

2026 Camp Ondessonk Parent & Camper Handbook



Camp Ondessonk

**THIS DOCUMENT IS A LIVING DOCUMENT!
CHECK BACK FREQUENTLY FOR UPDATES!**

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Letter from the Camp Director

Dear Parents,

Thank you for registering your child for a session at Camp Ondessonk. We feel honored that you have chosen us. Although Camp may look a little different than in summers past, the core fundamentals of what makes Camp so special and valuable for children, such as gaining independence, building self-esteem and making new friends in an outdoor environment, remain the same and these opportunities feel more important now than ever before. Our main goal is to provide the best experience possible for each of the campers we serve. To help us reach this goal, please review the contents of this handbook thoroughly.

The emotions a single Ondessonk camper may experience range from excitement, to anxiety, to joy and beyond. Of great benefit to campers, our summer staff is made up almost entirely of young men and women that were once Ondessonk campers themselves. They've experienced the feelings associated with being in an unfamiliar setting, the nervousness of meeting kids from distant places, and the excitement, or anxiety, of sleeping in a cabin in the woods. They also know how good it can eventually feel to embrace the unknown, to make new friends, to try new activities, and to grow through participation.

I hope that your child will learn, grow, and have fun as an Ondessonk camper. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Daniel W. King
Executive Director and former Ondessonk Camper
618.695.2489 x102
dan.king@ondessonk.com

Dear Campers,

Whether this is your first time as a camper or your fifth, we are glad you are coming to Camp Ondessonk. It is an amazing place. Please prepare yourself by reviewing this handbook. We are preparing for you.

See you soon,
Dan & the Staff of Camp Ondessonk

Mission and Vision

Mission

Exceptional outdoor and spiritual adventures empowering kids of all ages.

Vision

Inspired by our Catholic tradition and commitment to the growth of people and faith, we will:

- Operate a world-class camp in a spectacular natural environment
- Inspire leadership, self-confidence and lifelong learning
- Promote stewardship and appreciation of God's gifts

Camp Accreditation



Camp Ondessonk is proud to be accredited by the American Camp Association. Developed exclusively for the camp industry, this nationally-recognized organization focuses on program quality and health and safety issues and requires us to review every facet of our operation. Ondessonk has voluntarily submitted to this independent appraisal conducted by camp experts and is proud to have earned this mark of distinction.

Our Staff

All individuals working at Ondessonk choose the job because of a strong desire to serve others. The Leadership & Staff consists of devoted individuals with extensive experience in fields related to youth development and outdoor leadership. The summer leadership staff is comprised of proven, sound decision makers who have completed college or are actively working towards that goal. The camper to staff ratio is approximately 8:1. Leadership and Staff training emphasizes child development, child protection, teaching skills, and responsible leadership. First aid and CPR training are required for employment. Depending on position, staff members are certified by the Certified Horsemanship Association, National Rifle Association, American Red Cross, or other appropriate certifying bodies.

Contact Information

Main Camp Office – 618.695.2489 or camp@ondessonk.com

Summer Camp Information/Registration – 618.695.2489 x131 or registration@ondessonk.com

Scholarship Information – 618.695.2489 x109 or scholarship@ondessonk.com

Volunteer Information – 618.695.2489 x145 or volunteer@ondessonk.com

Lost & Found – 618.695.2489 x145

Preparing Your Camper

The camp experience is like other important experiences in life: the better one is prepared, the more one gets out of the experience. This section covers the key areas that require attention before your camper leaves home. One of the first things to do, especially with new campers (but returning campers need reminders, too!), is to talk with your camper(s) about what they can expect. While giving them a positive preview of their coming experience, let them know that life at camp will be different from life at home, and that you want them to gain many new experiences while away. Below are a few things you should review with your campers to help ease your camper's transition to camp life.

A Typical Day at Camp

The daily schedule for traditional and mini camps includes:

7:45 am	Breakfast
8:45 am	Activities 1,2
12:00 pm	Lunch
12:45 pm	Siesta (Rest Hour)
1:35 pm	Activities 3,4
4:45 pm	Shower Time, Prayer Service & Flag Ceremony
6:35 pm	Dinner
8:00 pm	Evening Activity
10:00 pm	Taps and Lights Out

Activities

Each evening brings a specific program designed to help campers progress through the week with a fun night activity. Sunday night kicks off with an opening campfire full of songs and skits. Other activities include a night hike, an evening game, an overnight adventure away from units, the Lodge Ceremony, and a closing campfire.

On Friday, campers will have an afternoon designed to test their skills and cohesion as a unit. Activities include a **Special Activity** based on the theme of the week, and a **Marathon** relay filled with varying activities for campers in the unit to test their skills as they race against other units.

Mini-Camp Explorers can participate in all activities with modifications made for their age. Mini-Campers will participate in fewer activities based on the length of their stay. On Tuesday and Thursday nights, Mini Campers/Explorers participate in evening programming that is geared toward their age group. Wednesday night overnight is spent sleeping in the unit after cooking dinner over a fire and participating in similar activities as the Traditional Camp Overnight Campout.

Camp Ondessonk activities include:

Nature Exploration—Campers will have the opportunity to explore the Shawnee National Forest during their week at Camp. Nature guides will take campers on an expedition they'll never forget—over, under, and through waterfalls, split-rock formations, streams, and bluffs. Throughout the day, campers will play nature games and appreciate God's creation.

Archery – Campers will have the opportunity to learn proper safety and shooting techniques while handling a bow and arrow. Program content is based on USA Archery guidelines. For Mini-Campers and Explorers, target distance is shorter to allow for better accuracy, and a creative target could be added for a fun shooting experience.

Riflery— Campers will learn proper safety and shooting techniques of a .22 caliber rifle based on the National Rifle Association guidelines for safe handling. Mini-Camp Explorers will have the chance to learn rifle range safety while using slingshots to practice their shooting.

Horsemanship— In accordance with Certified Horsemanship Association safety practices, traditional campers will have the opportunity to learn how to effectively ride a horse in an arena, through an obstacle course (campers aged 10–11) or on a trail ride (campers aged 12–15). They will practice the horsemanship skills they learn by navigating around poles, barrels, or trees and over bridges, logs, and creeks! Mini-Camp Explorers go on a pony ride, learn how to groom horses, and enjoy other stables activities. *Weight limit of 225lbs for rider and horse safety.*

Swimming—All campers will get to enjoy Ondessonk’s beautiful swimming lake, Lake St. Isaac, multiple times during their stay. Under the supervision of certified lifeguards, the swimming area has many great features including water slides, beach volleyball, and floating docks. Campers who pass the swim assessment can also use the slides, zip-line, and Tarzan swing. Zip-line and Tarzan swing options are not offered during Mini Camp.

Handicrafts—Campers will get a chance to learn a variety of crafts during their week at Camp. Crafts could include “Boondoggling,” leather stamping, beadwork, tie-dying, and other traditional favorites that stretch the limits of your imagination. Crafts may vary week to week.

Woodscraft—Campers will learn an introduction to outdoor living skills. Outdoor skills could include fire building, shelter making, knots & lashings, orienteering, and other basic outdoor skills to help survive in the woods. For older campers there could be a possibility to learn more advanced skills.

Boating—All campers will have the chance to float along and explore the wooded shoreline of Lake Echon while testing their skills in a canoe or a kayak. Before touching the water, campers are taught basic strokes and boating maneuvers on land. Certified Lifeguards help supervise and teach boating activities.

Council—Campers will receive the chance to explore spiritual concepts of nature and life through stories, discussions, and interactive activities; all based around the namesakes of Camp Ondessonk and our Catholic tradition.

Challenge—Senior Campers (campers aged 14 and 15) will have the opportunity to step out of their comfort zone to grow as an individual and a unit while participating in our challenge course elements. Challenge course elements could include the Climbing Wall, Giant Swing, Flying Squirrel, Zipline, or High Jungle. Each year, trained staff design a progression for units to help them grow both in the air and on the ground.

Living Arrangements

One of the best aspects of the Camp experience is learning to adjust to group living, making new friends, and getting along as part of a team.

Our Traditional Campers reside in a “unit”. Each unit has 5 or 6 three-sided cabins and each cabin has 4 sets of bunk beds (with a couple of exceptions). Traditional Camp unit staff sleep in one of the cabins while the campers stay in the others. Units for mini campers contain four-sided cabins with screen windows, and each cabin has 5-6 sets of bunk beds. Mini camp unit staff sleep in a separate room inside the cabin.

Campers are grouped according to age and gender assigned at birth. We strive to place campers in their desired units, but assignments are never guaranteed. Housing is on a first come, first served basis. Because of changes and cancellations, unit assignments are not given to campers prior to check-in.

We know how important it is for campers to be with their friends. We make every effort to ensure, at a minimum, they are assigned to the same unit, but sometimes it is not possible to place them in the same

cabin. To facilitate placement, you must enter all camper friend names in the Cabin Mate section of your online account or list them on the paper registration form. Larger groups with friends that register much later are at a higher risk for not receiving their desired unit. We place more importance on friends being together vs. which unit they stay in. Larger groups are also more likely to be split into two or more cabins within the same unit.

You can view pictures of the units [on our website](#).

Meals

Our menu is nutritious and attempts to meet the variety of tastes of the campers. Many items will be to your child's liking, some items your child may never have tried before, and other items may be things they dislike. Because of our need to feed over 500 people in a relatively short period of time, we are not able to offer "taste-based" special requests for meals. Parents, please help your camper prepare for Camp by relaying the expectation that they will try new things and that they may be hungry if they do not eat what is served. Please note that we always provide a vegetarian option as well as special menu items for children with medically-based dietary needs and common allergies such as milk, egg, peanuts, tree nuts, gluten, and soy. Additionally, all staff are trained in food and allergy safety. **Be sure to list any allergies in the MEDICAL section of your online account for your camper. Please be specific and very detailed.**

Conduct

All campers are expected to uphold the following behavior agreement.

- 1) Take Care of Ourselves by staying safe, listening, and following directions from counselors, applying sunscreen and bug spray every day, and reporting anything that doesn't feel right to our counselors.
- 2) Take Care of Others by showing kindness and respect for fellow campers and staff through words and actions.
- 3) Take Care of Camp by not disturbing the animals and plants that live here, keeping Camp clean from litter and graffiti, and caring for Camp's buildings and equipment like it is our own.

Campers are expected to follow all Summer Camp rules, including those not listed here, that may be set forth by Camp Ondessonk staff. The Camp Director reserves the right to dismiss campers for unacceptable behavior and gross violations of camp rules without refund. Parents will be responsible for arranging and covering costs for their child's early departure.

Independence

One of the significant growth opportunities a camper experiences is being independent of parents, with typically no contact during the camping session. This can be one of the most positive experiences they can have at Camp and one which can be invaluable in the process of growing up. Be aware that as a parent, you may need to prepare for this as much—if not more—than your camper!

Sending a First Time Camper

If this is your child's first trip to Camp Ondessonk for camp, your preparation in advance will go a long way toward helping them have a great experience and minimize the effects of homesickness. Almost all first-time campers and many returning campers experience some level of homesickness. These feelings are natural, extremely common, and very real. Most cases of homesickness are mild. Some cases are challenging. Our staff members are trained to help campers work through these feelings and as a result, homesickness usually

subsides within 24 hours of arriving at Camp. When preparing your child for Camp, you will minimize the likelihood of a serious case of homesickness by using the following parenting strategies:

- **Do not tell your child that you will pick them up if he/she does not like Camp right away.** Regrettably, we encounter this often. Though parents who give this message have good intentions, their children have an extremely hard time getting better when homesick. Be very honest with your child about what it means to sign up for something and follow through with it. Leaving Camp early is an absolute last resort.
- Develop a Camp nighttime routine at home. Practice falling asleep without noise, such as television or music. A fan or other ambient noise might help acclimate campers to typical nighttime sounds. Units at Camp have no electricity, so make sure that the camper is comfortable falling asleep in full darkness. Have them sleep with a flashlight next to the bed to practice using it at night. Finally, have your child spend a night or two away from home with a friend.
- Involve your child in planning for Camp. While doing this, focus on the fun that will be had.
- If you sense that your child is nervous about going to Camp and missing home, talk about it. Use an encouraging approach and supply your child with ideas that will help him/her work through it. Suggest writing a letter or taking along a favorite keepsake from home. You know your child better than anyone. What has helped her/him handle stressful situations in the past? All conversations about this subject will help if encouragement is at the forefront.
- If possible, send your child with a friend. Be sure that they are truly friends, not just acquaintances from school. If your child is going to Camp alone, emphasize the opportunities that he/ she will have to meet new people. Many of our staff, including Ondessonk's Executive Director, came to Camp Ondessonk alone as campers. Being alone should be seen as an opportunity.
- Discuss what Camp will be like. Read this booklet with your child and let him/her know what to expect. Focus on the positive aspects of Camp. Talk about the fun activities, the idea of "growing up" and the independence and adventure of it all. Visit our website with your child. Look at the photos and read about Ondessonk together.
- Establish realistic expectations. Camp, like life, has high points and low ones. Not every moment will be filled with wonder and excitement. Encouraging your child to try new things and make new friends will help the experience be a positive one.
- Plan to attend one of our "Learning More About Camp" Webinars. This is an excellent way for both new and returning camper families to hear about Camp Ondessonk's summer camp planning and see a virtual unit tour. You will meet some of our leadership staff and can ask questions about the Camp O experience. The schedule of webinars, and ability to register online, will be available on our [Events Calendar](#) on our website.
- In the event your child does have a bout with homesickness, please be assured that he/she will receive individual counseling directly from staff members trained for that purpose. If your child is having a particularly hard time, a Camp representative will contact you directly for support. Otherwise, no news is good news.

Arrangements to Make Before Camp

Fees

Make your payments easily and securely using our online registration system. Log in and make your payments according to your schedule and budget. Payments are also accepted over the phone, or you can mail a check. A \$25 fee will be charged for checks that are returned due to insufficient funds.

The balance of all payments is due four weeks prior to your Camp start date. If necessary, special payment arrangements can be made by emailing registration@ondessonk.com and are subject to approval by our Finance Department. Any unpaid balance on arrival can result in your camper not being able to attend.

Scholarships and Tuition Assistance

To make Camp more accessible to children of all economic means, scholarship funding is available. A maximum of \$739 of tuition assistance will be awarded per camper. A sliding scale is used to determine the amount of award based on adjusted gross income and household size. Camp Ondessonk is an equal opportunity provider of summer camp programs. Scholarship awards are made without regard to geographic location, race, color, national origin, sex, religion, disability, or any other legally protected status.

The scholarship application period begins each year on the first business day in January and is open until funds are depleted. Since Camp registration opens in October, it is highly recommended that you register your camper and secure a spot in Camp, then apply for scholarship funding. If you qualify for partial tuition assistance, your registration and deposit must be submitted before scholarship funding is applied. If you are awarded the maximum amount, your deposit will be refunded to you. [Visit our website](#) for more information.

Cancellations, Refunds & Transfers Policy

Cancellations received 30+ days prior to camp start date will receive a full refund minus the \$100 non-refundable deposit + \$10 processing fee. Use this [online form](#) to cancel your session. No refund will be issued to registrants who cancel less than 30 days prior to camp start date for any reason other than medical.

Medical-related cancellations require an appropriate & specific doctor's note to request a refund. Refund requests will be reviewed by the Executive Director or Camping Services Director for a full or partial refund, depending on the circumstances. If a refund is given, the Director of Finance will send an acknowledgment email notifying the participant of the refund.

Refunds will not be issued for campers leaving early due to illness or homesickness. Camp Ondessonk does not prorate. Camp Ondessonk reserves the right to terminate participation for behavioral issues without camper tuition reimbursement.

Tuition deposits and payments are not transferable to other campers or sessions outside the current summer camp season.

Transfers to a different session within the same summer camp season are allowed at any time. If it occurs within 14 days of the camp start date, there is a \$25 transfer fee. Use this [online form](#) to switch your session.

Late Arrival/Early Departure

Any camper that must arrive after 3:30 pm on Sunday must coordinate a late arrival with the office. Please use [this form](#) to schedule a late arrival.

If your child must be picked up before Saturday, you will need to coordinate an early departure with the office. Please use [this form](#) to schedule an early departure. We strongly discourage campers leaving early as it interrupts the flow of Camp and adversely affects the quality of the departing camper's experience. In case of an emergency requiring an unplanned early departure, contact the office for instructions. Written consent is necessary in all cases for early departure, and the person picking the camper up must show identification verifying that they are listed as an authorized release contact in the "Contacts" section of your account dashboard. **Early departures are not allowed on Saturday mornings or any day before 9:00 am, between 12:00-1:00 pm, or after 8:30 pm.**

Health Care, Health Forms and Medications

Camp's Health Center is centrally located in the main area of Camp and is stocked with first aid supplies and emergency medical equipment. A staff member with advanced medical training is on duty 24 hours a day. A licensed medical professional is on-site daily, and a Medical Doctor is always on call when campers are on-site. If your child needs medical care while at Camp, your insurance would be billed by the medical facility. Camp has accident coverage (up to \$2,500 per camper) that is secondary to your insurance coverage. Sickness that would or could occur without relation to Camp will be given medical treatment but will not be covered by camp insurance. In all cases, parents will be contacted if their child needs the care of a physician, a hospital visit, or if they spend the night in the Health Center.

At least 4 weeks prior to arrival at Camp, please log into your account and complete all medical-related items required to participate. This includes:

- Camper Medical Questionnaire: located in the FORMS/ONLINE FORMS section of the dashboard.
- Allergies: located in the MEDICAL section of the dashboard.
- Over the Counter Authorization: located in the MEDICAL section of the dashboard.
- Medications (if applicable): located in the MEDICAL section of the dashboard. **You must list any prescription medication, over the counter medication, ointments, vitamins, and/or supplements that you are bringing to Camp.**

All camper medications (prescriptions, over the counter) and vitamins will be kept in the Health Center for the duration of the camper's stay. Camper medications are distributed at mealtimes by the Health Center Staff & Nurses. Exceptions can be made based on primary care provider directions. To help your camper prepare for the summer, we encourage families to start a routine of receiving medications during mealtime.

Here are some helpful tips for medication check-in on your arrival day:

- Our office staff prints the medication check-in papers during the middle of the week prior to your camper's arrival. If you add medications after Wednesday the week prior to arrival, you will likely have to fill in the medication check-in form by hand.
- Please consider leaving over the counter medications at home. Our Health Center is well stocked with medications that treat nearly any minor ailment or injury that may occur. If you are concerned that we won't carry an over the counter medication your camper may need, please call and ask.
- **IMPORTANT: ALL medications, including over the counter medicine, vitamins, and supplements, MUST BE in the original container. We CAN NOT accept medications that are not in their original packaging, or any loose pills. Please label pill bottles clearly with your camper's name.**
- Parents should send at least a 9-day supply of their child's medication. Campers are notorious for dropping pills on the ground!
- If your child has asthma, please send two albuterol rescue inhalers, one to be kept in the Health Center, and one to be kept with your child's Unit Leader.

Poison Ivy, mosquitoes, and ticks are common at Camp. Campers are advised to wear repellent and appropriate clothing. Mosquito netting is available at the Trading Post. Please note that mosquito netting is not permitted in Mini Camp. Mini Camp units are 4-sided with screened windows. If the Health Center Staff believes that a health risk has occurred that may require attention after the camper leaves Camp, you will be contacted prior to your arrival for camper pick-up.

Campers will be screened for head lice upon arrival at Camp. Please do not arrive with braided hair.

Setup your Bunk1 Account

Camp Ondessonk utilizes Bunk1, a third-party photo-sharing service, that allows parents to view and order pictures online. Please understand that these photos merely give you a snapshot of the day. **Although we try our best, we are unable to provide photos of every child considering we have at least 350 campers on any given day, and depending on their schedule, may be off on an all-day hike.**

Bunk1 also provides one-way email service to campers. Campers can receive emails, called “Bunk Notes” through the Bunk1 portal for a small fee per email. You may send your camper(s) emails; however, campers are no longer able to respond through Bunk1. The heart behind this decision is for the campers to disconnect and enjoy their time at Camp. Emails are delivered to campers once a day. Information about this service can be found [on our website](#).

The 2026 Bunk1 invitation code is coming soon!

Pre-Purchased Items

Save time during check-in and pre-purchase unit photos, unit shirts, and/or care packages. Log into your account and go to the OPTIONAL ITEMS section of the dashboard. Click on the “Add. Chg.” tab, then the “Manage Add. Charges” button. After you have selected the items for purchase, click on the “Make a Payment” button on the dashboard to pay for them. Please note, these items are optional, and your Camp tuition does include one unit shirt. Must be pre-purchased at least one week prior to your camp session.

Early Swim Assessment Option

Campers may take a swim assessment before arriving at Camp at your local lap pool or lake. You must have a lifeguard, swim coach, or other **qualified aquatics professional** observe your camper’s swim assessment attempt and sign off on the form.

If your camper already has a swim assessment on file at Camp Ondessonk, another assessment is not necessary unless they are trying to advance or have had a change in health status that warrants a new assessment.

The Early Swim Assessment is completely optional. New campers without a swim level on file will complete a swim assessment during check-in, or during their first swimming block on Monday or Tuesday if an Early Assessment is not completed.

The Early Swim Assessment Form is located [on our website](#), or you can call the Office to request a copy via email. Once completed, please scan it as a PDF file and upload it in the FORMS/UPLOAD FORMS section. You may also email it to registration@ondessonk.com or fax it to 618-695-3593. **Forms submitted within seven days prior to your session start date are not guaranteed to have been processed. In that case, it is strongly advised you bring a copy of the form with you to Camp.**

There are only two swim assessment levels: “Swimmer” and “Wader”.

The “Swimmer” Level assessment involves swimming 75 meters in a strong manner using side stroke, breaststroke, or freestyle strokes. After rest of no longer than two minutes, swimmer must then tread in deep water with ears above water for two minutes.

Traditional campers with “Swimmer” Level are eligible to utilize the following areas of Lake St. Isaac: Trapeze Zipline, Tarzan Rope Swing, the dock, all three slides, as well as access to all in-water areas labeled as Traditional Swimmer, Mini Swimmer & Wader/Beachfront.

Mini Campers and Mini Camp Explorers with “Swimmer” Level are eligible to utilize the following area of Lake St. Isaac: All 3 slides, the dock, and all in-water areas labeled as Mini Swimmer & Wader/Beachfront.

If the swimmer does not successfully complete the “Swimmer” Assessment, or if they have chosen not to complete a swim assessment at all, they are classified as a “Wader”. These participants have access to all in-water areas labeled as Wader/Beachfront (or all in-water areas that are at waist/wading level for the swimmer). Additionally, all participants may request a life jacket if they desire.

Camper Resource Request

Camp Ondessonk makes every effort to accommodate all campers that wish to attend regardless of physical or emotional needs, dietary requirements, or other circumstances. Camp is, however, rustic, rugged, communal, and gender-binary by nature. Our goal is for all campers to have a safe, positive, and adventurous week at Camp. To provide the best experience possible, please contact us if you feel that any accommodation may be needed during their stay. We will work with you to determine if appropriate accommodations can be made within our current program, scope, and budget. Additional information can be submitted to Camp regarding your child’s needs via the [online form](#) on our website. Camp employs a summer Camper Support Specialist who is available to work with campers, staff, and parents before, during, and after their session(s) if requested.

Layover Weekends

Campers that choose to attend multiple sessions back-to-back may take advantage of the layover program. This two-day, one night session may include swimming, hiking, and relaxing at Camp, all meals, and other activities under the supervision of Counselors. Campers should pack enough clothes and supplies for their entire stay, as laundry facilities will not be made available.

Register for one of our four layover sessions as part of your online camper registration or call Camp for assistance. O.W.L.s who are registered for 2-week sessions DO NOT need to register for a layover session between weeks. The program includes weekend programming.

Packing for Camp

Mail, Packages & Snacks

Campers love to receive mail, so feel free to send a letter or package while they are at Camp. We recommend you drop your mail & packages off at the St. Noel Office while onsite during check-in. If you mail it, you should do so two weeks prior to your camp session. If you send it via Amazon, you should edit your delivery preference to deliver to the Front Desk and annotate the St. Noel building. Include your camper’s name and session # on the envelope or package. If your mail or package arrives after the session is over and you would like it returned, you will have to pay Camp for the cost of shipping.

DO NOT SEND FOOD IN CARE PACKAGES! Food in cabins invites unwelcome visitors (animals!). All packages will be opened in front of an Ondessonk staff member. Food and beverages, if present, will be confiscated. Camp’s Trading Post will be open daily if campers wish to buy a snack or beverage. Appropriate items to include in a care package are letters, magazines, small games, stickers, books, etc.

You can also pre-purchase care packages directly from Camp and have them waiting for you during check-in. Simply log into your account and find it in the OPTIONAL ITEMS section of the dashboard.

Packing List

Packing wisely can help ensure a good Camp experience. Please make sure that medicines, swimsuit, and towel are packed on top for easy access during registration. Make sure to pack old, comfortable clothes for your week. Keep in mind that no laundry service is available to campers and that units do not have electricity. Below is a suggested list of what to bring. Please pack according to your own child's needs. All packing lists, including Adventure and Equestrian packing lists, are [on our website](#).

Trading Post

Our Camp store, the Trading Post, is open daily and offers snacks, drinks, souvenirs, Ondessonk clothing, and incidentals (postcards, stamps, batteries, insect netting, etc.). On average, \$30 in spending money is sufficient for most campers. If you plan on purchasing netting or clothing/souvenir item(s), additional money may be necessary. The Trading Post will be open to campers and parents during check-in and check-out.

Barter Bucks



The Trading Post does not accept cash – only “Barter Bucks”. This will be your camper’s Barter Buck band. The barcode is used at our Trading Post to track how much money is in your Camp Store account. You can pre-purchase Barter Bucks from within your online account (click the “Make a Payment” button, then click on the Store tab) or you can purchase it during check-in. Your camper will wear this all week. It is waterproof, bug spray-proof and sunscreen-proof. If a camper loses their Barter Buck band, purchases can still be made via manual name lookup, but campers should notify their unit leader AND the Trading Post to prevent another camper from using the lost bracelet.

Throughout the Camp session, parents can monitor each camper’s Barter Buck balance, view purchases, and add funds through the FINANCE section of your online account.

On departure day, any camper with a balance of less than \$1.00 will not be refunded. Those funds are automatically applied to the Camper Scholarship Fund. If a camper has more than \$1.00 in their Camp store account, the Camp counselor will ask the parent/guardian if they would like to donate the funds to the Camper Scholarship Fund or be refunded. Refunds will be returned in the same way they were paid. Camp store balances cannot be left in their accounts. For layover campers, we will automatically transfer unused barter bucks to the next camp session.

Luggage Haul

During check-in, you will be provided with one luggage tag to be placed on your largest/heaviest piece of luggage. This is the only item that will be hauled for you. Camp’s luggage hauling service is not intended to be used to haul every single item a camper is bringing to Camp. It is intended to lessen the burden. Luggage delivery to your unit is typically delayed so it is recommended you hand-carry items needed to set up your camper’s bunk (sleeping bag, mosquito net, etc.). Due to irregular sizes and shapes coupled with limited cabin space, trash cans of any size will not be permitted in units and will not be delivered to the units by our luggage haulers. Campers are not to lash, tape, or otherwise attach extra items onto the single piece of luggage they submit to our luggage haulers. **Do not pack items/clothing in trash bags! They get mistaken for trash and thrown out.**

Rubbermaid-type bins and trunks checked in at luggage haul are not to exceed 32” x 20” x 17”. If your camper chooses to bring his/her belongings in a bin that exceeds this size, it will be his/her responsibility to transport the item and its contents.

Unusually large and/or heavy duffle bags will not be delivered by Ondessonk's luggage haulers. Our experience tells us that when a camper has an extremely large duffle bag, he/she has simply placed several or more smaller bags inside of a really large bag.

During the Camping Session

Relax!

While your child is at Camp, take advantage of and enjoy the (temporary) quiet! If you miss your kids, write a letter or two (campers love getting mail!) or get information about sending emails to your camper in the "Contact with your Child" section below. Relax, knowing your children are in good hands.

Visitation Policy

Please feel free to meet our staff and tour the Camp facilities on check-in day. For the safety and security of our campers, and because campers often become homesick when they see a parent or family member, no visitors are allowed during the week. For parents who want a more thorough experience of Camp Ondessonk, we have family weekend events you can attend, as well as our Open Houses. Visit our website at <https://ondessonk.com/community/camp-ondessonk-events> to see our list of events!

Contact with your Child

Receiving or placing phone calls during the session disrupts the program and often makes homesickness worse, so we do not allow them except for emergency circumstances. Therefore, you will probably not hear from the Camp or your camper during the session, and remember, "no news is good news!" If your camper suffers serious injury or illness, you will be promptly notified. This includes any issue requiring off-Camp health services or an illness in which a fever lasts for more than 24 hours. Personal cell phones found in a camper's possession will be held in a secure location until the end of the session.

Should an emergency requiring communication with your child arise, please call the Camp Office at 877-659-2267. If it is after hours, the voicemail system will offer you an emergency number to dial.

Emergencies

Camp administrative staff monitor the national news and local weather. Camp Ondessonk has policies and procedures in place for addressing weather emergencies. If there is an identified emergency, campers and staff will be informed and given instructions. Information is relayed to the public on www.ondessonk.com and via social media. Check the Camp website for up-to-date information before you call. Camp also uses a mass text messaging platform to connect with camper parents and deliver important messages instantly.

Getting Your Camper to and from Camp

Driving your Camper to Camp

- Check-in is on Sunday(s) from 1:00-3:30 pm. Two weeks prior to Camp, we will email you a link to sign up for an appointment time for check-in. Sandwiches are sold at the Trading Post if you want to grab some lunch! Cash or credit card accepted.
- Families unable to arrive during their appointment time are asked to contact 877-659-2267 x109 or email registration@ondessonk.com. On the day of check-in, call 877-659-2267 x0 or 618-759-1780 for further instructions.

- Upon arrival, Camp staff will instruct vehicles to various “drive-thru” check-in stations and where to park.
- **Campers will be screened for head lice upon arrival at Camp. Please do not arrive with braided hair.**
- While at Camp, we request parents/guardians to restrict the amount of time to 1.5 hours while onsite.

DO NOT BRING PETS TO CAMP! PETS ARE NOT ALLOWED ON CAMP PROPERTY!

Driving your Camper Home from Camp

For mini campers (3-day camps), Camp ends on Wednesday. Our gates open at 8:45 am and all campers must be picked up by 10:00 am. No appointment time necessary.

For traditional and other adventure campers (6-day camps), Camp ends on Saturday. Our gates open at 8:30 am, there is an optional Parent Reception held in the Chapel at 9:00 am, campers are available to check-out at approximately 9:30 am, and all campers must be picked up by 10:00 am. No appointment time necessary.

First Time Camper & Family Sleepover

Whether your family has been to Camp before or this is your first time, we know that preparing to send a new child to Camp can be nerve-racking, stressful, and a source of anxiety for both campers and their families. As your camper(s) prepare to come to Camp Ondessonk for their first time, we invite you to spend the night before at Camp in our St. Noel Conference and Retreat Center. On these select weekends, you will have the opportunity to spend a lovely evening and morning with seasoned staff for a fun experience that will set the perfect stage for your camper(s) first week away rooms with private bathroom and free WiFi. For more information about this program, go to the [registration form](#) on our website.

Bus Transportation

At this time, we are unable to schedule bus transportation. Our team is actively exploring alternative options and will share updates as soon as they are available. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Volunteer Opportunities

Want to spend a week at Camp Ondessonk, too? This year don't get left behind... be a volunteer! During the 2025 summer, more than 180 teachers, carpenters, doctors, EMTs, nurses, retirees, moms, dads, and many others spent their vacation time hiking, gardening, performing maintenance, unit leading, and mentoring eager young learners at Camp. This summer you could join them! If you are at least 25 years old and would like to spend a week reliving your childhood and working hard to support a worthy cause, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at 618-695-2489 x145, or email volunteer@ondessonk.com. Remember to allow 6 weeks for us to process your application due to Diocesan policy'.

NOTE: Doctors, nurses, therapists, and other medical personnel are always in high demand! If you can donate your services for a week this summer, please contact Camp for information on waiving one camper's tuition in exchange for volunteering in the Health Center. This program is offered to RNs, Nurse Practitioners, MDs, DOs, PsyDs, and PA-Cs to help Camp Ondessonk exceed ACA accreditation standards. Medical professionals not listed above are also encouraged to volunteer.

Giving Opportunities

Since the beginning, generations of Camp Friends have been giving their TIME, TALENT, and TREASURE, allowing us to offer the superior programs and facilities that open the doors to a lifetime of opportunity. Your stewardship gifts help us keep Camp Ondessonk affordable for our campers and allow us to offer the outstanding outdoor experiences that our campers will carry for a lifetime.

Whether you are interested in giving a one-time gift online, enrolling in the Campfire Circle Program to give monthly, remembering Camp Ondessonk in your estate planning with a legacy gift, or becoming an Ondessonk Builder or Founder, know that your gifts truly help us achieve our vision of being the world's best youth camp.

Please visit our [Ways to Give](#) webpage for more details on how you can donate to Camp!