



# AYF CAMP

## CAMPER SURVIVAL GUIDE

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO AYF SUMMER CAMP FOR CAMPERS

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# INTRODUCTION



## ***WHAT IS AYF CAMP?***

AYF Camp is 11.5 acres of beautiful forestland located in the Angeles National Forest near the city of Wrightwood. Since 1977, AYF Camp has become a home to hundreds of campers who spend time participating in activities, learning about Armenian culture and history, and making friendships that last a lifetime. For over four decades, campers and counselors alike have grown to love AYF Camp, and return to their home away from home every year.

AYF Camp consists of a dining lodge, 12 heated cabins, renovated restrooms, an updated infirmary, a campfire pit, volleyball and basketball courts, a huge swimming pool, an arts & crafts lodge, an archery range, a rock climbing wall, and much more. AYF Camp is our little community - our home away from home. Many of our counselors and staff were campers, themselves, and have come back summer after summer because of their love of camp.

AYF Camp is a place where everyone belongs - where you can be exactly who you want to be, and where you spend a week strengthening your Armenian identity, as well as reveling in both personal freedom and personal responsibility. We come to camp to meet new friends, reunite with old ones, and to be a part of all our favorite traditions. We hope you'll join us.

# INTRODUCTION

## ***STAYING AT CAMP***

Is this your first time going away to camp? If so, here's an important thing to remember. At one point, all of us went away to camp for the first time, too. One of the best things about AYF Camp and one of the things we're most proud of is our camper return rate. Many of our campers have such a good time at camp that they almost always come back the next summer. And the next summer... and the next summer. In fact, the majority of our counselors have been campers here before. We have staff members who are in college and have spent every summer with us since they were in elementary school. And where did their camp journey begin? In the same place you are right now; waiting to go to AYF Camp for the very first time.

The majority of our younger cabins are made up of first-time campers, and there will always be a number of first-time campers in our older cabins as well. Camp is all about meeting new friends, trying new things, and having fun all day long. We start all of that right away. From meeting your counselors and cabin mates, to playing some get-to-know-you games, the fun at camp starts right away and doesn't let up until it's time to be picked up and go home at the end of camp. You'll be amazed how quickly the week flies by and how much we have managed to cram into it. You won't believe that these people you only met a few days ago are now your friends for life. You'll officially be a member of our AYF Camp family, and more likely than not, at the end of the week, you'll already be counting down the days until next summer.





# CABINS AND BUNKING

## ***CABIN LIFE***

One of our favorite things about AYF Camp is that it's a genuine sleep-away summer camp. You arrive on Sunday morning (with the exception of the younger kids' weeks), and leave the following Sunday, making camp your home away from home throughout the entirety of the week.

Our cabins are simple and cozy. There are six sets of bunks (twelve beds) in each cabin, two of which are for your counselors. Two counselors are assigned to each cabin. You'll have your own area around your bunk to store your luggage, clothes, toiletries, flashlights, and what-not. One of the great experiences of summer camp is learning to live with up to 10 other people in a single cabin, sharing and respecting each other's space and habits, and discovering how strong friendships grow out of living together.

Our camp day is so jam-packed with activities that you'll spend a lot less time in the cabin than you might think. You'll wake up in the cabin and go to sleep at night only returning in between each activity to prepare for the next. There will also be selected times in the cabin to prepare for cabin activities (like your cabin talent show). Every morning, the cabins will be inspected for safety and cleanliness, and the tidiest cabins win an award at the end of the week.



# CABINS AND BUNKING

## ***BUNKING WITH YOUR FRIENDS***

Cabins are divided by gender (obviously) and by age. We do not take any cabin mate requests at AYF Camp. If you come to camp with a friend or a group of friends and you're the same age, you will most likely end up being in the same cabin. If you aren't initially placed in the same cabin, don't cry or worry! After we split the cabin on the first day, we go around making sure everyone is happy where they are. If you are not happy, all you have to do is tell your counselor that you want to switch cabins, and we will do our absolute best to make sure you are in a cabin with at least one friend. If your ages are too far apart, you might not be in the same cabin. For example, if you are 9 years old, you will not be in the same cabin as a 13 year old, and if you are 13 years old, you will not be in the same cabin as a 16 year old, no exceptions. If you are not in a cabin with your entire group of friends, that's okay!

One of the biggest and best parts of camp is making new friends. If you're in a cabin with campers you haven't met yet, they will quickly become your friends. Plus, if you have friends in other cabins you'll have more than enough time to see them and have fun with them, whether it's games, in group activities, during competitions, during free time and all camp activities...we spend way more time outside of the cabin than in it.

## ***TEENS AT CAMP***

Being a teen at camp allows for some extra privileges, in addition to extra responsibilities. Sometimes, teens get to participate in some activities that the younger campers don't. However, their responsibility is to serve as role models to our younger campers. This includes adhering to the dress code, using appropriate language, and adhering to our tenets of respect and kindness. We want campers to be aware that we do not promote dating relationships at camp. Camp is about having fun and making friends, that's as far as it should go. You are here for such a limited time, that the drama and issues potentially created by dating can take away from the camp experience.

# CAMPER BEHAVIOR

## ***KINDNESS AND RESPECT***

Respect and kindness: two of the most important words at AYF Camp. Each week here at camp, we create a brand new community. It's made up of our directors, counselors, and all the campers living together that particular week. That can be a lot of people together in one place, so how do we make sure everybody gets along? If you treat the camp, other campers, the counselors, and yourself with kindness and respect, we can guarantee you are going to have a great time here at camp.

What if, during your time here at camp, someone treats you in a way that you don't think is respectful and kind? Well, that's what your counselors and directors are here for. Let them know right away, and we can all work together to sort out any differences or misunderstandings. It's open communication and being as respectful and kind as possible that makes AYF Camp such a great community and a wonderful place to spend some time each summer.

To create and maintain this great atmosphere, we take any instances of bullying, teasing, or harassment very seriously. If a camper's behavior is continuously detrimental to another camper's enjoyment of camp and is not corrected, that child could face going home. A camper who is repeatedly disrespectful or harmful to the camp program will be sent home.

## ***BUDDY SYSTEM***

Two of our major goals at camp are to stay safe and to have fun. The buddy system helps us achieve both of those things. Any time a camper asks to travel anywhere at camp, they'll hear a common reply from their counselor, "Take a buddy." Want to leave an activity to run to the bathroom? Take a buddy. Need to grab a quick Band-Aid from the EMT? Take a buddy. Forgot your towel at the pool and now we're half-way to the lodge? Take a buddy. This makes sure you've always got a friendly companion, and everyone is always accounted for. Even if you need to use the restroom in the middle of the night, your buddy will be there for you, just like you'd be there for them.



# CAMPER BEHAVIOR

## ***WE ALL TAKE CARE OF CAMP***

One of the major philosophies here at AYF Camp is personal responsibility. This means that we all clean up after ourselves (and each other), and that it's all of our responsibilities to take care of Camp. AYF Camp is our home, and we treat it with respect. This means cleaning up after your meal, throwing away your garbage or snack wrappers when you're done, and just picking up any trash you see outside of your cabin or around the campground. Throughout the week, each cabin will be assigned to a very important duty, KP (Kitchen Patrol). When on KP, you'll help set the tables, clear the plates, and clean the dining hall for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And of course, all cabins have "cabin clean-up" time each morning, where they make sure the inside and outside of their cabins are neat and spotless. The directors go around and judge each cabin on cleanliness, and the cabin with the highest scores gets an award at the end of the week.



# CAMPER BEHAVIOR

It is our expectation that all campers display “camp appropriate” behavior. This includes appropriate language, topics of conversation, and acting according to our camp rules and dress code.

It is very important to us that all campers feel welcome and accepted and as if they belong. We approach bullying as a societal problem, often with no clear good guy or bad guy, and two (or more) sides to each story. We hope that camp can help you learn how to behave with the principles of kindness and respect, and that you can take these principles back to your school and apply them to the rest of your life.

To create and maintain this great atmosphere, we take any instances of bullying, teasing, or harassment very seriously. If a camper’s behavior is continuously detrimental to another camper’s enjoyment of camp, and is not corrected, that child could face going home. A camper who is repeatedly disrespectful or harmful to the camp program will be sent home.

## ***CAMPER RULES***

Follow all directions given by the directors and counselors.

NO weapons allowed (knives, firearms, look-alike weapons)

NO cigarettes, electronic cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, or drugs

NO leaving the campground

NO food or beverages

NO destruction of or stealing another’s property, including the touching of another’s personal belongings without their permission

NO fighting

NO use of foul language

NO vandalizing or destruction of camp property (Parents will be liable for any damage done by their children)

NO writing on camp property (e.g. walls, tables, benches, etc.)

NO shaving cream

NO phones

NO electronic devices (stereos, tablets, iPads, video games, etc.)

NO use of the pool without supervision

Dispose of trash and paper appropriately. You are responsible for the cleanliness of the facilities you are using. The cabins are to be swept and trash is to be emptied daily.

Campers violating any of these rules and regulations can be sent home at the discretion of the director. Parents will be expected to pick up their child should any of these rules be broken.

# CAMPER BEHAVIOR

## ***CAMPER DRESS CODE***

We want you to have the best experience possible, so we have developed a dress code to assure that no one will feel offended or uncomfortable during his or her stay.

If you choose to dress inappropriately, you will be asked to change. By planning ahead and packing appropriately, you will save yourself the inconvenience of having to change and will be contributing to a pleasant camp atmosphere.

Please be advised that this dress code will be enforced for all individuals attending the camp, including staff and directors.

- Appropriate shoes, shirts, and shorts or pants are to be worn at all times.
- All clothing must be neat, clean, and acceptable in repair and appearance and must be worn within the bounds of decency and good taste as appropriate for all camp events.
- Items of clothing which expose bare midriffs, bare chests, undergarments (short shorts), or that are transparent (see-through) are prohibited. Tank tops are permitted as long as they cover all parts that cover undergarments.
- Articles of clothing which display profanity, products, or slogans which promote tobacco, alcohol, drugs, sex or are in any other way inappropriate, are prohibited.
- Excessively baggy or tight clothing, and clothing which advertises any gang symbols or affiliation is prohibited.
- Swimming (for all water recreation): men's swimsuits - swim trunks only (no shorts, cut-off pants, or Speedos); women's swimsuits: one-piece suits recommended, but not mandatory. Two-piece suits are allowed as long as they are modestly cut. No string, thong, or crochet suits will be allowed.

Common sense in dress will make a better camp experience for everyone. Please note that the above applies to all campers, counselors, and directors.

# A DAY AT CAMP

## ***A TYPICAL DAY AT CAMP***

There is no such thing as a typical day at camp. Each day is unique and has its own activities. But here's what most days have in common...

Bright and early, counselors go from cabin to cabin for wake-up. Once they are awake and washed up, everyone gathers at flagpole for some morning stretches and light exercise, followed by raising the Armenian flag and singing our national anthem or a patriotic Armenian song. Next, it's time for breakfast in the lodge. Once everyone has had their breakfast, they head down to their cabins for cabin clean up.

Next on our daily agenda are educationals, which are a very important aspect of AYF Camp. Everyone participates during educationals, which take place in the lodge. During educationals, campers learn about Armenian culture, language, history, politics, and current events taking place in both our homeland and in the diaspora. Every morning, a different speaker or group of speakers will come to camp to present their lesson of the day. Once the educational is finished, campers are off to their red, blue, and orange group activities.

Everyone (including counselors) is split into three groups - red, blue, and orange. In these groups, you will participate in activities (e.g. canoeing, arts & crafts, rock climbing, etc.) and competitions (e.g. steal the bacon, song competition, butt volleyball, etc.). After the morning activity, it's time for lunch, followed by "free time." During free time, you have multiple options. Whether it's diving into the pool to swim, making bracelets at the arts & crafts lodge, playing a game of basketball with your friends, or getting some snacks and goodies from the snack shop, there will be counselors supervising every possible activity you desire to participate in.

Once free time is over, it's time for the red, blue, and orange competitions. Each color group competes against each other in some of the most fun and exciting games ever. This is where your passion and team spirit come out to play at AYF Camp. We keep track of the winners of every game that's played throughout the week, and there is an overall winner at the end. Next, it's time to lower the flags and go up to the lodge for dinner.

After dinner is cabin discussion. Every cabin spends this time inside their cabin with their counselors to talk about their day and also to come up with ideas and practice their cabin activities like talent show. Once cabin discussion is over, we have an evening activity all together (such as a hike, a game, campfire, etc.). Then, it's time to wash up, get into bed, and lights out.

As you can tell, we make sure every single day is packed with fun activities for you and your friends at AYF Camp!



# A DAY AT CAMP

## FOOD AT CAMP

We have a wonderful kitchen staff here at camp whose only goal all summer long is to provide you with delicious food three times a day during your stay here at AYF Camp. Our kitchen staff has always received tremendous reviews on their food. Attention is paid to make sure the food is not only delicious, but provides a healthy balance for the active lifestyle of camp. Food allergies and special dietary needs must be noted on your medical information.

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
BREAKFAST	BAGEL CREAM CHEESE CEREAL MILK	BREAKFAST CRUNCHWRAP HASHBROWN CEREAL MILK	PANCAKES BACON CEREAL MILK	BAGEL CREAM CHEESE CEREAL MILK	FRENCH TOAST BACON CEREAL MILK	BREAKFAST BURRITO HASHBROWN CEREAL MILK	PANCAKES SAUSAGE CEREAL MILK
LUNCH	COLD CUT SANDWICH JUICE FRUIT	HOT DOGS MAC & CHEESE JUICE FRUIT	BEEF TACO SPANISH RICE JUICE FRUIT	BURGERS FRENCH FRIES JUICE FRUIT	CHICKEN STRIPS MASHED POTATOES JUICE FRUIT	LULE KABOB BASMATI RICE SALAD JUICE FRUIT	CORN DOGS TATER TOTS CORN JUICE FRUIT
DINNER	LASAGNA SALAD JUICE FRUIT	HOME MADE PIZZA CAESAR SALAD JUICE FRUIT	LAHMAJOUN CHEESE BOREG SALAD JUICE JELLO	CHICKEN KABOB RICE SALAD JUICE FRUIT	KUFTAH HUMMUS ARMENIAN SALAD JUICE JELLO	SPAGHETTI MEAT SAUCE GARLIC BREAD JUICE FRUIT	CHICKEN FAJITA RICE JUICE FRUIT

*\*MENU IS NOT PERMANENT AND IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE*

Campers enjoy three wholesome meals daily, as well as an evening snack including but not limited to the menu above.

Please note that we will not allow for any food to be brought up to camp under any circumstances. We do not accommodate special diets. If you have any food allergies please note it in your application in the health section.

# PACKING FOR CAMP

## ***WHAT TO BRING***

Ah, the most frequently asked question... the simple answer is: less than you think! For a full packing list, visit our website. In addition to all the info on the packing list, keep in mind that for the most part, camp is very casual. Bring clothes for a variety of temperatures, as it can switch from hot during the day to chilly at night relatively quickly. Also, bring some extra shirts and pants. If you're on a hike and get caught in a rain shower, you'll need some dry clothes to change into when you get back to the cabin. Please keep in mind that there will be lots of playing and running around here, which often results in mud splashes or stains, so please leave your nice and new belongings at home.

As we mentioned on page 11, please plan to dress appropriately. Campers who dress inappropriately will be asked to change immediately. As for footwear, we recommend packing closed-toed shoes (sneakers or hiking boots) since many activities will require running and jumping around.

You are allowed to bring digital or disposable cameras to camp. However, we encourage them to be left in the cabin unless absolutely necessary. Please keep in mind that AYF Camp is not responsible if these items are lost or stolen.

Please visit our website for the most up to date printable packing list.



# PACKING FOR CAMP

## ***WHAT NOT TO BRING***

You knew this was coming... under no circumstances are cell phones allowed at AYF Camp. That's right - camp is a cell phone-free zone! Any camper caught with a cell phone may be sent home early.

For six days out of the whole year you will be completely free of light up screens. Nothing will buzz in your pocket and nobody will look away to send a text message while you're talking to them. You'll get to make friends, the only way to communicate with them will be to talk to them, and the only people you can talk to will be right next to you. It'll be exciting, it'll be fun, it'll be like living in colonial times, way back in the early 2000s. This extends to screens of all kind! Please don't bring small personal gaming systems. You'll have more fun talking to your bunkmate about what you did this morning, we promise.

Here are some other items on the "Don't Bring It" list...

- Fireworks. C'mon. We're in a state forest.
- Knives or weapons of any kind.
- Tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs. If you bring it, we will find it.

Please DO NOT come to camp with food. We have a very healthy relationship with the wildlife at camp and do not want this wildlife to visit your cabin. Candy is very difficult to hide at camp due to our well trained ants so please do not bring it. If you have questions regarding this policy, please contact the camp office.

## ***A TECH FREE CAMP***

Here's one of the greatest things about camp: there is no contact with the outside world. Camp is your chance to get away from it all; camp becomes its own world. It is very important to us that you get to make new friends and interact with your Armenian community here at camp in a face-to-face only fashion, without the unnecessary habits of Snapchatting, Instagramming, going on TikTok, tweeting, texting, and whatever else it is that you kids do these days.

Our directors and staff will not hesitate to confiscate any camper's cell phone that is found throughout the week, and trust us, we will find out if you secretly have one. You will have plenty of time to talk to your parents and other friends after camp to share your stories from the week. So until then, there is absolutely no contact with the world outside of AYF Camp.

# OUR STAFF



## ***OUR STAFF***

Our AYF Camp counselors are from all over the world. We seek out individuals who not only have the skills to successfully present materials to youth, but those who also have the natural ability to connect and bond with campers. We look for counselors who have natural tendencies toward: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, caring, fairness, and kindness. The staff is the heart of any camp, and our goal is to provide a safe, positive, and friendly environment for our campers.

All of our staff are extensively interviewed, screened, and subject to a criminal background check. They are chosen for their skills and experience. We also conduct an intensive pre-camp counselor orientation, which covers all aspects of camp life from teaching lessons to dealing with homesickness and preparing for emergencies (all counselors become CPR/AED and First Aid certified at the counselor orientation).

Many of our staff members return each year, and many have also been campers in previous years. Campers often express that their counselors are a huge part of making their AYF Camp experience a great one. Our hope is that you become friends with and look up to your counselors as role models for the years to come.



# OUR STAFF

## ***DIRECTORS***

Each week we are fortunate enough to have at minimum three directors. All of our directors have extensive camp experience. They are all very well acquainted and knowledgeable about the campground and summer camp agenda.

## ***EMT***

The infirmary is staffed 24 hours a day by a certified EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) or other certified health professional. A new EMT will attend camp each week and will reside in the infirmary providing medical attention as needed. We are also a short distance from local hospitals. We will have all your medical information in your application in case we need to access it. If for any reason a camper needs to be transported to the hospital, a director and a camp staff member will accompany them on the trip.

AYF Camp is nestled in the beautiful Angeles National Forest amongst tall pine trees, fresh air, and bright starlit skies. Along with the beauty of nature, come the consequences of its landscape, specifically dirt, rocks, and bugs which can cause the occasional bruises, cuts, and bites. You may or may not encounter one of these minor abrasions but this is not something the EMT will call home for. These are treated quickly and monitored to ensure they are well taken care of.

## ***COUNSELORS***

Most campers have said that nothing has more of an effect on their camp experience than their counselors. At AYF Camp, we search for caring, compassionate, enthusiastic, energetic, and responsible young people with a passion for their Armenian identity, mentoring children, and a love of the outdoors. Most all our counselors have prior experience working with youth. Many have looked forward to being a counselor here since they were campers, themselves. All counselors must prioritize their camper's physical safety and emotional well-being.

We aim to have staff who we can trust when it comes to your safety, and who you can be proud to call your friends and role models.

# SEE YOU THIS SUMMER

So while we've tried our best to tell you what AYF Camp is like, the description in this little survival guide is only a small taste of it. To really know AYF Camp, you'll have to come spend a week in the forest and try it for yourself. We hope you'll do exactly that, and we'll see you soon!



# LIFE AFTER CAMP

Campers will come home with tales of camp experiences, new Armenian songs they have learned, knowledge they have gained, and new Armenian friends. Many of the activities offered here at camp are also offered on a year-round basis through the AYF and AYF Juniors organizations.

“The Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) strives to advance the goals of a free, independent and united Armenia. Toward these ends, the AYF is dedicated to the principles of freedom, democracy, self-determination, economic justice, and social equality. The AYF is committed to the moral, social and intellectual advancement of Armenian youth in order that they may gain a better understanding of themselves. It seeks to accomplish this objective by promoting activities based on its five long standing pillars: political, cultural, educational, athletic, and social.”

“AYF Juniors is a place where the youth build lifelong friendships with their peers and begin to cultivate their knowledge and passion for Armenian history, culture and politics. Most importantly, AYF Juniors empowers the youth with the discipline, confidence and organizational tools to turn their ideas into a reality — skills that will help them excel in any of life’s endeavors.”

If you are interested in finding out more about the AYF or AYF Juniors programs offered in your area, please do not hesitate to contact them.



AYF Western United States Contact Information:

Website: [www.ayfwest.org](http://www.ayfwest.org)

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**Juniors**

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