

Mountain Man Rendezvous Unit Leader Guide

What is Rendezvous?

In the 1820's-1840's, beaver pelts were a prized commodity in the Eastern US and Europe for the making of gentlemen's hats. The Rocky Mountains and Upper Missouri River were prime grounds for trapping beaver. The only problem was transporting the pelts from the Mountain West to St. Louis where they could be prepped for shipping to the East. A trapper would have to give up 2-3 months of prime trapping season to transport the pelts to St. Louis before winter came. By 1825, the Henry-Ashley Trading Company figured that it would be more economical to have their trappers stay in the mountain west and meet them on the plains of Wyoming with supplies for the upcoming year. In turn they would collect the pelts and take them back to St. Louis. The event became known as the Rendezvous. For the next 15 years, the annual Rendezvous was a gathering of not just mountain men, but also Native Americans. Trading, competition and story telling were standard for each Rendezvous. By the 1840's, the demand for beaver pelts had fallen in favor of silk hats. Most of the mountain men found employment as guides for the army or in leading pioneers across the Oregon, Mormon, and California Pioneer trails.

Why is it apart of Scouting? What can youth learn from Rendezvous?

The Mountain Men had to learn to live in and respect nature and the elements, things that we teach the youth in the scouting program. By understanding the types of things they did almost 200 years ago to survive and make a living, youth of today can better appreciate things they take for granted every day of their lives. Also, by doing hard things, youth are able to better understand their own capabilities and potential in life.

Arrival & Check-in

Camp Tahquitz is located on Highway 38 above Angelus Oaks in the San Bernardino Mountains. When you arrive at camp, make sure you enter using the entrance to upper camp, on the south side of Highway 38 (on your right if you come up from Redlands). Check-in will be conducted at the Commissary. You can temporarily park you car(s) in the commissary parking lot for check-in. Once you have received your campsite assignment, you may proceed to your campsite to unload gear and boys. Once unloaded, park your car in the parking lot on the Southeast end of camp, across Barton Flats Road.

During check-in, we will check to make sure all the youth have registered and have all the proper permission slips signed. All adults will also be asked to fulfill a volunteer assignment during the Rendezvous. Once you receive your campsite number, you can proceed to unload and setup camp.

Attire

Dressing up like a mountain man really helps one get into the spirit of Rendezvous. One shouldn't feel like they have to go to a great expense in order to look authentic, although one certainly could if they chose to do so! For the men, long sleeve shirts, un-tucked with the belt worn over the shirt goes quite a long way in making one look like a mountain

man. Add in a leather sheathed knife and ditch the denim jeans for earth tone cotton pants and you're on your way. To make everyone else jealous of your inner mountain man, however, you'll probably have to wear your fitted deerskin pants, possibly a bag, a fox fur or felt wide brim hat, and grow your beard out for 3 months! There's no one right way to dress like a mountain man.

Any women in your unit are welcome to come dressed like the men (sans the beard), or they can try their hand at prairie dresses or suede leather outfits. Simple skirts, & blouses w/ a pinned apron were also common during that time period.

However you come, you will be welcomed. No one will be shunned for not dressing in period appropriate attire, but those that make the extra effort to dress the part will find their experience enhanced. Please wear good fitting, close toed shoes.

Remember that during the month of October, the days can be warm and the nights can be cold. Please consider the weather when you determine what you want to wear to the Rendezvous.

Event Schedule

- Friday
 - 5 pm-9 pm: Check-in & Volunteering Assignments
 - 9:30-10:30 pm: Campfire
- Saturday
 - 7am: Breakfast
 - 8:30 am – 12:30 pm: Morning Events
 - 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm: Lunch
 - 2:00 pm: Coulter Run
 - 3:30 pm: Clean-up & Awards Ceremony

Event Descriptions

- Muzzleloading Rifle

The most valued tool of the Mountain Man was his rifle. Youth will learn how to properly and safely load, aim and fire a muzzleloading rifle at a target 50 ft away. This activity will be held at the Rifle Range.

- Archery

Native Americans and Mountain Men used their archery skills to kill prey for both food and hide. Youth will learn to properly and safely shoot arrows at archery targets. This activity will be held at the Archery Range.

- Primitive Firestarting

No matches allowed. Here youth will learn how to use the traditional tools of flint, steel and charcloth to start their fire. This activity will be held near the commissary.

- Cannon ball toss

Games demonstrating strength were commonplace during the Rendezvous. Mountain Men and Native Americans alike participated in these activities. Youth will toss the cannon ball as far as they can, similar to a shot put. Location of this event will be announced at the campfire

- Caber Toss

Similar to the Scottish Highland games, youth will try to toss a wood beam as far as they can. Location of this event will be announced at the campfire.

- ‘Hawk Throwing

The Mountain Man didn’t always get along with the Native Americans he met during trapping season. The tomahawk, or “hawk” for short, was a tool that could be used in close quarters combat for protection. In this activity, scouts will try their hand at throwing hawks at a target. This event will be held at the Shotgun Range

- Coulter Run

The culminating activity of the event, the Coulter Run was inspired by the actual events of John Coulter, an original member of the Lewis & Clark expedition, who had to run for his life from a band of Native Americans intent on killing him. In this event, teams of 4 youth will run from event to event, attempting to complete them in the shortest period of time. The events can be completed in any order, but time penalties will be enforced for failure to complete an activity. The Coulter Run Start and Finish lines will be at the Med Lodge

There may be other events which we will announce at the campfire on Friday night.

Camp Safety Concerns

HIGHWAY 38

With the new bridge, there is no reason to cross Highway 38. You should NEVER cross the highway at street level, you must ALWAYS take the bridge. DO NOT CROSS HIGHWAY 38 AT STREET LEVEL!

TOWER & COPE COURSE

The Climbing Tower and the Cope Course are dangerous without proper staff supervision and equipment. Under no circumstances should anyone be on any portion of the Climbing Tower/COPE Course without the supervision of a certified staff member.

POOL AND LAKE

No one should attempt to swim in the pool or the lake, or use any pool/lake equipment (including boats) without the supervision of the Aquatics Staff. The dam at the north end of the lake presents a steep drop, please stay off of it to avoid any possibility of a fall. Be aware of fishing equipment that is in use or that has been discarded by careless Scouts.

ANIMALS

Do not try to catch wild animals. They may carry disease and will fight to stay free. Report all dead animals to the Camp Director but do not touch the bodies as they may also carry disease.

BEARS

Scouts are only visitors here at Camp Tahquitz; the bears live here all year. Bears are attracted to campsites by food, grease, etc. To minimize the chance of having bears visit, keep your campsite clean from food and garbage at all times. Food, candy, or items that may smell like food should NEVER be kept in tents. If they are in the campsite overnight, they must be suspended in a bear bag or in a bear locker.

MOUNTAIN LIONS

Although rare, mountain lions may be drawn into camp to find deer or raccoons. Be sure to always travel in pairs, especially at dawn and at dusk. If you see a mountain lion, DO NOT RUN (food runs away!) Face the animal, make noise, and make yourself “larger” by waving your arms.

SNAKES

Snakes may occasionally be seen on the north (lower) side of Camp Tahquitz, especially in warm weather. To avoid contact with snakes, stay on paths and trails, avoiding tall grass, weeds, and heavy underbrush. If you see a snake, leave it alone – do not pester the snake! One way to protect the environment, and to avoid unanticipated meeting with snakes, is to stay on the trails.

STINGING NETTLE/POISON OAK

Stinging nettle is found throughout the camp, and poison oak has been found in the lower end of the camp. Please watch out and avoid contact.

What to Bring

- Signed Permission Slips
 - Participation Form
 - Firearm Use
- Health Forms (Parts A & B only)
- Lunch for your Unit on Saturday
- Sleeping Gear
- Basic Unit First Aid Kit
- Sunscreen
- Water Bottle
- Personal Hygiene Kit

What not to bring

- Personal firearms of any kind
- Kids should leave cell phones and other personal electronics behind. Cameras are welcome.