

Poker Lake Loop



Participants: Janice and Bill.
Total distance: 9 Km, 1,650m in 10 Portages.

Janice: Thurs. Sept. 23, 1999. We parked on the south side of Hwy. 118. We arrived at 5:00pm and had to change our gear and food. We just finished an Algonquin trip for 4 and now we are 2. We put in at Bentshoe L. and paddled to the northern end. We are camped on a lovely site on the north-east side of the west arm. It's too bad there is so much garbage around here. We spent our evening cleaning up other people's mess. Both parking lots have a pile of garbage that people have left behind instead taking it home with them. Too bad. This part of the lake is very pretty and there are some nice sites here. We are in bed at 9:30pm. It's warm and they are calling for thunder showers.

Bill: Fri. Sept. 24, 1999. It rained through the night. It rained so much that it leaked through the tent and Janice had to move over. We packed up inside the tent and Janice headed out first. She went to untie the tarp and release the big puddle of water and as she did that, the tarp tore along the edge. I put it back up temporarily since it was still pouring out. We had cream of wheat for breakfast and then checked out all the other camp sites on the lake. We want to know the area well in case we bring our scouts to do the loop. We went back to the van to exchange the tarp for a good one we had with us. We went back to our camp site, had lunch, took down the tent and packed. It finally quit pouring but it was still completely overcast. We did the 325m portage to Poker L. It was up a hill and down a hill. At the put in it was a scenic view with the island in the fore front and coloured trees behind it. Poker L. is a nice lake. We portaged the 50m portage to the pond and had to paddle around the marshy brush to get to the main water (follow the canal). There is a marked camp site with a barrel toilet but it is pretty rustic yet. Did the 75m portage to Quirt L. and there is a scenic camp site high on a hill but only a couple of tent spots. The 75m portage into Cinder L. was OK but the first thing we saw across the lake was a cabin. We also saw some tarps at the shore where the alternate access is. We checked it out and a couple of guys were setting up camp for a primitive workshop on the weekend. Checked out the cabin and there is a big Buckhorn sign there so if anyone in Buckhorn is missing their sign, the Buckhorns have it. We paddled to the site on the big island and set up camp. There are some pioneer projects and 3 toilets. We were here in-between 3:30 and 4 o'clock. The sun actually showed itself for a brief period at 6:00pm between the clouds overhead. We hung stuff out to dry and had a delicious stew supper. Got a nice fire going even though everything is wet. The fish were jumping all around so I think I will try to catch some tomorrow.

Sat. Sept. 25, 1999. I was out first and tried to catch some fish, but nothing worked to lure them to my hook. Janice lounged around in bed and checked out the maps. Had Red River cereal for breakfast, dried our stuff and went for a paddle around the lake at 11:00am. There is a small camp site at the corner of this island across from the next island site. We saw a couple pull into a point on the east side of the lake which looked like it could be a nice site. There were 2 broken pails hung on trees with lids and a hole in the bottom. We don't know what they could be for.

Janice: One of these pails had an orange helmet with holes like a sieve and it was below the hole in the

pail. Peculiar. We paddled through the arrow head reeds on the north westerly end of the island. We checked out the island site west of the big island. Nice site, no toilet area, fairly small. There is a new site east of here on the bigger island. No blue barrel here either. This site could be very nice if it is used a little more. We are back at our site at 1:00pm and had lunch at 2:00. We fished and lazed the afternoon away. We saw a water snake swimming close by. Had a chat with a couple who are now camped at the new site on the other side of our island. They are portaging back the same way they came in (Quirt L) to avoid the marshy areas. They have read Kevin Callan's book and are going by his map. I paddled Bill around in the evening while he fished. (Only fair since he paddled me around in the afternoon.) It was nice. We have a great fire going and it is a full moon and a clear night. This is the life!

Sun. Sept. 26, 1999. We are awake at 6:45am. We had breakfast, packed, cleaned up and washed our hair. It's a beautiful sunny day. We left at 9:45am. We portaged 175m to an unnamed lake. The portage is along a creek and could be wet in the spring. We checked out a new site here. It's rustic yet with a blue barrel toilet, but has potential. The 175m portage is at the end of a small channel on the south side. You will portage over a small hill into Poker L. The 275m is a nice walk. Upper Crane L. is very nice and there is a large campsite with a blue barrel on the east side. There is a nice rock to swim off here. A small site for one is farther down on the same side. We didn't have to do the liftover into Lower Crane L. (my favorite lake). There are 2 campsites here, one on each side of the liftover on the north side. The site by the liftover to the east is my pick. The western site a little closer to the portage, has an interesting toilet, complete with tarp. The 300m portage to Bentshoe L. is easy to follow with lots of big flat rocks along the way. A man and 4 kids had a fire going at the put in. They were having lunch. This could be a nice campsite. We checked out the long point on the south side. It is more of a picnic site. There are lots of dirt mounds in the water here that we zigged and zagged around. There is another tent site on the north shore 3/4 of the way through the lake. We had lunch here around 1:00pm. There is one more tiny site on the southern point just before you head into the low water to the main part of Bentshoe L. We didn't have to do the liftover. There are lots of people in this part of the lake. We canoed to the take out and portaged to the parking lot, loaded, changed and left at 2:20pm. Nice easy portages and small lakes. We did not have trouble with muck this time of year. The sites were pretty clean with the exception of the one that we cleaned, but there are a lot of tables and things made here. It is a good loop to start out on.

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