

Camp Otterdale - Frequently Asked Questions

What are the responsibilities of the Parent Volunteers?

Parent volunteers are there to be an extra set of eyes. All activities will be run by the qualified camp staff who are all certified. Parents are welcome to take part in activities if they wish, but are not required to.

Some parents will need to stay in cabins with the students as the Camp's Spring staff is not large enough to supervise our large groups. Within each cabin there is a large room with bunk beds and storage for 10-12 campers and an adjoining room which would be used by the parent volunteers and is large enough for about four people. There will be two parents in each cabin with the students.

All costs for parent volunteers will be covered. Parents have the choice of riding on the bus or driving up to the camp. There is plenty of parking.

Will the parent volunteers be asked to get a Police check?

Yes. With the exception of School Board employees, who have to make a declaration yearly, all parent volunteers are required to complete a Police check, which will be paid for by the school if it's no longer free.

When will we find out the dates of our trip?

Planning will take place over March break after students have submitted their slips declaring their interest. Parent volunteers will be contacted the week after March Break so they can make arrangements and start the process for a Police Check.

If I don't decide before March Break will I still be able to go to camp?

Yes. We just need to know initial numbers and parent volunteers so we can assign classes to trip dates. The camp can accommodate up to 90 students per trip. Students can sign up for camp at a later date provided there is still space available.

Who will be running the individual activities?

All of the activities will be run by qualified camp staff, who follow the OPHEA (Ontario Physical and Health Education Association) guidelines for all activities. Most, if not all of the Spring staff, are certified lifeguards and have years of training in camp activities.

What activities are included at camp?

Activities at camp include swimming, kayaking, canoeing, fishing, court sports (basketball, dodgeball, tennis, badminton, etc), field games (soccer, large group games such as Capture the flag, etc), Survival Skills (camp fire building, camouflage, etc), hiking, bird watching, arts and crafts, Archery (approval pending), Extreme Leisure Sports (ping pong, Giant Chess, card games, etc) and many others.

In addition students will have an opportunity to learn about forest and lake ecology and get a tour of the camp farm and maple syrup production facility.

There will also be an evening program which will include a campfire, cabin competitions, and group games.

There is also time in the schedule for down time and social time in the cabins. (See draft schedule at the end).

Do the students get to decide which activities they would like to participate in?

Yes. For the first day and a half the students will rotate with their cabin groups through a series of activities so they can try everything. At lunch on the second day they will receive a set of personalized discs which will allow them to sign up for their chosen activities for the remainder of the trip.

What safety precautions are there on the waterfront?

There is an "H" shaped dock, with a swimming area enclosed by the dock and a rope on the other end. Students are only allowed to swim inside the swimming area which is staffed by a minimum of 2 lifeguards depending on the number of students present.

Students will be required to wear a life jacket for all boating activities and will have camp staff with them on the water at all times. Students are not allowed on the waterfront without a teacher, camp staff member, or parent volunteer present.

Will students need to complete a swim test?

Yes, If they want to swim or go in one of the boats they will need to do a swim test. On the morning of the first day students will complete a swimming test which involves swimming across the swimming area and back, and treading water for 1 minute.

HOWEVER, if they don't want to swim but do want to go canoeing they can complete the swim test using a life jacket, as per OPHEA guidelines.

Can the camp accommodate food allergies and dietary requirements?

Yes, the camp will be able to accommodate food allergies and special diets. A lot of the camp staff are vegetarian or vegan, so there are always plenty of vegetarian options available. They can also accommodate Halal, Kosher and gluten free diets.

Part of the permission forms will include a medical form which will also ask about allergies and diet requirements.

What are the cabins like?

It is a camp, so it is rustic by hotel standards, but very nice compared to many camps. Think of it as comfortable camping!

The cabins are very spacious with lots of room for the students and their belongings. Many of them have been built in the last few years. They will be sleeping on bunk beds with a mattress, not on the floor or ground, and there is electricity in the cabins for lights and a few plugs.

Can students be placed in a cabin with a friend?

Yes, the students get to choose their own cabin members from the classes that will be attending the trip. Half of the classes will be assigned to one trip, the other half will be assigned to the second trip, based on the number of students who sign up and the parents who volunteer. The girls cabins are on one side of the camp property and the boys cabins are on the other side.

Are electronic devices allowed?

Personal devices not allowed at camp. There is no wifi and kids are encouraged to unplug and take a vacation from technology. The whole point of going to camp is to enjoy the outdoors and experience other activities that don't involve technology. The kids are so busy they don't miss it.

But what if there is an emergency?

The camp has a telephone that parents can use to contact us in case of an emergency at home. If there is a problem at camp parents will be contacted. Remember - No News is Good News!

But what about photos?

As per school board policy, students are not allowed to take photos on their personal device. As this is a School trip, photos are not allowed. We will have a designated photographer (staff or parent) who will take photos to share.

Are there showers?

They do have showers (brand new shower house built last year - smells like fresh cedar!), but very few kids, if any, used them last year. They're only there for three days, and most of them are in and out of the lake all day, which is fabulous, so they tend not to need one.

What is your experience with kids that get homesick?

The camp counsellors are excellent at helping students get through their anxieties. Last year we had a number of anxious students but by halfway through day 2 they had adjusted to the routines and had a great time. That is why it is best to go for three days. It takes some kids a day or two to adjust to their new surroundings, then they still have a day to enjoy themselves. As an educator it is amazing to watch the change in some kids over the three days as they learn to be independent and gain confidence in their own abilities.

However, sometimes students need a quick phone call home for reassurance, and we can make that happen. Although sometimes a child going off to camp is harder on the parents than on the students!

One of the reasons we chose Otterdale is because it is relatively close to home, so in extreme circumstances a child could be picked up if necessary.

At any point before the trip can we back out of it and not be penalized financially?

The cost of the trip will be added to your Cash on-line account in late-April, early May, when the permission forms are sent home. Depending on the circumstances we could issue a refund. However, it puts the school in a large financial burden if we book two trips and enough buses based on numbers and a lot of students back out at the last minute. We have certain fixed costs that we can't recover. In that instance we may only be able to refund the individual student's cost for the camp.

Daily Camp Schedule (Times approximate)

8:00 am	Wake up bell and optional morning swim
8:30	O' Canada and Thoughts of the Day
8:45	Breakfast
9:15	Cabin Cleanup and preparation for Activities
9:30	Activity Rotations
11:30	Cabin time/Clean up
12:00 pm	Lunch
12:30	Quiet time for rest in Cabin
1:30	Activity Rotations
4:30	Cabin Time/Clean up
5:30	Supper
6:30	Cabin Time
7:00	Evening Program
8:30	Snack
9:00	Cabin time
10:00	Lights out.