

SUMMER CAMPS FOR BOYS & GIRLS RIDGECREST

Dear Sioux Trailblazers,

The summer is close at hand, and I hope you are looking forward to all of the challenges this summer has to offer. If you've never been a Trailblazer before, you have an exciting experience to look forward to, filled with adventure, fellowship, and growth. The Blazers are a small group that learns the value of close relationships in harmony with the nature God has blessed us with here in the mountains of North Carolina.

The Trailblazers live together in Trailblazer Inn during their time in camp, but are divided into two groups when out of camp for the most part. We have found that the National Forest Service doesn't allow large groups in many areas, nor does the Appalachian Trail Conference. Additionally, safety and environmental stewardship are the keys to this group system working. The Blazers have no more than 12 members in each group and are led by two staffers. If you prefer to be in the same group as another camper, you can indicate that on your camper application.

There is some equipment that is necessary for you to bring to camp this summer as a Trailblazer:

Pack/Backpack: An internal or external frame pack with a hip belt is recommended. A suitable pack should have a volume of 3200 – 4500 cubic inches (53-75 Liters). Camp has a limited number of external and internal frame packs that may be borrowed. Your local outfitter can assist you in finding a pack that fits best.

Sleeping Bag: A compressible, synthetic-filled, mummy-style bag that can be stuffed in a stuff sack or compression sack is ideal. A temperature rating of 40 degrees is fine for late spring/summer backpacking. There are a number of economical manufacturers of these kinds of bags including Slumberjack, Campmor, Sierra Designs, The North Face and Mountain Hardwear. PLEASE AVOID BULKY, RECTANGULAR BAGS. These are heavy, cumbersome, and lose their insulating qualities when wet.

Sleeping Pad: This is not a required item, but is recommended for comfort

on the trail. Foam pads (Ridgerest, Z-rest style) are light and inexpensive and are ideal for a session as a Blazer. Self-inflating pads (Therm-a-rest) are also available and are extremely comfortable.

Boots: Boots that are “broken in” are the best as they provide ankle support while hiking. New boots that are not broken in can cause painful blisters and other problems. Trail shoes or tennis shoes are suitable if they have a good tread and can be laced tightly. You must guard your ankles and strengthen them before camp, though. **PLEASE AVOID SKATE SHOES OR FOOTWEAR WITH WEAK TREAD.**

Sandals: Chaco or Teva-style with a back is best for relaxing at camp or for whitewater trips and creek hiking.

Socks: 2-3 pair of wool or synthetic socks are best for hiking. Liners for hiking socks are also recommended. Avoid cotton if possible.

Rain Gear: Light, “breathable” rain gear (jacket, parka, rain suit) is best. It is important for this outer layer to be “breathable” as you are exerting yourself in the rain. Also, keep weight in mind when shopping, as some rain gear can be quite heavy and cumbersome, and not fit for hiking.

Layering: The layering system is ideal for cooler nights, and this can be best achieved with a fleece jacket or pullover. Fleece dries quicker than cotton because it is synthetic. A sweatshirt is ok if covered by a rain jacket.

T-Shirts: “Wicking” t-shirts are best because they are synthetic (polyester, mesh, nylon, etc.) and will regulate body temperature and perspiration best, and will dry faster than cotton. These can be found at most outfitters or athletic stores. If you bring cotton, bring one t-shirt per day on each hike.

Shorts: Mesh or nylon athletic or hiking shorts are best and will dry faster than cotton.

Hat: This will offer sun protection as well as insulation at night.

Headlamp/Flashlight: Be sure to remember extra batteries.

Other items that you will need are covered in the “Parent Pack” and on our website at “Packing for Camp” under the Parents tab.

Some of these items are optional, but a lot of campers are making them part of their regular gear for additional comfort. If you have a tent, please bring it along. If you purchase a tent or are thinking about bringing your own,

make sure it is of good quality and waterproof, or it may not last through the session. Other optional items include hammocks, pocketknives, lip balm, sunscreen, sunglasses, insect repellent, camera and film, stuff sacks, and bandannas.

PLEASE do not bring radios, walkmans, GameBoys, etc. These items often are detracting from your experience, especially in the outdoors. Cameras are great for pictures with friends and mountain views, but remember all of your belongings are brought at your own risk.

The Trailblazer program is very physically demanding with hiking on rough terrain that can last throughout the day for multiple days on each trip. We strongly suggest that you strengthen your legs by jogging, biking, swimming, etc. and strengthen your arms through pushups, pull-ups, weights, etc. This is imperative for your enjoyment. If not physically fit, campers can put themselves as well as their fellow campers and staff at risk. This is also the primary cause for injury in the backcountry. As well, when filling out your health form, please be completely thorough and forthright. Sioux staffers are trained in backcountry medicine, but a proper medical history is imperative for your safety. Of course, this is strictly confidential.

Hopefully this letter has been helpful and answers any questions you might have. If you do need more information before the summer, please feel free to call Camp at 1-800-968-1630. Enjoy the rest of the school year and work hard. Camp is right around the corner; we look forward to your arrival.

Your Friend,

Ron Springs
Camp Director