

The Wild Institute

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Wilderness trips for women, Professional

Speaking, Personal Coaching

PADDLING AND POETRY

August 21-24, 2008

"It is astonishing how many people cannot, or will not, hold still. I could not, or would not, hold still for thirty minutes inside, but at the creek I slow down, center down, empty...I retreat—not inside myself, but outside myself, so that I am a tissue of senses. Whatever I see is plenty, abundance. I am the skin of water the wind plays over; I am petal, feather, stone." Annie Dillard

Open to poets and would-be poets. Whether you're new to poetry or want to carve out some concentrated time in a beautiful place to write, this trip combines the beauty and fun of river canoeing with the expertise of a poetry instructor, and time built into the trip for writing.

The Namekagon River is an ideal location for inspiration. It has been called "one of the ten most beautiful rivers in America" by *Backpacker* magazine. It has a gentle current and occasional riffles (not big enough to be called rapids) for learning and playing along the way. Located in Northwestern Wisconsin, the primary occupants are bald eagles, otters, beaver, turtles, deer, and waterfowl, and we often see them in the late afternoons. It is a designated "wild and scenic waterway" so rich in wildflowers and wildlife that one of the Namekagon ranger-naturalists said her previous assignment, the Grand Canyon, was "boring by comparison."

You do not need any previous canoe or camping experience for this trip. Women new to canoeing and "seasoned paddlers" have traveled with us on this route. We'll show you how to paddle easily through the faster current, or take time to play in the waves. The focus on this trip is not about pushing yourself beyond limits or learning that you can handle challenging situations—you already know that, and you probably do it every day. This trip is designed to inspire you, inside and out, getting away from cell phones and daily routines, and into living at nature's pace.

Our poetry guide is Su Smallen, an award-winning poet and author of *Weight of Light*. Su teaches poetry and writing for Hamline University's Master of Fine Arts program, for St. Olaf College, and privately. She came on last year's Boundary Waters canoe trip and quickly saw the natural fit of paddling and poetry. Her love of the outdoors and her generous, inspirational teaching style create a welcome environment for going deeper into your writing and yourself. In and around the rhythm of the day's canoeing, Su will read a few poems, sharing some gems about what makes them work. Mary Oliver, Alison Deming, Jane Kenyon, and Lisel Mueller are some possible poets Su will talk about. You will receive suggestions and prompts to spark your own writing, and thoughtful, supportive feedback. You'll have time in the mornings or evenings to write, and our last morning will be a celebration and reading of poetry written on the trip (optional sharing, of course).

The details...

What to bring: When you register, you'll receive a detailed packing list, so you'll be sure to have what you need. You bring only your personal gear, writing materials, sleeping bag, and sleeping pad. Tents are provided at double occupancy. If you prefer, you are welcome to bring a small solo tent.

How much experience, how in shape do I need to be: You do not need any prior canoeing or camping experience for this trip. Though many women use their trip as motivation to get in better shape before they go, no particular level of fitness is necessary for this trip.

Who are the guides: Chris Heeter, Founding Director of The Wild Institute and author of the weekly poems, Wild Thoughts, teams up with Su Smallen for this adventure. Chris has traveled on and loved this river for over two decades. Having guided women's wilderness trips for 24 years, she has a deep understanding of the restorative nature of women traveling together in the outdoors and is excited about the incredible potential of poetry in that environment. Su Smallen, author, professor, and founding member of the Laurel Poetry Collective, "writes with eccentric grace and clarity." Her poems are "expertly crafted and by turns joyful and elegiac—always full of the wonderment and strangeness of life." Find out more about Su at: <http://susmallen.efoliomn1.com>

Weather: August is a spectacular time to be in northern Wisconsin. Most of the bugs have left, days are in the 80's (and sometimes 90's), nights can get down to the high 50's.

Meals: Food matters! We bring hearty and delicious primarily vegetarian fare. Many women are surprised by the amount of fresh vegetables and mouth-watering menus prepared outdoors.

What does my trip fee cover: Your trip fee of \$375 includes all canoe and camping equipment, poetry instruction, river permits, all meals from Thursday dinner through Sunday lunch, and your guide team of Chris and Su.

Schedule: We'll meet at 1:00 on Thursday, August 21 at our put-in on the river (directions to follow when you register). We'll gather, re-pack gear into Duluth packs, and shuttle cars to the end of the route. From there, we'll be on river time! On Sunday, August 24, following our writing celebration and a tasty lunch, we'll paddle a few short miles to the take-out, planning to be off the water by mid-afternoon.

Transportation: The section of the Namekagon River that we'll be paddling is about a two and a half hour drive from the Twin Cities, about six and a half from Chicago. If you are flying, the closest airport is Duluth, MN. Plan your return flight for late evening on Sunday (August 24). Detailed directions to follow when you register.

Payment information: Your deposit is not refundable. If you must cancel, please do so in writing. If you cancel 50 days prior to the trip or more, the balance of your trip fee is refundable; 30 to 49 days, the balance of your trip fee is transferable to any other Wild Institute trip through the end of the following year; 0-29 days, the trip fee is not refundable or transferable. **We strongly recommend that you purchase travel insurance so that you can recover your losses should you need to cancel your trip.** Some companies that Wild Institute participants have used are: CSA Travel Protection (800-348-9505) www.csatravelprotection.com/comfort, or Travel Insured, 800-243-3174. The Wild Institute reserves the right to alter trip plans due to severe weather, water/snow conditions, or other unforeseen circumstances.

How do I sign up: A deposit of \$125 holds your spot, and payment in full is due by July 10, 2008. With your deposit, please send name, address, phone, and e-mail address.

