



## **TEEN HIGH ADVENTURE Background Information**

### **GOALS**

- To educate teens about the wildlife, natural ecosystems, and biodiversity of the Great Smoky Mountains.
- To provide enjoyable, adventurous, educational and safe outdoor experiences.
- To provide teens with essential knowledge of wise, conservation-based outdoor living skills, including the principles of Leave No Trace.
- To help teens develop a value system and lifestyle more in harmony with the earth.
- To inspire teens about environmental ethics and wilderness conservation.
- To provide teens with opportunities for high adventure experiences, mainly backpacking.
- To provide teens with opportunities for hands-on conservation and natural resource projects.

### **THE WILDERNESS**

Great Smoky Mountains National Park offers tremendous opportunities to learn about a diverse and beautiful part of the Earth. These mountains are estimated to be 600 million years old and are now one of the most diverse temperate regions in the world. The Smokies are known for their breathtaking views, clear mountain streams, abundant wildlife and variety of plants. The Park has some of the highest peaks in eastern North America with 16 peaks over 6,000 feet in elevation. In this wilderness there are old growth forests, more species of trees than in all of Northern Europe, more vascular plants than in any other national park, and the largest concentration of salamander species in the world, not to mention abundant deer, black bears and bird life.

### **SPENDING A WEEK IN THE WILDERNESS**

Teen High Adventure provides a unique opportunity for teens to become immersed in the wilderness for an entire week. There are certain challenges, both mental and physical, that go along with this. Teen High Adventure is designed for teens already somewhat familiar with the rigors of living in the backpacking and who are interested in a more challenging experience.

The Tremont staff members you'll be spending a week in the backcountry with are professional naturalists who live in these mountains and know them well. They are knowledgeable in a wide array of natural history subjects and outdoor recreation skills and bring many interests and talents to share with you this summer. You will also have opportunities to swim in the river, test your co-operation

skills with your hiking group, participate in conservation and natural resource projects to help the Park and simply enjoy the awe inspiring Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Our living environment emphasizes cooperation, friendship, fun, concern for others, and love of people and nature. We try to illustrate these messages in the lodge, in the dining hall, on the trails, everywhere we go and in everything we do. When you are not out on the backpacking trip you will be staying in a dormitory with the other Teen High Adventure Campers, some of who may become friends for life!

You will have many opportunities to discover how to feel at home in the outdoors and at the same time, to learn new ways you can help to protect our home, the earth.

## **TIPS TO PARENTS**

Keep us notified of your whereabouts; we want to be able to reach you if necessary. If you will be at a different phone number or address, please let us know.

Please avoid sending valuables along with your teen. We cannot be responsible for lost, damaged or stolen property.

We have a park visitor center that will be open on the arriving and departure days, so there is no reason to leave money with your teen. Shopping can be done on the days you arrive or depart.

## **CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT**

Our staff will inspect all clothing and equipment to be taken on the backpacking trip. They will make the final decision about what will be taken on the trip based on their experience backpacking in the Smokies. This is done so that each participant will have the most enjoyable, comfortable and safe trip possible.

You do not need to own everything on the list. Please feel free to rent, buy used items or borrow from friends anything on the packing list. Make sure all items are comfortable and “worn-in.”

You should bring more than what you will be wearing on the trail. About four nights will be spent in the dormitory or platform tents at Tremont. Any clothing you will not be taking on the backpacking trip can be left indoors. The following may answer some questions about some of the items listed on the What to Bring list. If you have any more questions about these items or others on the What to Bring list, please feel free to call us.

**Backpack:** A comfortable pack that has enough room for your personal gear as well as some group gear is important. It can be external or internal frame depending on your preference.

Internal frames can be more comfortable, but keep in mind that summers in the Smokies can be hot and humid and external frames may provide more ventilation. If you do not already own a pack we encourage you to buy one after trying several different kinds. Many outdoor stores will rent packs and you can try different designs and make a decision based on this trip as well as what you will use it

for in the future. The more you carry your backpack (with weight in it, not empty!) the better off you will be when you get here.

**Sleeping Bag:** We recommend *not* using cotton or down bags. The Smokies are very wet and humid, and wet cotton and down do not insulate well and take a long time to dry. A bag rated to about 30° F. with a synthetic shell that compresses into a small stuff sack is recommended.

**Hiking Boots:** The most important thing about hiking boots is not the price but that they are *broken in*. You want boots with good ankle support. Remember that you will be hiking many miles so don't get a pair that weigh a ton. Purchase boots several months in advance, especially if you get all-leather boots, and wear them twice a week at least during that time prior to your wilderness trip.

**Rain Gear:** Your rain gear should be decent quality, not thin plastic like that of a garbage bag. It should be sturdy and waterproof. A rain jacket and pants will keep you warmer than a poncho.

Remember: function is more important than fashion!

There are a few items we can provide if you do not feel you can afford them, including internal frame packs. If you absolutely cannot get a backpack please call us well in advance and tell us you will need one. The disadvantage to this is that you will not be able to practice carrying a loaded pack before you get here and it may take most of the trip to adjust it optimally. We will provide most group gear items such as eating utensils, tents and ground cloths.

*\*Don't forget to read the **WHAT TO BRING** list!*

**GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS INSTITUTE AT TREMONT**

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