

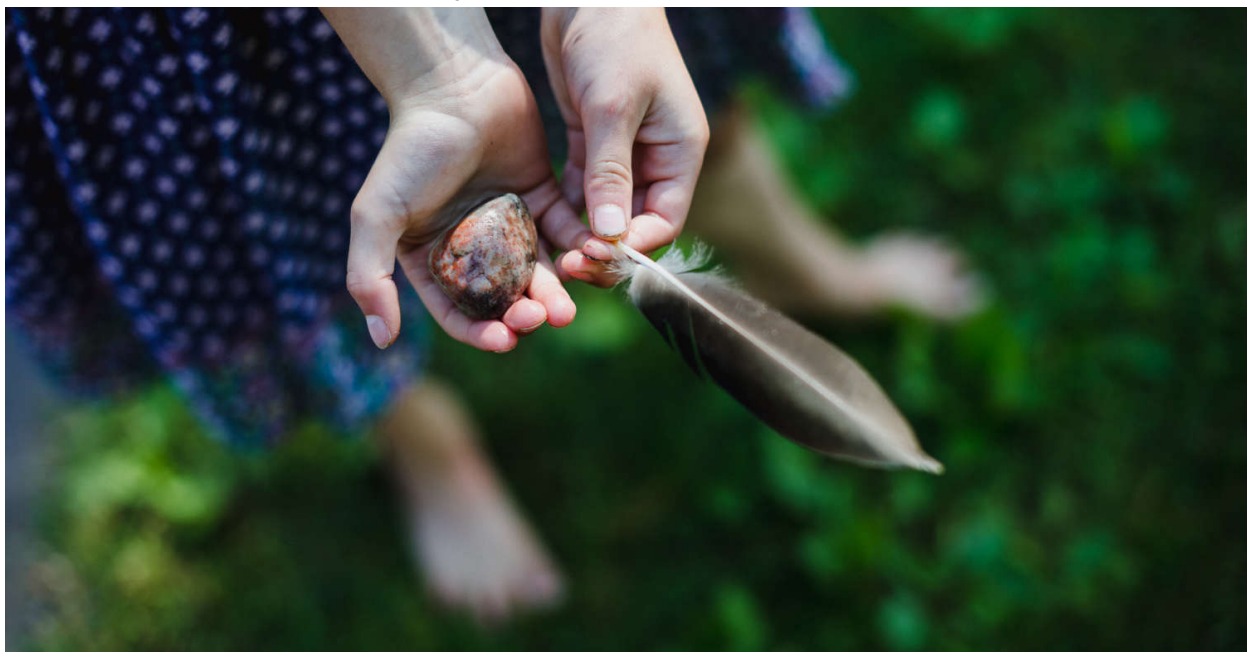


Discovery

WILDERNESS SCHOOL

"It is not what we do to the child or for the child that educates him, but what we enable him to do for himself, to see and learn and feel and understand for himself. The child grows by his own efforts and his own real experience."

Susan Isacs, "First-Hand Experience – What Matters to Children" Diane Rich



Camp Handbook

Summer 2024



Summer Camp Handbook

PROGRAM INFORMATION

- Welcome!
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- Curriculum
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- What to Wear based on Weather

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Weather
- Water, Snacks, Lunch
- Bathrooms + Communication
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- Drop-off and Pick-up Routine
- Student Behavior Policy

RISK MANAGEMENT

- Safety and Risk Assessment
- Lakefront Policy
- Outdoor Hazards
- Staff and Teen Mentor Training
- Thank you!



Welcome to Discovery Wilderness School!

WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE.

At Discovery, we strive to inspire wonder, curiosity, and connection with the natural world through playful exploration and meaningful community.

Our camp curriculum focuses on discovery-based learning using the natural world as a catalyst for growth and development.

As children spend time outdoors, they grow in understanding and connection to Mother Earth, developing a sense of pride and protection for her.

Can't wait to Explore with you!

Chelsea Eerkes

Discovery Wilderness School, Director

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616-540-3984



Adjustment to Wilderness Camp

Starting a new program is a big step for most kids, especially in an outdoor camp setting. We acknowledge each child's differences in adjusting to a new environment and provide support to help each child adjust to our program.

As a parent/guardian, you have unique insight as to how your child reacts to new settings. If there is specific information we should know to help your child acclimate, please reach out!



Wilderness Camp Curriculum

"COYOTE'S GUIDE TO CONNECTING WITH NATURE" BY JOHN YOUNG

- Engaging in direct experience with plants and animals.
- Connection to nature through science, art, and music
- Acknowledgement of worldwide indigenous cultures

GOALS FOR STUDENT GROWTH

1. Nature Connection (Heart)
2. Nature Awareness (Head)
3. Social Development (Community)
4. Physical Development (Body)

CHILD PASSIONS AS MENTORING TOOLS

Games hiding, seeking, and sneaking that bring the Core Routines for nature connection.

Hunts, errands and adventures present us with the opportunity to push beyond the edges of the known

Make-believe is an important part of children becoming engrossed in nature. We channel these passions into nature connection!



Core Routines of Nature Connection

THESE CORE ROUTINES ARE CENTRAL TO OUR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY.

1. **Sit Spot:** Students find one place in your natural world that they visit frequently. This will become their place of intimate connection with nature.
2. **Story of the Day:** After spending time in nature, we share our story of the day- verbally or with journaling
3. **Expanding our Senses:** Pay attention! Look Alert! Stretch out! Use all the senses, one at a time, and together.
4. **Questioning and Tracking:** Become a detective and track everything as a clue to a mystery to solve.
5. **Animal Forms:** Through games and storytelling, students act out animal movements, behaviors, and personalities.
6. **Wandering:** We're present in the moment and go off-trail wherever curiosity leads.
7. **Mapping:** Students orient to the compass directions, and perceive the landscape from a bird's eye view.
8. **Field Guides:** We regularly browse through field guides as treasure-chests of knowledge.
9. **Journaling:** We keep dated sketches, captions, and comments that describe our time in nature.
10. **Survival Living:** We practice all the basic human needs: shelter, water, fire, food, tools, clothing and art.
11. **Mind's Eye Imagining:** Students strengthen their imagination from the experience of all five senses.
12. **Bird Language:** Be still and listen. What message do you hear from the birds of the forest?
13. **Gratitude:** We express thanksgiving for any and all aspects of nature and life.



Summer 2024 Tuition and Refund Policy

\$270 per camper, \$10 sibling discount

***Optional before/after care 8am-5pm (Water Week Only)**

Upon enrollment, there is a \$50 non-refundable deposit.

- Cancellations more than 30 days before a camp session start date will receive a full refund, minus the deposit.
- Cancellations 14 to 29 days before a camp session start date will receive a 50% refund of the session cost, minus the deposit.
- Cancellations within two weeks of their session will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
 - Illness or injury, with a physician's note- full refund, minus the \$50 non-refundable deposit.
 - Cancellations due to personal reasons will not be refunded.
 - No-shows without prior communication will not be refunded.
 - Session fees will not be refunded if a camper is sent home for health or behavioral issues.
- If Wilderness School needs to cancel camp sessions due to any situation out of our control, such as Hazardous Air Quality, Extreme Weather, or other circumstances beyond our control, prorated refunds will be issued.



2024-2025 Camp Dates

SPRING BREAK CAMP 2024

April 1-4

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

SPRING BREAK CAMP 2025

April 7-10

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

SUMMER CAMPS 2024

June 3-6, Bushcraft Camp

July 8-11, Wild Water Week

9:00 AM- 3:00 PM

SUMMER CAMPS 2025

June 9-12

July 14-17

August 4-7

9:00 AM- 3:00 PM

WINTER CAMP 2024

December 9-12, 10:00 AM-

2:00 PM

WINTER CAMP 2025

December 8-11, 10:00 AM-

2:00 PM



What to Bring to Wilderness Camp

IN COLD WEATHER, LAYERING IS KEY

- Base Layer is essential- poly-propylene or capilene, wool, or silk/wool blends wick moisture off of the body
- Mid Layer- comfortable clothes
- Bulk Layer- warm sweater, sweatsuit
- Shell- outer, waterproof layer
- Hats and mittens/gloves + extra set for backpack
- Thick, warm, TALL wool socks
- Winter boots one size larger than your child's foot to create "dead-air space" for insulation.

EXTRA CHANGE OF CLOTHES, EVERY SINGLE DAY





- Even on dry days, we might end up wet or muddy
- Full set of seasonally appropriate clothes tucked inside a big ziplock bag to keep dry
- Winter- extra mittens and socks

FINDING QUALITY GEAR

- Make sure it's really waterproof- look for sealed seams.
- Recommended brands on the gear list below
- Used items on Facebook Marketplace or our facebook group gear exchange thread
- Good deals- Sierra Trading Post, ebay, poshmark.com




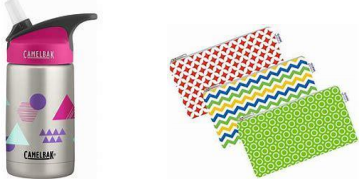


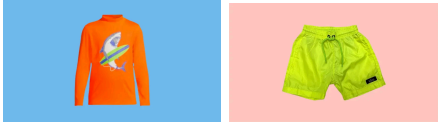


Recommended Gear List

Picture	Item	Recommended Brands
	rain coat and rain pants OR a one-piece rain suit	Oakiwear, LL Bean, Polarn O. Pyret, Grundens, Helly Hansen Discount Code with Oakiwear– oaki.com <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CODE: discoverywilderness ■ 25% off orders of \$29.99 or more with free shipping
	Base-Layer: long underwear bottoms and top (wool, wool/silk or synthetic)	Merino, kozi kidz, smartwool, ella's wool
	Wool sweater or fleece top, warm wool or fleece pants	Ella's Wool, merino, smartwool
Play clothes that you don't mind getting dirty in warm weather. Long sleeves and lightweight pants protect legs from scratches, bug bites and poison ivy.		Garage sales and thrift stores!
	Snow pants and winter jacket	Carhart, Columbia, gusti, chlorophylle, Northface, LL Bean grow with me jackets (seam can be cut to lengthen 1.5 inches for growth spurts)



	<p>2 or more pairs of wool socks (or wool/silk blend). These should be TALL, so they don't roll down inside boots.</p>	<p>Morino, icebreaker, smartwool, Ella's Wool, Oakiwear</p>
	<p>Rain boots AND snow boots OR insulated rainboots (rated for cold weather), recommended one size larger to accommodate for 2 layers of socks and extra room for air insulation.</p>	<p>Bogs, Muk, kamik, croc, natives</p>
	<p>Mud/water ready shoes for warmer weather (closed toe and closed heel)</p>	<p>Natives, keens</p>
	<p>Wool or fleece hat that covers ears plus neck warmer (no scarves please) or balaclava</p>	<p>Morino, icebreaker, smartwool, Ella's Wool</p>
	<p>2 pairs of mittens or gloves (waterproof shell plus wool mittens work well) Extra long elbow-length mittens also work great.</p>	<p>Kombi, head mittens, Gordini mittens, abeko brand Polarn O. Pyret sells a rain mitten which when paired with a woolen mitten is perfect for our climate.</p>



	Full size backpack with space for extra set of clothes, wet gear, and lunch/water bottle	LL Bean
	Lunchbox, Child-sized water bottle, and reusable containers/bags for lunches and snacks—we strive to be a zero-waste school, so please send food items in reusable containers.	
	Clothing Label Stickers with your family's last name. We will do our best to return all items with names labeled.	
	JUMBO 2.5 Gal zipping bag for storing your child's extra set of clothes in his backpack. (An extra set of clothes isnt any good if the rain soaked through his backpack too, right?)	
	Fluorescent and bright colored swimwear for lake days. Orange and lime green shows up best in the water at the lake.	
	Sunscreen (SPF 40)	Badger, Earth Mama
	Bug spray	Murphy's Naturals, Herbal Armor



What to Wear Gear List

PLEASE LABEL ALL GEAR WITH YOUR FAMILY NAME!

If the “feels like” temperature is...

less than 30° please wear

- base layer: wool, wool/silk or polyester
- bulk layer: warm pants, sweater
- waterproof layer: winter coat, snow pants
- wool socks
- snow boots (insulated)
- warm hat that covers ears well
- gloves or mittens (waterproof/resistant)

Please pack extra...

- wool socks
- gloves or mittens (waterproof/resistant)
- warm hat

Above 50° please wear

- sunscreen and bug spray already applied if necessary
- long pants and sleeves
- raincoat and pants /rain suit, if rainy or muddy
- rain boots or mud-ready shoes (closed-toe, closed heel)
- sun hat

30–50° please wear

- sunscreen and bug spray already applied if necessary
- warm under-layers
- regular clothes
- winter coat (waterproof/resistant)
- snow pants OR rain pants with a warm layer underneath
- snow boots OR rain boots with extra pair of warm socks
- warm hat
- gloves or mittens (waterproof/resistant)

Please pack extra...

- warm socks
- gloves or mittens (waterproof/resistant)
- warm hat

In backpacks each week

- water bottle
- snack and lunch
- extra complete set of seasonally appropriate clothes
- plastic bag for wet/dirty gear

*Personal toys should be left at home or in the car. Such items are often lost and present a problem for the children.



Weather

We will be outside in almost all weather! Teachers will be mindful of temperature and precipitation, as well as the emotional state of the children. We will retreat to our indoor space when necessary.

If Comstock Park Public Schools are Closed due to snow/ice/inclement weather, we will also close for the day.

EXTREME WEATHER - MOVING INDOORS

Courses will move indoors when the weather includes...

- Thunderstorm warning, tornados or severe weather
- Heat index above 90°
- Wind chill below 0°
- Heavy rain with a wind chill below 45°
- Wind gusts above 35 mph

WIND SCALE		WIND SPEED MILES PER HOUR
	SMOKE RISES UP	0
	SMOKE DRIFTS	1-3
	LEAVES RUSTLE FLAGS STIR	4-7
	LEAVES AND TWIGS MOVE	8-12
	BRANCHES MOVE FLAGS FLAP	13-18
	SMALL TREES SWAY FLAGS RIPPLE	19-24
	LARGE BRANCHES MOVE, FLAGS BEAT	25-31
	WHOLE TREES MOVE FLAGS EXTEND	32-38
	TWIGS BREAK WALKING IS DIFFICULT	39-46
	SIGNS, ANTENNAS BLOWN DOWN	47-54
	TREES UPROOTED CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE TO BUILDINGS	55-73
	COUNTRYSIDE DEVASTATED	74 OR ABOVE

WIND SAFETY + BEAUFORT WIND SCALE

Sustained winds of 20 mph or wind gusts of 25 mph- classes move from the woods into open fields

Sustained winds of 25 mph or gusts of 30 mph- we take extreme caution in the open field areas, keeping students away from all trees.

If wind gusts are predicted above 35 miles per hour, classes will be moved indoors.



Air Quality

Air Quality is a hazard new to the Michigan area. Summer 2023 saw some extremely unhealthy air quality conditions due to Canadian wildfires. If this becomes an issue, we will follow the recommended EPA guidelines as outlined below.

AQI	LEVEL	SCHOOL GUIDELINE
0-100	Good / Moderate Air Quality is acceptable	All activities unaffected
101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups Most people are unaffected, but those with respiratory disease, older adults, or younger children are at greater risk.	Outdoor activities may be modified for younger children and those with sensitivities. Staff will monitor all students, particularly those with identified sensitivities such as asthma.
151-200	Unhealthy Air Quality Everyone may experience some adverse health effects, those with high risk may experience more serious effects.	Outdoor activities are limited. Students will come in for 20-30 minutes for every hour outside. Outdoor activities will be modified to avoid prolonged physical exertion.
201-300	Very Unhealthy Everyone may experience more serious health risks.	All activities will move indoors. Drop off will be modified so students have limited time outside.
301+	Hazardous Everyone should limit travel and stay indoors. It is not safe to travel between house and car.	All activities will be canceled.



Water, Snacks and Lunch

WATER BOTTLES

- Child-sized (can refill at school)
- Kids need water in cold weather too!!!

FOOD ALLERGIES

- Each class/year has students with differing needs
- We'll let you know if you need to avoid nuts in lunches
- Please contact us if your child has a severe food allergy

LUNCH AND SNACKS

- Send a big, healthy lunch + snacks
- Students will always have access to food and drink, and will be allowed to eat when they need to
- Cold days- thermos of hot soup recommended

TRASH

- **Please no ziplock bags, tinfoil, juice boxes, etc.**
- We strive to be a zero-waste school.
- Leave no trace principles- any uneaten food and all packaging will be sent home for recycling.



Restrooms + Communication

ON-SITE RESTROOMS

- Please use the restroom before coming to class.
- We teach “wild wees” at age-appropriate levels.
- Students do always have access to indoor facilities when necessary.

COMMUNICATION

Communication with families is key to the success of our program and your child’s experience.

- Daily Camp Summaries
- Google Photo Albums
- Email/phone/text



Illness + Medication Policy

A sick child can have trouble maintaining their body temperature, and prolonged outdoor exposure could be dangerous. If a child becomes ill at Wilderness School, we will call for a parent or caregiver to come pick him or her up.

PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME:

- Temperature above 100.4 within the last 24 hours
- Coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath
- Vomiting within the last 24 hours, nausea or diarrhea
- Sore throat, headache
- Muscle aches, fatigue
- Heavy nasal discharge
- Green or yellow eye discharge
- Any illness known to be contagious

Any outbreak of communicable disease will be communicated to the community.

MEDICATION POLICY

- We need to know about any meds brought to school
- Parent + teacher will create a plan for med distribution
- Meds must be kept in original packaging with child's full name



Drop off and Pick Up Procedures

PLEASE DO YOUR BEST TO PICK UP YOUR CHILD ON TIME.

A late pick-up fee of \$20 for every 10-minute period will apply to children who are picked up late more than one time over the program year.

DROP OFF AND PICK UP

- Drop off up to 10 minutes before designated camp time
- Park and use restroom first
- Find the sign in table each day under Grandmother Maple, near the parking lot

PICK UP

- Pick up at designated end time from Grandmother Maple
- Park and exit your vehicle to sign out your child*
- Sign out your child directly from your child's teacher
- Students will only be allowed to go home with someone listed on their designated pick up list.
- Contact a teacher as soon as possible to let us know if someone else will be picking up your child.

*If you have a disability or a young baby that you don't want to take out of the vehicle, please contact the teacher to set up alternate arrangements.



DROP OFF/PICK UP MAP





Student Behavior Policy

We seek to accommodate individual needs, adapt programs when possible, and problem solve with children, their parents, and other teaching professionals in order to help children have an amazing experience at Discovery!

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Teachers will help prevent conflict through clear communication of expectations. When conflict or inappropriate behavior does arise, we will use the following strategies:

- **Redirection, Offering an alternative behavior**
Example, "You cannot throw acorns here because you might hit a friend with one, but you can throw acorns over there, away from the group."
- **Reminder of Expectations**
Example, "I see that you are swinging that stick. Remember to swing sticks in open space away from our friends."
- **Verbal Intervention and Problem Solving**
Example, "It sounds like you two are arguing over this fort. Do you need help solving a problem?"
- **Logical Consequences**
Example, "I asked you to move your stick-swinging to an open space. I still see you swinging a stick near our friends. I need to take this stick away now, so everyone can be safe."
- **Taking Space**
A teacher may ask a child to step away from the group and take some space. We strive to use other behavioral interventions first, but removal may be the first step if the behavior is dangerous to self or others or significantly disruptive to the experience of others.



PERSISTENT INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AND REMOVAL FROM PROGRAM

- A parent will be contacted in the case of persistent inappropriate behavior.
- Teacher, Parent, and Director will agree on a plan and timeline for addressing the behavior.
- If the behavior continues or is not steadily improving, parents may be asked to withdraw their child.

IMMEDIATE PROGRAM WITHDRAWAL

Behaviors that present a significant danger to the child or others, substantial and willful property damage, or intentionally running away or trying to run away from the property could result in immediate withdrawal.



Safety and Risk Assessment

One of the many benefits of allowing children to explore outdoors is that they gain self-confidence by testing their limits. We recognize that taking risks is an important part of development and we want to provide a safe and encouraging environment in which students can learn about risks, challenges, and personal safety.

Our goal is to allow reasonable risk taking, balanced with watchfulness for true safety hazards.

Please note that there may be age and situationally appropriate exceptions for many of the broad policies below. For example, certain kinds of climbing may be permissible for a 10-year-old but not for a 5-year-old.

BRINGING RISKY OBJECTS TO WILDERNESS CAMP

- Students MAY bring objects such as matches, fire-starters, pocket-knives, fishing poles, bows and arrows, and other survival type items to class.
- Never Allowed-Guns, gasoline, or other fire propellants
- Please communicate with your teacher before class if you plan to bring survival items
- Teacher will supervise the use of these items at appropriate times
- If any item is used without our knowledge or in an inappropriate way, the item will be taken from the student and returned to the parent at pick up.



CLIMBING

- Children may climb as high as they are tall* (exceptions for especially skilled climbers, especially older students)
- Students must be able to reach that height by themselves (teachers will not lift them up to a place that they cannot reach themselves).
- Students must be able to get down by themselves.
- If a student needs help coming down from a tree, teachers ask questions like “Where could you put your foot next?” and “Does that branch feel strong enough to support your weight?”

THROWING

- Children are permitted to throw sticks, acorns, and other natural objects AWAY from other people.
- Teachers will help define throwing zones when needed.

FIRE

- We teach and reinforce fire safety and skills.
- Students will frequently build and cook over fire.
- No running or rough-housing anywhere near fire.
- Campfires are closely supervised and extinguished thoroughly when not in use.

EXPLORING

- Children are taught to stay within the boundaries
- Usually kids are in sight, but occasionally the forest topography means a child is out of sight, but within boundaries and within voice range
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring that young children do not accidentally stray from the group.



- Children who deliberately run from or leave the group will be asked to withdraw if a plan cannot be worked out.

WILDLIFE

- Children are taught to be gentle with living things and to ask a teacher before touching or picking up any wildlife.
- We teach appropriate ways to handle insects, frogs, salamanders, snakes, and other amazing creatures that we find along our adventures.

WILD EDIBLE PLANTS

- Teachers will explore some basic, easily identifiable wild edibles with children (autumn olive berries, wild grapes, wood sorrel, and white pine needles, for example).
- Every single time that a student eats anything from the wild, s/he is asked to confirm id with an adult prior to consumption

STICKS

- Playing with sticks is part of childhood. We know that children will collect, carry, swing, dig, throw, and sword fight with sticks.
- Children are taught that they must carry sticks with one end in their hand and the other end pointing down.
- Stick-swinging must be in a safe space away from other people.
- Fantasy play, including sword fighting, is generally acceptable as long as all children consent, and the play does not involve invoking physical harm
- These types of games are directed away from the fire and groups of students that are not directly involved.
- Teachers will redirect play that crosses physical or emotional safety boundaries.



Lakefront Policy

On Lake Days, there will *always* be a certified lifeguard on duty.

SWIMMING

- When overseen by an aquatic observer, students do NOT need to wear a lifejacket inside the boundaries of the shallow swim zone.
- Under supervision of a lifeguard and with a properly fitted lifejacket, students may swim in any area of the lake.

CANOES, PADDLE BOATS, KAYAKS

- Students must stay inside boundaries in order to be within reach of the lifeguard at all times.
- When on boats, students must wear a properly-fitted life jacket at all times.

FISHING

- Older student classes sometimes go fishing
- At least one adult present must have a current fishing license
- A fishing expert will enforce safety and teach skills such as
 - Where to cast
 - How to carry a pole with hook
 - How to remove a hook from a fish, even if swallowed
 - How to filet and cook fish over the fire



Outdoor Hazards

TICKS

- Prevention
 - We've never seen a tick at our current location
 - Students stay out of prime tick habitat
 - Mosquito/Tick spray is encouraged (especially spraying shoes and socks)
- Ticks are sometimes found after field trips
 - Full body tick checks before bed are important
 - Ticks need to be attached 12-48 hours before spreading disease

POISON IVY

- Prevention
 - Dress in long pants and close-toed shoes
 - We teach Poison Ivy Identification
 - We bring attention to the Poison Ivy in the woods
 - During prime season, it is good practice to wash clothes right after class
- When a student walks through/touches PI
 - Alcohol in hand sanitizer neutralizes the oils
 - Students then wash in lake or restroom
 - Clothes are replaced with fresh set in student's backpack



SUN AND HEAT

- Apply sunscreen before class
- Hats are welcome to prevent UV exposure
- Long sleeves and pants are encouraged to protect skin
- We always have water along for refilling water bottles

SOILS

- Students get DIRTY at Wilderness Camp!
- We wash hands before snack/lunch
- Suggested to wash/bathe (and tick check) once home
- Keep old towels in your car for muddy rain suits/boots

INJURIES

- Scrapes, cuts, and insect stings are typical as we explore
- Cuts and scrapes are washed before bandaged
- Bumps and bee-stings are treated with ice
- Parents are notified about any significant injury
- All staff are certified in First Aid/CPR
- In an emergency, we will...
 - Call 911 first
 - Handle the situation until EMS arrives
 - Notify parents as soon as it is safe to do so
 - Fill out an incident report
 - Debrief as a staff
- Copies of Emergency Procedures available upon request



Our Training

STAFF AND MENTOR TRAINING

- Certified Forest School Teachers with ERAFANS
- Fingerprinted background check
- Certified in First Aid and CPR
- Paid training and professional development year-round.
- Copies of the Teacher Handbook and Emergency Procedures available upon request

Gratitude

THANK YOU!

Thank you for choosing to partner with Discovery Wilderness School. Choosing Wilderness Camp as a supplement to your schooling speaks to your commitment to nurturing your child's relationship to the natural environment.