



# THE ADVENTURE DOESN'T END

BY DARREN BUSH

The sun was setting, a blood-red sphere casting a subtle pink light on the canvas tents overlooking Bahía Candelero. We were on Isla Espíritu Santo, a large island an hour's boat ride from La Paz, Baja California.

We loaded into kayaks—big, comfortable tandem kayaks that allowed for stronger paddlers to support those with less experience—for a day paddle. Mom jumped into the front cockpit, and I took my place as the motor.

We paddled in turquoise water, looking down at the anemones, starfish, and shy reef fish scattering as the shadow of the kayak passed over. Given the number of cormorants around, I'd hide too if I were them.

Around the point into a calm bay, we stopped to relax a little, take a few pictures, and enjoy the warm sun and sand. We were barefoot and happy, while at home in Wisconsin, it was below freezing.

It was a multigenerational trip—my favorite kind. We had young kids, teenagers and their parents, and five or six grandparents. Every decade of life was represented. My own Mom was there at a young 74, and she wasn't the senior on the trip.

We invited Mom to go to Baja after our previous trip because we knew she'd love the beaches, snorkeling with sea lion pups, and spending a day on a skiff in Magdalena Bay to hang out with grey

whale babies. That previous trip when we sat on the beach looking at that blood red moon, we knew we needed to bring her here, and never considered her age to be a factor.

Sleeping on the ground in a tent can sound horrible to some, but a three-inch air mattress makes it downright swank. With the wind blowing across the mangroves and the sound of the waves, Mom slept like a baby. Indeed, we all had trouble crawling out of bed in the morning until the smell of breakfast wafted through camp.

We were in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), a boreal paradise in the arrowhead country of



Minnesota. We paddled the Vermillion River, though at this point in its journey, it's more of a lake that moves a little. We paddled through reeds and wild rice, enjoying the view of the white pines lining the shore. It was Mom's lazy day, but the next day, she'd have to work a little to get to where we were going.

Our canoe cut through the water with surprising speed. It was a big four-person canoe—23-feet long, 35-inches wide—that, despite its size, weighed just 64 pounds. I was in the stern; Stephanie was in the bow; and our two kids, paddlers since they were toddlers, provided even more power from midship. Mom sat in the middle with her camera, lounging until she saw a loon.

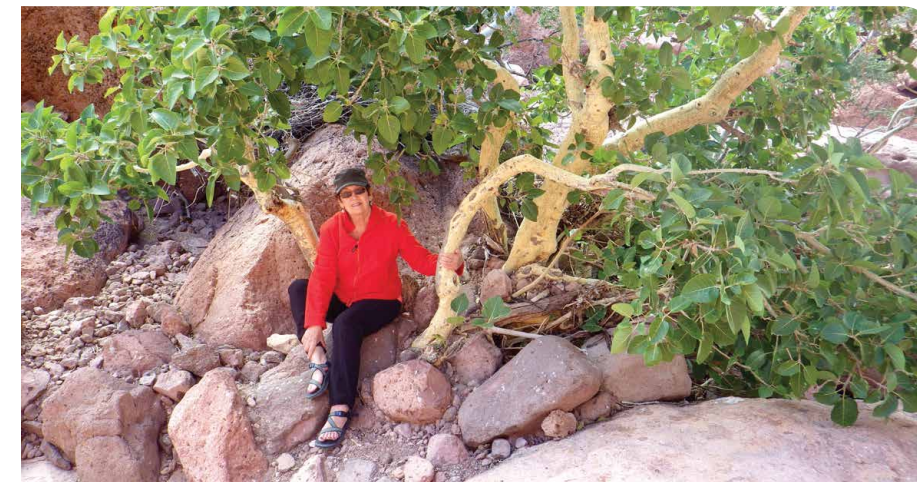
North Hegman Lake is on the edge of the BWCAW, easily accessed by a short walk and longer paddle. It's home to one of the best Native American pictograph art sites in Minnesota. The rock paintings are 500 to 1,000 years old, and there's evidence people have lived there for 9,000 years. Given the beauty, it's not surprising.

I carried the canoe on my shoulders, and Mom carried our paddles. We had a quarter-mile walk to get to South Hegman Lake, then a three-mile paddle to the area where the pictographs are found. Mom took her turn paddling, providing remarkable power as we scooted past cliffs and inlets, her camera always at the ready.

I love taking Mom on outdoor trips. She's a sport putting up with my wild plans, and doesn't complain about the mosquitoes or flies—she swats them with the rest of us. To her, age is just a number, and we've found that she can do anything we can do, it just takes a little longer sometimes, and once in a while she needs an arm of support if the trail is muddy. But that's true for all of us, isn't it?

*Darren Bush is the owner and chief paddling evangelist at Rutabaga Paddlesports.*

*Photographs provided by Darren Bush.*



You don't have to be miserable outside. There's no real bad weather, just the wrong clothing. Mom gets a little colder faster than we do, so we adjusted her wardrobe. We got her a base layer that wasn't cotton. Merino or new synthetic underwear feels great against the skin, dries fast, and wicks moisture away from your skin—as wet underwear means you'll be cold and clammy.

Second, good thick merino socks and a nice pair of fleece-lined mittens. Hands and feet get cold first. Adding a hat will reduce your heat loss and indirectly warm your toes.

Third, protection against wind. A little wind can suck the heat out of your core, and your organs need heat to function. Wind shirts cut the breezes, and windproof fleece does the same while adding insulation.

Finally, insulation itself. Dressing in layers is preferable as you can regulate your temperature by putting on or taking off layers. That said, I carry a very compressible down jacket with me. It's the first thing I put on when I get to camp as my body adjusts to not producing as much heat as before.

As for sleeping, you'd be surprised at the sophistication of sleeping systems. There are air mattresses that are insulated, self-inflate, and feel better than most hotels I've slept in. Technological advances in sleeping bags also make for a very comfortable sleep.

