

Summer Plans – Camping, Canoeing, & Hiking

Starting to make your troops Summer Camp plans? Are you going to do the same old summer camp experience your unit has been providing for as many years as the troop's been in existence? Are you going for just a week or can the unit do two weeks at camp this year? Ever thought about going to two different locations? Maybe the local council camp for the first-year scouts and the ones that don't like long trips and another week in the mountains or in Boundary Waters or see if you can get into Summit for a week for the more adventurous. Do you have enough trained leaders and adults to support the commitment and transportation? Any new parents planning to join their sons at camp this year? Do you have any special medical or menu needs this year? Do we camp old school (rough it a little) or look for air conditioned cabins or somewhere in between?



Camp Choices: In-Council, Out-of-Council, Out of Region, Theme, Landscape or Adventure oriented: Boundary Waters, Mountain or Ocean-side, Historic – Did you know there is a BSA camp 27 miles north of the Gettysburg Battlefield, Camp Tuckahoe is also only 2 hours from Washington DC? Did you know there is a BSA camp 7 miles from Yellowstone and the Tetons National Park? Do any of the camps offer a regular camp for the younger scouts and a high adventure camp for the

older scouts in the mountains like Ben Delatour and Elk Horne near Red Feather Lake, CO?

Amenities: Merit Badges, Dining Hall-Family style or tray & lines, Patrol Cooking, Provisional Camping, Chuck wagon trail cooking, swimming pool, Lake for fishing and swimming, snow-feed creek/river for Fly Fishing, canoeing, rowing, stand-up paddleboards, jet skis, sailing, motor boating, Stream/River for rafting/ kayaking, river tubing, kayak polo, guided



whitewater rafting, cardboard canoe races, Mile Swim BSA, Scuba, snorkeling, waterskiing, water carnival, horsemanship, horse/mule trekking and horse camping, Pioneering Projects, trail hiking, 50-mile cross county treks, bouldering wall, ATV training and trail rides, climbing areas-real rock face or constructed, zipline(s), mountain boarding, BMX Bicycle, mountain bike trail rides, Ga-Ga Ball, Frisbee Golf, Kubb, Kickball, Volleyball, Ultimate Frisbee, golf, COPE - Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience Course, mountain-man camps, conservation projects, Morning Chapel located between campsites and dining area, archery, rifle shoots, shotgun shooting, musket shooting, tomahawk throwing, static targets/moving targets, OA Day/Tap out ceremony, caving, tree-house campsites, mountain bikes, geocaching, caving subterranean Program, Paul



Bunyan Woodsman Award, buffalo, deer and antelope herds near or on the camp property, eagles, wild turkey, ducks, geese, loons and hawks living around the camp lake, beaver and otters, watching humming birds on the dining hall porch, etc.

Additional Training Opportunities

Campfire Program Planning, Interfaith Worship Planning, Trek Safely, Safety Afloat, Safe Swim Defense, Outdoor Leader Skills Training, Climb On Safe, BSA Lifeguard, Aquatics Supervision Award, Pressurized Fuel Training, PADI Open Water Diver Certification

Other considerations: Length of Time in camp, Travel time to camp, Preparatory Training time - if needed, Other places to visit to/from camp, Boy Scout/Military bases to stay at enroute, Cost, Funding sources, Do the scouts need a fundraiser to help defray the cost, Modes of transportation-Air, train, bus, POV, Adult leaders to scout ratio, extra drivers, discount for adult leaders, camp cost compared to other camps plus transportation, no micky mouse pricing structure, different prices for in- and out of council units, etc.



Opinions from Scouts and Leaders of the Perfect Summer Camp

Many camps have C.O.P.E. courses for older scouts or have a program that's separate for the regular camp. For example, two years ago at a summer camp I did this program that was two days hiking and two days kayaking and that was my entire summer camp. I'm not sure if your camp can do this yet though.



Things I've picked up on how people rate summer camps are staff enthusiasm, and friendliness. So make sure you have staff that are happy to be there. Secondly, ceremonies are a big one. The camp needs to have a standout ceremony and have skits that are well thought out and don't look like last minute ideas. The ceremony program needs to be exciting, not to long and impressionable. Thirdly, the Dining Hall. Make sure instructions given to waiters (if you have them) are clear and no confusion and the food should taste good. Not a joke, my troop has picked to return to summer camps

based on the food. Fourth, have competitions and programs after merit badges sessions every day. For example, on Wednesday troops can compete for the golden paddle (old paddle painted gold that can be given as a trophy). Troops must make a boat out of any materials that you have at camp. Example boat - lash sticks together to form kayak shape and wrap tarp around.

What you do during merit badges matter as you are in handicraft, you want to be safe but you can't be too strict that the scouts don't have fun. Try to make the scouts make something that has a purpose and see if you can let them keep their projects (would be expensive so might not be feasible). Maybe the camp wants bird houses put up, you could have your scouts make them.



Most of what I just said was about the camp as a whole, not just merit badges. Just keep in mind you need to have fun that's low cost which can be hard to find. Last thing, flag raising/lowering should be done with

military precision. Practice before hand, no matter how many times you have done it before. Many senior scouts and adults will have more respect for the camp for this attention to detail. There are a lot of veterans and adults that appreciate this being done right. Most have great influence over the troop, so with that said. Make sure the camp appeals to adults and scouts alike. Adult programs could be like a rifle shoot competition, leader training, advanced skills. Program area assistance, team building and comradery.

By the way, make sure camp bathrooms are clean. It's disgusting to clean but it will keep campers happy and coming back. And pick up the trash and candy wrappers.

- Perfect camp: TOP NOTCH FIRST YEAR CAMPER PROGRAM! - that use adults from the scout units when needed - HIGH ENERGY STAFF.
- Staff members that visit camp sites of units to make them feel welcome and helpful.
- Staff members that have compassion for the scouts.
- Staff members that will go ABOVE AND BEYOND - they are not working for a pay check, they are working because they love scouting!
- Staff members that put the CAMPERS FIRST, Leaders Second, And themselves last.
- ALL INCLUSIVE PRICING - no nickel and diming the scouts! Be ready for the rush!
- Old fashion. NO WIFI FOR SCOUTS! Leave the cell phones at home!
- Tether Ball. Have a bunch of tether ball poles up. Put them around the trading post, and common areas where scouts can mingle.
- Well-stocked trading post and keep it stocked. Excuses only make it worse.
- COPE Course – Well organized, enthusiastic and safe!
- Family Style Dining – Mix the troops and leaders from other units, Makes more friends.



Have a happy, energetic, enthusiastic staff that always appears to be having fun (even when they're not). Make sure they're not distracted by their phones, caught up too much in their intra-staff business, or worse, complaining to the kids.

Make sure the activities are fun. Regardless of the merit badge schedule, make sure the scouts have ample opportunity to have fun. Some MB classes will have boring parts, and that's OK. But no class should be all boring. Find ways to spice up the requirements (but also fulfill them).

Don't become a Merit Badge mill. Have other activities (including ones that aren't advancement based). Make sure you have evening program, but also allow time for the troop to be together. Have them involve the staff in their activities (my camp has a closing campfire, and then the troops have their closing activity; often inviting staff to join them).

Have a wide selection of activities to choose from, but don't spread yourselves too thin. Make sure you have proper functioning equipment if you offer a program. Nothings worse than trying to sail with a leaking boat, or having to go 4 campers to 1 bow when they need to shoot for advancement. Feel free to limit the number of scouts per class so your staff isn't spread too thin either.

Do you cook, or have the troops do so? Either way, make sure they eat well. Either provide them with time to cook properly, or provide them with good food. Food service can make or break a camp, because hungry scouts don't have fun.

Make a theme for your summer, and have areas play into that theme. A few years ago, we did 'Fantasy Worlds' for our cub camp. Each area was a different fantasy world, and was decorated accordingly. For Boy Scouts, you'll want to do something older, but make sure the theme is appropriate and relatable.

As the leadership of the camp, talk to the leaders. Make sure they know who you are, and that you're available (area directors, key-3, etc.). Encourage them to bring problems to you so you can fix them, and do so. Be happy that they brought these up to you, and they'll leave happy that you tried.

And get as many people going to NCS as applicable. It's super helpful. And hire people who are interested in the position. You want people who want the job, not whomever you can stick into it. This might take a few years to achieve, but make it your goal now.

Good luck and have fun!

Outpost Programs

The Outpost Programs offer the opportunity get Scouts out of camp and into exciting activities. Most programs offer a dutch oven meal for dinner.

Outpost Activities

- Action Archery
 - Briley Creek Gun Club
 - Supper with Snakes
 - Carnival in the Woods
 - Cliff Hanger
 - Davy Crocket
 - Diner in the Oaks
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- Indian Village
 - Lewis & Clark Canoe Trip
 - Lobo's Challenge
 - Mountain Man Village
 - Turkey Wing Gun Club
 - Up and Down Cave



Mountain Man Area

Travel back in time to 18th Century Appalachian Virginia where a single shot muzzle loader, an axe, and a hunting knife were the only tools a man needed to survive. At Mountain Man, Scouts will dress, eat, and live like the Long Hunters who explored, trapped, and eventually settled Virginia's western frontier.

- Cook over open fire
- Muzzle-loading Riflery
- Make your own Green River Hunting Knife and sheath
- Blacksmithing
- Wilderness Survival
- Living History

Requirements

- Age: 13+ by camp year, ability to backpack gear 1.5 miles.
- Leadership: Provisional program, Need adult for 5 or more youth.