

Backcountry Ecological Expedition June 26-July 1, 2023

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the **Backcountry Ecological Expedition** with Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont. Your camper is about to embark on an amazing journey, full of adventure, exploration, curiosity and wonder! We hope they're as excited as we are. **Please read this letter in full, as it contains essential information to help their experience go smoothly.**

Parents, please do the following:

- Have your camper [read, sign, and submit their camper contract](#) several weeks before camp starts.
- Let us know if there are any changes to the medical information you filled out when you registered.
- **Arrive at Tremont** between 2:00 and 4:00 pm on Monday, June 26.
- **Pick up your camper** promptly at 10:00 am on Saturday, July 1.

About Backcountry Ecological Expedition:

We have all kinds of adventures in store. This camp is an ecological canoe expedition on Fontana Lake in North Carolina. We will leave Tremont on Tuesday morning and return on Friday afternoon. We may find ourselves crawling through the undergrowth in search of rare snails, snorkeling the creeks to collect sneaky crawfish, or soaking in the wonders of a summer evening on a night paddle.

During this expedition, campers will learn not only backcountry living skills, but also field ecology techniques—from sampling aquatic macroinvertebrates to catching crayfish. Our field mission is to document as many organisms (invertebrates, birds, amphibians, plants, etc.) as possible as part of the park's All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory, an ambitious project that has brought scientists from all over the world to the Smokies to document its incredible biodiversity.

Our mission at Tremont is to convey respect and stewardship of the earth. We're committed to connecting people and nature. Your camper will discover how to feel at home in the outdoors while learning new ways they can help to protect our home, the earth. Tremont's professional staff cares about making their experience at Backcountry Ecological Expedition truly unforgettable - they are knowledgeable in a wide array of natural history subjects and outdoor recreation skills. Our living environment emphasizes cooperation, friendship, fun, concern for others, and love of people and

nature. We try to illustrate these messages in the tents, around the campfire, on the trails—everywhere we go and in everything we do.

Camper Contract

Campers participating in our camps need to read and think about each of the guidelines listed in the camper contract, linked above. Please read this over together, check and discuss each point, and then agree to these guidelines by signing the contract. Campers must understand, agree to, and abide by these guidelines. These expectations are important to create a positive and enjoyable experience for everyone involved in the program. Each teen will have responsibilities toward the group. They will be expected to carry their share of the group food and equipment, to be physically and mentally ready for the challenges of paddling a canoe over long distances, to help with the cooking and cleaning duties, and to participate in all group activities.

Packing for the Adventure

[Please review the packing list here.](#)

Arrival

We will do our best to be efficient as we meet each one of you, review your health form, collect any medications needed at camp and answer any questions you may have regarding your camper's stay. Please have these medications ready for check-in. You will then have the opportunity to help your camper move into the tent cabins, tour the site, and say your goodbyes.

Camper T-Shirts

We are happy to provide camper t-shirts at no cost to participants this year. Stop by the Visitor's Center to pick up your complimentary shirt. The store will be open on the first and last day of camp.

Your Camper's Health

In case of an accident or illness, guardians will be notified if the camper requires medical attention beyond what Tremont is able to provide. If we are unable to reach you in an emergency situation, the camp director will decide on appropriate action and continue to attempt to contact you or another responsible person as indicated on the medical form.

Your child's camping experience depends in part on his or her wellbeing. Please send only a healthy, illness-free child to camp.

Safety

We are proud to report that we have an outstanding safety record when it comes to kids and the outdoors. However, we do take the concerns of parents very seriously and have provided some insight into risk factors during summer camp. Please call or visit our website if you're interested in learning more about the precautions we take to ensure your child has a safe experience.

Please read our [latest COVID-19 guidelines](#) prior to your trip and let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Medications

*We request that you please do **not** take your child off any regularly prescribed medications during*

their week at summer camp. The resulting behavior following a sudden change in medicine regime can be difficult for both your camper and our staff. We realize that opinions may differ on this. However, camp can be a challenge as it is without further burdening a child by disrupting a routine.

Phone Calls

Because telephone calls intrude and interrupt the magic of the camp experience, we are not able to field telephone calls between campers and guardians. Rest assured, not hearing from your child is a sign that they are having fun and are fully involved in the life of the camp. The best way to stay in touch with your child is by writing letters and postcards.

If there is an emergency, you can contact us by calling our office Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM and on Saturday from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM. When our office is closed, you can leave a message on our answering machine and we will get it first thing the next business morning. If it is urgent to contact us immediately when our office is closed, call the National Park Service Dispatch at 865-436-1294.

Mail

Every camper loves mail. Start writing those letters now! Rather than writing how much you miss your camper (which is, of course, true but could make them homesick), consider instead telling them how proud you are of them for spending a week away from home! Send mail to:

(Camper's name)

BEE

Tremont

9275 Tremont Rd

Townsend, TN 37882

Lost and Found

When picking up your child on the last day of camp, please make sure they return home with every item they brought with them. Following the end of camp, we are able to keep items for only a brief period due to the large amount of lost and found items left behind. If you wish any items to be returned to you, you must notify us immediately following the end of camp and we'll send you instructions to arrange for a UPS pick-up.

We hope that this information is helpful to you in planning for your upcoming adventure with Tremont. If you have further questions, please feel free to call or email.