

TROOP 890 CAMPING FOR ADULTS

TROOP 890 CAMPING FOR ADULTS.....	1
Troop 890 Camping.....	1
Camping Equipment.....	3
Tips On Selecting A Tent	3
Sleeping Bags	6
Two final thoughts.....	6

This handout is intended to be a brief introduction into Troop 890 camping from an adult (parents) perspective. It is not intended to be all inclusive, rather a summary overview of information that you will want to know. You are encouraged to ask lots of questions to supplement what you will learn in the following pages, and of course, you will learn the rest the old fashioned way, by doing it!

Troop 890 loves camping! We have a weekend campout approximately 10 months of the year. We generally don't have weekend campouts as a Troop in June and August. The one week Boy Scout summer camp is in June during which parents may volunteer in advance to participate with the troop. March and July are the official 1st year campouts for new scouts and parents who joined the troop during that year.

Troop 890 Camping

All adults are welcome and encouraged to attend all campouts and this includes Moms. All adults are encouraged to participate during the campouts. There are ample opportunities to participate on the campouts on a voluntary basis although no one will be conscripted into participating. To regularly attend campouts and participate in other official scouting activities, you should be registered with the Boy Scouts of America which you can do very painlessly through the troop by filing out an application. The first year scoutmaster can get help you with that.

Dress code for adult campers can be the same as the scouts themselves. There is no requirement that adults wear the official "class a" scout uniform. You will notice that most of the "involved" parents do wear the uniform. I suppose there are many reasons for this, one of which I think is that it encourages our sons to wear their uniforms proudly. It also gives us a sense of belonging to the organization. You may feel a bit odd at first, wearing the uniform, even for those of us who were scouts as children, but trust me, after a couple of times walking into the 7-11 with it on, you will be perfectly comfortable and actually proud to wear it.

A bonus that comes along with wearing the uniform on campouts is that you get to collect the activity beads. The first campout at which you wear the full class a uniform, you will be presented with a totem. That's the piece of leather that attaches to your belt with the leather strands hanging off it. At the end of each campout and other official scouting activities, all participants in uniform are presented at least one bead for their totem. As you can observe, scouts and scouters (adults) have a lot of beads hanging behind them. It's an impressive site and a badge of courage so to speak. There are usually different and sometimes special beads for each campout and sometimes multiple beads for the same event, such as a rain bead, a snow bead, a freeze bead, etc. It's fun to collect them and it obviously indicates you are an active scouter. So you are encouraged to get your uniform early and wear it often and proudly.

Adult participation during campouts is encouraged as there are many chores that need to be done in the "adult" camp. The scout's camp in their own area usually right next door to the adult camp. Troop 890 is a "scout led" troop, meaning during campouts, the scouts are responsible for tending to their own needs. Only the Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters (and they know who they are) are authorized to visit

the scout's campsites. All other adults are highly discouraged from doing so. The purpose for this rule is to prevent us parents from "being parents". We tend to want to show the scouts the "right way" to do things, rather than watch them do it "their way" which is usually "different" from the way we, as experienced adults, would do it. The theory is the boys will learn more by doing it themselves and learning by their mistakes, and allowing the scout leadership (older scouts) to show them and teach them the correct way which of course, teaches the scouts to be leaders themselves.

Leaving the scouts to their own devices is the most difficult adjustment for adults attending campouts. You will be expected to refrain from helping your sons, as difficult and painful as that may be. It is totally contrary to your training the past 11 or so years, but you are not that old and you can be taught new tricks.

The venues for 890 campouts vary but consist of public campgrounds, private ranches and official Boy Scout Camps. Generally they are 3 hours or less driving time from Dallas. Our goal is to depart from the church no later than 6:30 p.m. Friday nights and return to the church no earlier than 1:00 p.m. Sundays. Everyone is to meet at the church on Friday no later than 6:00 p.m. Parents not attending the campout should attempt to make transportation arrangements in advance for their scouts. This is not mandatory but causes less confusion that evening. All scouts who don't have a prearranged ride should attempt to arrange for a ride when they arrive at the church parking lot that evening, or should alert their 1st year assistant scoutmaster at that time that they need a ride. No scouts have ever been left behind due to lack of space in vehicles. All personal gear (adults and scouts) should be packed in your individual vehicle, not in the patrol trailers.

Each adult attending the campout pays a total of \$20 for the adult's meals that weekend, which usually includes the traditional sausage late Friday night, three meals Saturday and breakfast Sunday. The money is collected at the DADS Patrol meeting (dedicated adults devoted to scouting) the Monday night preceding the campout (7:30 p.m.) or prior to departure Friday night in the church parking lot. Your dinner and your scout's dinner Friday night should be brought with you to eat in the vehicle on the road, or eat prior to arriving at the church. We generally all depart the parking lot at the same time, but we do not have an organized caravan to the campground. Maps are distributed Friday night before departure or may soon (hopefully) be accessed on the troop website. We are all expected to arrive at the campground at approximately the same time, therefore, stopping along the way for more than a bathroom break, fuel etc. is discouraged.

Upon arrival at the campground, the scouts hike in to the campsite as a troop with their loaded backpacks on their backs, therefore they must all arrive there at approximately the same time. The adults then proceed in their vehicles to the campsite to unload the adult's personal gear. Depending upon the configuration of the sites and campground, vehicles may have to be moved to designated parking areas after we unload our gear. Adults carry our own gear to the campsite. Each adult will choose his or her own camping spot in the general adult camping area. The distance between the cars and our camping areas rarely exceeds 50 yards or so.

Most adults do not purchase traditional backpacks as they are generally not needed. I've seen adults bring trunks, plastic storage containers, duffel bags, suit cases and any number of assorted other containers in which to carry their personal gear. I generally make two trips with my gear and I use a combination of backpacks and duffel bags, and they are usually hand carried rather than shoulder-carried.

Camping Equipment

What should you, the adult, bring on a campout? Here are some suggestions:

The short list (must-haves):

- Tent or shelter of some sort
- Sleeping bag/ pad/ pillow or equivalent bedding
- Flashlight or lantern (or both). Head- or cap-mounted lights are quite convenient.
- Mess kit (plate, cup, fork/knife; plastic mug in cold weather)
- Mesh dip bag to hang mess kit
- Lightweight folding chair
- Appropriate clothing to suit the weather conditions
- Duffel bag or container to carry your personal gear

Suggested optional items:

- Toiletries including toilet paper
- Lightweight rain gear
- Waterproof/cold weather boots
- Personal first aid kit
- Tylenol
- Pocket knife
- Hat
- Ear plugs (many adults snore)
- Snacks
- Bottled water (tap water is provided by the troop)
- Any other items you are willing to pack and carry
- Camera
- Class A Uniform (to earn your totem beads)

Tips On Selecting A Tent

Nothing can be more confusing to someone new to Scouting's outdoor program than trying to figure out what tent to buy. For the Scouts in Troop 890, it's easy: the Troop specifies the exact model that must be used and provides them to the Scouts. For adults, however, the choices are endless. Unfortunately, there is no single "right" answer.

Just as no two people are alike, no two people's camping styles are alike. Everyone has a different way of doing things; likes and dislikes vary as do taste in equipment and budgets. Some experienced campers prefer a rustic, tarp like shelter strung between trees with rope, open to the elements. Most people prefer tents. Most seasoned boy scout parent campers prefer smaller rather than larger and lighter rather than heavier when choosing a tent. Most of us have the old Coleman canvass or nylon tents that housed an entire family. Most of us who regularly attend Scout campouts have opted for a much smaller nylon two man tent that is fairly lightweight. I used a \$40 three season two man tent from Target for over a year and it was more than adequate. Sometimes I needed some on the spot modifications due to severe weather but it survived torrential rain, freezing cold and our normal summer heat. You don't need a \$400 tent to camp with Troop 890.

Most nylon tents are three-season tents. The fourth season being winter, usually calls for a tent that is “sealed” at the top and has a full coverage rain fly. This combination acts to hold in more heat while insulating and keeping the cold air off the inner tent. The result can be several degrees warmer, but still generally cold inside. Sleeping on the ground with some sort of pad underneath your winter sleeping bag can help keep you warm on cold nights.

Some tents are nearly completely mesh netting which are perfect for summer conditions in Texas where you want as much airflow as possible with protection from the ‘skeeters. If you have a cot, airflow under you at night acts to keep you cooler.

If you already own a tent, you are probably better off using it, at least until you have a chance to gain more insight into the type of tent you really want. Unless you already know that you enjoy camping, it is recommended that you “get your feet wet” before investing in a lot of expensive gear. If you do not own a tent, you might consider borrowing one from a friend or from a fellow adult in the Troop. A number of the Troop’s adults own several tents, and many would be happy to let you borrow one for the weekend. Ask around and I’m sure you will easily find someone willing to loan you one for the weekend.

Everyone changes their clothes in their tent so that dictates how small your tent can be. Some people want to stand up to change while others don’t mind pulling on their pants lying down. That can be your guide to a certain extent as far as size is concerned. Weight is also an importance factor in choosing a tent as you have to carry it a certain distance with a lot of other gear, but most true backpacking tents are extremely small and lightweight, so don’t tell the salesman you want a backpacking tent if you are only going to do weekend camping with the Scouts. You won’t need a true backpacking tent camping with Troop 890 for years, if ever.

Now, let’s consider the types of tents that are available, and their advantages and disadvantages:

- 1. Family Camping Tents.** For many people, this is the best choice. These are the large tents that allow you to stand up inside and provide lots of room to store gear and move around. If you plan on sleeping on a cot, it is probably the only way to go. Many models offer lots of mosquito netting, which provides maximum ventilation on hot nights. These tents house more than one adult comfortably. They are easily found in Walmart, Target, and Academy, as well as camping stores like REI and Backwoods. For most of us, the cheaper versions are as good as the more expensive choices. Primary disadvantages: (1) They are heavy and bulky and not suitable for backpacking (not really a disadvantage for those who do not intend to go backpacking); (2) Because they are larger, they do not hold in the heat as well on cold nights; and (3) They are not designed to withstand high winds, but that is a very rare occurrence in this part of the country. The second point is one to be considered by those of us who are cold natured. One feature to look for: zip-up flaps that cover ALL mosquito netted areas in case of rainy or cold weather. Examples: ANY of the “Coleman” cabin tents, Sierra Designs “Nomad 5”, Eureka “Headquarters” or “Equidome 6”.
- 2. 3-Season Free-Standing Tents.** This is the type of tent that Troop 890 prescribes for the Scouts. These are basic backpackable tents that do not have to be staked down (though they can be, and usually should be and usually are). They are not designed for winter camping in colder regions, but are generally suitable for winter camping in Texas. Models come with differing amounts of mosquito netting. This is great for summertime ventilation, but since there is no way to cover up the netting on cold nights, these tents also provide lots of ventilation in wintertime, too – bad news for those who are cold natured. If you are not going to use a family camping tent, this is probably the best choice for you. The model that the Troop designates for the Scouts is a good, inexpensive tent for adults, too. Other models are available in a variety of price ranges and with a variety of bells and whistles. For most of us, the bells and whistles are

unnecessary. Examples: Sierra Designs “Clip Flashlight CD”, Sierra Designs “Meteor Light CD”, Kelty “Vortex 2”, REI “Clipper”. These are perhaps the most desirable tents for Scout camping. Available in 2, 3 or 4 man models, the weight ranges from a minimum of four pounds to as much as six pounds. Tents weighing LESS than five pounds are the most ideal for back packing. Some can accommodate folding cots.

3. **Tube Tents.** Like free-standing tents, tube tents use fiberglass or aluminum rods to give the tent shape, but require that the tent be staked in order to keep it up. Many of the more popular models are light weight and make great backpacking tents. However, they generally have less room inside. Hard ground can make staking the tent more challenging, and extremely soft ground can pose similar problems. Generally, these tents are used by backpackers and by many Troop 890 adults.
4. **Mountaineering Tents.** These tents are engineered to withstand high winds, the weight of a serious snow, and to provide protection from the cold and is the best choice for extreme and heavy winter camping conditions. Unless you are planning to climb Mt. Everest or K-2, probably not the best choice for Troop 890 camping. The features that make them great for the side of a mountain in February will roast you in Texas in July. Example: The North Face VE-25 (as much as \$550.00!), Sierra Designs “Stretch Dome AST”.
5. **Convertible 3 - 4 Season Tents.** This is a good option for those who easily get cold in the winter. They are backpacking tents that have all of the attributes of a 3-season tent (except, perhaps, a little less mosquito netting for ventilation), with an added feature: There is a flap that can zip shut over every area that contains mosquito netting. This will close the tent in and help retain your body heat inside. The down side: They tend to be more expensive tents. This tent has a four-season tent’s strength and a three-season tent’s light weight. Often a great “overall” choice for Scout camping, but tends to be much more expensive than three-season tents. Examples: Sierra Designs “Alpha CD”.
6. **“Bug Huts”, Bivy Sacks, and Other Exotics.** In a word, Just Say NO! Unless and until you become a serious backpacker who hikes the 2000-mile Appalachian Trail for fun, this specialized gear is probably not for you. All of these items share the common characteristic of being extremely light weight, so that they can be easily backpacked for days on end. By dramatically cutting weight, they sacrifice comfort, gear storage space, and other attributes that most of us would prefer. They are engineered for specific and limited uses, and do not provide the all-round versatility that most of us want. The specifics: A **“Bug Hut”** is, effectively, a mosquito net made in the shape of a one-person tent. It generally will only fit your sleeping bag, and has no rain protection. It is designed to keep the bugs off of you on hot, dry summer nights. A **Bivy Sack** is, essentially, a waterproof bag that your sleeping bag fits into, generally with a hooded area covering your face. It is designed to keep you out of the elements while you are sleeping, but offers no ventilation, so it can be rather unpleasant on hot nights. Saves space and weight. MINIMAL room!! (Not for the claustrophobic!) Example is Marmot “Alpine”. **Single wall tents** generally permit water to enter at any spot that you touch when they are wet. This can be rather interesting in a good rainstorm.

A Few Final Tent Notes:

So-called 2-person tents will not comfortably fit 2 adults. But they are great for one. If you expect to have a second adult sharing the tent, a 3-person tent is probably a better choice.

Make sure your tent has a floor. Most modern models come with floors, but it is wise not to assume anything.

A “footprint” is a good investment to better protect the floor of your tent from the ground. A footprint is a ground cloth specifically designed to fit a particular model of tent. Family camping tents typically do not have footprints available, but all of the other types do. If you have a tent that does not offer a footprint, it is wise to use a rectangular ground cloth under the tent. Standard lightweight tarps are perfect for this purpose and they are A “must” for our campouts so be sure to bring at least one. It’s a handy item to have on hand in the event of heavy rain as well if, for example, you discover in the middle of the night that your tent leaks.

Sleeping Bags

You will need a warm one for the winter campouts. A mummy bag is best as it keeps your head, neck and shoulders warm. A 20 degree bag with a bag liner (extra) and perhaps a lightweight blanket is all you will need for even the coldest outings in Texas. Don’t use your child’s sleep over bag as it just won’t be adequate. And the bag ratings are usually not what they claim to be, so for winter camping, opt for the lowest temperature rating you can fit into your budget and put a flannel liner in it to give you a few extra degrees of comfort.

Size and weight are important considerations here as well. You don’t want such a large bag that combined with all your other things, it will take you three trips to move all your gear.

In summer, a sheet, lightweight cotton blanket and pillow is about all you will need.

Sleeping Pads/ Air Mattresses/ Cots

I have used a variety of things to separate me from the hard ground at night including a double wide air mattress with battery operated pump, an aluminum frame cot, a lighter weight rod framed cot and a self-inflating Therm-A-Rest camping mattress. This is something you will have to experiment with yourself, perhaps many times, to see what best suits your personal needs. but one thing is usually always constant everywhere we camp, the ground is very hard (except in the piney woods of east Texas – pine needles are very soft), so bring something to give you some separation from the ground.

Take a trip to REI on LBJ Freeway between Welch and Midway Rd. I don’t own stock in the place but I’m sure I’ve helped their stock price rise. They have everything you could ever want or need, and more. Spending a couple of hours in that store will wet your appetite for camping.

Two final thoughts.

Camping with Troop 890 is usually a great adventure, especially during adverse weather conditions. Use your imagination with regard to what extra gear, equipment or supplies you may need in the event of a weather “worst case scenario”. Rainy conditions can wreak havoc on your tent, gear and psyche. Cold camping is fun but can be dangerous if you aren’t properly equipped. **BE PREPARED** and you will find that half the fun of camping is in trying to beat mother nature and survive the elements. Some trips are more challenging than others but they are all fun and our sons benefit greatly from our participation.

Finally. Scouting as an adult can be very rewarding if you participate. As with everything else in life, the more you put into it, the more you get out of it. You will find that by attending the campouts, you will quickly bond with the other parents attending. Camping is the absolute best way to make friends with the other parents and after a few campouts, you may actually get hooked and look forward to the time away from the city and the time you get to spend with your new friends. Some of my best friends now are parents I met through scouting.