

## Wilderness Adventure Trek I

### June 10-15, 2024

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the **Wilderness Adventure Trek** 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](#) by May 23.
- Let us know if there are any changes to the medical information you filled out when you registered.
- Review the [packing list](#).
- **Arrive at Tremont** between 2:00 and 4:00 pm on June 10.
- **Pick up your camper** promptly at 10:00 am on June 15.

#### Spending Four Days in 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.

Wilderness Adventure Trek provides a unique opportunity for teens to become immersed in the wilderness for longer than a weekend camping trip. **It will be a fun yet challenging experience, both mentally and physically. You'll be expected to contribute your energy not only to the task of hiking, but also to group-living needs, such as preparing meals, filling water bottles, setting up tents, cleaning up campsites, etc. A positive attitude open to new experiences is a MUST.**

The Tremont staff with whom you'll be spending a week in the backcountry 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.

Our living environment emphasizes cooperation, friendship, fun, concern for others, and love of people and nature. We try to illustrate these messages in everything we do. When you are not out on the backpacking trip you will be staying in a dormitory with the other Wilderness Adventure Campers, some of whom 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.

### **Program Goals**

Some of our program goals include:

- Experience physical challenges, empowering teens with self-confidence and a sense of efficacy
- Be introduced to and experience the backcountry and wilderness, sparking a desire to explore other wild places
- Live, struggle, and laugh with new friends from many different backgrounds, gaining perspective and empathy for others
- Develop life skills, including self-responsibility, organization, relationship building, and teamwork through daily tasks of backcountry living

### **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 backpacking, to help with the cooking and cleaning duties, and to participate in all group activities.

### **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.

### **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)

**WAT I**

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.

**GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS INSTITUTE AT TREMONT**

9275 Tremont Road • Townsend, TN 37882 • Phone: 865-448-6709 • Fax: 865-448-9250 • [gsmmit.org](http://gsmmit.org) • [mail@gsmmit.org](mailto:mail@gsmmit.org)

**Other Notes**

Campers likely get to sleep on platform tents on the Tremont campus rather than in the dorm before the start of the backpack trip. Also, they may get the opportunity to participate in a small conservation project in the backcountry relating to our Community Science program. This might be collecting snail shells, inventorying ferns, or searching for beetles. This is an awesome way of learning more about the park and helping scientists in the process!

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.