

KROKA EXPEDITIONS

2011/12 Parent/Student Handbook

Semester Programs

Please review this material carefully. If you have questions after reading the handbook, please call us at (603) 835-9087 or email us at semester@kroka.org



Use this picture of Leo Tolstoy as a visual aid in how to pack for your trip!

FOREWORD FOR PARENTS

Dear Parents,

This handbook was designed to paint a clear picture of what your son/daughter will experience on Kroka Semester Programs. If you are uncomfortable with any of the policies described in this handbook, please contact our office immediately. We will answer any questions you may have about our philosophy or practices. It is in everyone's best interest to make sure that our students and their families feel that what we offer on the Semester Programs is what they want. Through this process, we are able to provide exceptional experiences for our students, and help with the development of capable, responsible and respectful citizens of the future.

Sincerely,

The Staff of Kroka Expeditions

OUR MISSION

Kroka Expeditions is committed to awakening in young people a connection to nature and the spirit within, and a capacity for conscious living and compassionate service. We strive to achieve this through wilderness adventure, community living, farming, and the practice of traditional and indigenous skills.

KROKA EXPEDITIONS strives to

- Develop common sense, awareness and understanding through sustainable, traditional and wilderness living lifestyles
- Open the door to the potential of spirit in all life
- Empowers young people to become capable and confident beings through working with their hands and the mastering of adventure sports
- Explore universal values, harmony, and responsibility for the common good through cooperative community living experiences
- Search for an appropriate balance between the ways of the past and present, as well as a balance between giving and taking
- Examine the meaning of quality of life and the role of the individual in society

BASE CAMP

All programs begin at our Farm in Marlow, New Hampshire - 75 lovely acres of northern forest, field and stream. The base camp is a village of its own with solar electricity and various traditional and indigenous dwellings such as yurts, canvas wall tents, teepees, and lodges to house teachers and students. An 1835 charming farmhouse and barn serve as an office and logistics base, as well as a home to the camp directors. All cooking is done traditionally over an open fire with a "spunhungen" (two forked sticks with a cross stick set over the fire to hang pots on with handmade pot hooks). In the cold months cooking is done on wood stoves and they are also used for heating dwellings. Mountain streams and local ponds replace showers in the summer. In addition we have an outdoor and indoor shower for the winter. Our community of students and teachers share all of the chores and maintenance at the camp.

Driving directions are provided on our website www.kroka.org. A list of local accommodations is available on our website. Please drive SLOWLY to respect local residents and please leave dogs at home.

COMMUNITY

A primary objective of the Kroka Semester Programs is to create a strong and loving community within our groups and to then extend this relationship to the greater community. In daily life students are asked to do difficult things for the well being of the group. Students will learn the joy of working for others. We will complete many service projects for farmers, elderly folks, and people who just need a hand.

We strive to create an environment in which everyone's comfort, happiness and sense of belonging are more important than individual accomplishments. Every day's success is measured by how the group feels as a whole and how each person has contributed to the success of others. We nurture an environment where one's accomplishments become everyone's joy and one's mistakes become a learning experience for all. We strive for an environment of cooperation rather than competition.

The Greater Community

As we travel around New England and Ecuador in pursuit of wilderness and indigenous culture, there are times when adventures begin before we reach our destination: someone's car breaks down and our help is needed, an animal has been hit and needs attention, etc. When appropriate and safe, helping people and animals alongside the road can be a great lesson in social responsibility. This policy of the school is central to our philosophy of developing responsible citizens who view society as their extended community.

Relationships

During the semester program young adults may develop strong feelings for each other. While we support their feelings for one another, we do not allow physical relationships between students. It has been our experience that such relationships take away from the cohesiveness of the group.

Religious Practices

At Kroka we value and respect all religions and beliefs. We might share religious festivals, if group members are interested and willing to carry such festivals. We will give time and space for worshiping if students wish to do so. In general, each day we allow sometime for meditation and/or solitude.

SAFETY

It would simply not be true to say that there are no risks involved in journeys of this magnitude. In fact, it is the healthy element of risk so vital to the development of capable individuals that makes these programs valuable. We have an excellent safety record, which we achieve in two ways. The first is through year-round staff training, rescue simulations, and wilderness medical training for the staff. The second is through teaching our students intelligent and proper techniques for wilderness living. Students learn to assess the weather and modify their plans accordingly, to make good choices in lost person and survival situations, to use solid and safe skiing, mountaineering and paddling techniques, to properly use tools like axes and knives. Overall we strive to develop a good use of common sense.

It is important that parents know that though we provide students with the proper skills to live safely upon the land the inherent risks of this lifestyle are real and they must be understood and accepted.

If you feel your child is not ready for this responsibility please let us know.

Alternative Travel

In Ecuador we will be using public transportation and vehicles of local people. At times it will be necessary to travel on the truck-beds of pick-up trucks or on the tops of busses; this is absolutely acceptable and common travel in Ecuador.

Learning to Use Tools

During the semester program we teach students to use sharp tools such as knives, saws and axes for wilderness living and craft projects. While we instruct students on safe and appropriate use of these tools, continuously remind them of all safety precautions, and supervise them during their use, it is likely that some students will still cut themselves while working. For some, this is a normal part of learning about sharp tools.

Safe Water

Finding, handling and drinking clean water is a very important aspect of backcountry living. Throughout the program students will learn to identify healthy water resources and will drink water straight from springs when appropriate. While traveling in Ecuador students will carry water-filters, iodine tablets as well as herbal and homeopathic supplements to strengthen the immune system.

Bare Feet

When appropriate we encourage our students to walk barefoot, feel the earth, toughen up their feet, and develop the awareness of a fox. Since most students have little practice walking barefoot, cuts and bruises may result before feet toughen.

Medical Treatment

Students may not bring any medications unless indicated on their medical form. This includes aspirin and all other pain medications. All medications will be carried and dispensed by Kroka's teachers unless arrangements have been made prior to the trip. While we carry all basic medications we generally try to avoid painkillers for common headaches, bruises, muscle pain, etc. We offer alternative ways of dealing with these discomforts. Homeopathic and herbal remedies such as Arnica and Echinacea, and antibacterial plants are part of our treatment plans. We believe in the power of the human body to heal itself and in the power of the human spirit to be strong in the face of physical pain.

With the above in mind, prompt professional backcountry treatment is always given to serious injuries and conventional treatment is given to serious injuries in non-remote environments. If a student falls ill on the trail and needs rest s/he will return to Kroka for healing before returning to the trail.

A Special Note about Insect Repellent:

In general we do not believe in repelling insects using conventional repellants, such as DEET, unless a student has allergic reactions to insect bites. We use herbal formulas and carry some in the first aid kit for students who are sensitive to bug bites. Things that we have found to work well are: smoke from the fire, eating raw garlic and onions, covering up in long, light colored clothes and refraining from the use of perfumed soaps and deodorants.

COMMUNICATION

At Base Camp

Students will have an opportunity to call home once while at Base Camp in Marlow, NH. Phone cards are not needed at Kroka's Base Camp in Marlow; we have unlimited long distance service. Students may not use their cell phones (**please leave them at home**). Students are encouraged to write cards or letters to their families on a regular basis and letters from home are welcome. However, please do not send packages, (**especially no food!!!**) unless your student has asked you to and communicated this to the teachers. Letters to Ecuador may take up to three weeks and need to be mailed well in advance in order to get there before the group returns to the United States in early December.

On the Trail

Teachers carry an emergency phone and are in communication with the office if necessary. The office has a copy of the expedition plan indicating the predicted itinerary and camp locations of the group for each day. Family members can write to their student. In case of emergency parents can call the Kroka office.

Parent Visits

In order to stay connected with their student and to build the parent community we offer parent weekends.

For the Vermont Semester we have the send-off parent day at the end of January and another opportunity at the NorthWoods Stewardship Center in Northern Vermont in early April.

For the Ecuador Semester we have the send-off weekend before the group departs in September. There is no more visit possible until the return of the group from Ecuador.

Both semester programs culminate with public performances and a graduation ceremony. We strongly encourage all parents to come to the parent weekends and the final celebration of the semester.

Conflict Resolution between parents and teachers

If a conflict arises between the parents and Kroka staff we are hoping it can be resolved between the people involved. We will make every effort to address and solve the issue/s immediately. If difficulties persist we offer the following process:

- 1) Parents set up a conversation with the teacher/s involved and try to resolve the issue/s.
- 2) Parents communicate to the director of Semester School if they cannot resolve the issue/s with the teachers. A meeting with teachers, parents and the director is set up to resolve the issue/s.
- 3) If there is no resolution after this meeting, the director will meet with Misha Golfman, Lynne Boudreau and the parents to resolve the issue/s.
- 4) Conference phone calls may be necessary if the family lives too far away.

EQUIPMENT

Specialty Gear

We provide specialty gear, such as life jackets, helmets, paddles, harnesses, etc. Our equipment is very dear to us and we like it to last for many years in order to bring pleasure to many people. Students will be instructed on proper care of all items and will be held responsible for the gear they are using. Students will be held financially accountable for negligent use and/or damage.

Gear List

A detailed gear list will be mailed to all accepted students three months prior to the start of the program. It is our intention to bring less so we can experience more, thus the gear list is very simple. It is best to not purchase anything ***prior to receiving the gear list***. A number of items are available for purchase through the Kroka camp store. Any purchases from the Kroka camp store directly benefit the Scholarship Fund.

Dress Code

In general clothing needs to be neat, clean, simple and appropriate for the activities. We do not accept offensive images on clothing. We encourage the purchase of used items, and those that are made with respect for the Earth. ***Please do not bring anything other than the items on the list*** (unless you have special needs that have been previously discussed with your teachers).

Camp Store

The camp store at Kroka Expeditions carries high quality merchandise tested in the field. We strive to buy locally made merchandise as well as high quality items from Sweden, Canada, Ecuador, and the USA. All profits from the store go to the Scholarship Fund. A camp store order form is available from the Kroka office or if you are in the area, please stop in.

KROKA LIFE

Challenge

Kroka's programs are designed to be physically and mentally demanding and require a willingness to push beyond one's limits. We want our students to become stronger and more capable beings.

Food

All food is provided. We create healthy, delicious, and simple meals. We eat primarily vegetarian food though we do eat some meat. The meat we eat it is often meat that we have a relationship with: fish that we catch, chickens that we slaughter, or meat that is raised at local farms. Vegetarians are not required to eat the meat. Most meals are cooked over an open fire and we strive to use ingredients that are locally and ecologically grown. We go light on sugar and emphasize three good meals per day with snacks when needed. We see value in feeling hungry for supper and do not have unlimited munchies available. Due to the limitations of expedition life we do not have options at meal times and we strive to waste no food. ***We may not be able to accommodate some special dietary restrictions on the semester programs.***

Acceptance of the Human Body

During remote wilderness expedition programs, some students may naturally choose to swim without clothing. At other times, members of the group may need to change out of wet clothes with privacy provided only by trees and rocks. While we neither encourage nor discourage students from swimming with or without clothes; if they are comfortable and they initiate swimming without clothes in an appropriate setting, we will allow it. While we believe that it can be an opportunity to discover a rare and wonderful freedom from societal norms and help to develop a comfort with, and healthy respect for, the human body, all students should know there is absolutely no pressure to do anything they are not comfortable with.

Drugs and Alcohol

Kroka Expeditions has a zero tolerance policy for use or possession of alcohol, tobacco or any mind-altering substances, including paraphernalia, during our programs. Students violating this rule will immediately be dismissed from the program and sent home at the expense of the family without refund.

FINANCES

Tuition, Deposits, and Cancellation Policy

A place will be held for a student upon acceptance of his/her application and receipt of the \$2,000 deposit. The deposit will be applied to the tuition. Acceptance is final once the signed contract and tuition payment plan are received. With the signed contract the obligation to pay tuition and fees for the full program is unconditional. The first four weeks of the program are considered a trial period for the students as well as for Kroka. Should a student withdraw or being asked to withdraw at the end of four weeks the tuition amount and fees due to Kroka will be prorated. Withdrawal before the four-week trial period is over will not warrant a reduction in tuition and fees. Past that time no deduction or remission of tuition costs is granted from Kroka Expeditions for withdrawal, dismissal for disciplinary reasons or absence for academic or personal reasons.

Dismissal from the Program

Staff may dismiss students on the basis of unacceptable behavior. Determination is at the discretion of the staff and is based on the well being of the group as a whole. In the case of unacceptable behavior, the following steps will be taken:

- 1) Behavior in question will be discussed privately between the student and the teachers.
- 2) If questionable behavior continues, parents will be notified of the issue/s. If the parents live too far away, parents will arrange a conference call. A plan of action will be created to help the student succeed.
- 3) Failure to comply will result in a three-day suspension, location to be determined. Another meeting with the coordinator, parents, the student and teachers will be held and a new plan of action created.
- 4) Teachers will meet regularly with the student as outlined in the plan of action. Parents will be informed of progress or if difficulties arise.
- 5) Failure to comply with the new plan of action may result in dismissal. Parents will be called and must pick up the student from the program, regardless of where that may be. If this occurs in Ecuador the student will be put on the next plane from Quito to the US.
- 6) Any costs arising from dismissal are the responsibility of the family involved (e.g. telephone, bus fare, airfare, etc.). No tuition refunds are given in the above dismissal situations.

Group Money:

Students will not carry any money - cash or credit/debit cards - throughout the program. We are asking that each student contribute \$50 towards a group account included in the invoice parents receive at the start of the program. Students will discuss and decide any spending as a whole group. Any necessary group equipment repair or losses will be paid for with group money. The student treasurer will be assigned by the group to keep track of all group expenses and settle the account upon return with the office manager at Kroka. Should there be money left at the end of the program the whole group will decide on how to distribute the remaining amount.

Market Money for the New Hampshire Ecuador semester:

The Ecuador Semester students may bring personal/market money (no more than \$ 50) for purchasing gifts at markets while in Ecuador. The desired amount will be added to your invoice and paid at the beginning of the semester. The money will be made available when there is opportunity to purchase gifts. Please respect our request to **not send money, credit or debit card with your student**; in the past students carrying money on their own has caused unnecessary challenges for the group.

Medical Insurance

We expect students to have medical coverage. If you are uninsured you will need to sign a waiver, indicating that you assume all financial responsibility for the cost of any medical treatment that may be a result of your student's participation in the Kroka Expeditions Semester Program. We will need your credit card number on file in case of necessary medical treatment during the program.

DECOMPRESSION AND TRANSITION AFTER THE PROGRAM

Months away from home and "civilization" combined with complete immersion in a wilderness lifestyle will have a profound effect on your student. He/she may come back seeing the world through a different lens. After students have spent time living outdoors, composting, recycling and wasting hardly anything, they may want to start changing their life at home. A thoughtful transition to everyday life is very important and may go a long way in avoiding potential cynicism and depression. Treating them with respect and allowing and assisting them in creating positive change in their own world will help this transition. We also have a list of possibilities/opportunities students can pursue after the semester program, ranging from alternative high schools and colleges to apprenticeship programs and work opportunities all over the US and the world.

LOGISTICS

Contact Information

Please call Kroka Expeditions at 603-835-9087 to speak with the teachers or the director of semester school. You may also email us at semester@kroka.org if you cannot reach us by phone.

Drop off and Pick up

The semester programs begin and end in Marlow, NH at our Base Camp. Directions to our Marlow base camp are on our web site: www.kroka.org.

LONG DISTANCE / INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Transportation arrangements can be made via plane, bus or train. The most local airport is listed below:

Airport	Location	Distance (one way) to Kroka
Manchester Airport	Manchester, NH	64 miles

SHUTTLES:

AIRPORT: Kroka staff is available to transport from Manchester airport. Please make arrangements if you need Kroka staff to pick up your student. For flights into Logan Airport in Boston, MA or Bradley International Airport in Hartford, CT arrangements can be made with Thomas Transportation 1-800-526-8143 www.thomastransportation.com

BUS: Students can travel by bus to Bellows Falls, VT or Keene, NH where they will be picked up by a Kroka staff. Vermont Transit: 1-800-552-8737/ www.vermonttransit.com

TRAIN: There is a train station in Bellows Falls, VT, where a Kroka staff can pick up your child. Amtrak: 1-800-872-7245 (USA-RAIL)/ www.amtrak.com