

Troop 497 Summer Camp 2026 Tips and Tricks for Beginners and Experienced Campers Alike

This document coins tips and tricks based on our past experiences that may make your summer camp more enjoyable.

Traveling

We will be traveling by bus this year. We start traveling in the full-dress uniform including Scout shirt, shorts/pants (zip pants work great because the buses are often cold), and socks; Troop name tag, neckerchief, and cap; neckerchief slide, belt, and comfortable shoes (no sandals or open-toed shoes). When on the bus you can often take off the uniform shirt, neckerchief, slide, and hat. Carry a metal clothes hanger and a suction cup hook if you want to try to keep the shirt neat on the bus and later in camp. For pit stops during the bus ride we frequently only require the more comfortable field uniform, Class B, which is a special Troop 497 T-shirt, hat, Scout shorts/pants, belt, socks and shoes. Wear the 497 T-shirt **UNDER** your uniform shirt when you board the bus -- then you will be ready -- don't pack the T-shirt in your main duffle bag because the duffle is going under the bus! This year, you may wear the 2026 Car Wash Shirt instead of the Class B shirt on Friday and Saturday on our way to camp. Regular Class B T-shirts and replacement neckerchiefs and hats will be available at troop meetings prior to camp and at check in. Nametags will be available at check in. If available, bring a second uniform or uniform parts so you can always have a clean one ready.

We will be traveling on buses with DVD players and will play approved movies during portions of the trip. Bring your summer school reading, a book, cards, and small, non-electronic games such as board games. No electronics (other than flashlights, cameras, and non-smart watches) are allowed on the trip. **Any electronic games, phones, etc. will be confiscated and NOT returned.** There are a few exceptions for adults only - see Mr. Boutilier before the trip!

Bring earplugs so you don't have to listen to people snoring at night and so you can more easily sleep on the bus. Bring a blowup or small pillow on the bus and a small blanket or sweatshirt to help you sleep better.

Pack a full water bottle for the bus. You'll want the water bottle for use in camp so one that can clip onto your daypack or fit in its pockets is especially useful. Do not bring food or snacks on the bus.

Packing

You should pack in two bags this year. You should pack your daypack for the bus and for later use in camp and for on the way home. Your second bag should be a large duffle containing everything else: your clothes, gear, sleeping bag and sleeping pad. Adults and Seniors may take a chair.

Consider bringing a small "dry bag" to use when transporting items like a camera and merit badge materials on the lake.

Day pack:

Your small backpack should contain items you need on the bus. You should include toilet articles, sunscreen, spending money, hat, sunglasses with strap (required at most water parks), rain gear, flashlight, water bottle, camera, pillow, ear plugs, books, cards, and small games. Pack any valuables or fragile items in your day pack. ***You should carry water clothes and a small towel for the whitewater rafting on the way up and the water park on the way home.*** Include a plastic bag for your wet clothes after the ride.

Main duffle bag:

Pack your clothes and other items in a SINGLE duffle bag; one with pockets helps keep you organized. Do not bring any hard-sided luggage. You will have access to the duffle each night traveling and during camp. Put everything that can get wet and shouldn't in a plastic bag. Use heavy duty resealable bags to organize smaller items. Pack everything in plastic bags before putting them into the duffle bags. You can get LARGE (2 1/2 gallon) bags that are excellent for packing clothes. If you sit on them, while you seal them, you'll create a vacuum-packed bag! Bring spare plastic bags of different sizes. You might pack outfits together so that you only have to open one bag to get clean sets of clothes for a day. Pack some nylon cord and some clothespins for hanging up wet bathing suits, towels and clothes you hand wash in camp. Use a distinctive nametag to make your duffle easy to locate. Bring a swimsuit without any metal buttons, grommets or rings on the back as the water park might not allow you on their slides with these and bring closed-toed water shoes for camp and the water park.

Miscellaneous packing information:

Use either clear or white plastic garbage bags (not black -- they could get mixed up with the garbage) and write your name on each and every bag before you leave home. Use one to protect your sleeping bag by first putting the plastic bag inside your nylon stuff sack and then putting in the sleeping bag. This way the nylon bag will protect the plastic bag from tears. Double bag your insect repellent and other liquids and put them in your bags -- they can damage your other gear if they leak. Bring a few extra bags -- they come in handy for all sorts of things.

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Put your name on everything and we mean everything - especially uniform parts (including neckerchiefs, hats, and socks) because they all look alike. We may wash clothes together and this is the only way you will get yours back! Sharpies work great for this. Don't forget to put your name in your Scout handbook and merit badge books!

Advancements

Bring a notebook or a pad of paper, multiple pens and pencils, and a clipboard or something hard to write on during merit badge classes. Bring paper and envelopes to write home.

Bring your Scout handbook (in a plastic bag and make sure your name and Troop 497 is in the book) so we can sign off your advancements! Keep a copy of the advancement pages in the back of your handbook at home in case your handbook is lost during the trip. Also bring your own merit badge books for your chosen merit badges if you have them. Scouting America no longer prints Merit Badge Books, but you can obtain a pdf of the book and print it at home. You can borrow many older merit badge books from the Troop library. Pack your books in resealable bags to protect them from water and wear. You can use your daypack to carry them in during camp! Read the merit badge books ahead of time and bring any personal materials you will need to complete your merit badges. Some badges require work that can't be done at camp – do it before camp and you can finish the badge in camp!

Take the initiative for advancement during camp -- go ask one of the adult leaders or seniors to work with you. They'll welcome the opportunity. Don't wait for them to come find you.

Living in camp

We will be sleeping in our troop tents this year in camp. Bring a sheet or sleeping bag liner for nights when the sleeping bag is too warm. A small battery powered fan can make hot nights in tents or buildings more comfortable.

Don't forget a separate bag for dirty laundry. It will keep your tent smelling nicer. Bring rain gear including water resistant footwear, a rain jacket with a hood (or a rain hat), and rain pants.

Pack an extra flashlight that can be left hanging in your tent for general illumination. LED flashlights with a cone or a lantern are better than a traditional spotlight for lighting your tent. It is also easier to manage batteries if all your flashlights use the same size batteries. Reverse batteries so flashlights don't turn on in your pack and drain your batteries while traveling and bring spare batteries.

Pack any food you mail to camp in metal containers so that animals do not get into it during transit or in camp. *No food, candy, or snacks should ever be brought into tents, sleeping bags, or packs.* The troop will store personal food and designated smellables in one of the trailers. You should bring a container or bag with your name on it for these items.

Food Allergies/Special Dietary Requests

If you have food allergies or special dietary requests for health, religious or other reasons, please follow the directions on the Troop website to notify the Troop immediately.

Health related

All medicines must be clearly marked in their original containers and then put in a resealable bag with the Scout's name, Troop 497, and instructions written on it and given to the adult responsible for medicines. The form to include in the bag is on the web site. An adult will monitor that Scouts are taking their medicines on schedule.

Bring a photocopy of your own medical records, passport, and permission letter. Keep them with your carry-on gear.

Several Scouts are treated every summer for foot sores because they walk around in wet shoes without socks. Proper foot care is important. Bring plenty of socks and foot powder. Wool or synthetic socks are preferred over cotton socks. Open toe footwear is not allowed in camp. Bring synthetic scout socks – the cotton ones take days to dry. Bring water shoes for swimming and boating. Bring biodegradable soap/shampoo, e.g. Camp Soap or Camp Suds, for use in camp.

Spray your outdoor clothing, including hats and boots, with a clothing insect repellent with permethrin before leaving home and you won't need as much repellent on you. The use of a bug repellent with DEET or picaridin can help avoid having to remove ticks from personal areas -- bring a non-aerosol container -- a pump spray or a lotion. Insect repellent should never be applied in or near a tent. It will destroy the waterproofing of the tent. Check everywhere for ticks every night before going to bed. A bug net to go over your hat will protect your face and neck if the bugs become fierce which they sometimes do around sunrise and sunset. You won't need the mosquito netting for sleeping, listed in the summer camp packing list, since our troop tents have netting installed in them.

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Don't forget sunscreen (non-aerosol) and a hat. Bring some warm clothes for cool nights. The average high temperature in Clare, MI in July is 82°F and the average low temperature is 59°F, rain averages 3.5 inches. Bring appropriate clothing for these conditions.

Anything else?

Read the Scoutmaster's Summer Camp Letter. It is full of the information you need to know for this summer camp. If you still need any additional advice just talk with one of the many adults who have travelled by bus for our traditional summer camp experience.

Review the [Summer Camp recommended packing list](#) on our Forms/ Current Events page.