

HIGH KNOLL TRAIL CAMP

Lace up your boots and set off on the High Knoll Trail - Blue Ridge Scout Reservation's premier high adventure backpacking program! Along the way, you'll discover our staffed outpost camps, where modern high adventure meets timeless classics that have been thrilling Scouts since 1975. Whether you're tackling tough trails or enjoying off-the-path fun, every day brings new excitement. But be prepared—these activities are not for the faint of heart! You'll need solid physical fitness to embrace the vigorous challenges ahead. High Knoll will deliver you the best backpacking experience, packed with daily adventures and unforgettable team-building moments.



BEFORE CAMP

In addition to the pre-camp requirements for base camp participants, High Knoll Trail Camp participants must do the following:

- Register for High Knoll Trail Camp on Black Pug after December 31, 2025
- Bring a copy of your CPR/First Aid card and Wilderness First Aid card
- Train and prepare as a crew

PREPARATION & TRAINING

LAST UPDATED: SEPTEMBER 19, 2025

Shakedown hikes are trips that are undertaken prior to a long intense trip and are intended to give the participants practice and preparation for the experience that they are about to undertake. They should start off with easier hikes to train those who are not as experienced and should progressively get more difficult and more technical, placing more responsibility on each of the crew members. Preferably, crews should do shakedown hikes in mountainous areas to prepare for the mountains on the reservation, but if there are no mountains around your area then there are other options that you can use, such as walking on sand and up and down steps. The more time spent in preparation for High Knoll, the more confident that the crew will be in having a successful trip and sail through the week with few issues. When going out on shakedown hikes, even if just for a day, have the crews carry what they would normally carry for a trek so that they can get used to the process of working together.

Map and compass skills are critical for spending a week on the trails at High Knoll. You may bring GPS units, but at some points throughout the week you will be hiking in and out of deep valleys where satellites may not be able to reach your device. GPS units run on batteries whereas a compass does not. Make sure that the crew is properly trained in how to navigate and read a map and compass. Each crew will be provided with two maps of the reservation, one with the trails planned out for the week and the other blank to use for navigation. Please make sure that the crew can demonstrate the proper use of these as our staff will ask them to demonstrate this when the crew arrives during our Ranger Shakedown process.

ARRIVAL & CHECK-IN

If your troop is traveling to Camp Powhatan, arrange for your High Knoll crew to be dropped off at Camp Ottari first. Upon arrival, the crew will meet their ranger, plan their itinerary with our map makers, perform medical checks, and verify attendance and fees. Plan on hiking your gear into the camp as vehicles will need to be parked in our High Knoll parking lot. Extra gear, such as extra clean clothes and your Field Uniform, should be stored inside your vehicles due to limited storage available in our buildings. Crews will spend all of their nights (Sunday through Friday) in their own tents, unless they participate in whitewater rafting.

After the Sunday shakedown and informational session conducted by one of the rangers, your crew will be released to hike upon our network of over 100 miles of trails crisscrossing the Scout Reservation. Though some crews shoot for the 50-miler award, typical groups hike around seven miles each day before ending up at one of our backcountry camps.

PARTICIPATION & LEADERSHIP

High Knoll Trail Camp is open to all Scouts who will be **at least 12 years old by September 1, 2026**, but units are encouraged to exercise caution by evaluating Scouts' maturity and physical ability before attending. Every crew must have two leaders or crew advisors at least 21 years old who are registered in Scouting. Any crew with female youth must have **at least one adult female leader. At least one member of each crew,** preferably two or more, must hold a current American Red Cross **Wilderness First Aid certification**, Emergency Care and Safety Institute (ECSI) Wilderness First Aid or equivalent, and current ARC or ECSI Adult and Child CPR/AED training or equivalent.

Due to staffing constraints, we do not have the ability to provide leadership for your crew; however, you can register as a partial crew and we will pair you with another partial crew. Many groups find leaders among their troop alumni. Except where health and safety are involved, all crew leadership stems from the elected crew leader. This youth leader's responsibilities should begin now with pre-trip planning.

High Knoll is designed as a low impact camping program. Thus, the ideal crew should have 10 youth and 2 adults. We often accept larger and smaller groups, but please check with the Registrar for confirmation. Individual youth (provisional campers) should submit their registration fee and application by April 1. Our registrar will place provisional campers within a crew.

In order for the week to go smoothly, crew duties need to be assigned in a way that fairly balances responsibilities on the trail. Duties may include: assigning a crew leader, assigning a cooking/cleaning rotation, bear bag hanging/food storage, navigator, etc. Make sure during the shakedown hikes that these roles and duties are being practiced so the crew as a whole can be prepared for a week on the trail.

HEALTH & SAFETY PROTOCOLS

In case of flooding, stay on high ground. Greenwood Trail (the fire road) is an especially good place to be. In all emergencies, make every effort to reach an outpost or base camp. If water is so high that hiking is unsafe and you are in low level areas, find a point to stay that is above the levels of nearby creeks and wait for help. For lightning: get off the ridge tops. For fires: move as quickly as possible AWAY from the direction of fire spread. Wildfire spread is generally greatest on steep slopes and/or when pushed by wind so pay attention to the terrain on which you are hiking as well as the environmental conditions each day.

Proper washing and rinsing of dishes will help protect your crew's health and keep you in the fittest shape for the week. Never use cold water; only hot water will prevent dysentery and diarrhea. Time taken to boil water for 8 minutes for rinsing is time well spent. Rinse dishes in boiling water treated with sanitizing tablets that are provided to the crew. In order to achieve maximum effectiveness only use these tablets as directed.

OUTPOST FACILITIES

As you are going by or through our base camps, make sure that you stop by and speak with someone in the main office so that they can point you in the direction of the shower facilities that will best suit the entire crew. Backcountry cleanliness is equally important for your health and others' happiness. A complete bath may not be possible but consider taking a "bucket bath" in a secluded area. Carry water at least 200 feet from springs, lakes, and streams, use biodegradable soap, and please don't place contaminated water back into the water supply as this is the same water that you will be drinking from throughout the week.

Pit latrines are at all staffed outpost camps. If you find it necessary to use a latrine when not at our established areas, use a small "cathole" to get rid of human waste. Make each cathole at least 200 feet from any campsite, trail, or water source, and choose a location that isn't likely to be visited by others. After use, cover the hole completely. Place nothing in a latrine or cathole except human waste and papers necessary for this action.

There is a water source in each outpost. All water outside of the base camps must be treated as there may be microorganisms that can make you sick. There are three acceptable methods of purification: boiling, Polar Pure or Potable Aqua pills (iodine based), and two water pumps/filters (provided by the crew). In most outposts, the creeks are the source of our water used for drinking, cooking, and cleaning. Swimming, bathing or washing of any items in the creeks are not allowed.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

After Sunday registration and your pack shake-down, our staff will prepare dinner for the hikers, and we will practice cleanup techniques as a group. After dinner there will be an opening campfire that will introduce all of the staff to the crew in a way only High Knoll can perform.

Throughout the week, crews will be expected to cook their own breakfast (food provided). We recommend that crews hit the trails each day promptly following breaking camp in the cool of the day. You should be in your program outpost around lunchtime, where you can then enjoy your afternoon program. Each night will bring a campfire and evening snack prepared by the staff. On Friday, crews will hike back into Camp Ottari for the rest of the evening program. You will check in at the Ottari Welcome Center as soon as you arrive back at camp, and can drop your packs at the High Knoll Commissary and, please, take a shower before dinner. Our staff will cook Friday dinner for you and present a closing campfire and award the High Knoll patches. On Saturday, crews will enjoy a light continental breakfast and depart from camp no later than 9:30 AM.

During the five days spent backpacking, a crew will cover from 35 to 50 miles over steep, rocky, mountainous terrain. The trails are a combination of narrow footpaths and abandoned logging roads. Although the trails are blazed with white paint, crews will need to be able to navigate by map and compass. The program is physically demanding, so get into shape. A 50-miler is possible if a crew is very experienced and fit; otherwise, you might spend your entire week hiking and will miss out on the program features. By properly working together, the crew will reach maximum hiking efficiency. This ranges from splitting up who carries what so everyone is carrying the same proportional weight, to splitting up the duties that will need to be taken on throughout the trip. When everyone is working together, the crew should be working as a well oiled machine.

The weather on the trail tends to be warm and humid with daytime temperatures in the high 80s, with nighttime temperatures falling into the 50s. If you wish to use a GPS: the Powhatan parking lot is 36°57'40" N, 80°34'30" W. Ottari Lake is 36°59'30" N, 80°34'30" W. These locations are not pinpoint accurate, but they should easily put you within the boundaries of each of the camps.

RUGGED ITINERARY - 50 MILER AWARD

Though all of the itineraries will have steep trails and challenging days, we can schedule the trek to be easier or more difficult. As our rangers create schedules for the week, we often run into situations where a crew will need to have a longer than normal day's hike. We assign these longer miles to the rugged itinerary crews. If we know that a crew is less experienced, we plan for shorter hikes. Upon their arrival on Sunday, we sit down with the crews and map out the actual trails they will hike. Crews looking for a more physical challenge can then request and receive the more challenging trails. Crews looking for the 50-Miler Award can review their

scheduled itinerary, calculate the miles and then pick days for taking additional short hikes, to add up to 50 miles during the week.

MENU

We issue the trail food to your crew on Sunday afternoon. There will be a mid-week food drop, so you will carry about 2½ days of food with you on the trail. If you require any special dietary needs or have any dietary restrictions, let us know prior to March 1, 2026. We order some specialty food for vegetarians and for those with peanut allergies, but we need early knowledge to have enough on hand. Please send a note to the camp registrar indicating the number of hikers who have dietary needs and are requesting this service. Each program outpost will have an evening campfire program which will feature a snack of some kind, such as apple or peach cobbler, brownies, cake, “sawdust stew,” etc. Your crew should provide its own trail snacks.

EQUIPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

A Scout’s pack should weigh 25% of ideal body weight. Proper fit and placement of backpacks is crucial for an enjoyable experience. This should be done by a licensed outfitter to properly fit packs to the individual's body.

Per crew: two backpacking stoves and fuel, water purification filters/pumps or tablets, spices for cooking, snacks, backpacking tents or tarp (hammocks must be tree-friendly), waterproof matches, bear bag and 75 ft. of 1/8 inch nylon rope, crew first aid kit, insect repellent, sunscreen, biodegradable liquid soap, spare rope/cordage, sewing kit & equipment repair kit, trowel for cat holes

Crew first aid kit: one 2-inch roller bandage, two 3-inch roller bandages, two rolls of 1-inch adhesive tape, scissors, tweezers, safety pins, water purification tablets, one box of assorted adhesive bandages, matches, twelve 3 x 3 inch sterile pads, moleskin, antacid tablets, pain reliever (aspirin, etc.), biohazard bag, gatorade, twenty four alcohol swabs, rash/poison ivy remedy, sunscreen, paper and pencil, mouth barrier device, antibiotic ointment, petroleum jelly, two pairs of latex or nitrile gloves, four triangular bandages (40”)

Personal items: sleeping bag in waterproof sack/heavy plastic, sleeping pad (closed cell or waterproof), waterproof ground cloth, waterproof pack cover, small towel and washcloth, roll of toilet paper in Ziploc bag, toothbrush and toothpaste, personal first aid kit, pocketknife, small flashlight with extra battery and bulb, waterproof watch, compass, whistle

Clothing: one pair of shorts, two t-shirts, fleece or wool jacket/vest, belt, pair of long pants (required for horseback riding, mountain boarding, and logging daze), two pairs of underwear, two pairs of boot socks, five pairs of lightweight liner socks, one pair of well broken-in boots with new laces, one pair of light shoes to wear around camp, swimsuit, one pair of water shoes for rafting, hat with brim, rain jacket or poncho, Field uniform (optional for Friday night campfire)

Hiking boots are the most crucial piece of gear that you will need for the week. Proper boot selection and fitting is one of the most important skills that hikers develop as they gain experience.

Eating utensils: plastic bag or large cup, drinking cup, spoon, 1-quart water bottles/hydration system like a platypus, pair of hot tongs, tarp for cooking area

Provided by camp: soap & sanitizing tablets for dishwashing, serving spoon, scrub pad, trail food

Found in staffed outposts: pots for cooking/boiling water, garbage bags, pans for dishwashing, bow saw

Evening temperatures on the Reservation are erratic, dropping as low as 40° on some nights. We recommend that you bring a summer weight bag with a sheet, fleece, or synthetic sleeping bag liner, and a closed foam sleeping pad. If you use an inflatable pad, please bring a repair patch and sealer in your crew's repair kit as holes are always possible.

Your unit should bring at least two backpacking stoves. We recommend that you use either white gas or kerosene stoves to avoid carrying fuel cartridges because the cartridges can't be refilled, and are typically heavier because you have to carry more of them. Backpacking stoves are to be used only under adult supervision, and never in tents. All fuel must be carried in designed fuel bottles, easily distinguishable from water bottles. Practice using your stoves and repairing them before arriving at camp.

There are no structures for your crew to camp in on the trail. You will need to bring your own trail shelters, both tents and a cooking tarp. Scouting National Camp standards specify that all tents used in camp must be marked "No Flames in Tents." Please either stencil this message onto your tents or attach a tag with this message. Hammocks must be supported by wide webbing or padding to prevent damage to our trees.

PROGRAM OUTPOSTS

During your week on High Knoll, your crew will be able to participate in five outpost programs. Please note that if a program area has more demand than we can meet, we will give preference to the first crews who have completed their full fee payments and have made their selections. High Knoll is a small operation, and each outpost is staffed to handle approximately 20 hikers during a program day. We custom-plan each crew's itinerary, and you will hike across the reservation each day to one of your chosen outposts, where we can fit you into that day's schedule. Upon your arrival at camp on Sunday, we'll share your outpost schedule with you and then plot the trails that you will need to follow.

The following are typical outposts offered at High Knoll; however, due to yearly changes in both staff talent and in availability, these outpost programs may change. The program outposts included in your basic camp fee are mountain boarding, Point Camp, White Oak, horseback riding, and Rendezvous.

Mountain Boarding

For those of you who enjoy high adrenaline mixed with some speed, mountain boarding combines the downhill thrill of snowboarding with an all-terrain skateboard. This sport features a strap on skate board with oversize tires that is fun to ride on our backwoods trail. Our experienced staff will train you in the techniques and provide the gear.

Point Camp

Climb up and rappel down our natural rock face overlooking Big Laurel Creek. Our staff teaches the proper techniques and movements needed to climb and rappel. During wet weather, there is also an indoor climbing facility that has an extensive bouldering area and two 30 foot vertical walls that provide all degrees of difficulty.

Horseback Riding

Horseback riding groups will leave from Camp Ottari and travel to Winterfrost Farm in Radford, VA with our staff the morning of the trip and will return to camp the afternoon following the trip. Winterfrost Farm provides training and safety briefings and any necessary gear. Participants will be given a group riding lesson, followed by a trail ride to a beautiful lunch stop, and will ride back to the barn in the afternoon. Get your boots or belt branded with the signature HK logo at the evening campfire.

We would greatly appreciate any crews participating in horseback riding to have their own form of transportation, but we can provide it if necessary.

White Oak Camp (Logging Daze)

White Oak Camp features our traditional Logging Daze program: using crosscut saws to cut a section of a tree, split out a shingle with a froe, brand the shingle, and make a spoon with a gouge. If desired, the crew can shoot airsoft guns at interactive targets (not at each other).

Rendezvous

At our 19th century trapper's camp, load and shoot .50 caliber muzzle loading rifles. Throw tomahawks and learn about wilderness living skills such as trapping. This living history program will be a real mountaineer's experience.