



# LA VIDA

## AT GORDON COLLEGE



# ADIRONDACK EXPEDITION

## GROUP LEADER PACKET

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La Vida Adirondack Expeditions Base Camp, 460 County Route 50, Lake Clear, NY 12945

Map Links: [Google Maps](#), [Apple Maps](#)

# LA VIDA WILDERNESS PATROL PREPARATIONS PACKET

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## INTRODUCTION

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This packet is provided as a resource to help prepare you and the participants attending La Vida and to ensure maximum impact. La Vida is full of teachable moments, so be prepared to think visually and help the participants see the many biblical truths that can be learned while on La Vida.

As the Group Leader, you know your group best. Your input concerning the focus of the expedition is important to us as we plan your trip. You already have a relationship with the kids and will be going back home with them. For this reason, we encourage you to consider doing at least some of the programming in order to share in their experience. Because most leaders, however, want to focus solely on the group and not have additional responsibilities, they often choose to let the La Vida staff plan the program. When this is the case, your input and direction continue to be highly valued as our staff seeks to plan a program that will be both relevant and meaningful for your particular group.

Together, you and your Trip Leaders set the tone for the activities, the processing of experiences, and the teaching of skills, discussions and group dynamics. A positive attitude is absolutely critical. You will have the opportunity to meet daily with your Trip Leaders. These times will help ensure good communication, direction, and unity among the leadership. In addition, this will provide time to evaluate the experience and to discuss what is happening in the group.

Please send in the Group Questionnaire (link in Group Leader Responsibilities) at least three weeks prior to your patrol dates. This information is important in our planning for your group's experience. The La Vida staff will call you two or three days prior to the trip to get an update on the group and to confer on the needs, goals and spiritual focus of the experience.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING YOUR GROUP

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We recommend each group leader meet with their group a few times in order to strengthen the commitment to the trip. Meeting together before the trip will begin to develop enthusiasm, unity and give you a chance to inform participants of any necessary personal preparation. The following is a list of tried and proven suggestions which may help you in getting your group excited and prepared for their La Vida experience.

1. Go over the [Equipment List](#) with the group. You may want to bring in a sample of each of the items to show the kids what to bring. Talk about wool and synthetic clothing, boots, necessities, what **not** to bring (like iPods, large knives, 24 pairs of underwear, large bottles of shampoo, a massive novel, etc.).
2. Meet with the group two or three times a week for a time of light physical training. Start with a prayer and Scripture. This will get them fired up for the experience. If the group cannot meet as a whole, encourage them to meet in small groups. Walking, jogging, bicycling an/or swimming are all great ways to prepare.
3. Meet to pray about the experience and talk about the group's goals, expectations, apprehensions, etc. Ask about things they hope they will see, do, learn and experience, and ways they hope they will be changed or things they will have to overcome. Once you arrive, we will be helping the group develop what we call a "Full-Value Contract" that will encourage the group make the most of the experience.
4. Have each student choose an adult to be their prayer partner or mentor for the experience. Have them share their goals, expectations and fears with that person before the trip and their progress and growth afterward.
5. If the group needs scholarship or travel money, an auction or service-oriented fundraiser is great for building community. \_\_\_\_\_-a-thons are great fundraisers especially if the sponsors get something out of it, like wash-a-thons, trash-a-thons, etc. Car washes, walk- or bike-a-thons or cleaning lawns can also be fruitful.

6. Pick a theme for your trip; come up with a group motto, group name, etc.
7. Have students' parents, mentor, leader or friends write them a letter that will be given to them as an encouragement when they are placed out on their solo.
8. Choose a book for the group to read together. Some suggestions are Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*, Francis Chan's *Crazy Love*, Phillip Yancey's *The Jesus I Never Knew*, C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* or Trish Harrison Warren's *Liturgy of the Ordinary*.
9. A commissioning service might help develop a sense of being "sent out" for this growth experience, implying the kids will return with more to offer.

## HOW TO FILL EXTRA LA VIDA SPACES

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The minimum group size for a La Vida patrol is 6 people and the maximum is 10. La Vida will also be providing two Trip Leaders for each patrol. If you are coming with more than 10 people total, you can simply split your participants into smaller groups.

Below is a list of suggestions that might help you fill the extra spaces on your patrol:

1. Get your group together to pray for God to direct you to those He wants on the patrol. Talk about a strategy for recruiting more participants. Identify those who would benefit from the trip. Make a prayer list. Do your part and allow God to work.
2. Demonstrate your commitment and excitement about the adventure. Start training with the kids who are signed up for the trip. Others will see the commitment and excitement and will catch the vision.
3. Talk about teamwork, the power of encouragement and La Vida's redefinition of success.
4. Utilize the group's natural leaders to generate enthusiasm, spread the word and even call a few kids who may be persuaded with a little encouragement.
5. Talk to other leaders in your area and see if they have a few kids in their group who might benefit from a La Vida experience.
6. If all else fails, call up the Adirondack director to get some help on filling any extra spaces. La Vida will not put others into your group without calling and asking for your advice and permission. We like to put people of the same age and commitment level together, but it has worked fine in the past to have a wide variety of participants. The wilderness has a way of equalizing age, popularity, looks, physical strength, etc. Let us know if you have any other successful ideas for filling extra spaces. We would love to share them with others.

# ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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Every student will receive the below form before their participation in an expedition. Please review so you can discuss any questions that your students may have.

We are so excited that you are considering a La Vida Expedition! Most La Vida participants have rarely, if ever, gone on a camping trip before and may find that this experience will stretch them. That opportunity for growth through challenge is exactly what makes an expedition so unique and powerful! With that being said, the location and activities of a La Vida Expedition are remote and exposed to outdoor elements. Due to the rigorous nature of the activities, we invite you to thoughtfully review the criteria below regarding various challenges associated with a La Vida Expedition:

The health and safety of our students and staff are a top priority, along with the educative quality of the program experience for all participants. The Essential Eligibility Criteria are applied to all students on a La Vida Expedition. If an applicant does not meet the specific criteria, La Vida may be able to make some modifications to the expedition only if they do not:

- Jeopardize the health and safety of the other program participants or staff
- Place an undue administrative or financial burden on La Vida
- Severely alter the programmatic goals and methods used

Requests for modifications to the expedition must be discussed with La Vida staff at **least one month prior**. Modifications are not guaranteed; La Vida will work with the requestor to determine the feasibility of the request. A final plan must be reviewed and approved by La Vida. Requests that are sent in within a month of the expedition start date are less likely to be approved given the challenges in making late modifications to the expedition.

Each individual La Vida participant, and guardian, if participant is a minor, are responsible for reviewing the relevant Essential Eligibility Criteria below. As you read the criteria below, consider your ability to meet these requirements from a physical, mental health, cognitive, and emotional perspective.

## Participants should be able to...

- Understand and follow verbal and visual instructions individually, and in a group setting.
- Comprehend hazards and safety concerns when explained, and adhere to safety policies and procedures even when staff and trip leaders are not immediately present.
- Identify hazards posed by the environment (steep terrain, sun, cold, etc.) and other participants (fatigue, state of mind, etc.).
- Effectively communicate to others personal distress, injury or need for assistance.
- Stay properly hydrated and nourished, and learn skills for self-care, including proper hygiene and use of clothing and equipment.
- Refrain from the use of alcohol, tobacco, controlled substances, and any misuse of prescription or over the counter drugs.
- If using prescription drugs, self-administer medications under staff supervision according to New York State Department of Health regulations.
- Contribute to a safe social and learning environment and maintain appropriate relationships with other group members and instructors.
- Refrain from harassment, bullying, and all other behavior that disrupts the learning of others or the cohesion of the group.
- Abstain from cell phone use for the duration of the program.
  - La Vida staff carry communication devices for emergency situations but, otherwise, a La Vida Expedition is a cell phone-free program
- Wear a climbing harness, helmet and any other safety gear correctly after instructed.
- Live and function in an outdoor camp setting without access to electricity for up to 12 days.
  - *No prior camping experience is expected nor necessary. This criterion is meant to address students who have medications or other medical interventions that require access to electricity.*



- For participants bringing a personal medical device (i.e. glucose monitor, hearing aid): function in a wilderness environment, knowing it is at risk of water damage.

**Backpacking Activities: Participants should be able to...**

- Walk continuously for up to 2 miles at a moderate pace (2 mph) over steep and uneven terrain unassisted while carrying a backpack weighing 30-50 pounds, and then repeat following 5-15 minutes of rest (up to 9 miles total in one day).
- Not have immediate access to advanced medical care facilities for the duration of the backpacking portion of a program. Participants may be up to an 8-hour hike from definitive care.

**Water Activities: Participants should be able to...**

- In the event of a capsized canoe, independently get out from under capsized canoe, remain face-up in water with personal floatation device, and identify, make progress to and ascend shoreline with or without instruction.
- Carry a canoe with another person ( $\approx$  75lbs) over uneven terrain for up to 1.5 miles with periodic breaks.
- Get in and out of a boat from the shore or from the water independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance.
- Swim in water, while wearing a personal flotation device.

If you have any questions on these Essential Eligibility Criteria or about your ability to meet one or more criteria, please contact La Vida at [LaVida@Gordon.edu](mailto:LaVida@Gordon.edu).

# **DIRECTIONS TO LA VIDA'S NEW YORK BASE CAMP**

**460 COUNTY ROUTE 50 (MCMASTER ROAD), LAKE CLEAR, NY 12945**

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We look forward to your attending La Vida this summer. Please plan to arrive at the La Vida Base Camp between 1 and 4 P.M. If you are picking up a group, please call La Vida's New York Base Camp at 518.891.4188 for specific details regarding the group's departure. You can search "La Vida Adirondack Expeditions Base Camp" in Google/Apple maps, or follow the directions below:

## **FROM THE WEST**

- Take Route 3 East through Tupper Lake. It will merge with Route 30.
- Turn left on Route 30 North for 19.8 miles towards Saranac Inn and the Adirondack Regional Airport. You will pass the Young Life Camp and the Fish Creek State Campground.
- Route 30 will then take a sharp left. GO STRAIGHT to continue on Route 186 for 2.1 miles heading east. You will pass the airport on the left along the way.
- Take a right on McMaster Road. After .2 miles, turn right to stay on McMaster Road.
- Continue on McMaster Road for 1.3 miles. The La Vida Base Camp is on the left. You will see the La Vida sign at the base of our driveway.

## **FROM THE EAST**

- Take Route 87 North to Exit 30. (The sign will read Lake Placid, Keene, Saranac Lakes).
- Go left off the exit ramp onto Route 9 N. Continue 2.1 miles and go straight to stay on Route 73 West. Continue on Route 73 for 25.8 miles.
- If you would like to avoid Lake Placid, bear left onto Old Military Road at the fork after you pass the Olympic Ski Jumps. Take this road for 3.6 miles, and then take a left onto Route 86. To go through Lake Placid, continue on Route 73 through downtown Lake Placid and turn left onto Route 86 at the traffic light.
- Stay on Route 86 through Saranac Lake. Take a left onto Route 186 at the blinking yellow light. You will see signs for the airport and Donnelly's Ice Cream is on the corner. It's 11.4 miles from the end of Old Military Road to Route 186.
- After 1.7 miles, take the first left, which is McMaster Road. After .2 miles, turn right to stay on McMaster Road.
- Continue on McMaster Road for 1.3 miles. The La Vida Base Camp is on the left. You will see the La Vida sign at the base of our driveway.

## **DIRECTIONS FROM BOSTON VIA GRAND ISLE FERRY**

- Take I-93 North to I-89 North.
- Stay on I-89 North for about 159 miles through New Hampshire into Vermont.
- Take Exit 17, which will be approximately 9 miles north of Burlington.
- Turn right off ramp onto Route 2 West.
- Travel 10 miles and take a LEFT onto VT-314 N after the second Mobil station.
- Travel 2.2 miles and take a LEFT at the blinking yellow light. Welcome to the ferry!

## **IN NEW YORK**

- Go straight out of the ferry's parking lot and continue 3.8 miles to I-87 South.
- After about 1 mile, take Exit 38 onto Route 374 West (to Dannemore and Saranac).
- Travel 7.5 miles and turn onto New York 3 West (to Cadyville and Saranac).
- Stay on Route 3 for 34 miles until you enter the town of Bloomingdale, New York.
- In Bloomingdale, Route 3 will take a sharp left; you want to take a right at the stop sign onto State Street.
- After .1 miles, bear left at the fork where you'll see an old, run-down church. Continue on Bloomingdale-Gabriels Road for 3.5 miles and then turn left on Split Rock Road.
- After .4 miles, take a left onto Route 86.
- Continue on Route 86 for 1.8 miles and then take a right at the blinking yellow light which is Route 186.
- McMaster Road will be your first left, about 1.8 miles down Route 186.
- After .2 miles, turn right to stay on McMaster Road.
- Continue on McMaster Road for 1.3 miles. The La Vida Base Camp is on the left. You will see the La Vida sign at the base of our driveway.

# LA VIDA

## GROUP LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

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The La Vida staff understand that planning and preparing for a La Vida expedition might make you a little anxious the first time. So in an attempt to help you structure your planning and preparations, we have come up with these recommendations. This information will hopefully ensure that your group will be able to get the most from their La Vida experience and help you stay more organized in the midst of all your other responsibilities.

The La Vida staff would like you to consider us your partners in ministry. As a leader and coordinator, you will be responsible for the following details:

1. Send each participant, or prospective participant, the following links
  - a. [Participant and Parent Information Packet](#)
  - b. [Release Forms](#)
  - c. [Medical Forms](#)
2. Submit \$100/participant confirmation deposit by May 1 in order to receive a 5 percent discount.
3. Complete [Group Leader Questionnaire](#) **three weeks prior** to the trip.
4. Plan for the group's transportation to La Vida's Base Camp.
5. Pay the remaining balance **two weeks prior** to the trip.
6. Show up for your trip!
7. Serve as a role model in your faith and show enthusiasm for the La Vida experience and be willing to work with the Trip Leaders in guiding, praying for and adapting the experience to your group's needs.

# ROLES OF THE LA VIDA TRIP LEADER AND GROUP LEADER

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## ROLE OF THE LA VIDA TRIP LEADER

Trip Leaders are committed to delivering a safe and educational experience that is grounded in La Vida's core principles. They equip the participants with the skills needed to camp and travel. They also coach participants on how to reflect in order to draw out learning from the experience.

**1. Skill Trainer:** In the first few days of La Vida, Trip Leaders will teach your group camping skills that will make the La Vida experience safe and as comfortable as possible.

**2. Program Director:** Trip Leaders, with the help of the director, will work with the group leaders to plan a creative and individually unique program, designed to offer your group spiritual growth, adventure and fun.

**3. Translator:** Trip Leaders will seek to help each learner translate the different experiences into organized words and concepts that will enhance the experiences with meaning and significance to make the transfer of learning possible.

**4. Group Facilitator:** Trip Leaders and group leaders work to facilitate the small-group experiences by stimulating and encouraging the development of a supportive Christian community able to deal with self-disclosure, conflict and other challenges that arise.

**5. Counselor:** Trip Leaders as well as group leaders will find it necessary at times to be on hand for talking through emotional and/or mental well-being issues. This is especially necessary when students wrestle with biblical truths, self-discovery and the everyday stresses and strains of living in community.

## ROLE OF THE GROUP LEADER

This role is a flexible one and usually changes often within the 8- to 12-day patrol. The following, along with the shared roles mentioned to the left, are additional suggestions that will help define the role of the group leader who accompanies the group.

**1. Role Model:** The students will see the real you on La Vida, and you will not have the security of always being in charge with all the right plans and alternate plans. *Just be yourself.* Your example will do much to make or break the effectiveness of the program. If you are excited and willing to try, they will be too.

**2. One of the Team:** This is your opportunity to relate to your group as a co-learner and as an equal. There is real power in this equality, and it will do much for relationships with kids.

**3. Encouragement:** The La Vida experience provides a great opportunity to support and encourage young people. They will need and appreciate it. It is contagious as well.

**4. Pastor:** Your relationship with the students will grow as you look out for their total well-being and development— especially their spiritual development. We will be praying with you throughout the trip.

**5. Follow-up Person:** Since you will be the one to go back with the students, our job is to support you in your leadership role within the group. You are critical in helping each student continue to grow and apply what he or she learned on La Vida.

# LA VIDA

## A PROCESS IN EXPERIENTIAL DISCIPLESHIP BY RICH OBENSCHAIN, FOUNDER OF THE LA VIDA CENTER

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In Colossians 1:28 Paul writes these words: *"We proclaim Christ! We warn everyone we meet, and we teach everyone we can, all that we know about Him, so that, if possible, we may bring every man up to his full maturity in Christ Jesus."* (J. B. Phillips)

La Vida is a ministry that focuses on this idea of "full maturity in Christ Jesus." The main goal of La Vida is to enable students to make a deeper, personal commitment to Christ and begin to understand what that commitment can mean in their everyday lives. La Vida's understanding of commitment to Christ is that of a dynamic process of growth that needs to be encouraged and nurtured.

Our philosophy of discipleship is one that was modeled by Jesus Christ in the training of His own disciples. It involves biblical teaching, modeling, experience and learning from experience, and passing on to others what one has received.

The La Vida ministry tries to offer students a supportive environment where their commitment to Christ can be explored, expressed, encouraged, tested and developed. Young people today need to be placed in a variety of experiences that offer adventure, challenge, and service-leadership opportunities. In this atmosphere, they are encouraged to make responsible decisions and take action based on biblical truth and their present level of faith and commitment to Christ. This will allow youth the freedom to learn from their successes as well as their struggles and failures. In this way, youth will be able to take ownership of their personal commitment to Christ and test many of the biblical truths or concepts they have been taught. A quote from Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound, helps us see the need for experience in all of education, and this is especially true in Christian Education.

"I Heard and I . . . Forgot  
I Saw and I . . . Remembered  
I Experienced and I . . . Understood"

Said another way, La Vida's process of experiential discipleship tries to address the needs of youth who are growing up in a society that is "information rich but experience poor." Many youth feel they have inherited Christianity from their families. They have heard numerous sermons, talks, or teachings on concepts like love, faith, trust, commitment, forgiveness, etc., but have little or no real experience how these teachings work in real-life situations. La Vida addresses this great need for experiences that can help give substance and deeper meaning to these concepts and teachings. It is the hope of the La Vida ministry—through adventure experiences—that students would become mature and complete. It is also a hope that they would more fully understand and appreciate the claim of Jesus Christ upon their lives. It is our prayer that they might be able to make the kind of commitment to Christ that will change their lives, including their values, character and behavior.

### LA VIDA'S EXPERIENTIAL DISCIPLESHIP MODEL IS SIMPLE

1. Remove students from their comfort zone and place them in an unfamiliar environment, taking away all the status symbols that give us identity, like clothes, makeup, music, cars, etc.
2. Give students a Christ-centered support group, which can empower them for servanthood and leadership through the power of love, understanding, acceptance, and encouragement.
3. Challenge students with activities designed to test their initiative, teamwork, perseverance and ability to learn and apply new skills, using them responsibly for the good of the group.
4. After each activity, create the space for personal reflection and group processing so the group can translate the experience into words, concepts and generalizations for use in the future.
5. Help each student draw conclusive ends to the lessons learned so the transfer of learning can be applied to future goals and life experiences.

Personal reflection and group processing take many forms on La Vida. The following ideas are just a few that have been used successfully: Daily morning quiet times, informal conversation, processing times for each activity, evening discussions, time to journal, self-study papers, group and personal goal setting, final debrief and feedback session, 24- to 48-hour solo experience.