



Why Girl Scouts of Utah Camps?

Working at summer camp from a staff member's perspective

There's this running joke in my family that whenever I am asked about my recent internship at a Girl Scout summer camp, I always respond with, "Living the dream!" I've probably said this phrase about a million times since starting employment in June and though most people think I'm being sarcastic, I can tell you I've never lied saying it even once. There's this hint of "Is that even a real job?" and "You're actually getting paid to play with kids for two months?" The answer to both questions? Absolutely.

I've worked with Girl Scouts of Utah's Summer Camp program for two summers now and going back to the "real world" (as we counselors refer to it) is always a tough transition. Aside from showering more often and getting to socialize with people my own age, I just can't help wanting to go back to camp. It has only been a few months since camp has ended, and I'm already finding myself moving around next year's schedule so I can do it again.

For those of you that have ever thought about being a counselor, have been influenced by a childhood camp staff member, or just love being a part of something that helps every kind of kid, I have one piece of advice: sign up. Do it and don't look back. Go online, catch a Girl Scout representative at a job fair, or simply walk into the Salt Lake office. I have never made a better decision than choosing to work at camp and I'd recommend it.

Being a part of camp staff is incredibly challenging and takes some serious hard work. It is far from what most people believe it to be because it challenges you on every possible level: emotionally, physically, intellectually, and mentally. For nine weeks you are creating and running outdoor education programs for 6 to 17 year olds, improving your management skills, facilitating skill building, star gazing, rock climbing, team building, and changing lives.

I have dozens of stories about campers who have come to me after attending just a week of camp to say how they have become stronger, more confident people. I had one camper's mom recently tell me how her daughter went from struggling to keep her head up at school last year to bringing home friends on the second day this year. She told me her daughter explains that she just feels "worth something" now. When I get to come back from the summer saying I made someone feel "worth something now," I'd say that's definitely living the dream.

But the dream isn't always easy. As I mentioned, you have to put in a lot for this job and you always want to be best you can be for your campers. I have stayed up late learning to draw anime so I could teach it better for the upcoming week; researched and taught lessons on love languages to help the staff feel more united; cried when a camper's pottery piece didn't make it through the kiln then laughed for the two hours we spent on my time off to rebuild it; led a self-reflection mediation session in the middle of the woods; and fell asleep singing to a group of campers late one night.

So I'm leaving camp this year- just like every year- completely changed for the better because of these experiences. Whether you are going into the working world or the family world or academia or wherever, the skills learned as a camp staff member such as adaptability, quick thinking, flexibility, and learning to laugh at the small things will take you farther than you could ever imagine. So, if you're considering the camp staff life, I say go out there and live the dream.

- Sundance, a former camp staff member

Comments from campers

Camp was a lot of fun! I loved kayaking in the lake and hiking.

– *Rachel, camper*

I loved going to camp! The rock climbing was great and we learned about hard work and teamwork - the more fun way of course. I want to do it again and again!

– *Savannah, camper*

Camp was a wonderful experience with counselors and campers that I will not soon forget. It tested my ability to be responsible, work as a team, and appreciate a different lifestyle, all while having the time of my life. The food was great, the environment was beautiful, and when I got home, I had a more positive outlook about everything.

– *Anna, camper*

It's really, really fun. My favorite part was going to the lake, and I loved it when the camp cook made us special lemon cakes and my whole group got to have a sleep over in the lodge. Me and my camp buddy made bubble beards with our new friends... it was the coolest ever! Please can I go again soon?

– *Dylan, camper*



Comments from parents

I am so impressed with the programming my girls participated in this past week - way exceeded my expectations. When my girls go to camp, my hope is that they will experience things different from what they could have done at home, and to reach outside of their comfort zone to try something hard. I was so impressed that they did both of these and more.

My rock climbing daughter learned to do something very hard for her, and in the process gained a love for it. Apparently she got stuck on a climb for 30 minutes but didn't give up and made it to the top. That speaks tons for the ability of the camp staff to both encourage and teach, and in the process she learned an amazing lesson. You ladies are amazing.

– *Heather, parent*

We sent our 13 year old daughter to camp hoping that she would come home with more self-confidence and a greater appreciation for the world around her. Girl Scouts of Utah camps delivered! Her experience at camp was nothing short of life changing and she cannot wait to go back.

– *Amy, parent*

Our 6 year old daughter attended her first sleep away camp this summer at Trefoil Ranch, then attended camp Cloud Rim shortly afterward. She loved each camp, and actually begged us to let her stay longer. Our current challenge is negotiating how many camps she will be enrolled in in the future - as she would like to attend all of them. The staff members are wonderful and the camps are a tremendous value. We look forward to our next Girl Scout Camp experience.

– *Jeannie, parent*





Comments from campers about their counselors

Thank you for the wonderful company. You took great care of everybody, including me. You make me smile a lot! Thank you for your enthusiasm and your awesome uniqueness!

You were always there to cheer me up. I really appreciate all that you have done. You are awesome!

You have made my first time at Girl Scout camp the best. At first I was scared and worried but you all helped and are all really nice. So again, thank you very much.

This was my first year at any Girl Scout camp and it was amazing! I love the food so much! I loved painting and kayaking.

Thank you guys for being there when we needed it. Also for taking care of us. I love it when I can talk about my family and myself around you because you will listen to me and I feel comfortable around you. I have a great time. Thank you.

Thank you for helping me when I felt homesick or scared. You are very nice counselors.

Thank you for the wonderful time. I had a lot of fun getting to know you all. You were all there when I needed something and you made me feel at home.

I love seeing all you every year and I love your enthusiasm and encouragement. I hope to see you all next year! I'll miss you!

Thank you so much for providing such a positive environment. It was a welcome change from the normal. It helped me personally.

Most rewarding parts of working at camp, according to staff

Pushing campers out of their comfort zones and helping them to establish a better confidence level in themselves.

Seeing the kids have fun and conquer their fears.

When the campers tell you how much fun that they are having. And that they are never going to forget how awesome you are.

The growth and development that I experienced myself. I did enjoy working with the girls and seeing things click and making connections with fellow staff, but what I learned about myself was the most rewarding part.

Being around great people who cared about each other.

The times that I could see the kids felt like anything was possible in the world, or that they belong somewhere.

Seeing a kiddo's "aha" moment.

I am a HUGE believer in the benefits of summer camp experiences. I think it provides the campers (and staff) with incredible opportunities for growth, discovery, and independence.

The most rewarding part was seeing the growth in courage and self-assurance in each of the girls, and forming lasting friendships with so many people.

Seeing campers and coworkers succeed in their various challenges.

Becoming a family with the other staff.

Getting to see the way kids grow and changed over just one week at camp.