

Top 10 reasons why you might not enjoy camp

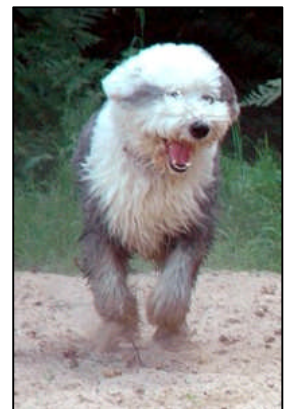
Dog Scouts of America has been holding camps since 1996. In 2002, we had our 20th camp. In 2006 we celebrated 10 years of camps! Over the years our camp has evolved and improved, thanks in great part to the comments and suggestions made by the campers. We very carefully examine the suggestions made for camp to find areas in which we could improve. We aim to please.

Based on our feedback, 95 to 97 percent of the campers are somewhere between satisfied to extremely thrilled with their camp experience, so we must be reaching our goal. People who find the camp experience less than fabulous, usually are unimpressed because their high personal expectations were not met. This informational sheet is to help you keep your expectations in a more reasonable range so you can be part of the 95-97 percent.

Like some of you, I never got a chance to go to camp as a kid, and my first “dog camp” I attended as an adult left much to be desired. The camp did not have screens on the windows. There was sand everywhere. The cots were terrible. If you didn’t bring a piece of plywood with you to camp, your back would be in a “C” shape in the morning. The cabins were all unfinished on the insides. To use the insect infested restroom in the middle of the night, I had to try to make my way on crutches, holding a flashlight, over huge tree roots sticking up out of the ground everywhere. Nonetheless, I enjoyed the camp very much. I would rate it a “10” because my expectations were not a five star motel with gourmet food, maid service, and air conditioning. I was expecting “camp.”

For those of you who have never had an adult camping experience in a rustic setting, I will try to prepare you with some of the things that have turned people off in the past.

#1- The sand. While we have put in grass around the lodge and in the activity fields (& taken great pains to get it to grow,) in the north woods, the huge pine trees grow the best in sandy soil. So, while we have beautiful trees to look at, we have sand everywhere. It gets tracked in (we’re not going to make you take your shoes off at the door and rinse your dog’s feet.) It gets in your bed. It gets on the floor. It gets in your shoes and socks. It gets all over your dog. During extremely dry spells, it works up into a dust, so that any disturbance, like a car driving up, will raise a cloud of dust that will take several moments to settle. If you’re coming to camp not expecting sand, you may be disappointed.



#2- The bugs. Bugs are beyond our control. We try to encourage bug-eating critters to inhabit our woods and have mosquito fish in the pond. We also have several “mosquito eater” machines around the lodge and RV area. We try not to add dangerous poisonous chemicals to the environment by fogging constantly. But we do have a large body of water and a huge woods containing several streams and standing pools of water. Insects love it here as much as we do. Bugs are a fact of outdoor life at camp. If you are coming to camp expecting to not see mosquitoes or other biting insects, you may be disappointed.



#3- The food. Close to 99% of the campers really like the food we serve at camp. It is camp food, geared more toward an adult palate. Instead of the usual camp diet of goulash and hot dogs, we serve lasagna, chicken dinners and fire cooked baked potatoes. However, there’s always at least ONE person at camp who rates the food as inedible (even though the others are saying it’s fabulous.) I personally love the camp food, and all I can say about the occasional person who complains about it is that they must eat 3 meals a day at a 5-star restaurant. If you’re expecting haute cuisine, you may be disappointed.



#4- The bunkhouse. Our bunkhouse was designed so that no one would have to pick their way through the dark woods in the middle of the night to find the restroom.



The showers and toilets are at one end of our large building, and the rooms (private and shared) are at the other end with the dining room/lecture room in the "middle". The walls are thin. They are temporary partitions that are made of the same 2" thick construction as an older mobile home (packing ear plugs is recommended, just in case someone snores loudly.) The doors are 2 feet wide, also just like an older mobile home (the restrooms and the door to the handicap accessible room are 3 feet wide.) You will be able to hear your neighbors through

the walls (so be careful what you say about them!) We must all be considerate of one another after "quiet time." If you're expecting a carpeted, sound-proof room, or TV or bed linens, or phone, you may be disappointed.

#5- The staff. The dog scout camp staff is always prepared to "go the extra mile" for our campers. The combination of skills and experience we have in our staff members makes for a great mixture. We love our campers. Anyone who loves their dog enough to come to camp is our kind of people. While there are rules to be followed for the preservation of everyone's sanity while living in this communal situation for a week, we try our best not to treat you like a band of wild hoodlums. Our staff gets high marks 99% of the time. We've had people add several plus marks to the "A"s they give us, to show how very impressed they were with the overall competence and caring shown by the staff. However, every now and then we'll get the odd camper who totally trashes the staff. It's as though this person was attending a different camp from the one all of the others attended. In this person's mind, we did not give them enough attention, or we somehow let them down. They usually never give a specific reason for their dissatisfaction, and they usually don't sign their note. If you think that nobody likes you, you must be the center of attention and waited on like a princess or you suffer from low self-esteem, you may be disappointed with your camp experience.



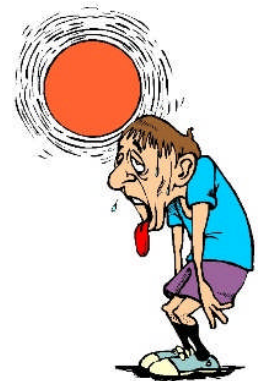
#6- The waterfront. Splash Lake is a really large pond with inflow and outflow, so it qualifies as a lake.



The sandy bottom makes the undisturbed water crystal clear, for a good view of the bottom. With 35 campers and dogs in the water, however, it temporarily takes on more of the appearance of a mud puddle! There are little critters in there, as you would expect to find in ALL bodies of fresh water (along with some really large Japanese Koi fish and some turtles.) It is spring fed, and can be quite cold at depth. In its fifth year, it started to grow some weeds and we have taken measures to reduce these as much as possible (adding harmless dye that blocks sunlight from reaching the bottom where the weeds start to grow). If you were expecting something like the Caribbean, or a

swimming pool, you may be disappointed.

#7- The weather. It can get very hot and humid, even in the north woods in the summer. It may also rain heavily, causing us to adjust the schedule where possible. The tall trees tend to shade the lodge, which is super insulated (so it stays relatively cool.) There are fans, but no air conditioning at camp. It could be hot and parched all week, or we could have a week of solid rain. There have also been some early June camps that had frost on the ground in the morning and were much cooler than one might expect for summer. If this kind of uncertainty and possibility of temperature extremes bothers you, you may be disappointed.



#8- The other campers. There will be plenty of other campers and their dogs here at the same time (otherwise it wouldn't be called a camp.) Some of the people are nice. Some may be selfish or rude. A lot of the campers, like me, are over 40, with mood swings and set in their ways. We must try to get along with the other campers while we're here. People vary. We can't whack people with a paddle, or write a note to their parents if they misbehave. We have to obey the golden rule and be aware of our own behavior. If you can't deal with other people, or are expecting everyone to be nice all of the time, you may be disappointed.



#9- The mistakes. We do the best job we can, but occasionally there are oversights. We may forget to add something to your camp store tab and need an additional payment when the oversight is found, or we may forget that you asked us to reserve you a rental backpack. We're all human and we're all imperfect. With so many things to think about to keep the camp running smoothly, it's hard to get it all right 100% of the time. We would never intentionally do anything to inconvenience a camper, or make you feel less than important. So if we do, it is entirely by accident. If you are expecting us to be incapable of error, you may be disappointed.



#10 Dog behavior. Either your dog's behavior or someone else's dog's behavior may cause you embarrassment or concern. Dogs are not going to be on their best behavior in this environment. Your dog may show signs of overexcitement, no self-control, stress, or even aggression that he or she never exhibited when not surrounded by 40 other dogs and expected to be awake and active much more than usual. This sudden change may get back to normal in a few days, but if not, we have behavior experts at camp that may be able to shed some light on why your dog (or dogs in general) may be behaving this way. If you are expecting the dogs to all be perfect angels and get along well with all of the other dogs, you may be disappointed.



These are the top ten things that lead to peoples' dissatisfaction. If you arrive at camp with your expectations set realistically, you will be less likely to want to turn around and go home, or worse, to stay and be miserable because your expectations did not meet the reality.