

Taking Scouts Camping

In theory, taking Scouts camping should be one of the easiest things in the world, as the majority of the progressive training within the Scout section is centred around camping, and activities that can more easily be achieved under a camping environment. However, as any Leader will tell you, it can be a nightmare!

The Patrol system is perfectly designed to work within a Camping environment. One Patrol can be completely self-sufficient, setting up their own area, cooking and cleaning for themselves, and in fact should be able to cope completely without Leaders, if the PL is competent enough. Although not as common as they used to be, Patrol Camps are perfectly permissible, where the PL organises and runs everything without a leader permanently on site.

Although it often falls to Leaders to organise the menu, programme, organising equipment and all other aspects of the camp, Scouts should be involved in deciding what sort of activities are undertaken. When taking a whole Troop on camp, it is often easier for everyone to do the same programme rather than each Patrol doing their own thing. You will need to keep Scouts active at all times, although of course 'rest periods' should be included.

Choosing accommodation

The majority of Scout Camps are held under canvas, at either a permanent Scout Campsite, where you will be able to meet other Troops and share activities and games, or in a farmer's field. This type of camp where you stay at the same site all week is known as a "Standing Camp".

A full directory of UK permanent Scout Campsites is available. You will normally need to provide all your own equipment, although some equipment (such as pioneering poles) and things relating to any adventurous activities provided by the site, are usually available there for hire.

With a "Standing Camp", Scouts should always put up their own tents, possibly with the guidance of Leaders. If they do not know how to put up a Patrol Tent, then it is a wonderful opportunity for them to learn - and possibly also to pass off a badgework 'tick'! Individual 'Patrol areas' should be marked off, with each Patrol having their own sleeping tent, fireplace, wood store, chopping area and washing up area, with a number of 'gadgets' to make life easier. Everyone should help with 'communal areas' such as store tents and marquees, and in theory even Leader's tents - if you trust them!

You may, of course, prefer a different type of camp to the traditional "Standing Camp". It is possible to have a 'moving camp', sleeping at different locations each night, and travel between them either by a hike-, horse-, cycle-, or water-based camp Further information on these is available.

You may still be sleeping under canvas if you choose one of the alternative types of camp.

If you are at an Activity Centre, you will usually be in dormitory accommodation, and all catering equipment is normally provided, meaning you will only need to take personal kit and any activity equipment not supplied by the Centre.

Catering

It is normal for each Patrol to organise their own food and washing up whilst on a "Standing Camp". This is normally on a wood fire of some description, although of course for practical reasons you may prefer to use gas. Sometimes it is easier for Leaders to do all the cooking, although the Patrol system should be encouraged. You will normally have to take your own equipment if camping under canvas. It is normal for Leaders to do all the shopping for a Troop Camp, although again if Scouts want to do it then that is fine.

If you are staying in an Activity Centre, then all catering utensils may be provided, and some of the larger ones also provide all meals.

If you are on a canal barge or similar, then the facilities offered in the way of catering differ greatly, but you will normally have to organise your own food and do your own cooking.

If on a 'moving camp' (hiking, cycling, horseback, canoe or similar) carrying your own food and equipment, you will probably need to take portable gas or Trangia stoves, as well as small sets of Billies for cooking in. Your menu will also need to be simplified to use as few pans as possible.

Badgework

A Scout Camp is a wonderful opportunity to achieve many different Scout badgework requirements. Apart from the obvious things such as "Camp a total of 12 nights under canvas" and "Pitch, strike and pack away a Patrol tent", activities such as major pioneering projects (towards the Pioneer proficiency badge), cooking a meal on a wood fire or a Tracking exercise that are difficult to do on a Troop night can be achieved with considerable success. Proficiency badges such as Camp Cook, Camper and Camp Warden can easily be achieved through camping, and a number of other badges such as Elementary Canoeist, Observer, Hiker and Pioneer can be achieved through activities whilst on Camp that would be difficult to organise into Troop evenings.

Type of Camp

Although it is common to have a 'theme' on Cub Camps, by Scout age this is usually too 'babyish'. However, there are a number of different types of camp, such as Training camps (usually weekends, the main aim being to refresh skills in preparation for a longer camp) and Activity Camps (the aim being to undertake as many adventurous activities as possible).