



## SUTTON GRAMMAR YEAR 8 OUTDOOR CHALLENGE

This is an early version of the information that will be given to participants nearer the time.

### DEPARTURE

Arrive at school at 9 a.m on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June, mustering in the back car park (Greyhound Road entrance) next to the minibuses and van. **Please bring a packed lunch** so that we can get tents set up and get settled into the site before worrying about food. We will stop at a services on the way, so you could bring money for something there if you prefer.

### RETURN

We should be back at school by 6pm on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July, but will send a broadcast text message to all parents with our estimated time of arrival when we leave the campsite, and update you on the way back. Please be available to pick up as early as 4pm if needed.

### TENTS

For most of the week, you'll be sleeping in tent groups of 5 (tents are provided) at Botany Bay Activity Centre, Botany Bay, Trelleck Road, Tintern, Chepstow, NP16 6SN. We will sort out tent teams at a meeting at the school nearer to the trip.

### STAFF

Outspark staff Jason, Alex and Martin will be assisted by school staff and young leaders from SGS. Jason is a former teacher at the school who has run over 100 expeditions at SGS. Alex is our Expeditions Manager and has been Head of Outdoor Education at Battle Abbey School, and Martin is an experienced youth worker who is also our bushcraft specialist.

### FOOD

The food is plentiful and of a good standard, so don't feel you need to bring lots of snacks and sweets. No fizzy drinks whatsoever please. We cater for all sorts of special diets. If you don't like what's on offer for one particular meal, or you're still hungry, always ask, but it's also a good opportunity to be adventurous and try stuff you don't normally eat.

### ACTIVITIES

The running order may be different, but here is a list of some of the headline activities during the week. It's all subject to weather and the programme can change in response to all sorts of things, but here's a flavour. Please note that in addition to our own qualified staff, we use other Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority approved companies for the caving, climbing, mountain biking and canoeing who have appropriate expertise for each activity. So although the activities are adventurous and you can never guarantee that you won't, for example, fall off your bike and get a graze, there are experts on hand to instruct you and keep you safe. All appropriate safety equipment will be provided – buoyancy aids, helmets etc.

### HILLWALKING

On Tuesday, there's usually a choice of two walks: Sugarloaf, which is a charismatic hill with a distinctive summit commanding great views (though populated by sheep that attempt to extort food from tourists); or Pen-y-Fan, a classic but challenging walk where you might bump into members of the SAS doing the famous "Fan Dance", a gruelling 24km challenge. For Pen-y-Fan, walking boots, NOT SHOES are essential, and for Sugarloaf they are much preferred. The key thing is ankle support: rugged looking trainers that do not provide ankle support are not much better than ordinary trainers. **No boots and you can't go to Pen-y-Fan.** They don't need to be expensive and we might be able to get some discarded by a previous participant if you give us notice. A good waterproof jacket and waterproof trousers are especially important for this day, as you'll be out for a long time and the weather can cut up rough. We have a stock of spare jackets but these may be rather "outsize" as they

are mainly for DofE.

## **MOUNTAIN BIKING**

On Wednesday, we head to the Pedalabikeaway centre in the heart of the Forest of Dean, where you'll split into groups based on your biking ability and appetite for challenge and spend a whole day biking with excellent instructors. Some of the trails are relatively straightforward, some are very technical. Whichever group you are in, you'll need to dig deep into your energy reserves to make the most of it. If you can't ride a bike, let us know in advance. Or better still, learn to ride a bike. For this activity, if you have cycling shorts with some padding your anatomy will thank you, but any sort of shorts that go to or just below the knee are fine. **Bring fingerless gloves if you have them.**

## **CANOE BIVOUAC**

On Wednesday evening, you paddle three to a canoe down the Wye then use the canoes, paddles and tarps to construct bivouacs in which you'll spend the night at a wild campsite. In the morning, paddle on to the final destination. All your kit gets packed into waterproof barrels for the journey. It will save you time packing if you have one complete change of clothes from top to bottom tied in a roll which you can take with you.

## **MASTERVEG COMPETITION**

In your tent teams of five, you'll have a budget of £5 per person (handed out to you when we descend en masse on Tesco's) to create a three course culinary extravaganza to feed yourselves and provide a tasting plate for the judges. **The twist is that this has to be a vegetarian meal** – no meat, fish or shellfish, but dairy and eggs are still in play (unless one of you is vegan, of course).

The standard is very high – you get marks for each course for ambition, flavour and presentation for each course. So a pizza you heat up in the oven or a straightforward pasta with tomato sauce won't get you anywhere. Oven space is limited and a bit slow, and the grill isn't very fierce, so although we usually have a few cakes and the occasional pie, you're best to go for things that can be cooked on a hob or a camping stove. You can bring spices etc. from home if it would be a waste of money to buy a whole jar just for a pinch of it, but the main ingredients have to come out of the £5 per person budget.

## **CAMP FIRE FEAST, WIDE GAMES, BUSHCRAFT**

As well as the headline activities that involve going off site, there will be lots going on back in the campsite, especially as we have an extra day compared to previous trips. We have a few campfires, including one where you'll build fires in tent groups and then cook fish, sweet potatoes, sweetcorn, bananas with chocolate and so on in the embers. We do make a lot of effort to cater to people with special diets and food is big element of the trip. If you're just a fussy eater, we encourage you to try things you haven't eaten: you'll need lots of energy for the activities so just get stuck in.

We'll also have some wide games, which involve creeping around in the woods as part of some scenario or other, and opportunities for you to do some bushcraft/survival skills such as constructing a tarp bivi. There will also be some downtime in which you explore the site and create your own entertainment. It's about getting away from the computer/phone screen and enjoying being in the real, natural world.

## **SWIMMING**

At some point we'll get you to a swimming pool, partly to ensure you don't start to stink too much. Usually we head to Bathurst Pool, an outdoor pool run very professionally by the local community, where you can splash about rather more than in an ordinary pool. So bring your swimming stuff.

## **CAVING AND CLIMBING**

On Friday, we go to Symonds Yat for a day that combines caving and climbing. This is as much a psychological as a physical challenge, and usually there are some boys who think they don't like heights or enclosed spaces. But by this point in the week, you've already done so much together that the camaraderie and support from your friends and the patient instruction of the expert cavers and climbers helps most people get over the fears they thought they had. For those of you who get the bug for caving, this trip qualifies you for participation in the SGS caving programme which starts with a trip to Pierre's Pot, Goatchurch Cavern and Swildon's Hole in the October of Year 9 and builds from there.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

Hopefully this and the kit list below gives you all the information you need. Boys will be able to ask questions at the meeting where we form teams. If parents have any queries after that, or ones that can't wait, please email alex@outspark.co.uk or ring 01245 830300 which will also be the emergency contact number during the trip.

Please do let us know if there are any changes in medical, dietary or contact information from when you filled in the form. Other than that, looking forward to a super trip!

Boys are asked **not to bring mobile phones or other electrical equipment**, as part of the experience is getting away from technology. It is not practical for us to send out updates during the week, as it's very hectic and internet connectivity is limited. **So please assume that no news is good news, and that the first you will hear from us is when we send an update from the services on the way back to update you on our expected arrival time back at school on Saturday.**

## KIT

There is the risk that in some activities you may get wet, therefore it is wise to have at least 3 complete changes of clothes. I would suggest that these include the following, as the weather may be variable. Items marked \* can be borrowed – ask at the meeting when you form tents groups.

### **TWO REFILLABLE WATER BOTTLES, at least 1.5 litres in total**

A small backpack or other bag. Put your waterproofs and packed lunch in here – it can travel with you on the minibus.

A holdall or rucksack for everything else. Suitcases are a bit of a nuisance as they take up space in your tent.

Roll mat\*

Sleeping bag\*

Waterproof Jacket and Trousers

Warm Jumper / fleece X 2

Trousers X 2 / **not jeans**

T shirts x 3

Shorts

Swimming trunks

Towel

Trainers x 2 (one old pair for canoeing)

Crocs or flip flops

Walking boots (these need to be worn in and comfortable).

Fingerless gloves for mountain biking if you have them (or other gloves suitable for gripping)

3 pairs of thick socks

2 pairs of sports socks

Night wear

Torch (plus spare batteries) – LED head torches are especially handy and quite cheap now

Spare plastic bags

Wash kit and small towel

Woollen hat, gloves

Suntan lotion - IMPORTANT

Sunhat – IMPORTANT

Insect repellent

Cutlery – knife, fork, spoon or spork

Any regularly taken medicines

Small amount of spending money – no more than

£20 max. You probably won't get the chance to

spend it other than at the services, unless the

weather is awful and we end up visiting civilisation in Cardiff.

### **Optional items**

Plasters for cuts/blisters or a small First Aid kit

Pack of cards or portable chess set

Camera

String

Guitar, harmonica, zither, hurdy-gurdy or other musical instrument

Jokes that are not in any way –ist and which at least some people won't have heard before

### **Maths question.**

If 37 boys each bring a penknife on a trip, and each has a 2% chance of injuring himself, what is the probability that a member of staff has to spend four hours in A&E getting one of them stitched up? I don't know the mathematical answer, but the short answer is – don't bring a knife.

### **Don't bring mobiles phones.**

Or speakers, Gameboys, iPod, mp3 player, radio or indeed anything electronic, other than a cheap digital camera if you would like to. Spend a week living in 3 dimensions and making your own entertainment!

**If you do bring valuables that get lost, soaked, broken or spoilt, hard cheese, tough luck and don't say I didn't warn you.**