



Boy Scouts of America/Cascade Pacific Council Summer Camp Programs: “Because Grit Lasts Forever”



Boy Scouts of America/Cascade Pacific Council summer camp programs are designed to create an experience that Scouts will remember and cherish forever. They deliver all the magic of summer camp, with spectacular locations and exciting activities, while also focused on building character, developing leadership and self-reliance, and nurturing a deep love for the outdoors. Boys and girls, from kindergarten to high school, are invited to experience nature and camaraderie while building skills and lifetime friendships.

“Each camp is really different, but they are all amazing in their own way,” explains [Cascade Pacific Council / Boy Scouts of America](#) (CPCBSA) Director of Program & Member Experience Todd McDonald. We spoke with Todd to learn more about the Scouting summer camp programs and the experience they offer to young people. Todd started his Scouting career in 1982 as summer camp staff, and has been passionate about Scouting camp ever since, understanding the powerful lifelong impact it can have.

He described flagship [Camp Meriwether](#), encompassing 2 1/2 miles of Oregon coast oceanfront and accommodating as many as 400 campers a week; [Camp Pioneer](#), featuring the remote wilderness of Mount Jefferson; [Camp Baldwin](#) in Mt. Hood forest; and [Butte Creek Scout Ranch](#) just for the younger Cub Scouts. Adventure is on the menu at all of CPCBSA locations, but each with its own flavor.

“All camps have activities like swimming, shooting sports, crafting, horseback riding, nature studies and environmental conservation, hiking, and climbing,” Todd notes, “and all our camps provide first aid training, citizenship development, and of course all the stuff of great memories like campfires, songs, skits, and games. But each camp is special and unique.”

Camp Meriwether

[Camp Meriwether](#) on the Oregon Coast is more than just beaches. Its 790-acre property includes Lake Chamberlain, and camp facilities feature a planetarium, a climbing tower, a full replica of Lewis & Clark’s 1805 winter camp, an ecology center, shooting ranges, and a stagecraft center, just for starters. Campers can learn skills like blacksmithing and tomahawk throwing or they can try sports like landsailing, sandboarding, or kayaking. There are plenty of opportunities for learning about oceanography, exploring tide pools, and discovering nature conservation.



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“Each year, we also often offer new activities based on interests of the staff, like geocaching or radio or rocketry,” Todd adds. The staff of 100 includes full-time staff, staff-in-training, and plenty of adult volunteers. Since campers come in troops with their own adult supervision, CPCBSA camp staff can largely focus on facilities, food, and fun.

New Scouts join together on their first day to learn the basics but after that, Scouts can build their own schedules based on activities of their choosing. A lottery is held for popular activities that have limited space, like blacksmithing and climbing. BSA Scouts stay a whole week, so they have plenty of time to explore the camp’s offerings.

The Camp Meriwether property also houses [Camp Clark](#), which is available all summer long to families, offering campsite accommodations and facilities and beautiful beachfront access.

Camp Pioneer

[Camp Pioneer](#) is out at Milepost 72 up at Pine Lake in the Mt. Jefferson wilderness on land leased from the forest service. “You see Mount Jefferson, you see the lake, and you see Mount Jefferson,” Todd says, describing the incredible view of the reflected mountain.

“Camp Pioneer is a more intimate experience, where every Scout gets to know every staff member,” he explains, noting that the camp hosts about 130 campers at any given time.



At a 4,500-foot elevation surrounded by wilderness, it’s also more adventure-oriented, with spelunking, backpacking, and hiking. The Cascade Rangers program is hosted at Camp Pioneer, where campers backpack out and spend two nights in the wilderness.

“Camp Pioneer operates on wilderness rules,” explains Todd. There is a strong emphasis on environmental stewardship, and campers aim to “leave no trace.” They learn Scouting skills, enjoy an archery and rifle range, and kayak or canoe out on Pine Lake.

Camp Baldwin

[Camp Baldwin](#) is the home of our horsemanship programs. It definitely has a Western flair, featuring animal husbandry and our horse wrangler programs.” At a 3,600-ft. elevation in Mt. Hood forest, Camp Baldwin offers natural rock climbing, mountain boarding (it’s like riding a skateboard on giant wheels down a mountain), and water activities like windsurfing and whitewater rafting.

At Camp Baldwin, state-of-the-art cooking equipment, utensils, and food is provided, but campers do all their own cooking.

Camp Baldwin also hosts “BASE Camp” (Big Adventurous Scouting Experience) — a program for Webelos (those in between Cub Scouts and BSA), where they get to experience some of the activities open to older campers. They get to shoot pellet guns, ride horses, try archery, and cook their own food.

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Butte Creek Scout Ranch

Butte Creek Scout Ranch

is a working horse ranch, where CPCBSA houses their horse herd, including young Mustangs. The horse program hosts about 1,000 riders each year on half or full-day rides. For younger Scouts, the Lil' Buckaroo program teaches basic horsemanship skills with a little more supervision. There is an annual [Horse Trek](#), as well — an eight-day adventure, riding 165 miles from Butte Creek Scout Ranch to Camp Baldwin.

While the horse program is year-round, the Butte Creek Scout Ranch

summer camp is exclusively for Cub Scouts.

There is a cowboy theme to Butte Creek Ranch: the younger kids spend their time panning for gold (there might be a few pieces of Fool's Gold tossed in as an incentive!), petting barn animals, and learning pioneering skills like making butter and sewing clothing. They also experience woodcraft, candle making, and all sorts of games and sports. And sometimes, special activities: "This year, they did an Escape Room," Todd notes.

"Butte Creek is very parent-child oriented," he explains, with many parents accompanying their Cub Scout. All campers dine together and enjoy entertainment together, like the horse show and Cosmic Cowboy vs. Bad Bart running story throughout the session. Cub Scouts weren't always included in summer camp programs, and Todd was instrumental in developing Cub Scout camping beginning in 1991: "As I watch how our Cub Scout programs have grown and turned into family-based programs, it is one of the greatest joys and greatest successes of my career."



What's New?

CPCBSA has made some significant upgrades in the past few years, having set aside funds from a property sale to invest back into their camp programs. They have upgraded many facilities from the old Adirondack cabins that slept between four and ten people to two-person "minidacs," three-sided wood structures with bunks that are easier to maintain and drier in the rain than canvas tents. And they have made important outhouse upgrades, making bathrooms cleaner and safer with solar lights and RV toilets. For those camps exposed to fire danger, they have been equipped with propane fire pits. They've purchased land-sails and upgraded the sailboat fleets, and the planetarium at Camp Meriwether is a new installation.

Outside of facility upgrades, one of the most significant new programs is focused on mental health training for camp staff. Called "Tired Brain Training," the course is developed so that everyone can relate and benefit from the skills it teaches. Since implementing the program, they have found a significant reduction in mental health issues and self-harm declarations.

Because Grit Lasts Forever

Emotional health isn't just for staff members. One of the most important aspects of Scouting and summer camp adventures is helping young people build strength of character, self-confidence, and decision-making skills. "Helping young people learn to handle their emotions is something we excel at," Todd says, "but it's the hardest thing we do." Pre-adolescence and adolescence is a challenging time, fraught with changes and uncertainty. Todd explains that learning guided reflection can help kids

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deal with failure and avoid self-limiting themselves or falling prey to a victimhood mentality that can stop them short of reaching their potential.

“Having an adult other than a parent who you trust and who can help guide you is so important.” Sometimes, Todd notes, it’s enough to just prepare kids in advance for the emotions they will experience: “If you let them know what to expect, it helps them manage the experience.” Todd says that once parents realize the impact of this aspect of Scouting, they often become advocates for life — many become Scouting mentors themselves.

CPCBSA and Inclusivity

Todd remembers when an early Cub Scout camp reached a milestone of hosting 2,000 campers. He and a colleague sat and reflected on this remarkable accomplishment, saying, “Now we’re just missing one thing: little girls.”

Boy Scouts of America summer camp programs have had female camp staff for over 50 years, as well as non-summer camp programming for high school-aged girls. Around 2005, girls of all ages were welcomed to a sister’s camp. And in 2018, the Cub Scout program opened to girls, with the Scout Program inviting older girls as Scouts BSA in 2019.

When asked what program changes have been made to accommodate girls, Todd answers, “no real program changes, really — the point is that girls want to do the same things.” There have been some logistical changes, of course, to re-work showers and bathrooms to be single occupancy and non-gender-specific, supplied with additional sanitation materials.

The transition to including girls has been mostly smooth and natural. Some of that success can be attributed to the launch of a “Choose Kindness” program to encourage

Scouts to adopt an inclusive and caring attitude, welcoming everyone and appreciating people’s differences. All staff is trained on Choose Kindness principles, and posters across the camps remind Scouts of their duty to respect and protect others.

Soon, Todd says, the “Choose Kindness” program will be expanded and targeted for different age groups. Cub Scouts will be eligible for a Choose Kindness award for helping others feel included. For older BSA Scouts, CPCBSA will offer a program on Meaningful Conversations, providing skill building in how to emphasize relating over being right and curiosity over judgment.

What’s Next?

CPCBSA summer camps are open to campers of all genders and orientations, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, and religions, and the organization is dedicated to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all. But there are some populations that haven’t

CHOOSE
Kindness

SCOUTS CARE
about the feelings of others.

SCOUTS RESPECT
others and appreciate differences.

SCOUTS PROTECT
those who are being mistreated.



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traditionally engaged with Scouting, and it may take more active outreach to ensure they can access these amazing resources as well. CPCBSA is working toward creating more events and activities that are open to the public, inviting people from all walks to experience the organization and its facilities. They are working through insurance hurdles and laying the groundwork to create a future in which the Scouting experience is available to everyone.

See the following page for the CPCBSA Equity Statement.

Learn More

Visit www.cpcbsa.org to learn more about Cascade Pacific Council/Boy Scouts of America and its Scouting programs, supported by over 7,000 youth members and 5,000 adult volunteers.

If you are interested in learning more about the summer camp programs, you can contact Director of Programming and Member Experience Todd McDonald at todd.mcdonald@scouting.org.

If you are interested in learning more about ways to give to this remarkable organization, contact Director of Development Anna LaPointe at anna.lapointe@scouting.org.



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Cascade Pacific Council, Boy Scouts of America Equity Statement

The Cascade Pacific Council, Boy Scouts of America (CPC, BSA) is committed to foster a culture of diversity and inclusion that makes it enriching to participate, volunteer, and work in the Scouting program. In expanding our mission throughout SW Washington and NW Oregon, we are committed to becoming better prepared to serve people of all genders, orientations, ethnicity, physical ability, socio-economic status, political belief and faith, consistent with Scouting's traditions and values.

In collaboration with the community, we are committed to creating a welcoming environment for all, encouraging each other to live by the values of the Scout Oath and Law; inclusive of all perspectives and experiences that strengthen our movement, help prepare young people to serve as successful leaders and continue to make CPC a valued contributor to the nation's increasingly diverse communities.

Scouting provides a safe environment for the next generation to become self-reliant, appreciative of people from all backgrounds, and prepared to function as an integral and impactful part of the world. CPC aims to reduce barriers so that any youth can become a Scout.

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