Campout Planning Guide

For large-scale regional campouts, check out the Hullabaloo Planning Guide

Organizing a group campout can be a lot of work, but it is also very rewarding and fun. This guide will walk you through planning, from date and site selection to recruiting volunteers.

Camping Considerations

Before you plan out your camping schedule for the year, there are some questions to consider:

- What are the best times of year to camp where you are?
- What is your group's scouting year like and how do you want camping to fit into that?
- Do you want to do more all ages campouts or do you want to camp by section?
- How is your group going to pay for campouts (is it built into your yearly fees or do you do a separate charge?)
- Are there activities that your group would like to do that may lend themselves to a campout?

Some groups opt for quarterly campouts year round, others pack monthly campouts into the summer. Groups located in hot areas may camp more in the winter and skip the summer months.

Types of Campouts

Depending on the type of campout your group is looking to do, there are different considerations to take into account.

Campout at an Established Campground

The biggest difficulty camping at an established campground is often securing a site. Group sites can range in size from 12 people (probably too small for a scout group) up through 250. Amenities (potable water, bathrooms, etc.) can also vary considerably. Depending on who who manages the site, reservations generally open between 6 and 12 months beforehand, and can often go quickly, especially during weekends in the high season.

Some options to look into for group sites:

- recreation.gov: Federally managed sites (national parks, USFS)
- reserveamerica.com: A variety of campgrounds, including some state parks and private campgrounds
- State Park Systems: some do their reservations through Reserve America, but many have their own reservation systems.

- County/Regional Parks: reservation systems for these vary widely.
- Private Campgrounds: reservation systems for these vary widely.

Another possibility if you can't secure a group site is to try to get multiple individual sites within a campground, but this can be difficult, both in terms of being able to get enough sites and in terms of conflicts with camping neighbors. Those in sites adjacent to yours may not appreciate the hubbub that comes with a scout group, and your group may not want to be dealing with groups of rowdy adults partying into the night.

Dispersed Camping

Dispersed camping (or camping outside of a designated campground) may be an option for your group depending on where you are located. This type of camping involves having to bring in or filter your own water and figure out a privy solution, but can also give you more flexibility when it comes to dates and timing. Do your research ahead of time to make sure that you are allowed to camp there and keep in mind that not all families will have high clearance vehicles, so you will want to ensure that the roads to the location are traversable.

Backpacking

If you are doing a backpacking trip, you will want to follow guidelines for group size (generally less than 12) and ensure you have proper permits for the place you are going. Some areas are more competitive when it comes to permits than others. You may have to split into smaller groups and camp separately to follow wilderness guidelines. If permits are required for the area you are visiting, they can generally be obtained through recreation.gov.

Lodge/Cabin Trip

Some groups do a winter lodge visit. These generally require a good deal of preplanning and must be booked well in advance. They are also usually more expensive than a typical campout and must be arranged with the owner of the property.

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