

Outdoor trip planning: tips & traps & who to call

Work by Jim Beller, former Outdoor Chairman, November 1999

Are you planning an outdoor trip under BSA 365 auspices? Here's a review of considerations: information about [reservations](#), [finances](#), [paperwork](#), [gear](#), [bus rules](#), [pointers](#) on the trip, [follow-up](#), and [other](#) considerations. Browse this freely!

GENERAL

Make your trip a neat experience. Put your thinking cap on, and talk with Scouts. What would they like to do? Work up a plan for what's really cool!

Many trips are a repeat or close variation of past trips so a file will be available with trip planning information along with direct help from someone who has handled the planning for this trip in the past.

RESERVATIONS

Some trips require reservations to be placed well in advance (up to 6 months) for items such as:

- ❑ Campgrounds & public such as state parks or privately run campgrounds including AEP Recreation Land campgrounds in southeast Ohio. Some heavily trafficked backpacking areas like the Great Smokies National Park require reservations and prior park approval.
- ❑ Canoes (from an outfitter at the destination or Council canoes which are rented by the trailer load (8-10 boats)) with PFD's and paddles.
- ❑ Hotel rooms — Holidome trip or when traveling on a long trip where overnight camping isn't practical.
- ❑ Out of council camporees or jamborees.
- ❑ Patches and trail medals — These are typically included in Camporee/jamboree fees but must be ordered in advance for other trips.
- ❑ Trip guides — Such as Pat Kelly for wild caving trips.
- ❑ Riding horses

FINANCES

Campout fees are intended to cover all trip expenses (food, gas, fees, etc), however, placing reservations and pricing the trip means guessing at the number of attendees. Generally, we use the number of people who went the last time plus room for another 5. If the trip turns out to be lightly attended, the troop will wind up eating some costs but the alternative is restricting the number of attendees, which we would rather avoid.

People incurring expenses (buying food, reservations and other fees, gas for bus) will send their receipts to the troop treasurer (Scott Craig) for reimbursement. A troop check can be written up front for sizable expenses. The trip leader will collect the

campout fees and forward those to the troop treasurer with a trip roster.

If personal vehicles are taken in lieu of the bus or are specifically brought as "chase" vehicles, "sag wagon", to pull equipment trailers or supplement a full bus then their gas would be reimbursed out of the trip fees. If people take their cars for personal convenience (to leave early or arrive late) then their gas is not covered in the trip fee.

CAMPOUT FEE

When cooking is done by patrol, meal cost is budgeted at \$2/person for breakfast and \$3/person for lunch and supper (evening) meal. Each patrol must have an individual responsible for planning the menu, buying food and supervising the cooking and clean up (this is a 1st Class advancement requirement). The troop does not stock plastic utensils or paper plates, cups, napkins or paper towels although you may find leftover supplies of this nature in the equipment garage. It is the responsibility of the food purchaser to buy these supplies, if they are desired, out of the food budget. Often you'll find leftover charcoal in the garage but check and make sure before counting on it.

On long trips it often makes sense to include money in the trip fee for restaurant meals eaten on the road rather than counting on the boys to have sufficient pocket money which could also get lost on a long trip. Fast food meals can be figured at \$4-5/each while pizza or a cafeteria-style restaurant would be more.

Gas money can be figured on expected round trip miles using 6 mpg for the bus burning unleaded regular gasoline. Gas money should be included for other vehicles as discussed earlier and the gas money divided by the estimated attendance number (use previous year's attendance) to formulate the trip fee. Campground fees, patches/medals, equipment rental for activities and other appropriate fees are included as well.

PAPERWORK

Flyer

The trip flyer/permission slip will need to be ready and copied for distribution at a weekly troop meeting 4-5 weeks in advance of the trip. Russ Line may want it earlier if there is a Court of Honor coming up to make sure parents are aware of the trip. If you have access to a computer, you can massage a file for the trip flyer from the previous year or a previous campout. If you don't have access to a computer let the Outdoor Chairman (Jim Belier) know so he can get the trip flyer prepared. In addition to the small print legalese waiver statement, the flyer needs to cover the "where, what and when" of the trip as well as what to bring (any special equipment and pocket money for road meals). The bottom of the flyer includes the permission slip with your name, address and number.

Scout Council Tour Permit

The local Scout council has a standard Local Tour Permit Application (2 sides), which must be completed and sent to the local council office at Simon Kenton Council, Boy Scouts of America, and 1901 E. Dublin-Granville Road, P.O. Box 29207, Columbus, Ohio 43229-0207. The form will be stamped by the local council office and should be received prior to departing on the trip. The shortcut method is to fax the form to the council office at 436-7917 to Lorrie's attention and she will fax the approved form back to you within 1-2 days. The phone number for the Council office is 436-7200.

The information on "Safety Afloat" and "Safe Swim Defense" training only apply to trips that include these activities. If you're not sure of the number going, make your best guess and the driver's license information is only included for people driving the bus or vehicles used to transport troop equipment or Scouts other than the driver's son. No one under the age of 18 is allowed to drive on a Scout trip.

National Tour Permit

A different form, called a National Tour Permit Application is used for trips over 500 miles each way. Don't count on the fax for this. Plan on two months to get the permit.

Emergency Medical Authorization Forms

The trip leader needs to bring the completed permission slips plus the emergency medical authorization forms along on the trip. Russ Line keeps a complete set of emergency medical authorization forms for the entire trip, which can be borrowed for the duration of the trip. Russ will need them back for the next troop activity.

It is also necessary to take a first aid kit for the group along with additional kits if you intend to break up into several groups for the activities. Russ Line also has a large blue fishing tackle box, which contains major quantities of first aid supplies.

Troop Roster

Russ Line will need a roster of who went on the trip for his records so make up a roster before leaving of who is attending which can be used to identify the boy's patrols, who is responsible for food, who has medicine which needs to be administered (check permission slips) and any other particulars. Include the adults on the list as well.

Bus Notebook

Before starting out, make sure the bus notebook (in red binder) is on-board. It contains insurance papers, vehicle registration, applicable warranty information and emergency phone numbers.

Border Crossing Information

Trips that involve crossing the Canadian border will require proof of citizenship paperwork for the border patrols. Valid passports will work of course and the alternative is a notarized copy of an individual's birth certificate, which will need to be sent in with

the trip permission slip.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- ❑ At the Monday *meeting* prior to the trip, get with the patrol leaders prior to the “patrol corners” session and let them know how many are going from their patrol so they can determine who will be responsible for food and let you know. Have them make sure the mess kits and patrol coolers have been returned from the previous campout if people had them home for cleanup.
- ❑ Often the numbers attending from several patrols will be low so the patrols can be combined for the campout. Let the food people know how many people and which meals to plan for as well as their overall budget.
- ❑ The bus driver must have a CDL so it's necessary to make sure that at least one adult with a CDL is making the trip.
- ❑ Where the adults cook as a separate patrol, one adult needs to be lined up to take care of buying the food.
- ❑ Most trips require some instruction to be given to the boys on clothing, equipment, safety, etc at the Monday troop meeting 1-2 weeks prior to departure. The past trip file will generally contain necessary handouts that will need to be copied and you or someone will need to deliver the necessary training at the troop meeting. Older Scouts such as Eagles can assist with putting this training on.
- ❑ Check with the patrol leaders on the Tuesday night preceding the trip *if* you're not confident that food responsibilities are clearly identified.
- ❑ Review the completed permission slips and check with parents of kids that are taking medicines to see what arrangements are needed.

GEAR

Boys are responsible for their own tents, personal gear, eating utensils, cup & plate plus food and stoves on backpacking trips. Have them load the troop gear first and then their personal gear. Combination for the trailer lock is 3653 and keys are required to get into the equipment garage, white cabinets, for the hitch lock and bus ignition, fuel tank cover and rear door lock. Contact the quartermaster (Bob Iddings) if there are any questions regarding troop equipment before or after the trip.

Outside of backpacking trips, the following troop gear will be brought from inside the storage shed:

- ❑ Dining fly (in white cabinets), including bag of collapsible center ridgepoles, long bundles of corner poles and plastic tubes with stakes held in with black rubber straps. There is one odd-size dining fly so avoid it if possible. One for each patrol. The poles are color coded if you look closely.
- ❑ Patrol box, which should include 2-burner propane stove, mess kit and cooking utensil roll, cleaning detergent (liquid soap), monkey wrench, plastic drink cooler, cooking oil and matches. One for each patrol.
- ❑ Long green plastic tote box (a.k.a. “the coffin”), which has propane “trees” for

stoves & lanterns plus various and sundry other supplies. This box, along with a full size blue trash can hold leftover plastic utensils, paper plates, cups, etc, which are leftover, supplies from other campouts that can be drawn from.

- ❑ Large white propane cylinder for each patrol.
- ❑ Metal folding table (painted light green) for each patrol. Adults also have a supplemental wooden table and trestles and (if they can find it) an extra wooden patrol box with extra condiments and 5-year-old instant coffee.
- ❑ Propane camping lantern in maroon plastic box for each patrol (in white cabinets), check condition of lantern globes and mantles.
- ❑ Galvanized steel washtubs, 3 for each patrol.
- ❑ Water jugs, 5 gallon cans can be filled in church at janitor's closet sinks prior to starting out, at least 1 per patrol. Bring and fill them all if you won't be near a water source to refill the jugs.
- ❑ Each patrol has a cooler, which people who bought food can transfer their food into. There are also dark blue plastic totes in the garage, which can be used to bring the rest of the food.
- ❑ There is at least one Dutch oven for each patrol if they are needed.
- ❑ Hatchets, saws and axes are in the white cabinets if they're needed for fire building. There are generally 1 qt capacity propane cylinders if they'd come in handy.

BUS RULES

All Scouts must be wearing their Scout shins when they board the bus/vehicles for departure. They must wear the shirts (buttoned and tucked in) at all stops made along the trip. No food or drink is allowed on the bus other than water, although special dispensation is granted to the bus driver. People driving their own vehicles can apply the same food and drink rules at their own discretion. Obviously, the boys are expected to take care of the bus, no standing on seats, dropping trash, etc. CD/cassette players must have headphones.

ON THE TRIP

Divide the adults up between the patrols as needed to provide coverage to supervise setup, cooking and clean up. The intention is for the boys to lead and generally the 13 & 14 year olds know the drill and do a good job running the show. The intent is for adults to intervene only if necessary to reinforce the authority of patrol leaders and to instruct the younger boys how to set up, cook and clean, not to do the work for them. The older boys are generally quite ready to handle these duties but occasionally the adults need to take them aside to make sure they're looking ahead to what needs to get done next. Make sure there is a (acting) senior patrol leader and make him responsible for organizing and leading activities as much as possible.

Maintain "2 deep" coverage during activities, particularly if disciplinary action is to be implemented. A parent can tent with their son, but may not tent with another youth. Women are treated the same as men in planning adult coverage, but separate restroom

and bathing facilities are required.

In public, the boys represent our troop and all of Scouting, so responsible behavior is expected. No abuse is tolerated or foul language. Exceptions can generally be handled by having the offenders apologize to the group or hand out extra chores. In severe cases, parents can be called to come pick their son up.

Campfires are fine if there are no burning restrictions at the campsite. Fires should be burned down to ashes. Outside establish fire rings, replace sod over the fire pit to remove any scars. Practice "no trace" camping and form a police line after packing up to make sure the campsite is clean. Repeat the sweep until no trash is found.

On the trip home, have each patrol decide who will take the mess kit home and run it through the dishwasher. The patrol cooler should be taken home and washed and dried as well. If the dining fly is wet, it must be taken home by someone and dried.

On arriving home, unload all gear and don't let anyone leave for home until all of the following is done:

- ❑ Troop gear is packed away in the garage, including the trailer.
- ❑ Extra napkins, paper towels, paper plates, plastic utensils, etc can be deposited in the long green tote box or the full size blue trash can for future use.
- ❑ Bus is picked up (trash), swept and seats washed if necessary.
- ❑ All extra food is given away. Do not put any food (even canned) in the garage.

FOLLOW-UP

- ❑ Give Emergency Medical Authorization forms and first aid kits back to Russ Line along with a copy of the trip roster.
- ❑ Send campout fee money to troop treasurer (Gary Roos)
- ❑ Add any additional relevant information to the archive file for this particular campout and return to the outdoor chairman or adult Scouter who is maintaining these records. Include a trip roster, flyer and trip permit and write a short report on results, any problems or planning considerations.
- ❑ Report to the troop committee at the next meeting (generally the Monday night after a campout) on how things went and line up a representative (or yourself) to talk about the trip highlights at the next Court of Honor.