

TAMARACK OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Course Descriptions

Outdoor Wilderness Skills

Program Availability Indicator

S - spring season F - fall season W - winter season A - all year

Compass Skills 1 ¼ hrs. | A

A map and compass are important tools for wilderness travel. They can make the difference between a safe and enjoyable trek through the backcountry and a frightening ordeal of being "lost out in middle of nowhere." Students will learn an easy method to use the compass and apply their knowledge in a simple orienteering game. The 'Compass Challenge Course' and the 'Map and Compass Lost and Found Hike' offer excellent follow-up activities.

Compass Challenge Course 2 ½ hrs. | A

Simulating an orienteering course, the compass challenge course requires small groups of students to use a series of bearings and clues to travel on and off trails around the lake at Tamarack. Following a 20 minute compass class, students take turns setting and walking nearly three dozen bearings. Allow an entire morning or afternoon for this activity. Each group must be accompanied by one of your adults.

Map and Compass: Lost and Found Hike 2 ½ hrs. | A

This 2 1/2 hour hike allows students a realistic opportunity to refine their orienteering skills, while exploring some of the more remote areas of Tamarack's 1500 acres. Groups of 12 or less, accompanied by an adult from your group, are given instruction using the map and compass and then directed to their starting point. Using their map and compass they find their way through the winding trails, forests, and unknown wilds, to their destination and back, making this a challenge for all. Allow a full morning or afternoon for this activity.

Flashlight Orienteering 1 ½ hrs. | F

This is a simple short orienteering course done at night using a flashlight to read the clues and take bearings. Each small group of students (5 or 6) must be accompanied by an adult from your group.

Wild Edibles/Herbal Lore 1 ¼ hrs. | S

Take a seasonal journey through the woods and discover a variety of edible and medicinal plants. Some are revered as gourmet delicacies, and many are used in modern pharmaceuticals. Some held great spiritual significance for indigenous peoples and were enshrined in legend and lore. Others formed the basis of folk medical practices. Tasting is not encouraged due to individuals potential to sensitivity or allergic reactions.

Outdoor Cooking - What's for Dinner? 1 ¼ hrs. | A

This outdoor cooking activity will give students some hands-on experience at cooking over a campfire to prepare some delicious campfire specialties such as pizza pockets, fruit pies, S'mores, and Boy Scout dinners. Pull up a chair--Soup's on!

Survival Skills 1 ¼ - 2 ½ hrs. | A

A knowledge of basic survival needs instills confidence in an outdoor emergency situation. These skills should be a part of anyone who travels regularly out of doors. Proper attitude and information makes anyone more comfortable in wilderness travel. Learn about shelter building, fire building, finding water, lost proofing, and avoiding hypothermia.

Camping Skills 1 ¼ hrs. | S&F

Students have the opportunity to participate in setting up a campsite. They will set up a tent, build a campfire, learn to tie a bear bag, purify water, and much more. These are skills that every camper can use when backpacking into unknown territory or simply camping at a campground.

Natural History / Environmental Skills

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Secrets of the Forest 1 ¼ hrs. | S&F

Discovery through observation makes each walk in the woods a unique learning experience. Activities with emphasis on concepts such as community, niche, competition, producers, consumers, decomposers, adaptation, and territory to visualize the inter-relationships of a forest system.

Portrait of a Pond 1 ¼ hrs. | S&F

Water and wetlands form a vital part of the ecology of Michigan. Students use nets, buckets, magnifiers, and other equipment with hands-on investigations to reveal the fascinating living organisms in a pond. Our staff naturalist interprets the findings to teach concepts of succession, aquatic insect stages, food chains, and illustrates the importance of water to all life on earth.

New & Nature Games 1 ¼ hrs. | A

New Games philosophy stresses cooperation rather than competition. There are no winners, no losers, only a stronger group in which everyone finds a place to have fun. See how many people you can load on a milk crate, suspend the three-foot 'earth' ball up in the air forever, or capture Smog's Jewel. A good opening or closing activity.

A variety of quality nature games are available. Games will be tailored to your group's goals and objectives. Examples include Predator-Prey, Adaptations, Sensory Awareness, Cycles, and Eco-location. Complex concepts are illustrated in a way that is both fun and new for students. Post games activities will be suggested for follow up back in the classroom.

Reptilian Rendezvous 1 ¼ hrs. | S&F

Snakes, lizards, and turtles make up the cold-blooded class known as reptiles. Our naturalist will help students overcome their fears and increase their understanding of snakes and other reptiles.

Raptors/Owl Prowl 1 ½ hrs. | A

Sharp talons, keen eyesight, and radar-like hearing make the owl one of the night's most formidable predator. A brief indoor introduction precedes an evening foray into darkness. No flashlights allowed! Quiet groups are rewarded by sounds of screech, barred, and great horned owls that reside in the varied habitats in the Tamarack Woods.

Dark Sky 2 hrs. | A

Take an in-depth look at the night sky away from the lights of the city. Our facilitator will interpret the mysteries of the heavens and provide a wonderful opportunity to view moons, planets, stars, and constellations with the help of a slide presentation. In favorable weather the group may go outdoors for direct observation and instruction.

Birds 1 ¼ hrs. | S&F

This class stresses the diversity of the bird class by celebrating the adaptation of form, song, and behavior. Students will be encouraged to enjoy bird watching on their own as a hobby, and realize the importance of creating and maintaining a field journal. We hope to help instill a general feeling of responsibility for concerns regarding proper habitat and protection for birds.

Night Hike 1 hr. | A

Students will be guided on a hike in the dark where they will gain confidence in learning to walk through the woods without the aid of a flashlight. This very popular activity teaches students about the nocturnal world that exists and allows them to explore the use of their senses while doing the activities.

Going Batty! 1 ½ hrs. | S&F

This evening program will explore the very common and misunderstood mammal, the bat. Games and art activities emphasizing environmental impact, adaptations, life history and myths will follow an interesting slide presentation and discussion. Games that emphasize the echolocation concept and predator-prey relationship will be a part of this activity.

Nature Senses 1 ¼ hrs. | A

Nature Senses is a class in which the students learn to isolate their five senses. The object is for them to realize the importance of each of the five senses. Meeting a tree is also part of the class, as well as the mystery of the Grocking Beast. Woolly Worms are lost and once they are found, the kids will participate in a blind hike where they will have to use all the senses, except sight, on a hike through the camp.

Instincts for Survival 1 ¼ hrs. | A

Instincts for Survival is a simulation game where participants role-play a specific animal in an ecosystem. The purpose is to create an awareness and appreciation of the importance of animals in the food chain. It also illustrates how human actions have an impact on the animals in the ecosystem.

Living Science 1 ¼ hrs. | A

Meet our family of living things. We have a Burmese python named "Pooky", two ball pythons (Marge & Homer), a tarantula, two lovable rats, and "Iggy the Iguana". Students are given the opportunity to get a close look at the animals and become more at ease with them, as our instructor shares pertinent facts about the characteristics and habits of these exotic animals.

Cultural History

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Pioneer Skills 2 ½ hrs. | A

The Smokler family's generous donations have enabled Tamarack Outdoor Education to build and maintain an authentic re-creation of a Michigan pioneer settlement village of the 1800's. Here students may engage in a variety of hands-on activities, including candle making, rope making, pioneer crafts, and more. Students take home their handmade treasures to remind them of this incomparable experience. Our mayor will train adult members of your staff to run the various stations 15-20 minutes before the activity. Allow an entire morning or afternoon for this activity. '

Smoklerville: A Year in the Homesteaders Life 2 ½ hrs. | A

Smoklerville is a role-playing activity that simulates the trials and tribulations of a homesteading family in the 1800's in America. Students are grouped into small "families" of 4 or 6, and attempt to live a typical year in a pioneer's life, carrying out the various practical duties to survive the year. Our mayor will train your adult chaperones (min of 8) to play the roles of the various townspeople 15 to 20 minutes prior to the activity. Don't miss this valuable lesson in living history and cultural development. Allow a morning or afternoon for this program.

Native American Lore: The Ways of the People 1 ¼ hrs. | A

Native peoples lived on this land centuries ago and today. We will discuss indigenous cultures of Michigan, their names, tools, spirituality, and ways of life. Story telling as an educational tool offers an enlightening example of the ways of the people. Students will learn to play traditional games like Buffalo Robe and Hunter. Our aim is to foster a better understanding of native cultures of the world.

Native American Crafts 1 ¼ hrs. | A

Native Americans have long been admired for their beautiful crafts. Learn to make a dream catcher, a money pouch, God's Eyes, rainsticks, and a bear claw necklace. A general appreciation for Native Americans is shared through their crafts.

Medicine Hunt 1 ¼ hrs. | S&F

The great Medicine Person arrives atop his/her trusty steed to send the trusted villagers in search of ingredients needed to prepare a cure for the ailing Chief Tamarack. Natives are sent out on a hunt to find the items on their list. Upon return, natives present their gifts to the Medicine Person in a very reverent ceremony.

Outdoor Recreation and Sports

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Mountain Biking | S&F

Mountain bike along the many miles of trails and roads in and around Tamarack. Maximum group size: 15. Helmets are provided and must be worn. Each group must be accompanied by an adult.

Hayride | S&F

A relaxing half-hour tour through camp on our hay wagon. Sit back and enjoy the country air as you wind along the road. A great way to conclude a busy day. Though evenings are most popular, rides are available any time of day. Limit twenty-five per ride.

Canoeing/Waterfront | S&F

Glide gently among the lily pads or sing the hearty song of the paddle, as did the voyagers in search of furs. You will hardly need a reason to enjoy canoeing on beautiful Phipps Lake during your stay at camp. Paddles and life jackets are provided. Maximum occupancy: three per canoe.

Our waterfront can also be used for swimming, water games, fishing, or other water sports. All activities require supervision by a Red Cross certified lifeguard. Lifeguards can be provided by our staff for an additional fee, and must be arranged prior to your visit.

Archery | A

Come to the edge of the medieval forest by the lake. Our archery range will test your skills amongst ye band of merry men and women. All equipment provided. Instructor available for an additional fee.

Mock Olympics | A

Active group relays and games. Fun for all ages.

Self-Directed Activities

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Swampland Nature Trail | A

Take a leisurely self-guided walk on our nature trail. Sights and smells abound to awaken your senses. As you "wend one's way" you will come upon labeled stations explaining what is happening at each location, pointing out the various species of plant and animal life in the wetlands & woods around Tamarack Lake.

Campfire | A

Each village has fire ring to create the perfect atmosphere for nighttime sing-a-longs and storytelling. Wood is available for purchase in camp. Requests for wood must be made prior to your visit. We recommend that you bring dry fire-starting materials. Groups are responsible for putting campfire completely out at the conclusion of your program.