

Camper's Guide – Summer Week Camps

Revised 2026

Why this Guide?

You have booked a Folk Camp. Well done! You are joining a big family of people that you have lots in common with - but have not met yet! So, this guide is to help you know what you might expect during your week of camping so you can relax more, join in more, and have more fun!

You can expect to receive two documents by email before your camp starts. The Advanced Camp Information Letter will give you specific information about where your camp is taking place with start and finish times etc. Hopefully it contains the useful 'practical' information that is good to know before you leave home. There will also be a separate letter from your staffing team detailing 'artistic' plans for the weekend, maybe a rough timetable and links or PDF's of any music that you need to print out before you leave home.

What to Bring to Camp

Of course, this list could be very long if we were to remind you about everything, so here are just a few things that people have forgotten in the past. Yes, it's true! People have arrived at a Folk Camp without a tent or anywhere to sleep!

Tent, pegs and mallet

Sleeping bags, pillows and blankets

Warm clothes

Wet weather gear

Wellies or similar

Cutlery, crockery, mug, tea towels (and a drying rack if you fancy!) – have all these items in a basket, box or bag to be housed in the crockery store.

Dancing shoes

Torch and spare batteries

Fire Bucket (a plastic bucket is fine, which should be placed outside each camping unit full of water)

Musical instruments and music stands, workshop music (if you play anything)

Suntan lotion

Sun hat

Anti-bite cream

A towel, toiletries, shower gel

Some wine or beer

A smiling face!

This is a fully catered camp so no need to bring any cooking equipment or food (unless you have favourite snacks). Food is generous with cooked breakfast, porridge, breads and spreads in the morning; coffee, tea and biscuits at 11; buffet-style lunch of salads, sandwich fillings, bread, soup, fruit; tea, soft drinks and biscuits at 4pm; evening 2-course dinner; Cocoa and biscuits before circle time.

Washing up tables, bowls, washing-up liquid, brushes and scourers are all provided.

No camp fires are allowed on site, and no smoking/vaping in or around the hall/ marquee.

The First Day of Camp

Please do not arrive on site too early, typically not before 2pm for a summer camp.. The arrival time, venue location, address and postcode etc. for the camp can be found in the Advanced Camp Information Letter and on the Folk Camps website.

We know that arriving at a Folk Camp for the first time can be a daunting experience. We have all been there! Just remember that everyone is coming to Folk Camps for very similar reasons so you are meeting very like-minded people.

On arrival at the site, the first thing to do is to find the Warden. They should be making themselves easy to find, or they may come and find you and introduce themselves. They will be able to help you to decide where you might like to pitch your tent or park your caravan. Make sure you do find them before deciding where to pitch because there is nothing worse than getting everything set up and then having to move the next day because you are in the middle of the proposed rounders pitch!

In choosing where to camp, you should also remember that there will be music and dancing in the hall/ marquee every evening, and sometimes some very late-night singing or dancing, so if you are a light sleeper, choosing a pitch further from the hall/ marquee might be advisable.

There will be a cup of tea and biscuits or cake available from 4pm. Make sure you bring your mug with you and why not introduce yourself to someone you don't know? Lifelong friendships have been known to start in this way.

You will be told the time for dinner and should also hear a bell ringing out across the field just before the time to remind you. Find a place at the communal tables for your size of party and leave your cutlery and cups to reserve your spot. Everyone then queues up with their plates – great chat time in the queue!

A welcome meeting will be held later on the first evening where all the staff for the camp will be introduced and important information about the camp is given. After that, there will be a ceillidh where you can dance, call a dance or play in the band until the call of your bed becomes too strong to resist.

Second day and onwards ...

Whilst every camp is different and every staffing team does things in their own way, here is the default routine that has developed and stood the test of time.

Workshops

At summer camps, the morning music workshop is the only workshop that is guaranteed to happen. It will run from 9.30am and finish at 11am. Copies of the music will be available a couple of weeks before camp starts either as a link or as an attachment to an email that you will be sent. You should print copies out for your own use, or download, before you come to camp. The musicians will try and make sure there is something for everyone, but you will need to have a basic understanding of your instrument. It is also a good idea to bring a music stand and a copy of 'The Unexpected Polka' and 'Join The Band' if you own them. (There are also copies you can borrow from Folk Camps for the week.) Everything you bring should be clearly labelled so you know it is yours as you won't be surprised to hear that many music stands and copies of the same book can look very similar.

During the workshop, you will be learning the tunes chosen by the volunteer camp musicians throughout the week. Even if you only play one note, there may be a place for you (depending on which note it is), so come and have a go!

Folk camps are primarily for acoustic sounding instruments. An amplifier for a keyboard or bass guitar is fine, but please don't bring your 'guitar back line stack' or a drum kit to camp unless you know for certain that the weeks staff musicians are happy.

After the break for morning drinks, more workshops will happen. The very nature of these workshops depends almost entirely on who volunteers to run them. Over the years, as well as singing workshops and traditional folky dance workshops like morris dancing, clog and rapper, we have also had workshops in reiki, street dancing, orienteering, origami and a

variety of arts and crafts. So, if you would like to share any knowledge you have and can find some people that would like to learn, why not come to camp prepared to offer a workshop? That is exactly what Folk Camps are all about!

Lunchtime and afternoons

Generally, the afternoon is free time. You may wish to visit a nearby attraction with some new-found friends but be mindful that more workshops might well start happening after a cup of tea at 4pm.

There may be a visit to a pub organised on one or more lunchtimes for playing some music, singing songs and maybe a little dancing. On some camps an unofficial communal walk, trip to the beach/lake/river or visit to a local attraction may be suggested one afternoon. There is also the very likely possibility of a 'lemon jousting tournament' – a Folk Camps tradition!

Evening

There may be some early dancing and/or games from 7.30 - 8pm. Generally, around 8pm, cocoa is served, and everyone sits around in a big circle and passes an item around. When the item gets to you, you can choose to just pass it on (performing is not compulsory) or you can take a few minutes to share a song, or a joke or a reading - or whatever you like! This is an important part of Folk Camps. When everybody has had an opportunity, the chairs are pushed back and there is ceilidh dancing for the rest of the evening. You can choose whether to dance, to call a dance or two or maybe join the band.

No player should expect to plug themselves into the Folk Camps PA during the evening. The PA is just there for the staff musicians to use so that the dancers and other band members can hear them. We really want you to join the band and play during the evening, but it should just be for the joy of playing in a band and for your own pleasure.

Friday night – Party Night

Usually on the Wednesday, a party night theme is announced by the Leader. Campers then have the opportunity to prepare a fancy dress costume for the Friday dinner by visiting local charity shops if needed or by making and creating 'Blue Peter style' (minimalism is also acceptable!).

Friday night is party night with a mixture of dance, song, sketches and general celebration of the week's events. Workshops can showcase their achievements. The marquee or hall will also be decorated to fit the theme and so many artistic talents are put to use on Friday afternoon!

The 'cabaret' replaces circle time for the evening. Ceilidh dancing will follow with some traditional closing pieces at the end of the evening.

Duties

At a summer camp there are many jobs that need doing! It is a community where we all contribute, with either cooking meals (in small teams with supervision from the Caterer), or keeping the site clean and tidy. The Warden will assign everyone a suitable duty, taking into account experience to create balanced teams. Duties include: Breakfast Cooks (preparing breakfasts for half the week), Cooks of the Day (prepare a lunch and evening meal), Toilet Cleaning, Waste/ Recycling, Marquee/ Hall Tidying, Kitchen Tidying, and more. Children will be assigned simple, safe tasks such as table wiping and tidying.

Staffing Team

Leaders - They oversee organising all the dancing and workshops throughout the week. They are the overall MC for the duration of the camp. Speak to them about running a workshop, calling a dance or anything to do with activities that are happening.

Musicians - They run the morning music workshop and ensure that live music is provided for all the workshops that need it. They will also be in charge of the evening ceilidh band. Speak to them about music workshops or joining in with playing in the band.

Wardens - They make sure you are happy and safe on camp, handling maintenance, as well as facilities. Speak to them if you have any issues that may need their attention to do with the safe running of the camp.

Caterers – They organise and supervise teams of campers to prepare and serve each meal. They also ensure the correct amount of food is available, using local suppliers. If you have a food allergy that is notified in advance of camp they will discuss it with you. Folk Camps provides standard and vegetarian/vegan meals. There is more information about the meals and limitations on special diets on the Folk Camps website.

Tips for new campers

Get stuck in! Folk Camp can seem like a close-knit community, but everyone was a new



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camper once. The best way to find your feet is to get involved. Introduce yourself, and if you are ever unsure of what to do or if you need a hand with something, just ask! Whether that be a staff member or fellow camper, most will offer advice, a lift, or spare batteries if you need them. We really are a friendly bunch!

Electricity and Mobile Phones

You won't really need your mobile phone whilst you are at Folk Camp! Hard to believe - but it is true! The world of Folk Camps is far removed from the world of the internet. You should enjoy your time away from the superficial world. However, of course some people need to stay in touch and be reachable whilst they are away. So, we provide a charging table where you can charge your device, however, at a marquee camp the electricity is from a small generator which is only turned on for a few hours each day, e.g. to power lights and the PA for the evening music.

Leaving Day

All too soon, the week will be over. Please pack up your tent, check the lost property and leave the site by 12 noon.

Don't forget to tell all your friends when you get home about the magical Folk Camps holiday that you have had. You could get an introductory credit if your friends book for next year!

Governing Membership

Please consider becoming a Governing Member of Folk Camps. It costs just £10 for a 5 year membership and will mean you are supporting the organisation and can have your say in how Folk Camps move forward. Details are on the website.

And when you have become a Governing Member, you might also like to consider joining Folk Camps Council. They are directors and trustees of the organisation, who make decisions about how Folk Camps are run. The Council has one face to face meeting each year over a weekend, and a number of Zoom meetings spread throughout the year. Although there are 3 contractors, Folk Camps are run by the volunteer council members.