



2023 Miniwanca Adventurer Camper & Family Handbook



Table of Contents

Welcome to Four Trails	3
Welcome to the Adventurer Program	4
• Miniwanca Contact Details	4
• Expect the Unexpected	5
• Four Trails Safety.....	6
• Four Trails Fitness and Preparation.....	7
• Equipment and Clothing Recommendations	8
• Communication and Photographs on Trail	9
• Meals on Trail	10
• Camper Money on Trail	10
• Sanitation and Hygiene on Trail	10
• Weather Conditions on Trail	11
• Removal from Trips	11
Adventurer Canoeing Program	12



Welcome to Four Trails

Dear Adventurer Camper & Family,

Whether this is your first year in Four Trails or you're returning for another year of adventure, we are so excited you have enrolled in the Adventurer program this summer. Your decision to participate in this program is just the start of an experience where you will be asked to connect, play, and reflect in the outdoors, and we couldn't be more excited to invite you on this adventure.

The foundation of Four Trails is the belief that, when we explore and discover the wonder of the natural world, we also explore and venture inward and discover more about ourselves. When we pay attention to the astounding outdoors, we also pay attention to our equally astounding inner selves. We then use that self-knowledge to be better, more engaged community members.

This handbook is a good place to begin your preparations for the adventure ahead. The first section, Welcome to the Adventurer Program, covers many need-to-know topics for Adventurer campers, and the following sections offer a thorough explanation of what Adventurer campers can expect to do on trail.

Take the time to read through this document, and if you have questions or concerns about any items in this handbook or packing list, please feel free to contact me. I'll be more than happy to help.

Get outside, listen, play, feel, connect, and happy trails,

Regan Gibson Wiesler

Regan Gibson Wiesler

Four Trails Program Manager

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Welcome to the Adventurer Program

As an Adventurer, campers will experience the scenic wilderness of the Upper Mississippi River on this 10-day, 9-night expedition through Minnesota and Wisconsin. They'll adventure through locks and pools and down America's Great River Road. They'll camp out each night in tents and wake each morning to the sunrise.

It's not only about the beauty of the natural world. It's also about challenging Voyageurs to live the values of best self and balanced life out loud. With the help of their leaders, they will help plan and facilitate Evening Reflections, cook meals for their group, and help lead the group each day as they plan their next destination. Along the way, Voyageurs will empower themselves and others through the support of the mobile community they create together on their adventure.

Campers leave Miniwanca with lasting memories, newfound skills and friends, and newly gained confidence in themselves and their ability to make a positive difference in the world.

Miniwanca Contact Details

In your preparation for the summer, please direct any questions regarding the information contained within this handbook or other questions about the Four Trails program to our Four Trails Program Manager, Regan Gibson Wiesler.

The best way to contact us throughout the year is to call Miniwanca at 231-861-2262.

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Expect the Unexpected

The AYF makes every reasonable effort to ensure a fun, safe experience where campers are encouraged to achieve their personal best. However, we cannot foresee or control every circumstance. Group dynamics, failure to follow instruction, missing a turn, interactions with people not affiliated with the AYF, inclement weather, and other environmental hazards can create unexpected challenges on trail. Our staff is trained for unexpected situations, and as a result our unplanned programmatic elements often serve as the greatest catalyst for teaching our participants life skills. Campers gain problem-solving and critical-thinking skills as they resolve low-level incidents during their turn as “leader of the day” under the supervision of their trip leader.

Should an incident occur, our priority is camper safety and quality of the overall group experience. Our course of action may include but is not limited to addressing the incident with individuals involved or the entire trip group, facilitating group collaboration to determine the next best steps, and/or intentionally adjusting the itinerary.

For a positive group and individual experience, it is important campers come to Miniwanca physically fit, mentally prepared, and with the correct equipment. Be sure to follow the specific training and equipment recommendations included in the following sections.



Four Trails Safety

Just as our in-camp programs encourage campers to take social, emotional, and physical risks in healthy and safe ways, our adventure programs are designed to challenge campers to take healthy risks in an environment where they can feel safe, supported, and valued. We encourage campers to try new things, to ask questions, and to explore what it means to be their own self in settings outside their comfort zones.

We are additionally committed to remaining in constant dialogue within and outside the camp community to help us continually refine the safety or the Four Trails program. Though specific safety protocols vary based on trip type, most can be categorized in three distinct areas:

Pre-Trip Preparation and Assessment Protocols

All campers and leaders must arrive with a base level of physical and mental readiness that will allow them to participate for several hours in physically and mentally rigorous activities. Participants will participate in “shakedown,” practice trips on site or near camp where staff check in with each camper to make sure they are ready for their adventure.

Routine Safety Monitoring for All Trip Groups

Some protocols for monitoring trip safety include daily group check-ins with camp coordinators, group safety and first aid briefings, cell phone and satellite phone support, and van and transportation support when applicable.

Post-Trip Debrief and Route Evaluation

Our post-trip safety protocols include facilitated trip debriefs between coordinators, trip leaders, and campers, ongoing route evaluations including contact with local and state officials, and annual route review conducted by camp directors and coordinators.



Four Trails Fitness and Trip Preparation

It is important campers arrive with a base level of fitness that will allow them to participate in physical activity for up to several hours at a time. The Four Trails Fitness and Training Program below is important for your personal safety and enjoyment, but they are also necessary for the safety and enjoyment of others who will be a part of your mobile community.

Activities that could be undertaken to specifically prepare for camp include:

- Cycling on a bike or exercise machine.
- Swimming, running, or any other cardio-intensive sport.
- Yoga or any activity that works on flexibility and building core strength.
- Strength training exercises including push-ups, sit-ups, chin-ups, pull-ups, and supervised weight training.
- Practicing healthy levels of hydration, diet, and rest.

Cardiovascular Endurance Assessment: Find a 1.5-mile course (local running track or set a back road course with a car.) Run and/or walk the distance as fast as you can. A desirable endurance level is less than 15 minutes to complete the course.

Suggested Training Program

Week	Cardiovascular		Strength	
	days per week	minutes per day	days per week	minutes per day
1	3	30	2	15
2	4	30	2	15
3	4	30	3	20
4	4	30	3	30
5	4	40	3	30
6	4	50	3	30
7	4	30	3	45
8	4	60	3	45

These activities will not only boost physical and mental readiness for Four Trails campers but will also minimize the stress related to these physically demanding trip experiences.

Equipment and Clothing Recommendations

Miniwanca provides as much gear and equipment as possible for Four Trails campers. In general, campers are responsible for providing personal gear, including clothing, sleeping bags, and sleeping pads as listed on the [Adventurer Packing List](#). Miniwanca will provide all essential group gear (including cooking gear, tents, paddles, etc.). We encourage everyone to consider cost-effective and environmentally sustainable options for acquiring gear including borrowing from friends and family or purchasing secondhand items in good condition.

While some equipment below may not fit your idea of summer weather, it is **all** very important. Temperatures can range from 40 degrees F to 90-plus degrees F in the summer, and weather is always variable. If you are uncertain about the type of equipment required, consider the following recommendations, and reach out if you have questions.

Fabrics

When indicated on the packing list, please only bring synthetic fabrics (polyester) or wool when possible. Cotton loses its insulating properties when wet and therefore cannot ensure campers stay comfortable, warm, and happy on trail.

When weather permits, many campers prefer cotton, nylon, or quick-drying fabrics which keep your body cool. Having a few of these items is good for long, hot days of hiking, canoeing, or kayaking.

Layers

Layering trip clothing is the best way for campers to adjust to changing environments. We recommend three layers, starting with a thin base layer (long underwear, tops and bottoms), a second layer (long-sleeve shirt, pants), and a heavier fleece outer-layer. The camper's raincoat should be able to fit these three layers underneath without feeling too tight or restrictive. [Learn more about layering basics](#).

Raingear

Waterproof rain gear is necessary to keep campers dry and comfortable. Campers should test their raincoat in the shower before arrival. Families can purchase re-waterproofing sprays if the raincoat is several years old. [Learn more about rain gear basics](#).

Sleeping Bags

There are two important factors to consider about your sleeping bag for this trip: warmth and compressibility. Sleeping bags must have a **synthetic fill**. Like polyester and wool, synthetic fill sleeping bags maintain their insulating properties when wet. This is especially important for canoe trips, when so much time is spent on the water.

Sleeping bags must also have a temperature rating of at least 30 degrees F. Warmer ratings (10 to 20 degrees F) are also adequate. Sleeping bags must also have a **compression stuff sack** with

straps on the exterior that can be tightened to compress the bag. [Learn more about sleeping bags.](#)

Sleeping Pads

Sleeping pads help campers sleep comfortably in a wilderness setting. There are many different kinds, but the main considerations are weight/size, insulating ability, and comfort. The most basic requirement for a sleeping pad is that it keeps your camper off the ground, such as the Therm-a-Rest [Ridge Rest](#) or [Z-Lite](#) sleeping pads. [Learn more about sleeping pads.](#)

What Not to Bring

We believe the following items detract from the campers' experience or create a safety hazard. In respect of the community, please make sure not to bring these items:

- **Electronics such as smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, fitness trackers, e-readers, or other connected devices.** Digital cameras are OK. Any smartphone or Internet-connected device will be checked into safekeeping for the duration of the session.
- Snacks, sodas, or sports drinks. Because we have campers with severe food allergies, outside food, candy, and gum are not allowed.
- Pocket knives, hunting knives, hatchets, axes, lighters, matches, candles, or fireworks
- Aerosol cans for bug spray, sunscreen, or other products
- All medications, **including over-the-counter and vitamins**, must be turned into the Health Team at check in. Please review our [2023 Health & Wellness Policies](#) for more information.

If campers bring these items, staff will collect them for the session and return them at the end of camp.

Communication and Photography on Trail

All Four Trails leaders carry a cell phone while on-trail, as well as a satellite phone and/or SPOT locator for more remote adventures. Miniwanca has regularly scheduled check-ins with trip leaders, and when possible, trip leaders notify Miniwanca when the group arrives at its daily destination.

Campers can receive and send mail at camp before, between, and/or after their trips. All camper mail and care packages received while they are on trail will be stored until they return. Please review our care package and mail guidance in our [Miniwanca Camper & Family Handbook.](#)

Due to the remote settings of these experiences, trip leaders cannot provide regular, detailed, or real-time photographs. **Photos from Four Trails trips will be available online when groups have returned to camp.** Families will receive SmugMug login information via email once their camper's session begins. Learn more about our [revised Photo Policy.](#)

Meals on Trail

Leaders ensure campers receive food that helps them “go” throughout the day (complex carbohydrates and sugars, healthy fats), the food that helps them “grow” (nourishing proteins such as nuts, beans, grains, dairy, and meat when available), and the food that helps them have a healthy “glow” (fresh fruits and vegetables).

Some meals and snacks include oatmeal with granola and dried fruit, bagel thins with hummus and summer sausage, soy butter and jelly tortillas, Southwestern chili, chicken and rice curry, trail pad Thai, Clif bars, granola bars, and fruit leather.

Backpacking and paddling trip food is supplied by our Food Pack-Out System. Miniwanca plans and provides menus aligned with the values of the [Miniwanca Food Program](#).

Our goal is to ensure all campers eat healthy meals in sufficient quantities. Junk food, candy, and soda do not provide the same level of nutrition as other food options, and in some cases may harm a physically active body. Campers cannot bring these items to camp or on trail.

Camper Money on Trail

Campers are allowed spending money for souvenirs. **Miniwanca aims to minimize inequities in pocket money between campers.** We ask camp families provide pocket money **that does not exceed** the following amounts:

- We ask that Trailblazers do not bring cash for their trip.
- \$50 for **Explorer and Adventurer** campers
- \$100 for **Voyageur and Odyssey** campers

Miniwanca will collect spending money on Opening Day and distribute it to campers for their trips. Families must provide cash. Miniwanca does not use camp store accounts, and we cannot charge credit cards to provide a cash advance on trail spending.

Sanitation and Hygiene on Trail

Sanitation and hygiene are just as important on trail as they are in camp. For the health and safety of all group members, we encourage the following:

- Hand washing/sanitation is mandatory before all meals and after going to the bathroom.
- Groups use public facilities when available and practice Leave No Trace ethics.
- Personal and group dishes will be washed and sanitized after every meal. All food scraps will be disposed of responsibly.

Weather Conditions on Trail

Weather on the roads, rivers, lakes, and trails can change quickly and be severe, affecting the plans of a trip group. Rain can cause less than adequate conditions, including slippery terrain, increased workload for the paddler or hiker, and loss of body heat on cool days.

All these conditions are manageable, and Miniwanca has policies in place to respond to various weather conditions. It is important that all campers are physically fit and come prepared with the correct equipment indicated in the [Adventurer Packing List](#).

Each trip group will carry a weather radio that provides a forecast including direction and strength of wind, visibility, and general weather for the next 24 hours. These radios help trip leaders make informed decisions about how the group travels.

Removal from Trips

It is never easy to decide a camper should be dismissed, and we know it is a difficult thing for families to hear. **Behaviors that result in immediate dismissal include but are not limited to threat to harm self or others, possession or use of drugs or alcohol, or possession of a weapon.**

AYF staff must balance what is best for the group and community with the needs of an individual camper. If a camper's actions, statements, or attitude negatively affect their cabin or the wider AYF community, or if a camper is physically, mentally, socially, or emotionally unable to participate in camp activities, they may be dismissed.

Please review Miniwanca's full Behavior and Dismissal Policies in the [2023 Camper & Family Handbook](#). If a camper is removed from a trip, AYF staff will return the camper to Miniwanca or a local airport. Families are responsible for picking up their camper as soon as possible.

If a camper is injured or becomes ill on trail, staff will arrange for the camper to be transported to the nearest hospital, and a Miniwanca staff member will contact the family with the hospital's contact information.

If a camper cannot continue the trip, Miniwanca will arrange transportation back to camp, and families should pick up their camper as soon as possible. Parents are responsible for all medical and associated evacuation costs. Families may be eligible for a prorated tuition medical refund. Please review Miniwanca's full Withdrawal and Dismissal Policy in the [2023 Camper & Family Handbook](#).

Adventurer Canoeing Program

Miniwanca's Adventurer paddling program is designed to build on the foundational paddling skills campers have learned prior to departure. **Campers will experience the scenic wilderness of the Upper Mississippi River on this 10-day, 9-night expedition through Minnesota and Wisconsin.**

What does an average day on the water look like for an Adventurer paddler?

Groups will generally paddle between 3 and 4 hours a day depending on wind, group speed, and water level. Camper gear is loaded in dry bags and water-tight containers and then transported in canoes along with essential group gear and food items.

Groups stay at approved campsites along the Mississippi River. They will be staying at pre-determined campsites, so making camp is important to ensure there is an adequate place for the group to stay overnight. Wake up and mealtimes will vary and will be dependent on the group's time management, efficiency, and other environmental factors, keeping in mind the importance of getting into camp with time to make dinner and enjoy the evening.

Throughout the day, campers and leaders will exercise all Four Folds to work toward logistical, personal, and group goals. Trip groups will also engage in some type of reflective activity in hopes of bringing meaning to their individual and group experiences.

Where do Adventurer paddlers canoe?

Adventurers will experience the beauty of the upper Midwest while paddling down the Upper Basin of the Mississippi River. Their put-in point is in Red Wing, Minnesota, and they will travel downriver over the next 8 days before returning to Miniwanca. They will paddle between 5 and 10 miles a day and will make camp on various islands on the river and banks of state parks and National Wildlife Refuge land.

Weather Conditions on Paddling Trips

Weather on the water can change quickly and be severe. Wind can affect the plans of paddling groups. It can cause spray off the water, increase the workload of the paddler and cause loss of body heat on cool days. Rain and storms are not uncommon during the summer and while all these conditions are manageable, they make it important that all campers are physically fit and come prepared with the correct equipment.



Are there any special gear considerations for paddlers?

Please consult the [Adventurer Packing List](#) for a comprehensive list of gear. The following are recommendations specifically for paddling trips:

- **Extra Clothing:** Campers should have a “wet set” of clothing to wear while paddling and a “dry set” to wear once they make camp. Both sets should follow the Four Trails guidelines for clothing fabric.
- **Water Shoes:** All paddlers must wear closed-toe shoes while swimming and cooking. **Crocs, Tevas, and other hybrid sandal-shoes are not closed toe.** If you can see your toes, they are not considered closed toe. While some shoes may overlap in purpose, it is preferable to have a dry pair of closed-toe shoes for the evenings.
- **Hats:** All campers are required to have a hat for sun protection, preferably a wide-brim hat they can secure to themselves in windy conditions. Campers must also have a fleece or woolen hat to wear at night, as the temperatures can vary greatly.

What equipment does Miniwanca provide?

In addition to a canoe, Miniwanca will provide paddles, personal flotation devices, and dry bags. Miniwanca also provides camping equipment including tents, stoves, fuel, food, water containers, and sanitation items.

Trip leaders carry an extensive first aid kit and are trained in high-level first aid. Leaders also have cell or satellite phones and are in regular contact with Miniwanca. Finally, leaders also carry maps and resources to assist in route navigation and camping arrangements.

