

KROKA EXPEDITIONS

2009 Parent/Student Handbook Congratulations & Welcome to Kroka!

Please review this material carefully. If you have questions after reading the handbook, please call us at (603) 835-9087 or email us at summer@kroka.org



Use this picture of Leo Tolstoy as a visual aid in how to pack for your trip!

FOREWORD FOR PARENTS

Dear Parents,

This handbook was designed to paint a clear picture of what your child will experience with Kroka Expeditions. If you are uncomfortable with any of the policies described in this handbook please contact our office. We will answer any questions you may have about our programs and practices. If you still question whether or not you wish to send your child on our programs, we will be happy to issue you a full refund if requested by April 1. Our programs are intentionally designed to be unique, with much thought, understanding and experience. It is in everyone's best interest to make sure that our students and their families feel that what we offer is what they want in a summer camping experience. Through this process, we are able to provide exceptional experiences for our students, and help with the development of capable, responsible and respectful citizens of the future.

Sincerely,

Lynne Boudreau and Misha Golfman

OUR MISSION

Kroka Expeditions is committed to awakening in young people a connection to nature and the spirit within, and a capacity for conscious living and compassionate service. We strive to achieve this through wilderness adventure, community living, farming, and the practice of traditional and indigenous skills.

KROKA EXPEDITIONS:

- 🕒 Develops common sense, awareness and understanding through sustainable, traditional and wilderness living lifestyles
- 🕒 Opens the door to the potential of spirit in all life
- 🕒 Empowers young people to become capable and confident beings through working with their hands and the mastering of adventure sports
- 🕒 Explores universal values, harmony, and responsibility for the common good through cooperative community living experiences
- 🕒 Searches for an appropriate balance between the ways of the past and present, as well as a balance between giving and taking

- 🌍 Examines the meaning of quality of life and the role of the individual in society
- 🌍 Is committed to participation for all regardless of ability to pay

WHO SHOULD COME TO A KROKA PROGRAM?

Kroka programs are for any student who hears about us, and one of our programs, and becomes excited and truly wants to come. As parents, we all want good things and what we feel is best for our children. However, it is really important that the desire to come to Kroka comes from the student. It has been our experience that students who come because "my parents told me to", generally, but not always, are not happy. Perhaps they are not ready for the experience or what we do here is not of interest to them. We want camp to be FUN for everyone. When a student struggles with being at camp, it is hard for the other students, the teachers and most importantly the student.

QUESTIONS ABOUT A PROGRAM?

We always welcome your questions by phone (603) 835-9087, or email summer@kroka.org.

We have a list of families from our 2008 summer who have agreed to be contacted as a reference. Please feel welcome to call or email to request our reference list.

HOW MANY PROGRAMS SHOULD I COME FOR IN ONE SUMMER?

The majority of our students come for one or two programs each summer. Some stay with us for up to six weeks. If you are considering more than one program, please contact us for suggestions on which combinations will work best and to arrange your stay between sessions.

CHALLENGE

We design physically and mentally demanding programs, which require a willingness to push beyond one's limits. We want our students to become stronger and more capable beings at the end of their experience. Program challenges are developmentally appropriate and are adapted to the individual students' ability level.

BASE CAMP

All programs begin at our Farm in Marlow, New Hampshire - 75 lovely acres of northern forest, field and stream. The base camp is a village of its own with solar electricity and various traditional and indigenous dwellings such as yurts, canvas wall tents, teepees, and lodges to house teachers and students. An 1835 charming farmhouse and barn serve as an office and logistics base, as well as a home to the camp directors. All cooking is done traditionally over an open fire with a "spunhungen" (two forked sticks with a cross stick set over the fire to hang pots on with handmade pot hooks). Wood stoves are used for heating dwellings. Mountain streams and local ponds replace showers. Our community of students and teachers share all of the chores and maintenance at the camp. Driving directions are provided on our website www.kroka.org. Parents are encouraged to take a tour of our base camp at the beginning or end of the program. There are 3 campsites available for families to camp at Kroka during their child's program. To make a reservation or for more details please contact us. A list of local accommodations is available on our website. Please drive slowly to respect local residents and **please leave dogs at home.**

COMMUNITY

We are equally concerned with what we do, as we are with how we do it. Everyone's comfort, happiness and sense of belonging are more important to us than individual accomplishments. Every day's success is measured by how the group feels as a whole and how each person has contributed to the success of others. We nurture an environment where one's accomplishments become everyone's joy and one's mistakes become a learning experience for all. We support a culture of validation and strive for an environment of cooperation rather than competition. All residential programs will include a service project. Projects will vary in duration and focus. They may include anything from site clean-ups to helping elders in the community.

ABOUT LIABILITY RELEASE FORM

All families must sign a Liability Release Form provided by our insurance company. Please note that we did not create nor do we have control over the language of this form but are required to have all participants sign this in order for us to maintain our liability insurance policy. Thank you for your understanding.

SAFETY

It would simply not be true to say that there are no risks involved in outdoor life. In fact, it is the healthy element of risk, which is vital to the development of capable individuals that makes our programs so valuable. In addition to the general risks associated with adventure sports and wilderness pursuits, there are other risks such as slipping on wet rocks, getting into poison ivy, tripping and falling over logs or cutting yourself while preparing a meal, to name just a few. We have an excellent safety record, which we achieve through year-round practice in simple living, wilderness medical training, providing special safety equipment and trust in our intuitive sense. However, this does not excuse individuals from being responsible for their own safety. Any outdoor activity requires common sense and thought before action. This personal responsibility is expected of all participants with respect to age. We realize some students have more difficulty than others in the area of self-monitoring personal safety. If you feel your child may need extra attention, please let us know.

SAFETY ON ADVANCED PROGRAMS

Some of our programs, such as advanced remote expeditions, Class IV white water paddling, advanced rock climbing and caving, go far beyond what children are allowed to do in a typical camp. In such programs, there may be an increased level of risk due to unpredictable environments. Participation in these advanced programs is a privilege that students earn through hard training, experience and the development of exceptional personal qualities. In addition to this privilege, there must be trust between families and Kroka's teachers, with mutual respect and the awareness that while all safety precautions are taken, there is an inherent risk involved that must be understood and accepted.

SWIMMING

All students must pass a swim test prior to swimming without a life jacket. The swim test is not mandatory. Students may choose not to take the swim test and instead wear their life jackets while in the water. During swimming activities at least one teacher is on duty watching the children at all times. Each spring, during our staff training, there is a session on swimming safety which involves role playing and simulations. If your child is not a swimmer, this should be noted on the Medical Questionnaire.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE HUMAN BODY

During programs, some students may choose to swim without clothing. At other times, members of the group may need to change out of wet clothes in front of one another, with privacy provided only by trees and rocks (there are no private changing rooms in the woods or on the river). While we neither encourage nor discourage students from suit-less swimming, if students are comfortable and they initiate it, in an appropriate setting, we will allow it. Students who have not experienced freedom from clothing may be understandably skeptical about and perhaps uncomfortable with this. All students should know there is absolutely no pressure or expectation to do anything they are not comfortable with. Note that this issue does not arise in the younger programs.

LEARNING TO USE TOOLS

During most programs, we teach students, at age-appropriate times, to use sharp tools such as knives, saws and axes for wilderness craft projects, preparing meals and cutting and splitting firewood. While we instruct students on safe and appropriate use of these tools, continuously remind them of all safety precautions and supervise them during their use, it is likely that some students will still cut themselves while working. For some, this is a normal part of learning about sharp tools.

EQUIPMENT

We provide all specialty gear, such as life jackets, helmets, paddles, harnesses, etc. Our equipment is very dear to us and we like it to last for many years in order to bring pleasure to many people. Students will be instructed on proper care and maintenance of all items and will be held responsible for the gear they are using. There is a form to sign stating such and students will be held financially accountable for negligent use and/or damage. If you have your own boat, harness or other gear that you would like to use, we encourage you to do so, but please check with your teachers first.

PACKING / GEAR LIST

The gear list is very simple. We try to provide all the items that people don't commonly own. It is our intention to bring less so we can experience more. We have a limited supply of items from the list to lend to students (at no charge), and other items available to purchase. If you have a choice, pack old things rather than new - there's less chance of upset if you rip them or get them wet and muddy, not to mention losing them! With all of the above in mind, it is important to prepare well and follow the gear list precisely. If you need to buy new gear, we encourage you to purchase items that are made with respect for the Earth, and by people who are treated fairly. We can suggest responsible gear manufacturers and distributors, or you can purchase certain items in our store. Regarding personal gear, please label all items and ***do not bring anything other than the items on the list***, unless you have special needs that have been previously discussed with your teachers. During program start, your teachers will go over all your personal gear making sure you have everything you need. You will be asked to leave anything extra in the student gear bay until your program ends. It is better to not bring them. Extra items take up time and space.

A Special Note about Insect Repellent: We carry all natural Badger Bug Balm in our first aid kit for campers. During the buggy times of day our teachers will make sure students are covered with clothing or anti bug salve. Things that we find also work well are: smoke from the fire, eating raw garlic and onions, covering up in long, light colored clothes and refraining from the use of perfumed soaps, etc. Homeopathic Sting Stop is offered to students who are bothered by bites. Beware! You may be bitten by mosquitoes, black flies and fellow campers!

APPROPRIATE CLOTHING

When packing for Kroka programs, we ask that you pack appropriate attire. Clothing should not be distracting, disrespectful, offensive, or suggestive. Please do not pack clothing that advertises products, contains vulgar or sexual language, or offensive and scary pictures. Any clothing instructors find inappropriate will be put in student's gear storage and returned at the end of the trip.

FOOTWEAR

Some modern footwear is hard on the wilderness, compacting and damaging the ground cover. Students are welcomed to walk barefoot, whenever appropriate, to develop the awareness of a foot and experience direct contact with the Earth. Since most children have little practice walking barefoot, cuts and bruises to feet are not uncommon. We encourage students to wear moccasins, as a great medium between barefoot and shoes. Another acceptable alternative is soft-soled shoes without treads. When buying moccasins, we suggest choosing a non-zipper style, as wilderness living will quickly jam and derail zippers with mud and general wear. You can mail order moccasins by calling Howard's Leather Store at (603) 363-4325. Their Ankle Hi "Tramper Boot" is good, however, only begins sizing at 4 for women and 6 for men.

A Note about Cameras: We discourage students from bringing cameras. Pictures are taken by instructors and made available after the program. If your child is an enthusiastic photographer, they may bring their camera and ask to be elected as the group photographer to be responsible for picture taking during the program. One group photographer may be chosen for each program.

COMMUNICATION DEVICES

Each program that heads into the wild carries a cellular phone as an emergency communication device. The ocean programs carry marine VHF radio. Electronic devices will only be used in case of emergency.

FOOD

Communal cooking of delicious wholesome meals over an open fire is an important part of a Kroka experience. Students take turns gathering ingredients from the farm, garden and the forest, cooking, cleaning and tending the fire. Most meals are vegetarian. When we eat meat it is the meat we have a relationship with: fish that we catch, chickens that we slaughter, or meat that is raised at local farms. Many ingredients are grown at camp and on local family farms. We go light on sugar and emphasize three good meals per day with in between snacks, when needed. We see value in feeling hungry for supper and do not have unlimited munchies available. We do realize that some children may need more frequent eating to prevent emotional meltdowns. Please indicate this on the medical questionnaire. Our menu follows the seasons in our Bio Region. We take pride in continually refining our menu, but it is important to realize there are limitations to the types of food we can carry and store on expeditions. Please share with your child that we do not have options at meal times and we strive to waste no food. While the food on the trip may be different from what some students eat at home, we ask them to keep an open mind (and flexible taste buds). We also ask that students have respect for everyone involved in growing the food, as well as those who plan and prepare each meal that is eaten - complaining will not make anything better! We do welcome constructive feedback and new ideas. We believe if one has a positive attitude and is willing to try new things they, like many of our students, may discover new foods they enjoy. We are willing to work with many different dietary and food related needs and will accommodate, if we can. Otherwise we ask families to provide specialty foods. Please give advanced notice. We are happy to send you a sample program menu upon request.

ON THE ROAD

As we travel around New England in pursuit of wilderness adventure, there are times when adventures begin before we reach our destination: Someone's car breaks down and they need help, an animal has been hit and needs attention, etc. With the safety of our students as our utmost priority, we do not stop indiscriminately. However, when appropriate and safe, helping people and animals alongside the road can be a great lesson in responsibility. This policy of the school is central to our philosophy of developing responsible citizens who view society as their extended community.

CHANGES IN PROGRAMMING

While we do our best to give an accurate description of program details in our brochure and acceptance packet, there are often last-minute changes that require us to be flexible in our programming. Due to changes in weather, staffing, or group composition we may have to alter our itineraries, activities and **some times even teachers**. This is the nature of wilderness living and adventure programming. We ask that families and students be flexible, understanding and enjoy the adventure!

FIRST DAY

All programs start with registration followed by a potluck lunch and introduction circle where parents, students and teachers meet. The camp store is open during registration. Parents should be prepared to stay with their child for an hour and a half after the program starting time. Please be on time for the program start (**please check your program description for times**).

LAST DAY

Please arrive by the ending time listed on your program description. Parents will once again be part of a circle in which the students will share important memories of their trip. It is very difficult and disappointing for children to participate in this ending circle if their parents have not arrived. Often several programs end on the same day and we cannot delay one circle to wait for parents to arrive. *Please leave extra time so that you do not miss this special ending ceremony. If you are running late, please call base camp to let us know, so we can inform your child.*

DECOMPRESSION AND TRANSITION AFTER CAMP

A week or several weeks away from their usual world, immersed in a simple wilderness lifestyle can have a profound effect on children. They may come back seeing the world through a different lens. A thoughtful transition from a Kroka program to everyday life is very important.

MEDICATIONS AND MEDICAL TREATMENT

Students may not bring any medications unless indicated on their Medical Questionnaire. This includes over the counter pain medications. All medications will be carried and dispensed by Kroka's teachers unless parents prior to the program have made other arrangements prior to the program. Please give all medications to your child's teacher after the parent circle and include dosage and other instructions written directly on the Medical Questionnaire. It has been our experience that many students who are taking Ritalin during the school year to help with focus have done well without medication while on some programs at Kroka. Perhaps it is the physical activity or living out of doors. If this is something you would like to consider for your child, please contact Lynne, at the office. Prompt professional backcountry treatment is always given to serious injuries and conventional treatment is given to serious injuries in non-remote environments. Homeopathic and herbal remedies such as Arnica and Echinacea are some of the natural products we use to help with healing. All lead teachers are Certified Wilderness First Responders.

HOMESICKNESS

You know your child better than any of us here at Kroka. It is really important to us, as we are sure it is to you, that your child is ready to experience time happily away from home. Our children are all different, even within one family. Some are ready to leave home at age 7 while others are still not ready at age 12. All of this is perfectly fine. For us, at Kroka, we want to make sure the children feel ready to come to camp and sleep away from their families for an extended period of time. It is of course absolutely normal for children to experience some sadness and missing of their families. During these times which, as you know, usual come around bed time, we sing, tell stories and jokes and rub backs to help support the children. One thing we have discovered is that homesickness is highly contagious. If there is some cuddly friend your child would like to bring with him/her to help with these moments, they are more than welcome to do so. We ask you to carefully consider the question of homesickness. Again, we want camp to be FUN for all. We always do our best to make your child feel at home. If it just does not seem to be the right timing for them to be here, we will ask you to come and get your child as the best place for them would be with you. We also ask parents to not tell their child to come and try camp and if it doesn't work they (the parents) will come and get them. Our experience has proven that this sets everyone up for failure. We would be more than happy to speak with you about any concerns.

DISMISSAL FROM THE PROGRAM

Kroka Expeditions has a zero tolerance policy for alcohol, tobacco or any substance use or possession during our programs. Students violating this rule will immediately be dismissed from the program. Staff may also dismiss students on the basis of unacceptable behavior. Determination is at the discretion of the staff and is based on the well being of the group as a whole. In the case of unacceptable behavior, the following steps will be taken: 1) Behavior in question will be discussed privately with the student. 2) When possible, parents will be notified of the issue and of possible dismissal. 3) Student and instructor will create an action plan. 4) Failure to comply will result in dismissal. Parents will be called and must pick student up from program, regardless of where that may be. No refunds are given in the above dismissal situations.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Your deposit is non-refundable (unless you are not satisfied with the scholarship amount). Any tuition payments, made beyond the deposit, will be refunded if cancellation occurs prior to April 1st. In some cases, such as cancellation due to unexpected injury, tuition may be credited toward the following year. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

MULTIPLE PROGRAMS AND LAYOVER LOGISTICS

For students needing to stay before, after, or in between their program(s) arrangements can be made with the office. There is a fee of \$100 per day for each day of layover or \$85 and \$65, respectfully, if you are eligible under the sliding scale on Kroka's registration guidelines. Please contact our Summer Programs Coordinator, Lynne Boudreau, at (603) 835-9087 or summer@kroka.org, to request layover arrangements.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH US DURING THE PROGRAM

Please call Kroka Expeditions at (603) 835-9087 or email office@kroka.org.

MAIL: We ask parents to refrain from sending letters. It has been our experience that it is hard when one or two students in a group receive mail and others do not. We appreciate your understanding on this matter. If you feel strongly about sending your child mail just let us know.

PHONE CALLS: Generally speaking, students do not call home during the program, other than in special circumstances.

AREA LODGING

Local accommodations can be found on our web site.

LONG DISTANCE / INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Transportation arrangements can be made via plane, bus or train. local airports are listed below:

Airport	Location	Distance (one way) to Kroka
Bradley International	Hartford, CT	125 miles
Manchester Airport	Manchester, NH	64 miles

SHUTTLES:

AIRPORT: Kroka staff are available to transport from the above airports. Kroka charges \$250*/Bradley or \$130*/Manchester one-way to or from the respective airports.

BUS: Students can travel by bus to Bellows Falls, VT or Keene, NH where they will be picked up by a Kroka staff. The fee is \$35*.

Vermont Transit: www.vermonttransit.com/ 1-800-552-8737

TRAIN: There is a train station in Bellows Falls, VT, where a Kroka staff can pick up your child for a fee of \$35*.

Amtrak: www.amtrak.com 1-800-872-7245 (USA-RAIL)

*Prices are subject to change.

DIRECTIONS TO KROKA EXPEDITIONS BASE CAMP IN MARLOW, NEW HAMPSHIRE CAN BE FOUND AT OUR WEB SITE.