

Planning a Group Camping Trip

Well-planned group camping provides an opportunity for learning, developing personal values and concepts, generating skills for lifelong learning, encouraging group cooperation, and enhancing knowledge of and appreciation for the natural environment of Moab and vicinity. Good planning ensures a successful and fruitful visit. It is important to determine the goals and objectives of your visit and identify ways to accomplish them by becoming committed from the outset to making your visit a success.

This article is intended to help you have the very best possible visit to Ron's Pack Creek Campground and the Moab area. Of course, not all of these tips will apply to all groups, and are intended to serve as reminders and aids in your trip planning.

Basic considerations:

- Characteristics of group members, such as age, special needs, and special skills.
- Purpose of the visit.
- Length of the visit, including travel time.
- Distances to be traveled and mode of transportation.
- Planned activities and necessary support tasks.
- Season of the year.

The most common visit, and probably the easiest to plan, is camping for only three or four nights. This will enable you to see and do the major activities and sights in the Moab area. Your group would use their campsite at Ron's Pack Creek Campground as a base camp and take trips from there.

Camping Activities

- Participate in outdoor adventure activities (canoeing, rock climbing, mountain biking, river rafting, backpacking, etc.).
- Observe, identify, and/or collect specimens of leaves flowers, rocks, etc.
- Visit Arches and Canyonlands National Parks and Dead Horse Point State Park.
- Visit ancient Native American pictograph and petroglyph sites.
- Visit an historical site such as Pinhook Battlefield or Segoe ghost town.
- Use a variety of camping skills (fire building, cooking, etc.).

We believe the philosophy of outdoor education needs to be instilled in younger people so that they understand that a camping trip is a privilege and a special opportunity to enhance learning and personal skills.

Sites and Facilities

Group campsites are available by reservation for groups ranging in size from 10 to 200 campers.

Facilities include numerous conveniences such as picnic tables, grills, restrooms, showers, potable water, a dishwashing area, coin-operated laundry, and a year-round stream. Firewood and ice are available at the entrance kiosk for a nominal fee.

The trip leader is welcome to visit Ron's Pack Creek Campground to determine the exact facilities that will best suit your group's needs.

A ratio of one adult to 8-12 younger people seems to be optimum, with a minimum of two adults for small groups. The total number of younger people should be no larger than can be handled safely and effectively for that particular age group. Consideration should be given to the activities planned as well as the camping situation.

The actual camping arrangement can also be organized. The participants may choose from options such as the following or formulate your own:

- Camp in one group with the meals prepared for the entire group.
- Camp in separate groups of 8 to 12 members each. Each group would prepare the same menu to make meal planning and food buying easier.
- Camp in separate groups with each group planning its own menu. This plan works best with older campers who already have camping experience.

Your experience will be more pleasurable if duties are assigned in advance. Duties can be posted on a chart that itemizes such activities as pitching tents, building campfires, cooking, cleaning up, planning and leading evening campfire songs and programs, unloading and loading equipment, and cleaning the campsite(s) before departing. If the younger people have been involved with the planning, the many duties necessary to have a successful camping trip will be evident.

Supervising adults are encouraged to assist the younger people with various chores. This provides both guidance and positive reinforcement of desired behavior.

Planning

An effective and efficient way to plan is to use various check lists and charts for duties. Younger people of any age are quite capable of making the majority of decisions if the areas of concern are brought to their attention. Initially, younger people may work in small groups to plan such items as menu, equipment needs, activity schedule, tenting groups, etc. Then, as the groups share their information with the entire group and decisions are finalized, the younger people become totally committed to the trip logistics and to the cooperation demanded of them as members of the overall group.

Obviously, some areas of concern are the sole responsibility of the adult leaders, but involvement of all the younger people should receive a high priority. Thus, the

following topics should be addressed either by the leader or by the group members with leader assistance.

One valuable item to consider is for the group leader to prepare a 3-ring binder, to include (at minimum) all requisite forms, releases, itinerary, activities, duties, and trip schedule.

- **Trip Goals and Objectives:** Determine the purpose of the trip and prepare a schedule of activities with a time line. This should also be provided to all parents of the younger people in the group.
- **Camping Skills:** Review the necessary skills before the trip. These might include pitching a tent, lighting a gas lantern, cooking on a camp stove, or starting a wood fire, etc.
- **Adult Leaders:** Adults who have camping experience and the necessary skills to lead a planned activity are needed to support the leader.
- **Travel Plans:** Schedule the bus or cars, secure maps, plan a travel itinerary, assign people to specific cars if a bus is not used, arrange for shuttles, etc.
- **Camping Site:** Arrange in advance to reserve your campsite.
- **Finances:** Participation fees need to be determined. These are based on estimated travel expenses, campground fee(s), food costs, and miscellaneous items.
- **Weather:** Consider weather conditions, plan for possible extremes to prevent emergency situations, and have a contingency plan. Check with the most competent weather information service within 24 hours of the trip.
- **Duties Chart:** A duties chart displays duties with corresponding names so that it is clear at a glance who is assigned what chore. This method enables the duties to be evenly distributed and gives every person specific responsibilities and opportunities. The chart could also show who tents together and who rides in specific cars.
- **Meals:** Prepare a form that displays both the menu and a list of requested food items to prepare it. Include a staples and supplies list and an equipment list. Be aware of any campers with special dietary needs.
- **Equipment:** Categorized lists of equipment, both personal and group, may be compiled. Group equipment includes camping gear such as tents, tarps, lanterns; cooking supplies such as stoves, cook pots, spatulas, spoons, fire-building tools; clean-up materials such as dish pans, pans to heat water; storage containers such as ice chests, water jugs; and eating utensils such as plates, cups, and silverware. Such group equipment will probably need to be borrowed, but individuals should be responsible for their personal gear.
- **Safety:** The saying “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” is worth serious consideration. Stress safety in all phases of planning was well

as the trip itself. No minor should be allowed to accompany the group unless and until a parent-signed medical release and consent to accompany form is provided.

- **Emergency Plans:** The leader should have a list of the parents' home, cell, and work telephone numbers. Awareness of any medical restrictions, allergies, physical limitations, and special medications is vital. Camping equipment should include a fully equipped first-aid kit. An emergency plan specifying who will go with the patient and who will stay with the group is very helpful.
- **Group Rules and Regulations:** All possible rules should be discussed and agreed upon before your trip. They might include a desired dress code, the type of footwear appropriate, desired conduct, etc. Members who do not agree to abide by these rules should not go on the trip.
- **Policies and Procedures:** Ensure the form to be used for parental permission is adequate, make travel arrangements, assign adult leaders, assess liability, assign someone to handle the trip expenses, compile a list of available equipment, etc. Prepare a list of all younger people making the trip, the travel itinerary, and the activity schedule, along with any other information requested. Parents should also be apprised of the objectives of the trip, the activity schedule, and the travel itinerary.

Follow-Up Activities

Every effort should be made for the leaders to use various aspects of the camping experience as a follow-up. It can be used to enhance learning in various areas such as language arts, science, personal growth, and history. Even leaders who did not accompany the group can relate to the experiences in a positive way if they are informed of the details of the trip.

Other possible follow-up activities include the following:

- Cleaning and returning all equipment.
- Writing thank-you notes to those who assisted in any way.
- Obtaining a written evaluation from each adult helper.
- Preparing a written report, one from each member of specific activities and insights and perhaps a trip critique.

The trip leader should definitely compile a summary report to document the trip and to help plan future trips. It could contain the following lists and information:

- Trip objectives
- Names of younger people who made the trip.
- Names of adult leaders, along with their addresses, telephone numbers, and responsibilities.

- Travel itinerary and activity schedule.
- Total trip costs—travel, food, campground fee(s), entry fees, and miscellaneous expenses.
- Addresses and telephone numbers of the campground(s), sites visited, etc.
- Copies of all forms and lists used.
- Conclusions drawn from evaluations of adult helpers and younger people.
- Notations on positive aspects of the trip.
- Problems encountered and ways to avoid them.

The most important consideration of all remains your safety and enjoyment of Ron's Pack Creek Campground and the multitude of activities in and around Moab. If there is anything we can do to assist you, please do not hesitate to contact us.