

# Packing For That Canadian Adventure

BY MIKE YURK

One of the most frequently asked questions that I get about fishing in Canada is “What do I need to take with me?” The time of the year and what kind of fishing trip you are taking can make a big difference in the type of equipment and clothing that you will need.

On fly-in trips, there are, in many cases, weight limitations that can alter the packing list. Boat in or drive in fishing adventures allow the fisherman a great deal more latitude in what he takes.

However, with that being said, regardless of how you get to your Canadian fishing adventure, much of the packing list remains the same. The time of the year and the weather are major considerations. If your trip is planned earlier than the middle of June or after Labor Day, snow is a possibility. Two years ago we flew into our outpost cabin on July 10 and it snowed the first night. It is a good idea to anticipate the worst and be prepared for it.

Some things are basic no matter what kind of fishing trip you are planning. Rain gear is one of them. A good set of rain gear is always a must on any fishing trip. In addition to protecting you from the rain, it will keep the wind off and keep in your body heat. I consider rain gear my last layer in keeping warm regardless if it is raining or not. Keeping your feet dry is important to keeping warm even if it is not that cold. In the interest of weight, I pack a set of rubber pull-on boots or goulashes. They are easy to use and can be rolled up to fit in a boat locker or duffle bag. If you are going early or late in the season, when cold and wet weather can be at its worst, bring along neoprene gloves. They will keep your hands dry and warm and they are light enough to be able to cast and work your reel.

Even if the weather is cold, I can economically pack enough warm clothing by layering what I am going to wear. I start by packing a pair of long underwear, two longsleeved shirts, a sweatshirt or heavier shirt, a wool or fleece jacket and a down vest. That gives me some options to mix and match depending on the weather. That combination, with a set of rain gear, has never failed to keep me warm regardless of the weather that I have encountered and all of that together doesn't fill up the duffle bag.

How much extra clothing do you need then? I normally take two extra sets of underwear, socks, and shirts and one extra set of pants in with me besides the set that I am wearing. That allows me to change at least once during the trip and have a fresh set of clothes to wear on the way out. It also gives me an extra set of dry clothing to change into if I get soaked. An extra pair of shoes is a must. Even if it is warm out and your feet get wet, it sure does feel good to change into a city pair of shoes once you get back to camp.

Generally, from mid-June to the end of August, I have found the weather to be warm and sometimes downright hot. Normally, I spend most of my time in shorts and T-shirts. I have found the zip-off pants to be ideal. In the morning, if it is cool, you can leave the leggings on. When it gets hot later in the day, you can zip off the leggings to have shorts and then in the

evening, if the temperature begins to cool down, or the bugs get bad, you can zip the leggings back on and have long pants again. You, essentially, have two pieces of clothing in one.

Bugs seem to be as much a part of fishing in Canada as are the fish. My experience has found that the bugs are generally not too bad except at the end of the day. They are at their worst for about an hour and a half starting about a half-hour before dark. Obviously, mosquito repellent is a must, however, there are a couple of other things worth packing as well. Mosquito coils, found in any sporting goods shop, is a great way to rid the cabin of unwanted bugs at the end of the day. Another worthwhile purchase is a mosquito head net. I always put one in my duffle bag. It takes up no room. I will admit, I haven't used mine yet, but I would not want to be without it if the bugs got bad enough that I needed it. I also recommend rubber surgical gloves that can be found in any drug store. The bugs can not bite through them and they are light and thin enough to clean fish or fish with them and never lose any sensitivity. There is nothing more unpleasant than trying to clean fish at dark and have the mosquitoes attacking your hands. A couple pair of them weigh hardly anything and fit easily in a duffle bag.

Bring along extra towels for dishwashing and pot holders. Those things seem to disappear regularly out of cabins. Also bring a battery powered lantern – its much easier to fillet at night with a little light.

Most people plan on eating fish for most of their evening meals. It is hard to beat freshly caught fish. It is a gourmet delight. However, in most places, the possession limit is the same as the day's bag limit. For walleye, that means you can only keep four walleye and that includes whatever you are eating that day and whatever you have in the freezer to take home. The problem comes in on the last day. If you have your fish frozen to take home, you can't have another couple of fillets to eat that night. I always pack in a couple of steaks for that last night. Besides, no matter how good the fish are, it feels good to take a break from fish after eating fish every day for several days.

Although most outfitters furnish life vests and everyone is required to have a life vest in the boat, I feel more comfortable packing my own. Obviously, everyone will bring their own toilet articles and make sure to bring sun screen. The sun can be unrelenting at times. If anyone in the party has any special medication needs, double check to insure that it is packed. The wrong time to find out that it isn't is when you have landed at that outpost cabin. If you wear glasses, like I do, pack an extra set of glasses. Losing your only pair of glasses overboard can ruin a trip in a hurry. A good basic first-aid kit is also a must.

Fishing equipment is relatively simple and basic. I take along two spinning rods for walleye with eight-pound line. I put a crankbait on one and a jig on the other. For northern, I take along a heavier spinning rod with 10- or 12- pound line and a casting rod loaded with 17- pound line. The heavier spinning rod can double as a walleye rod if I break one of my other walleye rods and can be used with lighter bucktails, spinner baits or spoons for northern. I always pack a couple of extra spools of line. Even with insuring that all the reels have fresh line spooled on them before we leave it seems that at least one reel needs to be respooled some time during the trip. Especially on fly-in trips, there is no lodge or sport shop to go to if you need more line or some other piece of fishing equipment. If you don't pack it you have to do without it.

Lures are fairly basic. For walleye, I use numbers five and seven Shad Raps. They can be used for either trolling or casting. Silver and black and firetiger are my favorite colors. The king of walleye baits is, without a doubt, the jig. I use 1/4-, 3/8- and 1/2-ounce jigs. I haven't used anything lighter than 1/4- ounce jigs in years and now do not even pack anything lighter to take in with me. With that, I add a three-inch grub body. Chartreuse and yellow are my most productive colors. After that, orange, white and pink come next for colors. On fly-in trips, I just use the jig with a grub and no bait. On other trips where there is more fishing pressure, I tip the jig and grub body with a minnow or leech. If I am using minnows, I like to use Fireball jigs with a stinger hook by Northland. They have a 5/8-ounce Fireball jig in a firetiger color that is my favorite.

Baits for northern are equally as simple. Larger 3/4- to one-ounce bucktails, spinnerbaits and spoons are all favorites. Yellow, orange and black, silver, gold, and the traditional red and white are all good colors. As well, I have found a good basic selection of silver, silver and blue, gold and orange and firetiger number 14 jointed Rapalas will round out the tackle for northern. One last piece of equipment that one should always carry while fishing in Canada is jaw spreaders. Don't take the small ones, take the biggest ones you can find. I had a seven-pound northern just clamp his mouth shut one year after I had propped open his mouth with a small set of jaw spreaders. And take several with you. Last year I lost two of them in two days when northern just spit them out as I was trying to unhook them.

Fishing in Canada is a great adventure. Packing right will make it more enjoyable. Make a list and check it twice for more fun on that fishing adventure.