



# Temaga- *mommy*

MOMS & 'DOTS' TRIPPING ON LIFE'S MAP

—By Nicole Leaper

People come from all over the world to experience Ontario's spectacular wilderness. Our 250,000 lakes and 100,000 km (60,000 mi.) of rivers have been explored for hundreds of years, but for the past three years there's been a unique form of exploration going on in the Temagami region. Groups of mothers and daughters (moms and dots) have been heading out with expert guide Caryn Colman and her 'dot', Emily, from their outfitting and lodge operation, Smoothwater, 14 kilometres (9 miles) north of Temagami on James Lake.



Photos L – R: Amelia takes a break; Caryn (white hat) with Alara and Kate

Photos L – R: A beautiful dragonfly; Caryn and her daughter Emily on top of High Rock

Twelve years ago when Emily was a baby, Caryn and her husband, Francis Boyes, took over the operation as a livelihood beyond the rat race of the city. They provide a very comfortable starting-off point for many campers, both experienced and novice. Caryn and Francis are both expert leaders of canoe, kayak and hiking trips. They can help you plan a route, supply your equipment and lead your whole trip, whatever level of care you need. They can have you flown into Lake Obabika to hike the old-growth forest.

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Trips begin and end at the lodge, which offers accommodation ranging from cozy rooms with private baths to bunkhouses with shared facilities. Breakfast and dinner are served at a long harvest table in the large main house. You feel like an honoured guest in the home of Caryn, Francis and Emily.

The moms and dots trip is just one of the many unique tripping options Smoothwater offers. Caryn is also an accomplished watercolour artist and a member of

Arts in the Wild, a group of outfitters offering packages that combine tripping with a variety of visual arts.

But the moms and dots trip is very special. Caryn came up with the idea after observing families at their lodge and the bonds they gained as a result of tripping together. She wanted to share that experience with her dot and other like-minded women. She is flexible on the idea. In my case the combo is aunt and niece. Francis would be happy to coordinate father and son groups too.

Emily has grown in the three years from a trip participant to a trusted and competent co-leader, becoming both playmate and mentor to the other girls. The day we arrive, the girls are full of excitement and anticipation for the trip. Emily takes us on a tour of the property, making us feel very welcome. Within the first few minutes my niece runs over to ask if she can skinny dip with her ‘beautiful new friends’.

Smoothwater provided us with packing lists prior to

the trip; we only need our clothes and personal items, they provide everything else. Upon arrival, Smoothwater staff go through your gear, eliminate unnecessary items and teach you how to pack. I will never pack the same way again. Camping teaches how little you really need. If you have to carry everything for days, you think twice about what is really necessary.

The packing lesson is followed by a dry land paddling lesson with certified instructors, before putting canoes in the water for some real paddling.

The night before we head out, we enjoy a Smoothwater signature dish, Spinach Galette, and share stories with other guests; some about to embark on trips, some just returning. Everyone is in awe at the beauty of Temagami, the 300-year-old forests and the vastness of this wilderness, which feature the highest ridges in Ontario. There are seven provincial parks in the Temagami region, but we will be exploring Crown Land. Crown Land is mapped with campsites and portages marked. No permits are required but the downside is, unlike provincial parks, you cannot book a campsite.

After dinner the moms and dots head to the ‘gathering hall’ to learn what to expect in the days to come and to

get to know each other better. Emily presents us each with a medicine pouch for collecting treasures on the trip, a diary for mom and dot to share and the multi-purpose camping accessory: the bandana.

The next morning we pack up our gear after a hearty breakfast and head out to our take-off point. Within a few minutes of paddling we see a moose and a painted turtle. It’s not long until our first portage. Well, Caryn says it’s more of a ‘lift over’ than a portage onto Iceland Lake. A few minutes later we are just a few feet from a pair of loons – the first of many.

**TIME DOESN'T MATTER**

Caryn has requested we leave our watches at the lodge. The first 24 hours I habitually check my empty wrist for the time, but soon grow accustomed to not knowing what time it is, and realize I really don't need to know. Caryn has an innate sense of how things are going; when we need a snack break, when the girls need an energy release, when to start looking for a place to settle down for the night.

We find our site in time for the girls to do some exploring after our lesson in how to set up camp.



We spend our days paddling the pristine lakes and rivers. On one river, we lean back on our packs and silently let the river carry us.

Caryn and our co-leader, Catherine Andrews, prepare a wilderness gourmet feast. I've always heard food tastes better in the wilderness, now I know it's true.

Sleeping in a tent has its pros and cons, but there is no question every child should experience it, and if you can share that with your child, all the better. It's a clear and starry night; we fall asleep to the sounds of loons and moms reading to their dots.

After a breakfast of scrambled eggs and Mennonite bacon, we break camp and Caryn leads a pre-paddle yoga session. Emily demonstrates a position that presents a challenge for the moms, but not the dots. Other breakfasts include pancakes with sautéed apples and couscous with dried fruit, always accompanied by organic tea and coffee.

#### SMOOTHWATER'S GIFTS

The most valuable gift you can give a child is your undivided attention, which is pretty hard to do in this world of distractions and interruptions. Adults and kids alike are constantly impaired by the demands of everyday life. Smoothwater has provided a way you can give this gift to a child and come away with an even greater gift for yourself.

One of the moms, Joanne Thomas Yaccato, has been providing this gift to her dot Kate for the past three years. Joanne is a best-selling business writer and much sought after public speaker. Her book *Balancing Act* has sold over 75,000 copies and provides financial planning advice for women. For Joanne, an essential part of her balancing act is to provide this opportunity to herself and her dot every year.

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She and Kate have grown from complete novices to very capable paddlers. On this most recent trip Joanne sterned the whole trip and Kate, the smallest girl, carried a canoe on her head with the

other girls and spent some time paddling in the bow of the canoe for the first time. Joanne beamed with pride at her dot's efforts. Joanne is the type to set a personal goal for each trip. On the other hand, Marianne McIssac and her dot, Alara are totally new to this and have no goal other than to approach the week with an open mind to new experiences and adventures. For Marianne and Alara, sleeping on the ground is not the best part, although you'd never know it from the giggling coming from their tent.

Caryn fills our evenings around the campfire with stories meant to relieve some of the girl's fear of things that go bump in the night. But really, there is no need, Caryn is such a calm, strong leader you always feel safe. Around the fire we talk about the animals we saw that day, and read native medicine cards to learn from the strengths and weaknesses of these symbols of nature.

#### ENDLESS SKINNY DIPPING

We spend our days paddling the pristine lakes and rivers. On one river, we lean back on our packs and silently let the river carry us. The river opens into one of Ontario's most beautiful lakes, Wasaksina. Our lunch stops are especially exciting, one is on a cliff top and another is at a little falls where the girls can body surf. Lunch is a smorgasbord of delicious items, such as a variety of cheeses, cured meats and always followed by chocolate. Dinners can include soup, salad, chili, stirfry (secret



Photos L—R: Time to portage—Kate and Amelia; Say c-h-e-e-s-e! Moms, at the back, from left, Marianne, Joanne and Caryn, and dots, from left, Kate, Amelia, Alara, Emily and Catherine.

ingredient is dried mango) spaghetti bolognese and always a homemade dessert. The girls amuse themselves near the campsite by exploring in the woods, discovering a Queen's throne on a rock ledge or a Gnome home at the base of a tree and of course, endless skinny dipping.

The final day we have a challenging paddle on our biggest lake of the trip, Lake Temagami to High Rock, a sacred native site. A 10-minute hike to the top takes us to a spectacular view of the Temagami region in all directions.

Back at the lodge the girls are thrilled to be treated to a dinner of hamburgers and the 9 kg (20-lb.) chocolate cake. Caryn is a confessed foodie and takes obvious pleasure in providing the best organic ingredients

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available. The meals are hearty; fit for trippers. You are welcome to help yourself to seconds but hold back a bit, dessert is always special; ranging from the decadent chocolate cake decorated with

edible flowers from Caryn's garden to a delicious Blueberry Kuchen (recipe on page 20).

Afterwards we reflect on what we've learned over the past several days, about ourselves, our skills, our new-found friends. The next day we head back to reality, but Temagami will always hold a special place in our hearts. ☀️

*Turn to page 90 for more information on Temagami trips.*

*— Nicole Leaper is Publications Manager at Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership, publisher of Ontario magazine.*

# Temagami Trips

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