



715 Wisconsin Ave. Boscobel, WI 53805
608.375.5300 – 866.41.CANOE (22663)
86641canoe.com

WRO Trip Planning Guide and Checklist

Print this guide off and fill it out to help in planning your Wisconsin River trip.

Trip Dates: _____

Backup Trip Dates: _____

Number of Days/Nights on the river: _____

Trips Considering: 1. _____ 2. _____

How many are going on the trip? Adults _____ Kids _____

How many/what type of boats will we rent? Canoes _____ Kayaks _____

Menu: How extravagant will my menu be? What am I planning on serving?

What gear will we need to rent?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canoe/kayak | <input type="checkbox"/> Beach chairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HUGE Dry Bag | <input type="checkbox"/> Tent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small dry bag | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping bag |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firewood | <input type="checkbox"/> Look into Comfort Packages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upgraded lightweight canoe paddles | <input type="checkbox"/> 48 Hr Trip Cancellation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping mat, self-inflating | <input type="checkbox"/> Equipment Damage Protection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seatbacks | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Folding table | |

NOTES:

PRO TIP: We highly recommend booking your trip at least 3 weeks out to insure you get the dates, boats and trip you want. Booking in advance also gives you plenty of time to get yourself organized.



Sandbar Camping Planning Packet

Would you like \$10 off your first trip with WRO?

Will this your first time paddling with us? If so, we'd like to offer you \$10 off the first overnight trip you book with us!

Click the button below, fill out the form with your name and email address and you'll shoot you your unique coupon code to enter at check out when you book online.

Heck yeah, I want \$10 OFF

Welcome!

We're excited that you've requested this information and even more excited that we might be able to share our river with you! We believe the Wisconsin River is one of the most overlooked flat-water rivers in the country for its camping right on the river (YES, you'll camp on sand bars in the middle of the river!), free flowing 92 miles, tree lined shores, shallow sandy bottom and lack of development along the shore. Add in our fleet of light weight Royalex Wenonah Canoes and **YOU** and you've got a readymade trip for friends and family.

How to Use this Planning Packet

First, print off the checklist that came with the packet and fill in details as you firm them up.

Our objective is to be as helpful as we can in planning your trip. We'll give some pointers along the way that you may already have experience with but hopefully we can provide a tidbit or two that can add to your experience.



Trip Cost

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Regarding trip costs, for the most current information it's best to visit our website, www.86641canoe.com. From there, you'll see the Tripinator at the top of our homepage, plug in your information and it will give you a selection of trips based on your criteria. OR, you can click on the orange "Book Now" button at the upper right and select the number of days you'd like to paddle. If you're receiving this packet, there's also a very good possibility we've already provided you a quote for your trip. We do everything we can to "keep it simple" and make sure you've got the information you need to book and take your trip.

We're Waiting for Your Call

We're always ready to assist you with the hard-to-answer questions and requests by [email](mailto:info@86641canoe.com) or by phone at 608.375.5300. We generally answer every call between 9 AM and 6 PM Central Time from May to September and if we're experiencing heavy call volume we generally get back to you within 2 hours. **You are encouraged to book online 24/7, and that's where you can apply your \$10 coupon code if you decide to get one.** We know there are a lot of rentals that don't put as high a priority on answering the phone or returning emails...this is the start of what we hope you find makes us different.

What the River is Like

Protected

In 1989 the last 92 miles of the Wisconsin River was protected from development and is managed by the Lower Wisconsin Riverway Board. Because of this forethought you'll see very few



houses along the tree lined shore during your trip and views of bluffs in the distance are unspoiled.

The Wisconsin River is on the migratory route of many birds that fly between Canada and points south. We are lucky enough to have large populations of Bald Eagles, Sand Hill Cranes, Blue Herons, King Fishers and many other water oriented birds to include the occasional pelican, you read that right! You'll also see turtles sunning themselves on logs along the river's edge, raccoons, deer, beaver and otters.

Description

The Wisconsin River is wide, sandy and generally shallow; you'll be able to touch the bottom of the river 80% of the time with your paddle in normal summer conditions. However, it is HIGHLY suggested that you always wear your life jacket, especially if you don't swim or are not a strong swimmer. Ankle deep water

in one spot could be neck deep water within a few feet. See the “Anatomy of a Sand Bar on the Wisconsin River” at the end of this packet for a sense of what a sand bar is like.

The shores are tree lined with little development along the banks or on the bluffs in the distance. The further down river you go (from east to west) the less development you’ll see and fewer people you’ll run into.

At normal water levels, there are literally thousands of islands/sand bars to camp, swim and fish from; which is why the Wisconsin River is often called "The River of a Thousand Isles."

All of this makes for a perfect paddlesports/silent sports river. Because of how shallow the river is there are very few motorized boats on the river, local fisherman who know how to read the river will be the only boats you’ll see.

Where We’re Located

WI River Outings is located in [Boscobel Wisconsin](#) where we operate out of a 1867 feed mill that has been rehabbed into our storefront. From this location we provide access to the entire lower 92 miles of the Lower Wisconsin River.



The start of the Lower Wisconsin River is in Sauk City (60 miles upriver from Boscobel), which is located just downriver from the last dam on the Wisconsin River and is located about 20 minutes north of Madison, Wisconsin. On the weekends this is a popular stretch of river for both day trippers as well as overnights and can have a bit of a Spring Break atmosphere. However, on the weekdays this is a very pleasant stretch of river with significantly reduced use. Regardless the time of the week you paddle this stretch, the further down river you go...the fewer people you’ll see. At the 25 mile mark (and 35 miles upriver from Boscobel), Spring Green HWY 23 landing, the number of people on the river will drop



significantly.

Sauk City to Boscobel is a hearty 3 day paddle, most do it in 4...and some as many as 5 days.

Paddling downriver from Boscobel generally results in seeing no other canoers and perhaps a handful of fisherman, it is a remote stretch of river.

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If you're doing a 1 to 3 day trip, upriver trips from Boscobel are a great option because we can put you on the water upriver from Boscobel and you'll paddle back to your vehicle. The advantage...you can finish when you'd like and pack up and take off...no bus schedule to meet or be restricted to – we call it Land-Load-Leave.

Our Canoes

We are THE “Lightest Canoe Rental on the Wisconsin River.” Our fleet consists entirely of Roylex Wenonah Canoes. It's possible we have the largest Roylex rental fleet in the country but we prefer to focus on the river and service we provide our customers as our “shining star.”

Why Roylex? What's the big deal?

Roylex is a type of plastic that makes for an outstanding material for canoes because it's:

- Light, each boat weighs less than 65 lbs
- Durable, not that our sandy river really needs this
- Quiet, unlike aluminum canoes from water running alongside it or “paddle bang”
- Comfortable, our seats are made from nylon webbing which has some give, is soft and breathable



These boats are excellent for beginners as well as more advanced paddlers. We have yet to have anyone come off the water and suggest they'd never paddle these canoes again and are shocked by how quiet and comfortable they are.



How Far Should We Paddle?

Ah, the age-old question. First, here are the little tidbits that can help you begin to answer that question:

- On average, you'll cover 3 mph
- X-Factor, generally, if there's a breeze/wind on the river it will be in your face out of the southwest
- Extremely low water, a rarity, will slow you down a bit

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- In the Spring, during higher water, you'll generally move a bit faster because of faster moving water and more point A to point B paddling with fewer sandbars to navigate
- Are you out to "cover ground" or is this more of leisurely float? We've had groups in higher water on a calm day cover almost 6 mph.

Because there are boat landings roughly every 8 miles (which takes about 2.5 hours to paddle) your trip can be fine tuned to what you desire to accomplish. There are groups that are looking to spend most of their time lounging in the sun and swimming, while other groups are looking to cover as many miles as they can.

Suggested distance based on number of days:

- 1 day – 8-16 miles
- 2 days – 16-29 miles
- 3 days – 23-44 miles
- 4 days – 35-60 miles
- 5 days – 92 miles or take your time

Keep in mind, on days that you'll wake and fall asleep on the river you have the potential to cover a lot of distance because...what else is there to do but paddle? So, once you start looking at trips of 3 days, and greater, the distance you travel will be based on how much time you spend in the canoes.

Local Weather and River Trends

Here are some quick Facts of Life about the region:

- Generally, a breeze/the wind will be out of the southwest, moving upriver
- The breeziest part of the day will be from noon to about 6 PM
- If it is a breezy day you can be pretty well assured that by 7:30 PM it will be dead calm
- It will be a VERY rare occasion when there's enough rain locally that it will drive the river level up quickly
- Local river levels tend to rise because the dam has been opened due to rain 100-200 miles north of us (we can share information with you so you're aware when this could be coming)
- May and June make for unpredictable water levels- but with fewer people the river isn't a big deal
- July and August are prime times, try to stay away from weekend trips to have the river to yourself



- September and October, have the river to yourself and prime time for fall colors and cooler nights for outstanding camping

Windy Conditions Tips

On the handful of days a year, where progress is very difficult due to windy conditions, it's sometimes a better strategy to pull off for a few hours and wait for the winds to calm and put back on the river in the late afternoon and paddle until dusk. Another option, there's no better time of day to be on the water than FIRST thing in the morning with no wind and the mist still rising off the water if you're on a schedule and need to make up ground. Remember, you're finishing at your vehicle, there's no bus pickup time to catch – finish at your leisure.

Cooking on the River



We believe camp stoves are the way to go! Camping over a fire seems romantic until you can't find enough wood, it rains, or you must clean those pots and pans from all the soot. As will be mentioned later, there are issues with collecting firewood you should be aware of.

Planning for Meals

Everyone has a different idea of what eating on the river should be like. There are those that are thinking as light as possible. There are those who will bring out cast iron dutch

ovens spend hours getting a fire going, building a bed of coals and then the time spent cooking the actual meal. We're simply providing some suggestions so you plan your thinking about what becomes the most time consuming portion of trip planning...feeding the group.

Simple

The simplest and fastest way to go; sandwiches, cereal, yogurt, fruit and easy snacks. Based on the length of the trip this might get a little old but we also fully understand the time commitment to putting together more extravagant meals. Another big advantage to this simple approach, little or no cleanup, to include dishes. We'll take this simple route over not getting on the river overnight at all!



Also, it will make that burger you get on your way home that much better tasting and satisfying! May we suggest the [Grumpy Troll in Mt Horeb, WI](#) if you're heading east at the end of your trip.

Better

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Using a camp stove, meals that just require hot water to be added or cooked in or simply warmed up over low heat. While you could do dehydrated backpacking food, these meals tend to be



expensive. There are TONS of options at the local grocery store for just-add-water noodle and rice based dishes, Ramen Noodles and for breakfast a great standby is instant oatmeal. Canned/package precooked meats and tuna will add favor and needed protein to any meal and will keep as well as not take up valuable cooler space. The other big advantage, you don't have to spend the time cooking them at camp.

The next step up in this category, since you'll have a stove with you is precooked meals that simply need to be warmed up on the river. Our most popular menu on outfitted trips is homemade Sloppy Joes, garlic mashed potatoes, sweet corn or seasonal veggie and pound cake and strawberries for dessert. The Sloppy Joes are made ahead of time and frozen and act as ice in the cooler during the day. In the evening we slow warm the meat while boiling potatoes and prepping the corn. Just be sure you have a stove good enough to crank out the BTUs to boil the potatoes and quickly get the corn ready. And the guest favorite...and simple...Sara Lee pound cake with strawberries that started the day out frozen and kept our cooler cool until we brought them out to thaw while preparing dinner.

Pasta with Italian sausage is filling and another great option. Another crowd favorite is our fajitas, grilling and seasoning the chicken before the trip and warming it up with onions and peppers while on the river. It makes for a colorful, light and health dinner.

Gourmet

Surf and turf on the river, you bet! Let your imagination run wild, just keep in mind the number of days you'll be out on the water before you're going to have your white table cloth meal and keep your food safe and properly cooled. And don't forget to pack the white table clothes!



Cooler Management

While we own coolers that will keep ice...ice...for up to a week, it won't last long if the cooler lid isn't kept closed! For longer trips we designate a cooler based on the day. So a large group on a 5 day trip may require three coolers:



- Cooler #1 – Day 1
- Cooler #2 – Day 2-3
- Cooler #3 – Day 4-5

Cooler 2 and 3 will be marked and kept closed until the days they're assigned for. We also put a cam strap around them, the more tightly sealed the longer the cooler will stay cold. Finally, it should be made clear to all participants that the coolers aren't their refrigerator at home, they are not to be opened and browsed, and if they are asked to go into a cooler to retrieve something it should be quick and close the lid and lock it down right away.

Water on the River

We HIGHLY recommend bringing water with you. Six gallon Jerry cans (available for rent) are a great way to go as they also can double as ballast for those lightweight folks to bring the bow of the canoe down. You'll have a few opportunities to replenish water during longer trips.

For those with their heart set on filtering water, keep in mind the Wisconsin River drains 2/3 of the Dairy State...enough said? If you MUST filter, we suggest you use this water for cooking only and be sure to bring several back up filters...you'll need them. It's also a great idea to [prefilter the water](#) prior to running it through your pump filter.

This does not mean you shouldn't swim in and enjoy the river, we've just found that your trip will be much more enjoyable if you've brought your potable water supply with you.

Campsite Selection

There are perhaps few things more personal than what the perfect campsite consists of. Of course, water level may dictate what your options are. Some things to consider, roughly in order of priority:

- *Height above water* – you want to try and find as high a sandbar to camp on as you can...for obvious reasons
- *Mosquitoes* – if you can find a high sandbar in the middle of the river with no foliage you'll experience less harassment from this "bat food" than tucked up against trees...but yes, it does mean you're exposed to any storms that may come through
- *Shade* – keeping in mind the point made above, if you've been on the river a few days and dream of afternoon shade you'll be looking for a spot on the upriver side of an island with trees and a sand bar



- *Swimming hole* – you'll generally find deeper water where there's a quick drop off of a sandbar into the water, this tends to be on the downstream side of the sandbar
- *Fishing* – the Wisconsin River is fairly easy to fish when the water levels are down, look for a drop off, near shore if possible with some structure (downed tree), and work it!

In the end it comes down to what's most important to you and what weather is coming. The more days you spend on the river the better idea you'll have for what you're looking for.

Firewood



It's important to understand that with all the creepy crawlies that we have today, State Ordinance says that you are not to transport firewood more than 25 miles from its source. The DNR and law enforcement have ticketed people for hauling firewood over those distances.

Collecting Firewood

The shortest term discomfort to be aware of is [poison ivy](#), and the islands can be teeming with it.

The longer term issue is ticks and Lyme's Disease in

the worst case. We suggest collecting firewood that's out in the open on a sand bar. Be aware that the later in the summer you paddle the less chance they'll be of you finding any firewood that isn't in the woods. *Get to know your buddy* – if you do venture into the woods, ask someone to check you for ticks.

Purchasing Firewood

Keep in mind; based on the rental/outfitted package you purchase from WRO, you may already have firewood included with your rentals. If not, WRO provides nice sized bundles of firewood that generally last between 45-60 minutes. Our firewood is seasoned and ready to provide a memorable experience for you at your sand bar camping spot.

Many customers do a combo of purchased firewood to get a fire going and then use wood they've collected over the course of the day to supplement the purchased wood.



What Gear Should We Bring?

Rather than list the items here we've added a list at the end of this guide in a checklist format.

Work with your group to decide what is truly needed. A trip in early May is much different than one in the heat of August. Work together to avoid everyone bringing something that you don't really need 8 of, for example, cooking utensils, you don't need 8 spatulas.

Rain gear! You MUST be prepared to get wet on your trip. Just because it starts raining is not a reason to end your trip and we are frequently not in a position to pick you up "at any time and anywhere." You will be in the wilderness, no one has control of it and you must be prepared to deal with what it throws at you. You are better off packing rain gear and not using it than....

Our biggest pointer, ask yourself what you REALLY need for the length of your trip. Most paddles are out for 1 to 2 nights, there are a lot of things you can do without during that time. You should be asking yourself, "What can I do without for that short period of time?"

Finally, see [our YouTube Channel](#) for canoe and kayak packing videos and additional tips.

Additional Rental Items

Dry bags – HIGHLY recommended! If you pack right, you should only need one per canoe and should fit two non-cotton sleeping bags (because they pack smaller than bulky cotton bags), and a change of clothes for two. Doing a longer trip, consider one bag per person. See our [dry bag video](#). **NO ONE wants to sleep in a wet sleeping bag!**



Seat backs - a nice little luxury.

Jerry cans – for your water needs, 6 gallon containers.

Tents – smaller 4 person tents by ALPS

Sleeping Bags – LaFuma brand 25 degree bags.

Upgraded lightweight canoe paddles – great if you're doing a longer trip

Video Resources

[Canoe Packing Video](#)

[Kayak Packing Video](#)

[Comfort Package Information](#)

[Paddling a Tandem Canoe Solo](#)

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[Dry Bag vs Trash Bag](#)

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call or email us and we'll respond promptly.

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reservations@86641canoe.com

We look forward to seeing you on the water and showing you one of the best flat water rivers in the country!

Sincerely,

Scott and the WRO Crew

Would you...still...like \$10 off your first trip with WRO?

Is this your first time paddling with us? If so, we'd like to offer you \$10 off the first overnight trip you book with us!

Click the button below, fill out the form with your name and email address and you'll shoot you your unique coupon code to enter at check out.

Heck yeah, I want \$10 OFF

Packing List for Overnight Wisconsin River Trips



This is a wilderness experience; the Wisconsin River is NOT Six Flags. It's important you approach your trip in the correct frame of mind. Keep in mind; most people are on the river for 24 hours. There's no need to over pack and you don't need "the kitchen sink." The objective is NOT to see how much you can bring...but how little and still meet your needs.

Watch our [Canoe Packing video](#).

The #1 item that customers don't pack and wish they would have – Rain Gear! Please, please, please...bring rain gear! You are expected to finish the trip you booked. Rain is not a reason to end your trip early.

Italics = available for rent or sale from WRO

Convenience/Personal Items

- Sunscreen and lip balm w/ SPF*
- Sunglasses, polarized
- Insect repellent and itch relief*
- Book, cards, game
- Toiletries – toothpaste and brush, deodorant, etc
- Head lamp, flashlight*
- Matches/lighter
- Fire starter*
- Toilet paper*
- Baby wipes
- First aid kit and prescription meds
- Water bottle
- Hand sanitizer
- Saw – PLEASE leave the hatchet at home*
- Ball, frisbee, whiffle ball/bat, sand toys
- Multitool
- Camera, binoculars
- Fishing gear, license
- Trowel or shovel

Clothing (typical 2 day/1 night trip) Packing for July is significantly different than packing for early May/October

- Rain gear
- Wide brim hat

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- Bandana
- Swim suit
- 2 t-shirts
- Something dry to wear to sleep
- Long sleeve lightweight shirt and pants to keep the sun off you
- Lightweight jacket and stocking cap
- Sandals or wet shoes

Camping Gear

- Tent w/ drop cloth* (if it's dry when you put up your tent we recommend you NOT put a drop cloth down also, insure you have your rainfly and stakes)
- Sleeping bag* & pillow – if possible a 32 degree plus bag
- Sleeping mat*
- Camp chair/Crazy Creek stadium chair*
- Shade fly – tarp, canopy
- Rope or line

Cooking Gear – cooking on the river can be as complicated as you'd like

- Stove and fuel
- Matches or lighter
- Water jugs*
- Pots and pans
- Cooking utensils, can opener
- Eating utensils
- Plates, bowls, insulated mugs
- Coffee pot or French Press
- Bowls and strainer
- Cutting board
- Trash bags
- Biodegradable soap
- Paper towels
- Collapsible table*
- Cooler
- Hot pad(s)

Food

- Trail mix
- Granola bars
- Dried and fresh fruit
- Water
- Beef jerky
- S'mores

Presented by



Anatomy of a Sandbar on the Wisconsin River

Top 3 Tips

1. If a child's feet are wet, they should have a lifevest on.
2. ALWAYS watch for dark water, that means a drop-off.
3. If you do fall in, relax and drift with the current then work your way to shallow water.

Current

Sandbar - high and dry

Beware, Drop-off

Drop could be a couple inches or several feet

on the Wisconsin River

Beware, Drop-off

sandbar just breaking surface

Beware, Drop-off

Generally found on the downstream side of the sandbar



submerged sandbar

Current

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