

Weekend Packing Camp by Ally

The campers meet at the trailhead with their parents for lunch at noon on Thursday. During lunch we introduce ourselves to our campers and parents in small groups. After lunch, all of the campers and volunteers introduce themselves, tell where they're from, what their horse experience is, and how much back country experience they have. Then we go into horse safety, teach how to manly and pack with panniers, how to saddle the horses and how to load the stock. We also cover Leave No Trace. Then it's dinner time, after which we have a campfire chat.

Friday morning before breakfast everyone takes down their tent and has their gear collected into a pile to assess for packing. After breakfast, the camper's manly all of the personal gear and load the food and kitchen boxes. The volunteers supervise and the campers do all of the work. As they finish up with their packs, we start to saddle the stock with the campers doing the saddling and the volunteers supervise and teach.

This takes until about lunch time, so we'll stop to eat lunch before we load up and tie the pack strings together. The pack strings head out of the trailhead and the campers hike two miles into Short Camp with a volunteer at the head of the campers and another at the back of the campers.

At camp, the campers unload and unsaddle the stock, undo all of the packs, decide how camp will be set up and then set it up with the volunteers supervising. Then it's time for dinner and a campfire. All of the camper's volunteer for various camp chores, including taking care of the stock, with the volunteers pitching in.

On Saturday morning after breakfast, we all hiked the three miles to Heart Lake. We bring one pack horse that has a couple of Pulaski's and saws. Along the way we stop and clean out water bars and cut any downfall out of the trail. This gives the campers the idea of volunteering to keep the trails open. We eat lunch at the lake and the campers spend the afternoon swimming, fishing, and resting. Throughout the afternoon we have a few short instruction periods about trees, flowers and other naturalist subjects.

We hike back to Short Camp, cook dinner and sit around the campfire.

On Sunday morning the campers have their gear together before breakfast and we repeat the process of having the campers pack up all of the gear and saddle and load the stock. We head back to the trailhead and try to be there by noon. The parents are waiting to pick up the campers and we feed everyone lunch before they leave for home.