveling to the base. If you have difficulties or questions about travel arrangements, please call Northern Tier High Adventure Base at 218-365-4811 and ask for the OA Office.



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## INDIVIDUAL ARRIVAL PLANS

Please share your travel plans with us by visiting [registration.oa-bsa.org](https://registration.oa-bsa.org) and login using your ArrowID you created to register. Then click on My Events and then select travel on the left-hand side of the screen. Enter your travel information so we know when and where you will arrive.

## DIETARY NEEDS

If you have any dietary restrictions you should enter them at <https://registration.oa-bsa.org/>. Northern Tier is unable to accommodate any special diet needs not communicated before arrival. It is imperative that you communicate these needs at least 30 days in advance. Please do this at least 30 days before your trip. Northern Tier is unable to meet all food needs, as yours are reviewed the food services manager will reach out with questions or concerns. In some cases, you may need to bring your own food. If you have any questions about dietary needs and the food Northern Tier will be prepping for your trip, please call Northern Tier at 218-365-4811 and ask for the food service manager.

## PROGRAM FEES

Participant fee for OA Wilderness Voyage or Canadian Odyssey is \$450. A non-refundable deposit of \$50 is due with your application. The additional \$400 is due with the return of your acceptance notice. No participants will be allowed to begin their trek until their program fee is paid in full. Cancellations made at least four (4) weeks prior to your scheduled arrival date will be eligible for a refund of the second part of the payment.

The fee for shuttle transportation, if applicable, from Minneapolis/St. Paul airport must be paid in advance following the instruction provided in this information packet. Please refer to applicable shuttle transportation information for refund and other policies.

**“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail” -Benjamin Franklin**



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## NORTHERN TIER PACKING LIST- OAWV/OACO PARTICIPANTS

What you need to know: In the OA programs, you are doing hard physical labor, rain or shine, for a week, followed by a weeklong canoe trek in the wilderness. Since you will not be having a gear drop off or resupply, your “**Wet Clothes**” and “**Dry Clothes**” need to serve several purposes. Gear is listed with clothing first followed by personal gear. Please follow this list for your Wilderness Voyage/Canadian Odyssey and email if you need gear advice or suggestions.

### Wet Clothes

Work and Canoe clothing used for portage trail maintenance on the work week and paddling on the voyage week. These clothes **WILL** get wet and most likely not dry out. For this reason, the clothing must be synthetic or wool. Synthetics are preferred as it is less prone to chafing. Clothing should **NOT** be cotton.

- (1) Pair rugged synthetic pants, convertibles recommended
- (1) Short sleeve shirt, anything sturdy and synthetic
- (1) Pair durable wool/synthetic socks
- (1) Pair sturdy, non-waterproof boots with good drainage.

*Note from Northern Tier:* All participants are required to wear boots that have full ankle coverage, a rugged stitched or vulcanized sole and drainage at the instep. Boots should not be waterproof. If you are unsure if the boots you are planning to bring meet this requirement, please feel free to contact us prior to your arrival. Individuals arriving with inadequate footwear will be asked to purchase boots in the trading post prior to departure on water. The health and safety of our participants is of utmost importance to us, for this reason there are no exceptions to the boot requirement. While there are many options for boots, Northern Tier has Merrell Moab Ventilator Mid Boots available from the Trading Post at [www.northerntiertradingpost.org](http://www.northerntiertradingpost.org).

- (1) Long sleeve synthetic shirt (a base layer like a Duofold or a button up shirt such as a fishing shirt)
- (1) Pair synthetic underwear
- Waterproof rain jacket (No ponchos)
- Waterproof rain pants are recommended

### Camp Clothes (Dry Clothes)

Camp Clothing (For backup clothes and camp use. These clothes **NEED** to stay dry the entire trip) - Once you get into campsite, you will take off your wet clothes, air dry and powder your feet, and change into all dry clothes



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- (1) Wool sweater or Soft-shell fleece
- (1) Long sleeve synthetic shirt
- (1) Short sleeve synthetic shirt
- (1) Pair synthetic underwear
- (1) Pair synthetic pants (recommend: convertible “zip off” pants or soft-shell pants)
- (2) Pair synthetic or wool socks
- (1) Pair close toed shoes (recommend: used lightweight sneakers)

### **Personal Gear**

This is stuff you will either have on your person every day or packed up:

- (2) Nylon compression sacks: one for sleeping bag, one for clothing and gear (Examples include Sea to Summit eVent compression sacks or Granite Gear eVent compression sacks. You can also line a standard compression sack with a trash bag.)
- (1) 20-40°F degree sleeping bag, lightweight
- (1) Sleeping pad
- (1) 5ft of duct tape (take off roll of duct tape and roll on itself or roll around water bottle)
- (2) Large handkerchiefs (for general use)
- (1) Good folding-blade pocket knife or multi-tool
- (2) Wide or narrow mouth 1-liter Nalgene Water Bottles
- (1) Mess Kit
  - (1) Plastic or metal bowl (Example is GSI plastic bowl)
  - (1) Cup or mug (recommend: one that can be attached to belt by string or carabiner)
  - (1) Spoon
- (1) Hat (ball cap or wide brim)
- (1) Knit/stocking cap
- (1) Pair sunglasses with Croakies-type attachment
- (1) Pack towel (recommend: an old cotton hand towel or microfiber towel)
- (1) Bug spray in plastic bottle (tin cans are banned)
- (1) Small plastic bottle of 30+ SPF or higher waterproof sunscreen
- (1) Small bottle of Gold Bond Powder
- (1) Toothbrush
- (1) Small tube toothpaste
- (1) Good headlamp and extra batteries
- Good pen and journal
- Book for reading



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**-For On Base Days & Traveling-**

- Class A Uniform Shirt
- A pair of socks and underwear
- OA Sash
- Scout shorts/pants
- Scout belt
- Hiking boots or sneakers (closed toe required)
- Toiletries, towel
- Any money you may desire for Trading Post purchases

**Items you may bring but are not required**

- Digital Camera (recommend waterproof camera or stored in a small Pelican/waterproof Case as waterproofing)
- Small basic compass (to use on the trail, if needed)
- Fishing Gear (multi-piece rod, small tackle pouch, hooks, sinkers, spinners, small reel with 6lb test, and small filet knife. Make sure to purchase a fishing license if you wish to fish). Fishing gear is also available for check out as crew gear from Northern Tier.
- Crazy Creek or camp chair (for in-camp sitting)
- 10' P-cord (keep coiled for extra shoe lace)
- Pair of thin gloves

The crew gear provided by Northern Tier and the OA will include: packs, cooking equipment, water purification system, emergency communication, first aid kit, tents, fire tools, crew tarp and cord, bear ropes, food, work gloves, PFDs, canoes and paddles.

Note that there are no laundry services available at Northern Tier.

**“I think that we ought to eat all our Provisions now, so that we shan’t have so much to carry.” - Christopher Robin**



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## PAPERWORK & ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

- BSA Health and Medical Record (signed by a doctor within the last year)
- Visit [registration.oa-bsa.org](http://registration.oa-bsa.org) with your ArrowID to:
  - Enter personal arrival information
  - Register and pay for shuttle if needed
  - Enter any dietary restrictions (and also at [ntier.org/resources/food/](http://ntier.org/resources/food/) if applicable)
- Swim check form (Must be completed before you arrive)
- Proof of Youth Protection Training (If 18 or older)

*Please be sure to have ALL of the required paperwork when you arrive at base on your first day; any missing items could delay the start of your trek (and the other 13 Arrowmen there in the same session). If you have any questions about any of this information, please contact the OA Office at Northern Tier at 1(218) 365-4811– we'd be more than happy to help!*

**“All the sounds of the earth are like music.” -Oscar Hammerstein**



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## FISHING LICENSES

Northern Tier recommends that all Fishing Licenses be purchased online in advance of your trip. If you plan on fishing, please familiarize yourself with local rules and regulations.

**OA Wilderness Voyage: MINNESOTA FISHING LICENSES-** All individuals, 16 years of age and older wishing to fish need to obtain a license in order to fish in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), licenses can be purchased in advance over the phone by calling **1-888-665-4236**, or on-line <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/licenses/fishing/index.html?type=fishing>.

NOTE: A Social Security Number is required to obtain a Minnesota Fishing License

**OA Canadian Odyssey: ONTARIO FISHING LICENSES-** All individuals, 16 years of age and older wishing to fish need to obtain a license in order to fish in the Quetico Parks, licenses can be purchased in advance on-line <https://www.ontario.ca/page/fishing-licence-non-residents-canada>

**“Fishermen are born honest but they get over it.” -Ed Zern**



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# APPENDIX



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**Appendix A: Swim Classification Form**

**Swim Classification Record**

(Changes and/or corrections to the following chart should be initialed and dated by the test supervisor.)

Unit Number \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Swim Test \_\_\_\_\_

	Full Name (Print) (Draw lines through blank spaces)	Medical Recheck Parts A-B	Swim Classification		
			Non-Swimmer	Beginner	Swimmer
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					

The swim classification test performed at a unit level should be conducted by one of the following council-approved resource people: Aquatics Instructor, BSA; BSA Lifeguard; BSA Swimming & Water Rescue; or other lifeguard, swimming instructor, etc. Test administrators should utilize chapter 5 of the [BSA Aquatics Supervision Guide](#).

**NAME OF PERSON SUPERVISING & FACILITATING THE SWIM TEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Type of Authorization/Training  
(Attach a copy of certification if required by council procedure)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Expiration Date if applicable





## SWIM CLASSIFICATION PROCEDURES

The swim classification of individuals participating in a Boy Scouts of America activity is a key element in Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat. These swim classification tests are a foundational unit of the Aquatics Continuum.

All persons participating in BSA aquatics are classified according to swimming ability. The classification tests and test procedures have been developed and structured to demonstrate a skill level consistent with the individual's circumstances in the water.

## SWIM TESTS FOR COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Swim tests for **council activities** are conducted following procedures approved by a council-level committee, preferably the Council Aquatics Committee. The council committee should use the guidance contained in *BSA Aquatics Management Guide*. SPECIAL NOTE: When swim tests are conducted away from camp, the camp aquatics director retains the right to review or retest any or all participants to ensure that standards have been maintained.

### REGARDLESS OF WHERE OR WHEN THE SWIM TEST IS GIVEN THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES APPLY:

- **The test is given one-on-one.** The test administrator and the swimmer are buddies during the administration of the test.
- **Each component of the test is important.** The test must not be changed either to assist the Scout or to expedite the process.
- **The test must be completed without aid or support.** Aid includes lifejackets, wetsuits, fins, etc. Swim goggles may be used to avoid eye irritation.
- **Swim tests must be renewed annually,** preferably at the beginning of the outdoor season.

## TO THE SWIM TEST ADMINISTRATOR

### SWIMMER'S TEST:

Jump feet first into water over the head in depth, level off, and begin swimming. Swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: side stroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy resting back stroke. The 100 yards must be swum continuously and include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.

### BEGINNER'S TEST:

Jump feet first into water over the head in depth, level off, swim 25 feet on the surface, stop, turn sharply, resume swimming as before, and return to starting place.

Anyone who has not completed the beginner or swimmer tests is classified as a **nonswimmer**.



## Appendix B: OA Canadian Odyssey Participant Additional Instructions

1. All participants must have a valid, unexpired passport.
2. All participants must have a Remote Area Border Crossing certificate (RABC).
  - a. Northern Tier will assist you in applying for your RABC.
  - b. You will receive an email from 'WorkBright', our paperwork management system. That email will request you:
    - i. Complete the RABC application.
    - ii. Upload a photo of your passport.
      1. Do not use a flash.
      2. Make sure your passport is signed.
      3. Make sure the photo is in focus and easy to read.
  - c. The RABC process takes 4-6 weeks, so it is important to complete the process as soon as you receive the email.
3. Once your trip is completed, you will be required to check in with US customs. The Northern Tier staff will assist you with this process, typically done through the CBP ROAM app, available through Apple and Google. Your check in will be smoother, if you have downloaded the app to your phone prior to arrival. We will have devices with preloaded apps, but each person must check in individually and the line can get quite long.
4. Make sure to bring your passport with you to Northern Tier. You will have to show it at the border when crossing into Canada AND online when returning to the US. Do NOT forget at home as this will prevent you from participating.



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## Appendix C: BSA Health and Medical Record

<https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/ahmr/>

- Make sure to download and use the most up to date BSA Health and Medical Record.
- Make sure to take the Northern Tier Risk Advisory (the last page of the form) with you for your physician to review.



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