

WEKIVA YOUTH CAMP

7th GRADE TENT CAMPING PROGRAM

The Seventh Grade Program at Wekiva Youth Camp is the transition program where Campers no longer adhere to the Session Schedule of Camp (nature, crafts, and swimming) and instead participate in a focused program. The focus of the Seventh Grade Program is the **Tent Camping Experience**. You will leave your Cabin and sleep for 2-3 nights in Tents at the Primitive Camp Site at Wekiwa Springs State Park. You will learn the skills necessary for tent camping including pitching a tent, building a fire, and operating an outdoor kitchen (meal preparation and clean-up). Other activities include Swimming at the Springs, GPS (global positioning system) familiarization and Recycle Themed Crafts.

The facilities at the Primitive Camp Site include a spigot with cold water, two flush toilets, two outdoor cold showers (with wood walls and no roof), and several fire pits. A large rain awning is erected to cover 4-5 picnic tables that our group uses for meals and gathering. Three to four Campers share a tent that you will place in a spot of their choosing. You will be divided into 3 or 4 Duty Groups that rotate Camp Chores (fire preparation, food preparation, dishwashing, and clean-up). The Counselors and Volunteers offer advice and suggestions; yet, the actual man-power comes from the YOU. That's right; it's learning by doing. By the end of the week, you will be able to set-up a tent, build and maintain a fire (even in the rain), cook a meal, and wash dishes outdoors.

Due to the location of the Primitive Camp Site, there is no group transportation in and out. A truck or van is used to transport gear (tents, bedding, cooking supplies, and personal items) while food supplies are picked up from the main camp once a day. The hike from the main camp (or the paved road) into the Primitive Camp Site is on a marked dirt/sand trail that is just under $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile each way (about a 15-20 minute hike). You need to be capable of hiking a distance of 3 miles in one day. This hiking would not be continuous, but broken into $\frac{3}{4}$ mile segments with activities in between segments. Every attempt is made to visit the Springs for a swimming break every day. From the Primitive Camp Site, we hike the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the paved road to meet our ride to the Springs. After our swimming break, we are given a ride back to the trailhead for the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile hike back to our Primitive Camp Site.

Some of the same rules of the main camp are carried over to the Tent Camping Experience - shoes & socks, technology free zone (no cell phones, iPods, electronic devices), picking up after yourself, Buddy System, and activity participation. Some of the rules are relaxed during the Tent Camping Experience - lights out time, scheduled meal times, scheduled shower times, and reveille.

Perhaps the most important exciting thing about camping is nature. Wildlife is up close and personal. Birds and frogs are extremely prevalent. The sounds of these critters are loud and close. Insects are also crawling and flying about. **YOU MUST BRING INSECT REPELLANT AND USE IT.** Especially with today's soaps, shampoos and deodorants, the bugs are zeroing in on us. Unless you enjoy slapping and scratching, you must be diligent about using insect repellent. We generally won't see raccoons or bears. The food is kept in a vehicle away from the tents so these four legged creatures are intimidated by our numbers and keep their distance. It is dark at night. A good flashlight, lantern, or headlight is a must. It will probably rain. You get wet, you dry out. It will be hot during the day and surprisingly cool at night.

Tent camping is the seventh most popular recreational activity for Americans over the age of six. The Seventh Grade Program is designed to allow you to learn and practice the skills necessary for tent camping. Wekiva Youth Camp welcomes and encourages students who have completed the seventh grade to expand their horizons and join us in this exciting adventure!

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