



Becoming a leader at Camp Cooinda

Camp Cooinda is always on the lookout for people over 18 years of age who are interested in having fun in the outdoors on the amazing Gippsland lakes and who display basic qualities which enable them to work well on the Cooinda team and be trusted with the care of young people.

Leaders are a big part of what makes Cooinda special. A group of very diverse individuals comes together from varied backgrounds and experiences to form an effective team. All leaders are volunteers. Many leaders have been campers themselves, while others come from other outdoor camps or clubs or simply come along to give it a go, bringing with them a variety of skills. Whichever way, the whole leadership team is carefully put together to create a great mix of youth and experience. All leaders are valued and contribute skills and ideas to the rest of the team.

All leaders must participate in a selection and screening process which meets the legal requirements of the State of Victoria for persons caring for children and Camp Cooinda's criteria for leaders in a camp focussed on personal development, supportive relationships and boating.

What is expected from a leader?

A leader is not expected to know all parts of the program but to contribute to some part of it. There will be lots of fun and challenge as part of a great team and also the satisfaction of offering teenagers experiences that enhance their self-esteem and enlarge their horizons. Being a leader on Camp Cooinda is an experience that many people have not only enjoyed but found unforgettable.

Building great relationships with leaders and campers

Camp is generally an enjoyable active time for leaders spent in the outdoors. As a leader, you are part of a team undertaking a diverse set of roles in camp from skills instruction to leading individual groups or 'patrols'. You get to meet and make friends with other leaders, with many leaders remaining friends for years after camp.

Equally as rewarding, is getting to know the individual campers. Campers come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and they respond to experiences of group living and challenging activities in different ways. However generally they leave camp with a positive, enriching and at times life-changing experience. As a leader, seeing kids grow through the Cooinda experience is one of the things which many leaders find especially rewarding and keeps them coming back.

Responsibility to campers

Given the large focus on outdoor activities and group living, leaders need to adhere to established safety and personal welfare principles.

Although leaders usually have a fun, active and memorable experience, there are responsibilities that go hand in hand with this enjoyment. Each leader has a duty of care to the campers attending camp.

Through its years of operating on the Gippsland Lakes, Camp Cooinda has developed common sense guidelines for safe and enjoyable water based and other activities. These include basic rules for sailing, canoeing, swimming, kayaking, archery and all camp activities. These guidelines and procedures ensure campers and leaders have the best time possible at camp within appropriate safety parameters. They also help leaders to know what is appropriate for them.

The site

The Camp Coinda site is located just over 300 kilometres east of Melbourne, about one third of the way around the coast from Melbourne to Sydney. The nearest large town is Bairnsdale, 20 km away, with Paynesville being the nearest town – 4 km across the lake. The site is marvellous – it has a good white sandy beach in the middle of the Gippsland Lakes (three lakes spread over more than 70 km).

Dates for camps

Leader Training Weekend (held at the Gippsland Lakes site):

Arrive: Friday evening (between 8pm and 11pm) 27 November 2009

Depart: Sunday afternoon 29 November 2008.

CAMP ONE: Tuesday 29 December 2009 to Tuesday 5 January 2010

Leaders arrive: Not later than 12.30pm on Sunday 27 December

Leaders depart: Around 4pm on Monday 5 January. (The campers leave at 12 noon). *Leaders are welcome to stay at the site until 11am on Tuesday 6 January for a social dinner and debrief with other leaders.*

CAMP TWO: Saturday 9 January 2010 to Friday 15 January 2010

Leaders arrive: Not later than 12.30pm on Thursday 7 January

Leaders depart: Leaders are asked to stay on until 11am on Saturday 16 January to help with the big close down and clean up of the property at the end of the summer.

As with Camp 1, leaders will have a social dinner and debrief once the campers have departed (Campers depart at 12 noon on Saturday 17 January). Those leaders who need to leave on Saturday can negotiate in advance to leave about 5pm.

Leader selection process

Leaders come to camp from two main sources:

- Campers who have demonstrated personal qualities and skills in the camp program and after the age of 18 are invited to become leaders; or
- Other suitable people who express an interest in being a leader in a camp.

What you do to become a leader:

- Email a Leader Inquiry Form from our website to let us know of your interest and to tell us a bit about yourself.
- Fill in the Leadership Application Form which we send to you.
- Supply two recent written references about character, skills and experience in working with young people.
- Provide evidence of a Working with Children Check (a requirement for working in camps in the State of Victoria) or equivalent statement from the appropriate authority in your state or country that you have not been convicted of a criminal offence in the past 10 years. The information we send to you when we receive your initial application will provide guidance about this process.
- Provide written agreement to put into practice Camp Coinda's basic policies on safety and the welfare of campers (we send you a statement of those policies), and
- Participate in a leader training weekend camp on the site. In 2009 this is Friday 27 November to Sunday 29 November.

For those who have been campers, Camp Coinda has the benefit of seeing these people interact in the camp program over one or more summers. Leadership potential reports on eligible campers assist in deciding whether these campers are suitable. They are then invited to a Leaders' Camp for further training and, if appropriate, they are invited to lead on a summer camp.

The main leader training weekend is held over a weekend towards the end of November each year. The training camp gives Camp Cooina the chance to meet and see in action the skills and leadership potential of those who have never been on a Cooina program. It also gives the potential leader a chance to experience something of the Cooina program, to begin to become familiar with the principles on which the program operates, and to meet other leaders.

This weekend camp includes training and assessment in canoeing and kayaking skills for every leader who will be involved in any part of the canoeing or kayaking program at camp.

This is a required part of our selection process for new leaders. It is also an expected part of the preparation for camp of returning leaders.

Once the selection process is complete and you are accepted, you are notified of your acceptance as soon as is possible.

Selection of leaders starts in August. All steps in the selection process for leaders in summer camps in December 2009 – January 2010 must be completed by the conclusion of the leader training camp on 29 November 2009. It is essential for leaders to arrive on the campsite not later than midday two days before the arrival of campers. These two days of pre-camp training build a strong cooperative team, clarify each leader's particular responsibilities, and establish team procedures for the welfare and safety of campers, including emergency responses.

A bit of background

Camp Cooina is a non-profit organisation which was established in 1960 by David and Joy Merritt after they had been involved in camp leadership in Australia and the USA for many years. They developed a great idea – to run a camp for teenagers, allowing small groups of eight to ten young people of a similar age to share with adult leaders in planning their own program and to experience the challenge of travel in canoes and kayaks from a base camp to various sites around the lakes.

When a farmer offered land for youth camps on the Banksia Peninsula in Gippsland, this provided the opportunity to run a camp on one of the fantastic lakeside sites.

The underlying aim of Camp Cooina is for teenagers, through experiences in cooperative groups in the outdoors, to grow inside. Although it follows Christian principles, Camp Cooina does not actively teach or study the doctrines of any particular religion. It encourages people to think about what is important to them as individuals and as a group, in the context of an active outdoor experience.

If you are interested in becoming a leader, email a Leader Inquiry Form with the requested information about yourself and contact details for us to send you more information.

Because of the number of inquiries received about being a leader at Camp Cooina, we send further information only to people who provide the information requested on this Leader Inquiry Form.

Please send all inquiries about becoming a leader to: leaders@campcooina.asn.au.

There is more information about Camp Cooina on our website: www.campcooina.asn.au

The mail address for leader inquiries is:

Camp Cooina Inc.,

P.O. Box 1091

Windsor VIC 3181

Telephone: 03 9013 9465 (*select option 2 for leader inquiries*)