

Self-Guided Tour of Lakamaga

This guide is intended to give you a brief history & some interesting facts about Camp Lakamaga as you take a self-guided walking tour. By finding the name of the facility where you are currently located, you can start this tour at any point in the camp & wander at your leisure. For ease of use, we divided the tour of the camp into three sections: the historic, sports, and day camp areas.

Camp Lakamaga was named by the Boy Scouts, using a poor translation of the Latin words "Big Lake" & was originally the Rask Farm, a part of one of the oldest Swedish settlements in Minnesota. Today, having arrived at camp in your vehicle, stop & imagine that it is 1926, & you are a girl arriving at camp. You would have taken the train from St. Paul, to the tiny village of Copas near Marine on the St. Croix, and then hiked approximately 10 miles to camp. Image your feelings as you finally reached the current Bierbrauer Family Welcome Center. A member of the Bierbrauer family, who was committed to helping young women become strong & confident in all they do, donated this structure. She valued Girl Scouting for the way it encourages all girls to experience teamwork, take advantage of opportunities, give back to their communities and explore a wide range of activities. Today, there are usually picnic tables, benches & carts located here. This area is ideal for group check-in. Buses load & unload here during Resident & Day Camp.

The Historic Area

Taking the paved path (south) from here, you will start the first section of the tour. As you proceed up the path you will see the Annie Paper Dining Hall. Annie immigrated to the United States from Russia in 1868. She married Lewis Paper, founder of Paper Calmenson, a major steel company. In her will, she donated money in a trust fund, to the St. Paul Foundation; from which the Girl Scouts received funds, which in 2000, were used to build this 10,000 square foot multipurpose facility, as part of "For All The Girl's Campaign". This building, which has a large dining hall, kitchen, bathrooms, a camp store, as well as the director's office, can accommodate 299 people for program activities & meals. A large patio with picnic tables is located on the south side of the building for outdoor gatherings. A metal bell, which is rung continuously in the event of an emergency, is located in the woods, to the south of the building. The bathrooms, kitchen & part of the central hallway are designated Emergency Shelters.

Walk out the south doors & follow an unpaved path until you connect with the road, which leads south through the woods. At the junction in the road go straight ahead & follow the signs towards the Lodge. On your left, (east) you will see the Spookamaga Storage Shed, where materials for this annual event are housed. Just past this, are two posts on the left (east) side of the road. In the 1940's the original Infirmary was located in the woods near here.

Continuing down the road, you will see a path to your right, this will lead you to the Lochbrae Unit. Lochbrae is a Scottish word that means "a slope by the lake." These four 11' x 15' cabins which are heated & air-conditioned have four bunk beds (sleeps eight) in each. There is an adjacent fire circle & cooking shelter with picnic tables. A two-hole latrine & a covered wash station are located between the Lochbrae Unit & the Yurt Unit. There are also accessible bathroom facilities in the Dining Hall, as well as bathrooms with showers located in both the Troop House & the Sports Pavilion. A short path to your right (west) will connect you to the Yurt Unit. These four oddly shaped structures, based on the traditional Mongolian housing unit, have 12 bunks located around the inside walls of each building which leaves a large space in the center for activities. Large screens & a clear plastic dome at the top of the roof, which can be lifted, create a light & airy atmosphere. Rollup canvas screen covers, provide both privacy & protection from adverse weather. These buildings have no insulation, water or electricity. This unit also has a fire circle & cooking shelter with picnic tables. A two-hole latrine & covered wash station is located nearby as well as accessible bathroom facilities in the Dining Hall & bathrooms with showers located in the Troop House & the Sports Pavilion.

Walk out the backdoor of the Yurts & follow a path (south) to the Lodge. Built in 1930, this was the camp's main dining hall, kitchen & program center for many years. A stone slab patio running along the entire lakeside length of the lodge, which was buried under several inches of grass & dirt, was "rediscovered" in the 1960's. In the 1930's the lakeshore was level with the Old Lodge & the swimming beach was located here. Step through any door & enter the main room, which is not winterized. Take a look at the original fire screen & the candlesticks on the mantle, which were forged by Anton Olson, an artisan, who lived in the town of Scandia. The main room has what is best described as "atmosphere lighting" that makes fine detail work difficult. However, this is a great location for a Scout's Own, a group sing-along or a place to gather out of the weather, with a capacity of 140. The "mystery stairs" (east wall), which currently lead nowhere, in the 1940's lead to the trading post, located over the kitchen. The kitchen had very low ceilings at that time, which made this very hard on the cooks, since the kitchen very hot. In 2000, this building was converted into an accessible program facility. What use to be the pack-out room & kitchen were converted into a winterized area that now houses a kiln, tables & pottery making equipment. Water, both hot & cold is available here, but there are no toilet facilities. Originally, the camp was rented from the Stillwater Boy Scouts. At that time, the cost of a one-week stay was \$9.00. After the camp was purchased by the Girl Scouts, the cost dropped to \$8.50 for a one-week or \$17.00 for a two week experience at camp.

Walking out the main doors of the Lodge, you will be in the old flag ceremony area. At the left (east) end of this area is the Trading Post, which was originally, called Thunderbird Trading Post. Built in 1958, it has electricity & a telephone. The back room was originally the camp director's office & the front was a busy area where campers gathered to purchase souvenirs such as T-shirts, camp patches & postcards. It now serves a variety of functions, including acting as the nature center during summer camp & for the year-round storage of equipment.

Walk (south) straight across the flag ceremony area, to a paved path. A short distance along this path, on the sidehill between the Old Lodge & the Troop House is the Lakeside Cabin. Ask the occupants for permission to take a look at this small structure, which was built in 1958. For many summers this was the camp director's home. This building has electricity, but without heat or cooking facilities, it is used only in the summer. It currently

has two cots with mattresses & two large, built-in, wooden closets. Accessible bathroom facilities are located, down a short path, in the Lower Troop House. It has a capacity of 8 overnight & 15 daytime.

Continue down the path, until you come upon the Lakamaga Troop House. In the 1930s, a Craft House located on this site, was destroyed by fire. A two-story Troop House, consisting of two large rooms plus a bathroom on each level, was built in 1983 at a cost of \$160,000. In 2003, this Troop House was also destroyed by fire, caused by birds nesting in the electrical panel. It was replaced with a new accessible, multi-level facility. Step inside the upper level to find a large kitchen/living room with fireplace & cooking facilities with hot & cold water. This level has heat, air-conditioning, electricity, two bathrooms with showers & a telephone. In the back are two large rooms with 5 bunk beds in each, to sleep 10 & a leader's room, with bunks for 4. The daytime capacity for this level is 40. The lower level has 3 bunk beds (sleeps six), along with cooking facilities, hot & cold water, a telephone, toilet & a shower. The daytime capacity is 12. On the lower level, are two large accessible bathrooms with a total of 16 showers, 7 sinks & 5 toilets. These lower level bathrooms are designated as Emergency Shelters.

From the upper level of the Lakamaga Troop House, as you take the path (north) towards the Trading Post, you will see the Central Outdoor Showers on your right (east). These were built in 1964 & are no longer in use. Take the path that passes along the side of the Central Showers & continue until you connect with another path. Follow this path to your right (east-southeast) & you will arrive at the Craft House, which is now called Norgaard House. This building was built in 1958. As the old name implies, this is a great space for crafts. This building has heat, a fireplace, cold water, cooking facilities, electricity & carpeting. There is a latrine nearby. Capacity is 18 overnight & 30 daytime. In the later years of owning their farm, the Rask family built a home on the rise across from this building.

Continue on the road to the right (west), you reach the site of an old platform tent unit called the Norgaard Unit. The name comes from the Swedish word for "our farm." The platform tents have been removed, but the wash stand & latrines remain. This site is used by troops who canoe here, pitch tents & camp in preparation for extended canoe camping trips, such as to the Boundary Waters. Eagles have nested nearby in recent years; look carefully you might see their nest. The Rask family originally lived in a log & sod home that was located between the Innisfree unit & Norgaard Unit. From this spot, they could see both Big Marine Lake & Raskviken Bay. Another unit of yurts may be built here in the future.

Returning past the Norgaard House, follow the road until you reach the "Y", the Bicycle Shop is located on the right (east). Across the road (north) you might catch a glimpse of Raskviken (Rask's) Bay. When the Rasks lived here, the bay was part of Big Marine Lake, but today the bay is a separate lake, which trickles into Big Marine Lake, through a tiny stream located beyond the camp property.

On the left side (north) of the road, a large, red, metal building & hay bales mark the Archery Area, which may only be used with the supervision of a qualified instructor. Continuing down the road to the right (east), you will see the Canterbury Unit. This unit was named for a town in England, which the Crusaders passed through. If you have never stayed in a platform tent, ask the occupants for permission, then look them over to see what it is like to live under canvas. This is a typical platform tent unit; with 5 tents, a fire-circle, a covered cooking shelter with picnic tables and benches, a wood storage unit, a covered wash station & a two-hole latrine. Each of the platform tents has a short set of stairs leading to them. These canvas-covered, wooden structures have 4 cots, with mattresses, along the sides of the tent, which leaves an area in the center, where girls can gather.

Continuing down the road (east), you will reach a platform tent unit named Innisfree. This unit was named for an Irish location, which Yeats immortalized in both song & poetry. The unit consists of 8 tents, a covered cooking shelter with picnic tables, a wood storage unit, a fire-circle, a covered wash station and a latrine. Across the lake, a large dock marks the location of a new housing development.

Return on the road (west) past the archery area & the bicycle shop. At the Y in the road go right. You will see the Aintree Unit to the right & then pass the wood shed. The building you are approaching was called Snafu, but the name has now been changed to Tatanka. This building was constructed in 1930 as a shower house. In 1964 it was renovated into staff housing. Folding cots & mattresses sleep 8 & the daytime capacity is 15. This building which is great for small troops; has heat, electricity, water & cooking facilities. Accessible bathroom & shower facilities are nearby in the New Troop House, as well as accessible bathrooms in the Dining Hall.

The building next-door, is the Edgewood Cabin. This building was originally an infirmary & has a back room with four bunk beds. With the "nurse's office" in front, there is space for an overnight capacity of 6 & a daytime capacity of 15. Renovated in 1965 it has a sink, toilet, heat, electricity & a telephone. There are no cooking facilities. Accessible bathrooms with showers are located in the New Troop House.

From Tatanka and the Edgewood Unit, following the road to the right you will see 4 small 11' x 15' cabins in the woods to your right (east). These were once called "Portage Unit," because, without a road leading to it, the campers had to carry-in all of their supplies & gear. Later, when it housed the horseback-riding unit, it was renamed Aintree in honor of a famous English racetrack & riding stable. These accessible, heated & air-conditioned cabins have electricity, but no water. They can sleep 8 girls in bunk beds. Accessible bathroom facilities with showers are located nearby in the New Troop House, as well as accessible bathrooms in the Dining Hall.

The Sports Area

Returning to the Annie Paper Dining Hall, you will pass the camp bell in the woods to your right. This bell is rung 15 minutes before meals and in the event of an emergency, it is rung continuously to alert camper and staff. From the dining hall you start the next section of the tour, by continuing around the outside of the building (south & east sides), to explore the fitness activities of the Lakamaga Par Course. This is comprised of a number

of locations, each having posted directions & equipment for a variety of exercises. As you proceed across the lawn stop & test yourself on a number of these fitness activities. You will also see a Memorial Bench near the treeline, where you can sit a moment to rest and reflect.

Walking up the path, just off the parking lot, you reach the Sports Area. On your left (south) is a structure that was built in 1930. This was originally called the Handy Man's Cabin, until the name was changed to Ira's Hut, after a cook who resided here in the 1940's. Today, this structure is used to store seasonal sports equipment. Near here you will also find play areas including a soccer field, volleyball & basketball court. The next structure that you reach, is the Coya Knutson Sports Pavilion, which is accessible, with heated cement floors, toilets, showers, a drinking fountain & a sheltered patio with picnic tables. Electricity & water are available here. The Sports Pavilion & accompanying sports fields which were developed in 2000, as part of "For All The Girl's Campaign" was named for Coya Knutson. Coya was elected to the Minnesota legislature in 1950 & again in 1954, became the first woman representative to the U.S. Congress. The Low Ropes Course includes a bouldering wall as well as a variety of obstacles, that scouts must work their way over, around & through; requires the supervision & instruction provided by a trained instructor. This land, as well as the land on the lakeside of the road as you drive into camp, was purchased with funds from the sale of Camp Katherine Abbott, which was sold during 1987-88. The camp was sold, because without a live-in caretaker, there were frequent break-ins, vandalism & thefts.

Continuing past the Low Ropes Course, you pass one of the two housing units in this section of the tour. The Tamaray Unit, which was originally called Tyoga, is 6, wooden, accessible, open-air cabins that were originally renovated in 1991. In 2003, screens were added, but the cabins remain dark, so bring your flashlights. There is no heat or electricity. There is a fire-circle, a wood storage unit, a cooking shelter with picnic tables, a wash stand & latrines. Accessible bathrooms are in the dining hall, as well as at the Sport's Pavilion, which also has accessible showers.

Take the road to your right (west), down the hill to Tyoga, which in the Ojibwa language means "by the side of the water." Staying in this building is a great way to experience a taste of "frontier life" by cooking on a wood stove, hauling wood for a fire in the fireplace, living without electricity, obtaining water from a winterized outside pump & using a nearby latrine. There is heat & battery powered lights. In 1973, this unit, which sleeps 16, was remodeled & winterized. Daytime capacity 30.

The Waterfront Area has a large dock & a Supply Shed for storing equipment such as paddles & life jackets. Racks of canoes & funyaks stand nearby. A lifeguard must be present for canoeing, kayaking, swimming as well as the use of paddleboats & rowboats. Remember to use the Buddy Board, which is located at the head of the stairs leading to the dock, during any water-related activities!

The Day Camp

Return up the road going past the dining hall and the Bierbrauer Welcome Center to where you will begin the third section of the tour. This section begins at the Mary Randall Troop House, which you reach by way of a short footpath to the right (east) of the Bierbrauer Welcome Center. This accessible structure was built in 1969 for \$36,000 & was named after Mary Adelaide Proctor Randall, who formed one of the first Oriole Girl Scout Troops in St. Paul. Her husband was active in Boy Scouts. She was a teacher who focused her life to improving the living conditions of people, as well as pioneering the idea of providing preschool educational opportunities. This building is heated, with electricity, hot & cold water, a telephone, bathroom & a fireplace. The upper level has a daytime capacity of 60 & an overnight capacity of 30. The lower level has a bathroom with 3 sinks & 3 toilets, as well as 2 washers & dryers. The lower level bathroom area is a designated Emergency Shelter.

Walking (north) by way of the parking lot & a short footpath, you reach the Agnes Ober Program Center. Agnes was born to poor German immigrants in 1887 & was six years old when her mother died in 1893. Her father remarried, but he & her stepmother were unable to support the family, so at nine years of age, Agnes was given up for adoption. At 22 years of age she married Edgar Ober, a prominent railroad businessman. Edgar became & remained the president of 3M until 1929. Her wise investments in 3M produced funds, which later, became the basis for the Mardag Foundation, from which the Girl Scouts received a donation to build this program center in 2000, as part of "For All The Girl's Campaign." The upper level has a pack-out kitchen with full cooking facilities, two bathrooms with three toilets in each, a nurse's office & several picnic tables. The lower level has a small, enclosed kitchen & a number of wooden picnic tables as well as a small bathroom with a toilet & sink. There are folding cots with mattresses to sleep 20, which are usually stacked in a corner in order to utilize the available space. This level has a daytime capacity of 45. The lower level is an Emergency Shelter with wooden covers for the windows. Located behind the building's lower level, is a fire circle & picnic tables.

Walking a short distance further north in the parking lot, you find a road through the woods, which takes you to the Program Hut. This day-use only building, with a capacity of 15, was built in 1969. It has electricity, picnic tables, storage cupboards, as well as a nearby latrine & water supply; but no heat or cooking facilities.

The Day Camp Units, which are located in the woods behind the Program Hut, have a day capacity of 180 & 90 overnight. There is a central gathering area with a flagpole. Each of these ten units has a canvas kitchen shelter, fire circle, storage boxes for the cooking equipment, a source of water & a nearby latrine. Trail tents are available for overnight camping.