

Guide to Outdoor Activities Planning



**Prepared by Robert Waeltz, Scoutmaster Emeritus and
Coordinator of Outdoor Programs.**

September 10, 2020

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Types of Outdoor Activities.....	4
Outdoor Program Planning Steps	5
1. Meet with the TLC.....	5
2. Make a reservation	6
3. The budget	6
a. Camping Fee's	6
b. Transportation Costs.....	6
c. Activities Costs	7
d. Other costs	7
4. Promoting the Trip.....	7
a. Prepare a trip flyer	7
b. Social Media	8
c. Website	8
d. Meeting Promotion.....	8
5. Trip Roster.....	8
6. Trip Logistics.....	8
a. Menu Planning and Equipment needs.....	9
b. Pre-Load	9
c. Special Planning Issues.....	9
i. Medical Forms.....	9
ii. Transportation Plan	9
iii. Trip Directions.....	9
7. After the Trip.....	10
a. Drivers	10
b. Report to the Treasurer	10

Introduction

Outdoor adventure is the promise made to boys and girls when they join Scouting. Young people yearn for outdoor programs that stir their imagination and interest.

In the outdoors, they have opportunities to acquire skills that make them more self-reliant. They can explore canoe and hiking trails and complete challenges they first thought were beyond their ability. Attributes of good character become part of them as they learn to cooperate to meet outdoor challenges that may include extreme weather, difficult trails, and portages, and dealing with nature's unexpected circumstances.

Scouts plan and carry out activities with thoughtful guidance from their Scoutmaster and other adult leaders. Good youth leadership, communication, and teamwork enable them to achieve goals they have set for themselves, their patrol, and their troop.

Learning by doing is a hallmark of outdoor education. Unit meetings offer information and knowledge used on outdoor adventures each month throughout the year. A leader may describe and demonstrate a Scouting skill at a meeting, but the way Scouts truly learn outdoor skills is to do them themselves on a troop outing.

Scouting uses the patrol method to teach skills and values. Scouts elect their own patrol leader and they quickly learn that by working together and sharing duties, the patrol can accomplish far more than any of its members could do alone. The patrol succeeds when every member of the patrol succeeds, and Scouts learn that good teamwork is the key to success.

Exercise and fitness are part of the outdoor experience. As Scouts hike, paddle, climb, bike, or ride, their muscles become toned and their aerobic capacity increases. When they work as a patrol to plan menus for their outings, they learn to purchase cost-effective ingredients to prepare flavorful and nutritious meals.

Service to others and good citizenship is learned through such outdoor activities as conservation projects, collecting food, building trails and shelters, and conducting community service projects that promote healthy living. Through helping other people, Scouts learn to appreciate how they can share themselves and their

blessings to those in need. By giving service to benefit others, Scouts gain a sense of personal satisfaction.

Types of Outdoor Activities

Day hikes—Reasonably short hikes (3 to 10 miles) in terrain without a lot of elevation gain or loss.

Service projects—Daylong projects that may be related to conservation, food collection, building shelter, or healthy living activities.

Patrol activities—A Scouts BSA patrol may hike or camp with other patrols in the unit. Two registered adult leaders 21 years of age or over are required at all Scouting activities, including meetings.

Weekend overnights—Troops that plan and carry out outings once a month attract and retain youth at a much higher level than those that have fewer outings during the year.

Camporees—Councils and districts plan camporees and other outings during the year that give Scouts an opportunity to test their knowledge and skills in competitive events with other troops and patrols.

Summer camp—Summer camp is what many Scouts enjoy most. Camp programs provide numerous opportunities for Scouts to earn merit badges along their advancement trail. Resident camp includes at least five nights and six days of fun outdoor activities.

Jamborees—Every four years, the Boy Scouts of America hosts a [National Scout Jamboree](#). More than 40,000 Scouts and leaders from across the country participate in this 10-day event filled with the most popular and highest quality outdoor activities Scouts enjoy. To participate, a Scout must be at least 12 years of age by July 1 of the jamboree year and be a First-Class Scout.

Council High Adventure—A high-adventure experience includes at least five nights and six days of trekking in wilderness and other rugged, remote locations. Trekking may include backpacking, canoeing, mountain biking, horse packing, mountain climbing, ski touring, rafting, kayaking, or a host of other outdoor adventures. Participants must be at least 13 years old by Jan. 1 of the year they participate.

National High Adventure—The BSA operates national high-adventure bases and programs. With two locations in the Florida Keys, the [Florida National High Adventure Sea Base](#) offers a variety of aquatic and boating programs. The [Northern Tier National High Adventure](#), based in northern Minnesota with two satellite bases in Canada, provides a variety of canoe treks and programs. [Philmont Scout Ranch](#) in the mountains of New Mexico provides excellent backpacking treks. The [Summit Bechtel Reserve](#) in the mountains of West Virginia is the backdrop for Whitewater Rafting in the New River Gorge, High Adventure treks, as well as a Scout camp program for merit badge programs and all around Scouting ad. The Summit Bechtel Reserve is also home to the National Scout Jamboree.

No matter what form the outdoor activity takes, they require planning. We hear too often that trips are boring, or scouts did not have fun. Perhaps, the issue is not the trip but possibly the issue is the trip planning. That is the reason for this guide, to help the trip coordinators plan a fun and exciting trip so that there are no more “boring” trips.

Outdoor Program Planning Steps

1. [Meet with the TLC](#) – The troop leaders council is the governing body of the troop. The outdoor program planner should make it a point to meet with the TLC to discover what they want out of any trip. Remember, this is not your program it is their program. You should arrange with the Scoutmaster to meet with the TLC about 2-3 months in advance. It may take more than one meeting to fully develop the plan for a trip.
 - a. What type of trip is this – One of the most important aspects of trip planning is what type of trip are we taking. That question must be answered as it will determine everything that goes on afterward. For example, is this a patrol feed trip or is it a troop feed trip. Are we on a time schedule, if so, this could affect what type of meals they plan? Are we backpacking or canoeing, are we biking? These questions have other logistical issues that you as the trip planner must be aware of.

2. **Make a reservation** – You should be thinking about a reservation to camp at least two months out from the date of the trip and sometimes more. The big question here is, where will the troop stay while on the trip. Some places are more expensive than others and this must be taken into consideration. Can you stay at a scout camp? Maybe a state park? Is it more expensive to stay at a state park out of state? Canoeing or backpacking? Where will we be staying along the way? These are very important questions that must be answered and typically a budget cannot be prepared until this is complete.

3. **The budget** – We attempt to travel as inexpensively as possible. This, however, depends greatly on what the TLC has decided they want to accomplish on the trip. The trip budget should be developed taking into consideration all aspects of the trip. It must include camping fees, transportation costs, fee's for activities, fuel, supplies etc. If possible, trip coordinators should present the budget to the troop committee, at the monthly staff and committee meeting the month prior.
 - a. **Camping Fee's** – This is self-explanatory. For example, if you pay \$300.00 for a camping fee for an entire weekend, you must make an estimated guess as to how many youth and adults will attend. Then take the fee and divide by your estimate and that will be the per person cost for camping. I tend to round up when it comes to camping fees.

 - b. **Transportation Costs** – This should include both fuel and tolls. Again, you will need to make an educated guess. There are formulas that will help you, but you will need to decide how many will go, how many vehicles to take and how many will fit into a vehicle. You must also remember that a car towing a trailer will spend more in fuel and tolls. Be sure you take that into account. You must do everything possible to limit the number of vehicles we take, however, in times of COVID-19, the more vehicles the better.

- c. **Activities Costs** – Again, the TLC will need to guide you here. What activities will they do while away? Are we visiting a national park or museum? If so, what does it cost? Will we need to register canoes? What is the cost for that? Some activities are much more expensive than others. Whitewater rafting is one of the most expensive activities. This all must be factored into the budget.

 - d. **Other costs** – There may always be some unknown factors as far as the budget is concerned. I try to leave a little bit of a cushion in case something comes up. For example, we went to Rhinebeck Aerodrome last year and there was some discussion about purchasing patches for the boys. There was enough in the budget to accomplish this, so we bought the patches. It does not always happen but it's nice to know the money is there.
4. **Promoting the Trip** – You should begin to promote the trip until when you have established the spot to camp, what the activities will be and have a viable budget. All these things need to be a part of the trip promotion.
- a. **Prepare a trip flyer** – Everything you want to promote should be on the flyer. There needs to be a section to be returned to you with the scouts and scouters names and patrols. Can the scouter drive/tow and the number of seats? This will be important for transportation planning. Please remember dates. Are there hard dates that cannot be changed due to reservations? You need to include them in the flyer. There must be a drop-dead date for all scouts/scouters to reply. Remember that the price and date need to be there. Also, make sure the methods of payment are there, cash/check/Venmo. I have attached a sample flyer as an addendum to this packet.

- b. **Social Media** – Troop 3 has two very active social media accounts. Our Facebook page and our twitter page are great for promoting events. Please be sure to use them. See either Mr. Grimes, Mr. Marks, or Mr. Waeltz to post on Facebook or Mr. Walsh and Mr. Waeltz for twitter.
 - c. **Website** – Be sure a copy of the flyer is sent to Mr. Walsh so that he can include it onto the website.
 - d. **Meeting Promotion** – This is the most effective form of promotion. You need to have the flyer ready to go at this point. Remember to keep an eye on the calendar and coordinate with the Scoutmaster as to when promotion should start. The troop calendar must guide you so that there is enough time for patrols to plan.
5. **Trip Roster** – This is an important part of the trip planning process. Once a scout or scouter gives you a flyer return and pays for the trip, he should be added to the trip roster. I use an excel spread sheet and have several columns to the roster. I have attached a sample roster as an addendum to this guide.
- a. Excel spreadsheet – I have several tabs in my spreadsheets. There is a tab for the roster that includes the name, patrol, payment, form of payment. There is another tab for transportation and a third tab for the final financial report to the troop treasurer. I have included all three as an addendum to this document.
6. **Trip Logistics** – Bear in mind that every aspect of the trip is your responsibility as the trip planner. The one exception is the actual implementation of the plan, that function remains with the Scoutmaster. That being said, the Scoutmaster should rely heavily on you to make sure that the plan that the TLC and you have put together is implemented as planned.

- a. **Menu Planning and Equipment needs** – This is a function of each patrol and the Scoutmaster will be sure that there is time to complete these items during a regular troop meeting.
- b. **Pre-Load** – For most every trip, a preload night will be necessary. This removes the stress of having to load on Friday night. Pre-load will typically be completed on either Wednesday or Thursday prior to departure. Each patrol will need a representative and the troop QM will need to be present.
 - i. Patrol equipment lists need to be complete and this includes the adult patrol. Your adult grub master should be advising on what items he needs to prepare meals.
 - ii. Many times, we arrive at camp without basic items. It is up to you to be sure that everything patrols need go along with them. This is the idea behind the patrol QM.
- c. **Special Planning Issues** – This would include issues such as how to move boat trailers or bike racks from one place to another. This will need additional scouters to complete. The same issues would occur on a backpacking trip. You will need to arrange for these issues to be taken care of as a part of the trip planning process.
 - i. **Medical Forms** – Be sure a copy of the troop roster gets to the medical officer. He will provide you with the proper medical forms for the trip. In addition, the AED and a first aid kit must go on every trip.
 - ii. **Transportation Plan** – This is an essential part of the trip planning process. The transportation plan should be completed when the trip roster is complete. Be sure to keep two adults in every vehicle if possible. It is advisable to maximize the space that you have available without overcrowding. Make sure you identify someone who can tow the trailer if needed. Some trips do not require the trailer to go along.
 - iii. **Trip Directions** – It used to be that every driver was provided a packet with a roster, who was in his vehicle and directions to every location we would be attending. I still provide this

information, however with GPS most will not use it. I still suggest you provide the information.

7. **After the Trip** – There is one important item to be completed after the trip has ended. You are required to turn all receipts into the treasurer and account for any money spent.
 - a. **Drivers** – Drivers should submit to you all receipts. This includes gas and tolls.
 - b. **Report to the Treasurer** – Once you have collected all receipts, complete a final report to the treasurer. I list all receipts and who they came from. I then total that column and then list expenses and who turned in receipts. I total that column and then subtract. I have included an example as an addendum to this guide.