

Protect our wildlands. Know and adopt ethics of Leave No Trace. Visit www.LNT.org Plan Ahead & Prepare

- Know BWCAW rules and regulations. Prepare for extreme weather. Use a map and compass.
- Reduce litter by repackaging food into reusable bags or containers to remove excess packaging.

Minimize Visitor Impact

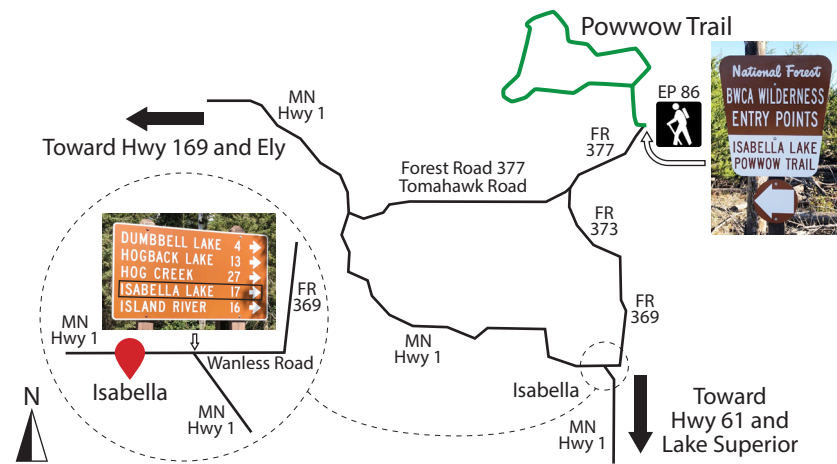
- Use a lightweight stove for cooking.
- When fires are permitted, use an established fire grate and keep fires small.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash, and make sure the fire is completely out.
- Travel and camp on established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses, or snow.
- Keep campsites small, stay in an area where vegetation is absent. Don't enlarge campsites.
- Walk in single file in the middle of the trail even when the trail is muddy.
- Hammocks are not advised on the Powwow Trail as post-fire trees are not sufficiently mature.

Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter. Burning trash in fire grates pollutes and is illegal.
- Deposit human or dog waste in latrines or bury 6" deep at least 200 feet from a water source.
- Wash yourself and dishes with biodegradable soap at least 200 feet from streams or lakes.

Respect Wildlife

- Do not follow or approach wildlife. Never feed animals. Store rations properly.



The Powwow Trail shares a parking lot with canoe entry point Isabella Lake. There are brown directional signs to Isabella Lake at the Hwy 1 turnoff and at all further intersections.

From Ely

- Take MN-1 east and south toward the North Shore for 18.4 miles.
- Turn left/east onto Tomahawk Road/FR 377.
- Follow Tomahawk Road 17.6 miles to Powwow trailhead.

From Lake Superior North Shore/MN Hwy 61

- Turn northwest onto MN Hwy 1 toward Isabella, MN. Travel 22 miles. The next 17 miles from Hwy 1 to the Powwow trailhead/Isabella Lake are unpaved forest roads.
- Turn right/east onto Wanless Rd/FR 172. Travel 0.8 mile on Wanless Road. Continue to follow all signage to Isabella Lake.
- Turn left/north onto FR 369. Travel 6 miles.
- Veer left at the fork onto FR 373. Travel 5.2 miles.
- Turn right at the "T" onto Tomahawk Rd/FR 377. Travel 5.1 miles to the Isabella Lake/

2 Powwow Trailhead turnoff sign on your left.

North/South Wilder Lakes stream crossing to Pose Lake campsite spur—4.0 mi

- North/South Wilder Lakes stream crossing to Pose Creek crossing—3.1 mi
- Pose Creek crossing to Pose Lake campsite spur—0.9 mi

From the Wilder Lakes stream crossing, the trail makes a 0.3 mi loop up and over, then down toward South Wilder Lake. The trail then forks: the right fork descends to the South Wilder shoreline water source; the left fork proceeds another 30' to reach the fire grate that overlooks the lake. The trail continues west from the fire grate.

The most rugged and rocky section of the trail follows the South Wilder shoreline on the way to Pose Creek. One-half mi past the east end of South Wilder is the "Football Field" dispersed camping area—a rare flat segment of trail. A seasonal drainage crosses the trail at the east end of the Football Field. Continuing east toward Pose Creek, the trail winds through a dense jack pine corridor, with many steep drops and climbs. An impressive 180 degree overlook of the creek valley is just off a 90 degree corner, 1.0 mi east of the Football Field. The last 0.5 mi to Pose Creek has more steep climbs up and over rock outcrops. "The Cubic Step" uses a squared rock to scale a 25' cliff.

After one more short wetland crossing, the trail reaches Pose Creek. Uphill from the creek is another dispersed camping area, with vistas and, during wet seasons, the sound of the creek flowing through the valley. Pose Creek has been an unreliable water source in 2020 and 2021. The winding trail continues east and north until rejoining the old logging road corridor at a 90 degree corner. Pose Lake is now in view to the north. One-half mi further is the cairn-marked spur trail to the restored Pose Lake campsite. The latrine is located 6' off the spur trail on the right side about 50 yards before the fire grate. There are 6+ tent pads.



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Pose Lake campsite spur to return to wye—3.0 mi

- Pose Lake campsite spur to small Powwow trail sign at 2nd wye—1.7 mi
- Small Powwow trail sign at 2nd wye to loop junction wye—1.3 mi

Just past the Pose Lake campsite spur is the turnoff for the discontinued portage to Lake Insula where, in 2001, a hiker lost his way with no gear, food, or water. He survived six snowy days in a makeshift pine shelter awaiting rescue, as told in Cary Griffith's book *Lost in the Wild*.

After crossing an ancient 0.25 mi long beaver dam, the trail returns to the old logging road and becomes smoother and straighter. Water can usually be obtained at the small drainage crossing 0.2 mi east of the Pose Lake campsite spur, or at the culvert running under the trail another 0.75 mi further.

A small "Powwow" sign marks the 90 degree turn to the south, known as the "2nd wye." The last 4.0 mi, including the already-hiked 2.7 mi stem from the wye to the trailhead and parking lot, are a mostly straight, wide corridor.

Lake Three/Horseshoe Lake portage to stream crossing between North and South Wilder Lakes—3.9 mi

- Lake Three/Horseshoe Lake portage to North Wilder Lake campsite—2.9 mi
- North Wilder campsite to North/South Wilder Lakes stream crossing—1.0 mi

The worn portage between Lake Three and Horseshoe Lake creates a highway across the Powwow Trail, making it easy to know where you are on the map. Water is available at the portage and along the trail following the northern Horseshoe shoreline. The trail dips after 0.4 mi to negotiate a 20' section of swamp before climbing high above the lake. Panoramic views and an 8' tall boulder overlooking the lake greet hikers. For camping at the Horseshoe Lake canoe campsite, locate the 0.1 mi spur traveling south from the boulder running directly to the lakeside site. If continuing your loop, the trail turns sharply left/northeast at the boulder, away from Horseshoe Lake. East toward North Wilder Lake, sparse jack pines and higher elevation provide distant views of Lake Four to the north and Horseshoe to the south. Look carefully in open areas for rock cairns and cut fallen trees defining the trail, and scout ahead for the next cut to make sure you stay on the trail.

North Wilder Lake comes into view 2.0 mi from the Lake Three/Horseshoe Lake portage. Bouldering down a rock face is required to reach the lake, where the trail is carpeted in a thick layer of jack pine needles. Thousands of fallen trees have been cut in this area, making the trail easy to locate. One-half mi down the lake is a hammerhead-shaped inlet where the trail again goes across bedrock. There is easy lake water access here, and it is a good site to take a break. Look for the pre-fire standing tree with surviving blazes facing both north and south.

The North Wilder campsite may not be marked on current navigation maps. It is 0.9 mi from the north end of the lake, with small rock cairns marking the spur leading to the fire grate. There is good (short, but steep) water access. Flat pads can be found for 4+ tents. The fire grate is scenically located across from a small island on North Wilder Lake.

Leaving the campsite, follow the trail southwest away from the lake until reaching the portage between North Wilder and Harbor Lake. The trail makes a sharp right, shares the path with the canoe portage for 40', then leaves the portage with a left turn onto the designated trail. Hikers will now be walking south along the waterway between North Wilder and South Wilder Lakes. The trail is rugged here, with some rock scaling required. The stream between North and South Wilder Lakes, a good water source and easily crossed on rocks, marks the end of this section.

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Entry Point 86, Powwow Trailhead to wye—2.7 mi

- Trailhead to Isabella River campsite and Isabella River bridge—1.0 mi
- Isabella River bridge to wye—1.7 mi

The trail begins in the northwest corner of the Isabella Lake parking lot, just to the right of the information kiosk. After the first flat 0.5 mi walk, a USFS sign marks the entrance to the BWCAW.

Another 0.5 mi further is the Isabella River, a reliable water source and a campsite with space for 6+ tents. The site is used by canoeists and backpackers and may be occupied during peak season. A rare BWCAW wooden bridge crosses the main Isabella River channel, with log balancing or rock hopping required to cross a secondary seasonal channel. Continuing north from the Isabella River, you will be walking on what was once a gravel logging road. North 1.0 mi of the river crossings is a long marshy beaver dam.

A clearing at 2.7 mi marks the “wye” junction with the loop portion of the trail. North from the wye takes the hiker counterclockwise around the trail; a left or western turn takes the hiker clockwise. This guide takes you in a clockwise direction, west from the wye.



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Wye to Diana Lake Bridge—3.9 mi

- Wye to Fallen Arch Creek—0.9 mi
- Fallen Arch Creek to Flapper Creek—0.6 mi
- Flapper Creek to Marathon Lake rock ring—1.1 mi
- Marathon Lake rock ring to Diana Lake bridge—1.3 mi

West of the wye, the hilly trail follows mostly straight logging roads. A few minutes hike west of the wye is the 10' long Pelt Creek beaver dam crossing.

About 0.75 mi further, hikers will see Fallen Arch Lake to the right/north and soon cross the Fallen Arch Creek. Another 0.7 mi west is an unofficial camping location at Flapper Creek, with flat tent areas on both sides of the creek. Both Fallen Arch and Flapper Creeks were dry for much of 2020-21 and should not be counted on as reliable water sources.

A pre-fire backpacking site at Marathon Lake has a rock ring, but no actual fire grate. Marathon Lake has a marshy shore but is a reliable water source.

The Diana Lake vicinity is an unburned “green zone” with a newly-laid (Nov. 2020, pictured above) tamarack log bridge crossing the lake outlet. Multiple tents can be pitched at the spacious green zone 100 yards west of the bridge at an old logging landing. Reliable water is at the Diana bridge.

Diana Lake bridge to Quadga Lake campsite spur—2.5 mi

- Diana Lake bridge to Campfire Lake fire grate—2.3 mi
- Campfire Lake fire grate to Quadga Lake campsite spur—0.2 mi

Before heading west from the Diana green zone, it's a good idea to fill up on water from Diana Creek. The trail in the vicinity of the next lake, Campfire, is marshy, with sections underwater depending on the season. Campfire Lake has a fire grate, tent pads, and a great view from the lakeshore, but water access is mucky. The next water source will be either 0.5 mi to Quadga Lake, or 0.80 mi from Campfire at the Myth/Exploit stream crossing

One quarter mi from the Campfire fire grate is the start of the 0.25 mi spur to the green zone Quadga canoe campsite, with lakeside water and plenty of tent pads. The site may be occupied by canoeists.



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Quadga Lake campsite spur to Mirror Lake fire grate—3.4 mi

- Quadga Lake campsite spur to Superstition Lake fire grate—2.0 mi
- Superstition Lake fire grate to Mirror Lake fire grate—1.4 mi

Hikers can expect to be picking their way through grassy bogs and on top of beaver dams in the area approaching and just west of the Myth and Exploit Lakes water crossing. After the beaver engineering, the trail enters an unburned zone where mature conifers shade the trail for about 0.75 mi as hikers round the bend north toward Superstition Lake.

The trail then follows the southern and eastern shore of Superstition Lake. About 0.10 mi from the turn north, look for the 80' spur sloping down to the fire grate, sited on a peninsula. Two or three small tent pads are close to the fire grate, situated about 20' from the lake and water access. Look for a rare post-fire white pine growing beside the lake.

About halfway between Superstition and Mirror is a rock ledge with seasonal water drainage. When flowing, the gurgling stream makes a refreshing spot to refill water, rest, and enjoy the vista.

As you hike north from the rock ledge, keep a lookout for cut logs and occasional cairns to stay on trail. Mirror Lake will come into view on the right/east side. The trail passes through the Mirror Lake fire grate clearing, across from a small island. Water access involves scrambling down a steep, switchback rockface north of the fire grate. There are plenty of flat spots and room for 6+ tents.

Mirror Lake fire grate to Lake Three/Horseshoe Lake portage—3.8 mi

- Mirror Lake fire grate to Path Lake campsite—1.6 mi
- Path Lake campsite to Rock of Ages Lake campsite—0.5 mi
- Rock of Ages Lake campsite to portage between Lake Three and Horseshoe Lake—1.7 mi

The trail here is rugged as it crosses over bedrock outcrops and open forest. It briefly follows Mirror Lake north from the fire grate, then makes a left/west turn away from the lake, descends and routes to the left around and above a large swamp (See map below). The trail follows above the shoreline of Mirror until the lake narrows; check your map. At the narrowing, the trail is close enough to the lake for water access. There is a short rise from the lake, then a turn straight west again for about 0.1 mi before the trail heads north once more.

The high trail between Mirror and Path is lovely. There is water access at the far south end of Path Lake and at the flat rock shore in front of the Path Lake fire grate. When you see a magnificent standing white pine skeleton to your right, watch for the "T" in the trail where the right turn brings you to the shoreline and fire grate, or make a left turn to continue on the trail to Rock of Ages.

Hiking from Path Lake to Rock of Ages Lake is another scenic treat, with rocky climbs and descents. Carefully follow the rock cairns where the trail crosses a grassy field. About 0.5 mi north of Path Lake, watch for a sentinel trimmed jack pine and a chest-high crumbling gray boulder on your left alerting hikers to the short spur trail down to the Rock of Ages rock slab lakeshore. When you find the lakeshore, you have found the campsite; turn away from the lake and climb two levels of rock ledge to locate the fire grate.

The scenic trail from Rock of Ages to Lake Three has a bedrock stretch just north of Rock of Ages with long views to the east of a massive rock wall. In the coming few years, jack pine growth will block the vista. This segment crosses seasonal streams.

Approaching Lake Three, there is another green zone. Massive fallen red pines have been cut away from the trail. Another couple hundred yards in, there is a significant stream that can be waded through or crossed by means of two huge fallen cedars. Shortly ahead on your left is the spur trail to the popular Lake Three designated canoe campsite. It's in a green zone, with the fire grate located on a peninsula and many flat tent sites.

Continue on the trail another 0.2 mi until reaching the end of this section at the canoe portage between Lake Three and Horseshoe Lake.

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