



parent handbook



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BIRCHWOOD

WILDERNESS CAMP

Consider this handbook a tool for your toolbox. We know it is extremely detailed and we appreciate your focus as you read through each section. It contains all the "reasons we do what we do" - written in excruciating detail - to prevent you from ever feeling in the dark.

Sending your child away can be emotional - the last thing you need to deal with is confusion about how to pack or what to expect with cabin assignments.

We want this to be a fantastic resource for you - before, during, and after camp.

Don't find the answer to your question?

Contact us and we will happily assist you.

Thank you for trusting us with your son!

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Preparing for Camp

Involve Your Son in Camp Preparations

Whether your son is absolutely thrilled to go to camp or nervous as can be expected, please include him in your preparations for “going to Birchwood”. The more that you - and he - can positively anticipate ahead of time, the better!

Please help your son with details about camp life. Discuss how travel works, how to write home, what to do if he feels homesick, how to choose healthy meal options, and so on. Equip him with ideas on how to interact with others. What can he do or say to make new friends, especially if he has old friends from previous summers at Birchwood? How can he become a good cabin-mate?

Encourage him to follow directions, listen to what others have to say, ask open-ended questions, offer a helping hand, and so on.

Early Camp Jitters

It's common to feel nervous at the beginning of camp! Remind your son that this is NORMAL. No one arrives at camp - or starts anything new - and is 100% well-adjusted from the get-go. It takes time!

Remind him to be patient. We do everything we can to help ease jitters from the very beginning. Our counselors warmly welcome each camper into the cabin group and integrate everyone immediately.

Boys will be introduced over and over. For several days, fun "ice breaker" games are played at the beginning of every activity until campers are known by name. The beauty of Birchwood is our small {by design} size. It doesn't take long before everyone knows EVERYONE in camp, not just cabin mates.

With that being said, the campers who simply smile and show an interest in others adjust the fastest! (You don't need to sound or look cool - crack jokes or act anyway special - just engage).

His nerves will subside once he settles into the routine and starts opening up to others.

Fill Out Camp Forms (in March)

In March we will prompt you to fill out your forms for camp attendance by logging onto your CampMinder account.

Each form matters a great deal to us! Here are the forms you'll find in your account:

The Camper Profile Form

This form is VERY important to us. Your son's cabin counselors review this form before he arrives. It helps them welcome him, integrate him into the group, and personalize his experience. This form is kept confidential amongst our staff members only. Please do not hesitate to inform us of any circumstances your son faces socially, academically, physically, emotionally, etc. This is information we need to do our very best!

Cabin-Mate Preference Form

If your son has a friend or relative (of the same age and grade) he wants to be in a cabin with, we need to know ahead of time. Please fill out this form well in advance. Please see our extensive explanation on CABIN ASSIGNMENTS in this book to understand how we process requests!

NOTE! A cabin-mate request is not necessary/required! Most new campers do not have one - and we love it when "old-timers" avoid listing anyone so they can have a whole new experience!!

Health History Form

Every camper must have an updated form on file that documents his health history, provides emergency contact information and lists your health insurance provider. On the rare occasion your son experiences illness or injury, this form is referenced by medical personnel. A doctor's signature is NOT required to fill out this form nor is it necessary for the child to have a physical prior to camp.

If your son has an advanced medical condition of any kind, you will be prompted to fill out additional information.

We REQUIRE all campers to be up-to-date with their vaccinations. If your son has a health condition that prevents him from receiving vaccinations, please call the camp office in advance to discuss.

Each camper has a private "check-in" with trained medical personnel within 24 hours of arrival at camp. If any changes occur between the time you fill out the form and coming to camp, call or e-mail us the new information and we will attach it to his form.

Prescription Medication Form

You only need to complete this form if your son will take medication(s) during his stay with us.

Please DOWNLOAD this form, fill it out, and fold it up in a zip-lock bag with his medication(s). Pack this baggie in his CARRY-ON so we can have him check it in with us right when he arrives.

If your son(s) will be bringing prescription medications to camp, you will also be prompted to input dosage information via the digital health history form. This allows us to pull a daily report of all campers medications for our camp nurse to use. Thank you for filling in both paper and digital forms.

NOTE: All medications MUST be in their official pharmacy containers.

Travel Confirmation Form

After booking travel, whether with our travel agent or separately/air or car or bus, please confirm travel details using this form! This form is the most commonly overlooked because it seems redundant on your end but it is the only place that the camp office will have all camp travel details in one place. Filling out this short and simple form helps us TREMENDOUSLY! See Travel section for more details.



Travel Information

Travel To & From Camp

Campers travel TO camp on Mondays and depart FROM camp on Sundays. Travel charges are separate from camp tuition fees.

Parents make all travel arrangements beginning MARCH 1st. (See below for exact directions depending on how your son will travel to/from camp).

Once you have all your details confirmed, please log on to your CampMinder account and click on “Forms and Documents” to fill out the Travel Form.

Travel Designations - Pick ONLY ONE “mode” of travel: We have three designations for how kids travel to/from camp. Only one mode is used to define a child’s travel TO camp and then one mode is used to define his departure FROM camp. NOTE - AIR automatically reserves a bus ride to/from the airport and camp.

- 1. AIR** - Camper flies in/out of the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport or Duluth airport AND rides the bus to/from the airport and camp.
- 2. BUS** - Camper ONLY rides the bus to/from camp and Minneapolis or Duluth.
- 3. CAR** - Camper is dropped off/picked up at Birchwood.

Confirming Your Travel Plans & Making Changes

A week prior to your son's session, you will receive an e-mail from us confirming your travel plans. This will solely reflect the information you have given us via your account on CampMinder. Please review this information and respond immediately if there are any errors.

If your travel plans change please inform us right away! Last-minute changes are very difficult to accommodate once we send our lists to the airport staff in Minneapolis and Duluth. Also, please do not depend on your son to relay travel changes, contact us directly with any new information.

Travel Days

If all goes well, travel days run smoothly and everything is on time! In case of unexpected hiccups, weather difficulties, or traffic congestion, please give yourself extra time to arrive at our meeting spots. We greatly appreciate your patience on travel days as we know it can be stressful if airports and highways are busy.

All Travel Reservations

are arranged for and paid for by the parent. Travel expenses are not included in the tuition fee for camp. New in 2025 - there is a \$50 fee (each way) for using our bus service.



Confirm Travel via your CampMinder Account

Once your travel plans are confirmed, please fill out the Travel Form via your CampMinder account by clicking on “Forms & Documents”.

Bus Travel

BUS Transportation (for campers who do NOT fly)

Campers who ONLY need a bus ride to/from camp should reserve a seat on our bus/van that arrives and departs from the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport. Remember, if your son is flying into Minneapolis or Duluth we will assume he is riding the bus, reserve him a seat, and add him to our bus roster automatically. New in 2025 - there is a \$50 fee (each way) for using our bus service.

To secure a reservation on the bus, fill out the Travel Form by clicking on “Forms & Documents” via your CampMinder account, and click on BUS.

The bus TO CAMP will leave around noon. For drop-off, please go to:

***Eisenhower Community Center (also known as the Hopkins Community Center)
1001 MN-7, Hopkins, MN 55305***

The bus FROM CAMP will arrive at the same location. Depending on traffic, the bus/van will arrive between 11:30 and 12:30.

We will email with more exact times for drop-off and pick-up a day or two before as they are always a little bit in flux depending on our flight schedule.

A Birchwood staff member will be there to greet you and check off campers. Please do not board the bus/van with your child. Our chaperones are trained to help settle boys in and will welcome him appropriately.

Car Travel

Though it may seem ideal to personally deliver your son to camp, we highly recommend he ride the bus TO camp! Friendships are forged and it is the beginning of all the fun! (Boys who arrive on their own tend to feel a bit overwhelmed when the bus full of campers arrives).

If you must drive to drop off your camper, note that you will not be able to actually visit the camp. Our group will convene in the parking lot before paddling canoes to camp.

Drop off is at 7 pm. Please do not stay longer than 30 minutes. Birchwood staff will keep him company until the bus arrives.

NOTE!! Parents tell us that picking their son UP FROM CAMP is the best way to visit Birchwood. You have plenty of time to tour camp and see your son's favorite places! Pick-up time is at 8:45 am. (Busses depart for Minneapolis much earlier that morning).

If you want to drive your son to camp please note:

Camp is located past the road's end, which means we will need to arrange a boat to pick you up if you wish to visit Birchwood upon pick up. There is no cell reception along the Gunflint Trail so do not hit the road expecting to call us once you get to the public boat landing. Please notify us before sending your son to camp if you plan to pick him up at the end of his session so that we can help you make your travel plans!

Airline Travel

Booking Airline Flights

Starting March 1, please book your flight on Delta Airlines with the assistance of our Minneapolis-based travel agency, TRAVEL ONE.

We know working through a travel agency these days seems antiquated but it streamlines our entire process and makes travel easier for your son.

We apologize in advance for any additional effort this requires and we acknowledge prices are not as competitive as some airlines. But when it comes to routing 40+ campers through the airport within three hours (and sorting 80+ heavy duffel bags), Delta is the ONLY airline that helps us route our luggage (we pay them to do so).

ALSO! Booking with Travel One guarantees that your son is taken care of by our agents if/when issues arise. This keeps him within our scope of care in the airport (he won't be separated from our group as an Unaccompanied Minor).

NOTE! If you book your travel separately (even if on Delta), your son could get bumped to a different flight without our Birchwood chaperone (if booked on a chaperoned flight) and we will not have the power to change his reservation.

If you must book on your own, please follow the directions within this handbook.

Flying to/from Chicago & Kansas City Specifically

As we have a large community of Birchwood Campers coming from Chicago and KC - we sometimes provide a Birchwood Wilderness Camp chaperone on flights to/from Chicago and/or Kansas City. A fee of \$100 (one-way) is applied to your son's store account for this service. This saves a few dollars and eases travel stress for those with campers still recognized as unaccompanied minors (14 and under) by Delta (their fee is \$150 one way). We will let you know in March which dates and cities will have a Birchwood counselor acting as a chaperone for your camper.

NOTE! The ONLY way to guarantee your son is on the chaperoned flight is if you book through Travel One.

NOTE! Luggage fees are charged by the airline. Unless we cover this charge ourselves to expedite large groups checking in, you will pay for luggage fees at the ticketing counter. Any charges we incur will be passed on to you on the store account after your son's session.

To Call Travel One: 844.803.9683
Ask to speak to a Camp Advisor

Booking Airline Reservations without Travel One

If you book airline reservations on your own (without the assistance of our agency, Travel One), please make sure you follow our schedule:

For the trip TO camp, your son must arrive in the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport (TERMINAL 1 – Lindbergh) between **9 am and 11 am.**

On the return trip, his flight should depart from this same terminal between **2 pm and 4 pm.**

If you are booking a flight on any carrier OTHER than Delta, please understand your son will have to bring his luggage directly to the ticketing counter and check-in separately from the group. (Boys flying Delta have their luggage routed for them and we are able to check them in ourselves).

PLEASE do NOT book on Southwest or Sun Country Airlines!

Yes, flights are cheaper but the headaches are costly! They land at a separate terminal over 20 minutes away from the main terminal and they are not helpful with campers, our staff, and luggage. If you are inclined to book with either airline, please call us first.

Arrival in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport

Campers are personally greeted by a Birchwood representative at their gate (unless they are already chaperoned by one). Boys are then escorted to an area to grab lunch prior to boarding the bus to camp.

If a staff member is NOT present at your son's arrival gate, he should WAIT there. (Last-minute flight changes and inevitable hiccups occur). If, after 10 to 15 minutes, no one shows up, call us immediately via our cell phone numbers listed on the contact page.

Do NOT have your son go off on his own to find our group no matter how old he is or how many times he has flown to camp.

Contacting Parents upon Arrival

If your son does not have a cell phone and you want a call once he's arrived in Minneapolis, he is welcome to use a chaperone's phone (just ask). If you want a call once he arrives at camp, he needs to tell his cabin counselor that he must use the camp phone. At that time, he will be brought to the camp office to use our land-line to call you briefly.

Time in the Airport upon Arrival & Departure

When in the airport, boys are gathered together, supervised by our counselors, and directed to purchase their own lunch to eat prior to boarding the bus.

Please provide at least \$30 for lunch/travel money (\$15 per meal on arrival and on departure). While at camp, this money is kept in a personal “valuables envelope” that is locked up in the camp office. Upon departure, this envelope is returned to your son so he can zip it in his carry-on for use in the airport prior to boarding his flight home.

Loading the Bus at the Airport

Boys who fly to/from the Minneapolis airport will ride a bus/van to and from camp.

The trip to/from camp is about 6 hours. Please do not request seat assignments or try to maneuver your child from one bus/van to another. We do not have the capability to assign exact seats ahead of time. Upon boarding the bus, our chaperones will settle everyone in comfortably and foster friendships all around.

Please Use a Backpack as a Carry-On

Campers who fly should use a backpack as a carry-on so items are physically attached to them at all times. Please pack a change of clothes, a swimsuit, and any medication(s) in this backpack just in case your son's luggage is delayed. (If his bags do not reach camp on arrival day we will lend him toiletries and bedding until his bags reach camp).

Alternative Travel Options

If you live in (or want to make the trip to) Duluth and would like your son to catch the bus, please meet us at the ***Duluth Rose Garden parking lot (15 S 13th Ave E, Duluth, MN 55802)*** at the following times:

To Camp - between 3 and 4 pm

From Camp - between 8 and 9 am

*We will update you with more accurate times the day before as these times vary depending on our flight schedules.



Packing for Camp

Packing for Camp

**Refer to packing list in the resources section*

Pack in 1 or 2 Duffel Bags Please!

Please pack in one to two “soft” duffel bags (with or without wheels). Please do not pack in footlockers, trunks, or hard suitcases as these do not fit underneath bunks.

Many of our two-week campers do just fine with 1 duffel so don't feel like you need to fill 2.

In May you will be mailed two Orange baggage tags to attach to each bag.

Regarding Clothing at Camp

Please avoid packing name-brand clothing that requires special washing. Do not pack anything that will be devastating to lose or cannot be stained, torn, or shrunk. Clothing should be void of advertising or logos that promote alcohol, smoking, explicit content, etc.

Laundry

Campers have the opportunity to submit clothing that needs to be laundered after they return from their adventure trips each week. To help this process run smoothly, please talk to your child about when something is ok to wear again or when it needs to be washed.

Socks and underwear are put in mesh “lingerie” bags that zip up and are laundered as a whole. (These are about \$5). Laundry is returned the next day in the same bags. Counselors help redistribute everyone’s items upon return.

Regarding Sheets & Bedding

State health codes require campers to make their beds (instead of sleeping inside their sleeping bag every night). Therefore, pack a bottom sheet, a top sheet, a blanket or two and a sleeping bag.

A thick fleece or cotton blanket is nice to lay under the bottom sheet as a “mattress pad” since our mattresses are made of a cold crinkly plastic (so they can be disinfected).

PLEASE pack a sleeping bag that packs into a very small stuff sack. Don’t forget to label both the bag and the sack with his first and last name.

Don't Forget the Travel Bag

This bag should include a change of clothes and some bedding materials. As we mentioned before, if there is a delay in your camper's luggage arriving to the airport, this bag will provide a necessary backup.

This bag is also a must for the last night of camp. All campers load their bags the night before their departure. The travel bag will be used the morning of departure to pack up bedding materials and a change of clothes

Unplugging at Camp - Putting the Electronic Gadgets Away

Electronic devices that have a screen (i.e. ipad, ipod, iphone, apple watch) are not permitted while at Camp.

As the use of these objects continues to consume everyone's attention, it has become more important than ever to disconnect from technology and find the "back to nature" feel that Birchwood is known for.

Any electronic devices will be collected during the first night of camp and stored in a valuables envelope to be returned at the beginning of the return bus ride. This will allow campers to use their electronics during travel to and from Camp.

Despite this limitation on electronics, music remains a big part of life at Camp.

Therefore, if your camper has a screen-less device that plays music, he may keep it in the cabin. Please discuss this policy with your camper so he is not upset when the above items are collected.

Please, no Go-Pro cameras or drones.

Please do NOT Pack Candy, Treats, Decorations, etc!

To keep our cabins free of critters, please do not pack candy, gum, mints, drinks, powder water mixes, etc. These items cannot be sent to camp in care packages either (along with any other goodies - please pass that information on to friends and family too).

To foster a clean camp setting, please avoid packing items that kids will not bother packing up again like plastic trinkets. Also, please do not pack items that make a mess like silly string, 4th of July decorations, or water guns.

Pack Appropriate Reading Material Only.

Please consider the content and use your best judgment! Books that involve topics like sex, drugs, party drinking, etc. are not part of our culture at camp.

NOTE: Kindles and other e-readers are NOT allowed at camp. Go “old school” and send him with real books. If your camper is an avid reader and finishes his packed book(s) quickly, we have plenty on-hand in our library and our campers enjoy trading books with their friends at camp too.

Remember! Label EVERYTHING!!!!

For a super easy way to label belongings, order Mabel's Labels! You will be shocked at how sturdy they are wash after wash! Otherwise, label items with a permanent marker. Write your son's first initial and full last name, thanks!

Lost & Found

We try VERY HARD to make sure boys take everything they own back home! Please remind your son that it is his responsibility to keep track of his personal belongings while at camp! Any items left behind are gathered together, washed, and set aside. ONLY UPON REQUEST do we mail belongings home.

A \$25 Lost & Found return fee is applied to your account to cover shipping and handling. All unclaimed items are donated to Goodwill after camp. If you are missing an item, call or e-mail us as soon as possible and we will do our best to locate it and mail it out ASAP.

Digital Cameras & Policies on Taking Photos

We suggest sending a disposable camera rather than a digital camera that could get lost, broken, left behind, or dropped in a lake (which happens every summer).

If you do send a digital camera it must be a simple one that does NOT have access to the internet. Make sure the camera and the camera case is labeled with your son's first and last name.

Please understand -- there is a huge amount of liability that is introduced into our lives - and your son's life - if he has the ability to upload images or videos to the internet straight from his camera. We also ask that campers gain our written permission prior to posting ANY images on internet sites that are not privacy protected.

To protect us and your camper, remind him to be vigilant of his camera and to respect everyone's privacy when taking photos at camp. Taking videos is not allowed.



Camp Arrival

Cabin Assignments

Cabin assignments are announced upon arrival. We place 6 boys in a cabin according to similar age and school grade. We also take into consideration where they are from and how many summers they may have spent with us.

We value the connections boys make at school/camp, however we sway from placing large groups of boys who already know each other in the same cabin.

Therefore, we only “guarantee” one cabin-mate request IF it matches our requirements and only if it is mutual. If your son has more than one friend request, we will take it into consideration but we will honor the FIRST child listed before any others.

For those returning campers out there -- please still make cabin-mate requests if you have them. We're pretty good at remembering who is best friends with who but we don't like to make assumptions.

Cabin-mate preferences are recorded and confirmed when you fill out the “Cabinmate Request” form via your CampMinder account.

Cabin assignments are not solidified until the night before boys arrive and they are kept confidential until the opening day of a session. We do not give assignments out to parents ahead of time, but we are happy to discuss any concerns you may have and/or review our data entry to make sure we have everything arranged correctly.

Upon Arrival

When boys arrive at camp, they immediately receive their cabin assignment and meet their cabin counselors. Everyone is introduced to each other, given a camp tour, shown to the cabin, and begin to unpack. During this time (or potentially in the morning if late arrival) they rotate through a medical check-in.

Boys also check in their phones along with any other valuables. These are locked up in the camp office for the duration of their stay.

Medical Check-in

Within 24 hours of arrival at camp, each camper sits down privately with a medically trained staff member. At that time he is asked questions based on the Health History form you filled out (online via your CampMinder account).

A lice check is done at this time as well as a general wellness check-up. If your son has recently been diagnosed with any kind of illness or health condition, please inform us prior to his arrival so we can be aware of how it has been treated and how to proceed with his care.

Camp Orientation

During the first week, everyone participates in Gunflint School, which is time spent learning/refreshing wilderness skills. Our staff will teach/refresh campers as though everyone is new to the wilderness so that everyone is comfortable and ready for their first trip. During Gunflint School, campers will also be fitted for a lifejacket if needed, will receive their swim tag, and taught how to sign up for activities.

The First Week

The first trip your camper will take will be a short 2 night trip via canoe into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). This provides your son with a great way to practice and/or refresh his wilderness wisdom. It also provides our counselors insight into your child's comfort level on the trail for subsequent trips.

After the first trip, campers will spend a few days in camp participating in our in-camp programming before heading out on another adventure the following week.



Camp Life

In-Camp Life

All campers are in Camp on Saturdays and Sundays. Boys can choose to stay in Camp longer by choosing a shorter adventure trip. Whether your camper chooses to stay in camp longer or just for the weekend, he will participate in traditional camp activities. Activities include instructional and group activities such as: riflery, archery, biking, backcountry cooking, swimming, fishing, arts and crafts, and day trip options like hiking, canoeing, rock-climbing, and fishing.

Activity Sign-Up

“Sign Up Time” is when campers go to the Program Office window to choose their activities for the next day. Each camper’s choices are recorded on a piece of paper that is posted on the community chalkboard so they can reference it throughout the next day.

Earning Activity Awards

At nearly every activity, boys can choose to earn a series of awards to mark their progress. These are hallmarks of achievement at Birchwood and treasured for years and years!

Every camper receives a blue toque his first year at camp (given out at the first campfire of each session). Award pins are added to these toques. Every year campers are awarded a new color toque to mark their years at Birchwood.

For returners, be sure your camper brings his toque from the previous year so he can transfer his award pins to his new toque. If he has lost pins, our policy is that he must re-earn them. He cannot purchase replacement pins.

The Camp Store

The camp store, referred to as the “Gunflint Trading Post,” has some outdoor equipment that can be purchased by your child. The trading post carries water bottles, flashlights, batteries, toothpaste, envelopes, and other items your son may lose, break or forget at home. We also have souvenirs like hats, sweatshirts, tee shirts and maps. Please discuss spending limits with your child, as any purchases will be added to your account along with travel expenses. If you desire to limit the amount your child may spend at the trading post, you can do so via the parent portal.

In-Camp Daily Schedule

7:00 Sunrise + Swim (optional + dependent on interest)

7:30 Wake Up Bell

7:45 Hopper Bell

8:00 Breakfast

9:30 Morning Caper Time

9:45 – 10:45 Activity 1

11:00 – 12:00 Activity 2

12:15 Hopper Bell

12:30 Lunch

1:30 – 2:30 Rest Hour

2:30 - 3:30 Activity 3

3:45 - 4:45 Activity 4

4:45 - Camp Store + Activity Sign-Up

5:15 Hopper Bell

5:30 Dinner (followed by “Free Time”)

7:00 Evening Activity

8:30 Evening Snack & Mail Time

10:00 Lights Out

Evening Activity

In the evenings, we run an all-camp activity that blends boys from every cabin. This might be an active game like counselor hide & seek or a fun night of swimming and going down the waterslide for “Open Waterfront”. We also have a talent show every two weeks, campfire on the weekends, and cookouts on Saturdays.

Sunday Schedule

On Sundays, we have pastries on the deck for breakfast and then sign up for special activities run by our senior campers. These include a variety of art classes, sporting events, relay games, yoga, guitar, etc. For dinner, we have a big outdoor BBQ on the deck overlooking the river

Doing Capers to Earn a Trip to “Store”

After breakfast, campers do “capers” (or chores). Each cabin has a “caper chart” posted on the wall that designates who does what task. The chart rotates so every day (in camp) boys do something new. Tasks include sweeping, taking out the trash, setting the table, scraping plates after the meal, etc.

Boys must also make their bed on their own, tidy their personal belongings, clean up the cabin common space and store their shoes and toiletries. A counselor is present during caper time but boys are ultimately responsible for getting everything done before the first activity bell rings.

To reward boys for doing a great job and working well as a team, the mysterious Mr. Whitegloves “secretly” visits the cabin and gives a “point” if it passes his inspection. This “point” earns the cabin group the opportunity to each choose a candy bar to be enjoyed during rest hour.

Selections are individually itemized and reflected on their "store account" which is billed to you after your camper's stay. You can find this under "Accounts" in CampMinder. Candy bars cost \$1.50.

Meals & Snacks

Everyone eats together in our main dining hall for all three meals. Cabin groups sit together at their own table and share the meal "family style". In addition to passing around the "main dish", boys share bowls of fresh fruit, vegetable side dishes and pitchers of water.

We work very hard to serve fresh whole foods that promote excellent nutrition while also being "kid-friendly". Almost every meal is served "a la carte" so boys can "construct" their meal to their taste (for example: pasta is in one bowl, marinara sauce in another, and meatballs in another).

At lunch and dinner we put out an extensive salad bar chock full of fresh, healthy options. It has dark lettuces, legumes, fresh veggies of all kinds, cold salads, hard boiled eggs, and low-fat dressings.

In the morning this is a cereal bar with 4-5 varieties of cereals, yogurt, and hot cereals (oatmeal or cream of wheat).

Peanut Butter Substitutes & Other Food Allergies/Intolerances

Due to the proliferation of peanut/tree nut allergies, we use a peanut butter alternative (Sunbutter, WOW Butter, Soybutter).

If your son requires a special diet, is a vegetarian, or has a food allergy or intolerance we must know well in advance to make sure we can accommodate him.

Outdoor Adventure Trips

The second and subsequent trips of your campers session are selected by your son and vary from 2-night to 4-night adventures. He will request his top 3 choices from the menu of presented trips and we do everything we can to give him his top choice. Occasionally, we must assign a second or third choice trip.

Planning for Trips

Your son, along with two trip leaders (counselors) and four to six other campers, will begin planning his trip on Saturday evening.

Each trip group will plan their route, decide on a menu, and outline a packing list. Our goal is to equip campers with the skills and experience necessary to plan their own trips for the rest of their lives.

The afternoon before your son's trip is set to leave camp, he and his trip group will go to Pack Out, which is a special building in camp outfitted with all our gear and trail food.

Your camper and his group will work as a team to check all gear, organize food, and pack into bags accordingly.

The morning of trip departure, each trip group will double check gear and take a group photo.

Food on Trips

Campers can expect two hot meals (breakfast and dinner) and one cold meal when out on trips, including snacks throughout the day. Staying fueled up and hydrated is a high priority for our counselors, who lead meal times during trips.

Schedule on Trips

Outdoor adventure trips are less structured than in-camp life. Groups work as a community to decide how long they will paddle, hike, or bike. They decide what time they'd prefer to start cooking breakfast and what time they want to set up camp for the evening.

That being said, our counselors are trained to foster a healthy community environment (with appropriate bed times) while on trail and in-camp. Safety & wellbeing is the lens through which our staff make ALL decisions.

Healthcare at Birchwood

All of our staff have current Red Cross certification in CPR and First Aid. In addition, all of our tripping counselors have current certifications in Wilderness First Aid. We also keep a volunteer nurse on staff all summer long.

If a health concern arises while at camp our volunteer nurse and directors will assess the situation. If a condition requires the attention of a medical professional at our local clinic, the camper will be taken to the Cook County Hospital in Grand Marais.

You will be notified by Victor or Ashley if we take your child to the hospital. If any prescriptions are required as a result of an injury/illness at camp, we will bill the charges to your camper's store account, which is sent to you after the session is over.

If, while on a trip, a camper needs medical attention that is beyond the expertise and certification of our counselors, the group will contact a medical professional and the camp office. Our trips are equipped with a Garmin emergency GPS device. Upon speaking with a medical professional and the camp office, a plan will be prepared to transport the camper to the nearest hospital and a camp director will meet the group at a designated location.

Taking Prescriptions/Medications at Camp

Campers who have asthma are allowed to carry their personal inhalers with them at all times. Otherwise, all medications are locked up and dispensed by qualified staff.

If your child will be bringing prescription and/or over the counter meds to camp, please log them into the health center within CampMinder so that we can print out daily dosage medication reports for everyone in camp. Additionally, please print the Prescription Medication form and send it in a plastic baggie with the prescription medication in your son's carry-on bag. This will be checked in during arrival procedures.

Please note that summer camp is not the right time and place for a child to take a break from certain medications. We cannot stress how important it is to keep children on medications that provide emotional balance and stability to regulate their behavior, cope with stress, and control sleeping patterns while at camp.

TIP: Maintain the same dosages at camp that are prescribed for school. Medications should be sent to camp with your camper in original containers. Each camper will meet with a director and/or camp nurse on the 1st night of camp to collect prescriptions and ask if there have been any recent health issues that have come up since the medical form was sent to camp.

We prefer to dispense all medications before breakfast, lunch, or dinner. If your son must take his meds before bed, we can personally deliver them to him, but it often interrupts the cabin's activities. So if at all possible, please accommodate us by scheduling his meds before a meal instead. If your son takes a medication "only as needed" please fill out the "medication record" but make it clear that this is only dispensed for particular conditions or situations.

Camp Showers & Personal Hygiene

There are 5 showers available in our shower house. It is located centrally in camp. Each private stall is a complete bathroom with a toilet, shower, and sink. Water pressure is not always good but there is continuous hot water.

It is ideal to have a small waterproof basket/bucket to carry shampoo and soap to/from the shower house. Boys can shower during free times but not during activities or rest hour. We ask that they be considerate of others (if there's a line, hurry it along), keep showers tidy (don't leave trash, bottles, etc behind), and try not to be wasteful of water. Counselors encourage regular bathing (not just rinsing off). Swimming in the river does not equal a shower!

Please be sure to talk with your son about the importance of proper hygiene at camp, especially at camp.

Staying Healthy at Camp and On Trail

To make your son's time at camp comfortable and to prevent illness, please speak with him about when and how to take care of his personal health.

We cannot begin to emphasize the importance of prevention when it comes to sunburns. Because many of our activities are outside both in and on the water the risk of sunburn is great. We will always provide reminders to apply sunscreen, but it is important for parents to educate their child about when and how to apply sunscreen before coming to camp.

The Northwoods of Minnesota is blessed with beautiful scenery, sparkling waters, great forests, and of course bugs - lots of them. It seems as though bugs and camping have always gone together, but that doesn't mean we can't take steps to prevent bites and infection. The most effective insect repellent contains DEET. When purchasing a DEET repellent look for concentrations around 30% as anything higher is not significantly more effective, but is more expensive.

*Please do not pack bug spray in your son's carry-on bag. Often times it gets thrown away for being larger than the liquid limit or for being an aerosol can.

Communications with Parents

After the first week at Camp, you will receive a letter of introduction from one of your son's trip leaders. You may also receive additional letters throughout the session from a counselor or trip leader letting you know how your son is doing and/or sharing a story about your son's time at Camp.

Regarding the Phone

Campers do not make or receive phone calls unless it is an emergency or his birthday. This policy allows campers to make the healthy and necessary detachment from home while gaining a great deal of independence and self-sufficiency.

So that this policy isn't a surprise to your son upon arriving at camp, please explain the policy and have alternatives planned such as snail mail.

Mail at Birchwood and Checking Up On Your Child

Mail is a big deal at camp! Campers really treasure notes, cards, and letters from family and friends. Campers who do not receive any mail often feel left out and sometimes homesick.

Our staff constantly encourage campers to write home, but it is not unusual for them to ditch writing a letter to run off and do something fun with their new friends.

It is not an easy notion for a parent to live by, but rest assured that at camp “no news, is good news.”

One way to better your odds of receiving letters from your son is to send a bundle of self-addressed stamped envelopes, paper, and pens to write with.

Many parents are alarmed to receive letters expressing strong feelings of discomfort and sickness. Professionals who consult with camps explain that many children use the act of writing home as an emotional outlet to shed stress and to connect with someone they love and trust.

Once they vent, it allows them to move forward and enjoy camp. If you receive such a letter, don't panic, call the camp office and we will work together to make sure your son is comfortable and having fun.

To email your son + receive handwritten replies, use the "Email" function found on your CampMinder dashboard.

Photos & Packages

Viewing Photos Online

We post photos online to offer a glimpse into camp life. We do understand how important it is to feel like your child is doing well and a photo speaks volumes in that regard.

Please note, if you are not seeing your son enough, it is not personal nor does it mean he is not having a good time! Some shy away on purpose and we want to honor their privacy. That being said, if you're concerned, please call the office and we will do our best to upload an image as soon as possible.

Our photographer typically uploads images every evening when your camper is in camp. Our photographer is also the camp director (Ashley) so she is not able to be on trips taking photos. So, for example, if your camper selects a 5-day trip, you will see a photo of him on departure day and when he returns to camp but nothing in between.

To view photos, simply select "Photos" in your CampMinder dashboard and view by album.

Care Packages

Sorry, but we do not allow campers to receive care packages. This policy has actually been more of a relief than a disappointment to parents, and it has cut down on so much clutter and trash throughout camp!

A package is considered anything other than a traditional stamped envelope. Anything bigger will be held in the camp office and given to your son on travel day.

IF your son must be sent something essential in the mail, or if it is his birthday, contact the camp office beforehand so we know to expect it. It is also a good idea to label the package “essential” or “birthday” and we will make sure he gets it.

DO NOT require a signature for any mail to be delivered. Our mailbox is about two miles away from Camp, by boat, so it is very difficult for any delivery service to coordinate a time and place for a signature to be provided.

Post-Camp Policies

Post-Camp Communication with Staff Members

Though technology has brought many wonderful benefits when it comes to maintaining connections with others, we must also contend with the negative impact social media can have in the lives of our children.

Our pledge is to put your children in the company of the most trustworthy and capable young adults we can hire - counselors and activity instructors who are well suited to the task of caring for campers. The effort we put into screening and selecting our staff is part of that pledge.

Our staff work with your children in the context of a visible, well-scrutinized environment that has many built-in checks and balances. Counselors are supervised and guided by clear, firm policies regarding behavior. Their actions are also visible to co-workers and campers.

Even though we hire employees for the summer, we do not recommend our staff members as babysitters, nannies, or child companions outside of camp. In general, we discourage our staff from having contact with your children after camp is over since we cannot supervise it.

We hire our staff for the camp season. We do not take responsibility for their behavior off-season. As a parent, you are, of course, free to make your own choice in this matter.

While we cannot keep you from allowing your child to maintain contact with one of our staff members, in doing so you take full responsibility.

To prevent issues, we ask our staff to refrain from “friending” or “following” campers on TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, etc.

Therefore, if your son wants to remain in contact with a staff member, we encourage him to do so through e-mails and letters only. We also require our staff to obtain written permission from you, the parent prior to contact with the camper so they are legally protected and you are fully aware of their interaction with your son.

Post-Camp Internet Policies

Many campers exchange contact information with one another before departing camp. We hope campers foster their friendships for years to come! As a precaution, we recommend that you as the parent supervise your child’s online activities just as you do other aspects of their life in your home.

We do not assume liability or responsibility for any inappropriate or harmful communication between campers outside of our actual camp setting.

Policy on Risks in Camp

There are numerous risks associated with participation in summer camp activities. This includes, but is not limited to swimming, camping, archery, riflery, climbing, biking, canoeing, kayaking, tubing, and transportation to and from camp activities.

These risks which contribute to the unique character and desirability of the activities involved, pose the possibility of severe injury, illness, or death. Most of the activities take place in an outdoor environment.

For this, and other reasons, the risks cannot be eliminated, altered, or controlled. While our camp operates on the highest standard of safety, we do not assume liability for sickness, disease, injury, or accidents.

Inappropriate Behavior and Dismissal

At Birchwood, we intend to have an environment free from discrimination, void of violence, intimidation, and/or harassment based on race, creed, color, nationality, religious beliefs, or disability.

Language, attitudes, and behaviors that intimidate, offend, threaten or debilitate campers or staff members are not tolerated. We encourage campers to discuss any issue with their counselors or camp director at any time if they have concerns regarding these issues.

We do not tolerate emotional or physical abuse or the threat of abuse on one person by another. Such behavior may be grounds for dismissal. Emotional or psychological behavior which affects a child's ability to participate in the camp program, or that significantly disrupts the program for other children, may require dismissal.

Camp policy prohibits the possession of alcohol, tobacco, and/or illegal drugs while under the supervision of Birchwood Wilderness Camp. If a camper is suspected of possessing said substances, the camp director will be informed and a search of the campers belongings will be conducted. If said materials are seized from a camper, he may be dismissed at the discretion of the camp director.

For the protection of your child's interest, we reserve the right to dismiss, without refund of tuition, any camper whose influence or behavior is, at our judgment, inappropriate. This includes but is not limited to disrespect for the camp and its property, disrespect for other program participants and their property, possession and/or use of tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, and weapons.

In all cases, parents will be notified of our decision and will be responsible for all travel expenses upon dismissal.

Tuition Fees

We require full tuition payment prior to your son's session. To pay for camp, access your account on CampMinder and process a credit card or mail a check to our camp office.

All travel charges are separate from tuition fees. We do not book or pay for flights. Expenses like chaperone fees (\$100 one way) are added to your son's "store account" and billed to you after your son's session.

Note you may have luggage fees added to your store account if you did not cover them initially.

Cancellation Fees & Procedures

Cancellations prior to summer result in a full refund minus \$200. Refunds are NOT provided if the cancellation occurs within 30 days of the camper's session start date. A refund is not provided if the camper is removed from the program at any time

NO REFUND IS PROVIDED IF A CANCELLATION
OCCURS WITHIN 30 DAYS OF YOUR SON'S
SESSION START DATE.

Campers are expected to complete the full term of their session. If a camper is dismissed from camp by the camp director, removed from camp at any time (even at the discretion of a disgruntled parent), or departs camp due to illness or a medical condition, tuition costs are not refunded.

Any/all medical costs incurred at local clinics or hospitals are covered by the parent(s) not camp. Any charges not billed directly to your health insurance will be added to your store account bill.

Charges After Camp

Within four weeks of the end of camp, we will automatically bill your account for the remainder of your campers store balance. Your son's store purchases and travel fees (chaperone charges, baggage fees, etc) are itemized on this bill.

If you do not have a credit card on file for us to charge, we kindly request that you mail a check promptly to the camp office or call us with a credit card number you prefer to use. Thanks!

**Lastly, we want to do great work
with every child, every parent,
every time, every summer!**

We have dedicated our lives to creating a joyful environment for boys to learn and grow in, summer after summer.

This work is both our deepest personal passion AND our long-term profession.

YOU are our most profound and valued partner(s) in doing this most impactful work.

Please, if at any time you are disappointed, angry, worried, or have an issue of any kind, contact us - we value your feedback and want the opportunity to rectify the situation to the best of our ability.

Even after your son's session, we are open and eager to receiving feedback via phone or email. We welcome the opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue regarding your son's experience.

THANK YOU, friends!

And as always, HAPPY TRAILS!

Resources

Mabels Labels

We love Mabel's Labels for all of our clothing and personal belonging labels. They're super durable and easy to use.

<https://mabelslabels.com/fundraising/support>

*When prompted to type in a camp name, use Camp Birchwood for Boys

Baggage Tags

In the spring, we will mail two baggage tags to you (per camper).

Don't forget to attach the orange baggage tags to EACH BAG. Delta Airlines handlers look for our tags specifically to route the bags to the Camp Bus.

Your bag may be lost in the shuffle if it does not have the ORANGE TAG.

Everything Summer Camp Bags

Pop Up Soft Trunks from EverythingSummerCamp.com work well for cabin life because they're durable and can slide underneath bunks easily.



Camp Prep Checklist:

- Read the Parent Handbook cover-to-cover
- Make travel arrangements
- Fill out camp forms:
 - Travel Plan Confirmation (in CampMinder)
 - Health History Form
 - Camper Profile Form
 - Daily Medication Record
(only if your son takes meds at camp)
- Review the packing list and plan accordingly
- Label all belongings (<https://mabelslabels.com/> is a great option)
- Pack for camp
- Attach your ORANGE Birchwood baggage tags to both duffle bags (arrive via mail by May 31st)
- Make sure your son has his mailing address
- Make final camp payments (due May 1st)

BIRCHWOOD

WILDERNESS CAMP

Packing List:

- 1 small packable sleeping bag & stuff sack (synthetic material)
- 1 good raincoat and pants (these can make or break a trip!)
- 1 pair of hiking boots or high ankle-supported shoes
- 1 pair of water shoes (Teva, Keen, Chaco...)
- 1 pair of tennis shoes
- 1 life jacket (PFD) *he can also borrow one of ours
- 1 warm jacket (fleece)
- 3 pairs of shorts
- 2 pairs of jeans
- 2 pairs of non-cotton pants (i.e. stretchy hiking pants)
- 2 sweatshirts
- 6 t-shirts (3 short sleeve and 3 long)
- 1 set of pajamas
- 10+ pairs of socks
- 10+ sets of underwear
- 2 swimsuits
- 2 bandanas/buffs
- 1 hat with brim
- 1 water bottle
- 1 fishing rod (optional)
- 1 camera
- 1 day pack (like his school backpack)

BIRCHWOOD

WILDERNESS CAMP

Packing List Cont:

- 1 sleeping pad (foam or thin-air)
- 1 blanket
- 1 fitted sheet and one flat sheet
- 1 sleeping bag liner (optional)
- 1 pillow and case
- 2 towels
- 1 washcloth
- 1 comb/brush
- 1 bar of soap with container
- 1 small bottle of shampoo
- 1 toothbrush and paste
- 1 laundry bag
- 1 bottle of insect repellent
- 1 bottle of sunscreen (SPF 15+)
- 1 flashlight or head-lamp with extra batteries
- 1 set of stationery, pen, envelopes, and stamps

Packing Tips:

Our packing list is meant to be a guide. You know your son best so use your best judgment. We do laundry once per week, so no need to overpack. Please keep in mind that storage space is limited and everything must fit in two medium to large soft duffle bags.

HAPPY TRAILS
1 9 6 8

LACE UP



'YER BOOTS!

50 YEARS ^{AT THE} END OF THE GUNFLINT
Trail

