

# I Lived a Dream

- Jake Emerick

Have you ever had a dream of something you've wanted to do and then gotten to live that dream? This summer I had an incredible experience that fulfilled one of my dreams. When I say dream I'm not talking about the kind of dream you have while asleep. During the summer my parents sent me away for six weeks to camp. This wasn't just any camp though. I would get to go out into the wilderness to canoe, hike, fish, cookout, pitch tents, gather firewood, and take part in other survival activities. I would also get to stay in camp and play games, swim, and participate in contests.

The camp is called Camp Voyageur. It is located in the North Woods Of Minnesota on the border of the BWCA (Boundary Waters Canoe Area). Here nature is pristine and the fish are plentiful. The northern lights give a light show like nothing else I had ever seen before. The camp was started in the early 1950's. Kids sleep in cabins where bug screens replace windows, the floors and walls are uninsulated, and you can see the rafters and studs (don't worry, the electrical wires to the light bulb are housed in metal tubes so they are inaccessible). Today, many kids go to camp and sleep in cabins that are insulated, have running water and bathrooms, and every amenity they could possibly need. Here, you wrap yourself in a warm sleeping bag and feel the cool lake breeze.

At camp, sports are the most common activity. Ultimate frisbee, soccer, and football (two hand touch only) are very popular. I learned how to properly shoot a bow and how to play croquet. Bocce ball and wiffle ball are also available. Since the water is always cool and refreshing, swimming is also very appealing. You can also paddleboard, windsurf, kayak, canoe, tube, water ski, wakeboard, kneeboard and fish. One major contest of the summer is when everyone works with their cabin to build a boat out of cardboard and duct tape and test them for speed, flotation, and durability in front of the "admiral."

A camper spends about one week in camp and one week on the trail alternating between the two. Trips on the trail could take you into the Boundary Waters, Quetico Provincial Park, the Superior Hiking Trail, Isle Royale, Apostle Islands, or even go out to Glacier National Park. You will never be in a group of more than nine people while on the trail. You can sleep in the tent or pack your camping hammock and sleep out between two trees, letting the wind gently swing you back and forth.

A typical day on the trail starts between 7:30 and 8 a.m., depending on how early you want to get up and how far you want to travel. On hiking trips, groups sometimes want to get up around 2:30 or 3 a.m. and hike for a little bit under the moon using flashlights to avoid tripping. Then you stop, eat breakfast, take a nap, and have an easy day of hiking, stopping early to set up camp. At campsites, campers play cards, read books, and learn survival skills, such as how to properly use their knife, if they brought one, to carve wood and use it to help make life easier on the trail. All counselors are trained in CPR and wilderness first aid if something happens so it can be taken care of.

Being on the trail brings a sense of peace and personal happiness as you become one with nature. As you overcome long or difficult portages (hikes between lakes with all of your gear) you feel pride as you make it from lake to lake. Some groups will even see moose or deer, or hear the beautiful call of the loon. There's nothing in this world like seeing the beauty of the natural world.