

Labo Camp

During the exchange, you will go to Labo Camp with your host. At Tokyo orientation, Labo staff will tell you where and when you will go to camp. There are several camps around the country and each camp has several camp sessions. The camps are at beautiful locations in the mountains, often areas which are used for skiing in the winter. Your host mother will help you pack for camp. Be sure and bring your 4-H t-shirts, name cards, camera and photo album to camp.

Campers usually travel to a train station which also has a bus terminal. You and your host brother or sister will then get on a bus with other Labo members and a Labo tutor chaperone. Your bag will be stored in the bus luggage compartment. The bus will make a bathroom stop, but you should use the toilet before getting on the bus. Bring your name cards for trading during the ride, plus anything else you want for the bus ride in your backpack or day bag. If the ride is long, you will be given a box lunch. If you also bring snacks, be prepared to share them with others. Make sure you have access to your sun hat. At rest stops and at camp, you will wear your hat any time you are outdoors.

The other campers on the bus will want to trade name cards with you during the bus ride. This is especially important to the younger Labo members. Be sure and have your name cards “on you” when you board the bus.

When you get to camp, you and your host will take your bags to your lodge. The boys sleep in one room and the girls in another. During the day, the bedding and luggage are stored away. Although you are only at camp a few days, you and the members of your lodge become like a family. You will play together and work together. You will take turns to go get the food for each meal, set up and take down tables at meal times, put out the ohashi (chopsticks) and lay out and put away the futons .

Bring your photo album and let one of the lodge mothers or the Senior Mate who is your lodge leader know that you have it. They would really like it if you would show your album to the other lodge members. The Senior Mate and Lodge Mothers speak good English and are there to help you, so talk with them if you need anything. There will also be a chaperone or a Labo Intern at Camp.

The Labo Intern is an English-speaking staff member from the USA, Canada, Australia or New Zealand who works for Labo. They will hold a nightly meeting for all the delegates from the USA. This may include 4-H delegates, plus any delegates who have come to Japan through other exchange programs. During the times you spend with the other USA delegates, you might enjoy having a chance to speak English at normal speed. Although it's great fun to see your 4-H friends again, please remember that you should be spending most of your time with your host. One of the things you will do at these meetings is plan some games you can teach your fellow campers and plan an activity you can lead during the campfire the final night. The campfire activity is a short, easy, repeating song or rhyme, preferably with hand motions, that you will teach everyone at camp. You may also be asked to choose which activities you will do when you return to Tokyo for your final night in Japan. Feel free to ask questions if you aren't sure what you want to do.

Each year, the camp has a theme, a story or legend that will be part of most camp activities. During camp, you and the members of your lodge will decide the roles you will each play in the camp theme activity story, practice it, and perform it for another lodge. You will also play singing/dancing games to music, such as the hokey pokey. You will know some of the songs and games, while others will be new to you. You may know the song, but not the motions which go with it. Don't worry if you don't know how to do it. Nobody expects you to immediately get it right. Just relax, try, have fun and laugh at yourself if you make a mistake. Camp is a great time to be a kid again.

The members of your lodge will range in age from young kids who are away from home for the first time to high school students. You and your host will choose from a selection of activities ranging from crafts to a mountain hike. Some of the activities are for younger children and some are designed for older lodge members. If you are not sure, ask your Lodge mother or a Labo tutor or Labo intern to help you decide which activity you would like to do. If you want to do the all-day mountain hike, you must be in good condition and have brought the required equipment from home. This includes long pants (no jeans), long-sleeved shirt, hiking boots, rain gear and sun protection. See your handbook for a complete list.

You and your lodge members will also participate in some outdoor activities

together and go to the camp store together. Usually, you will always be with your host and with your lodge group, except when the USA delegates do something together or if you make arrangements to sign up for the mountain hike and your host does not.

During the camp bazaar, you and other USA delegates will take turns selling the items you brought. Most items cost about 10 to 50 Yen, so be sure and bring coins.

At the end of camp, the members of your lodge have a chance to talk about how much camp has meant to them. When people ask you for your "opinions" or "impressions", they are not asking for criticism, suggestions or advice. This is the time for a compliment or comment about how much fun you have had, something that impressed you, or happy memories you will bring home with you. It's best to compliment the entire group or situation and not an individual person. For example, "I really enjoyed the friends I made at camp. I will never forget this." or "It amazed me how we could perform the theme activity so well without using any costumes." or "Labo Camp is so much fun. I'm really glad I came."

Camp is very important to Labo members. Don't be surprised to see many of them cry on the last day of Camp. The last day would be a time for you to give your lodge members, Lodge Mothers, Senior Mates and others any pins or other gifts such as bookmarks, pencils, stickers or postcards you have brought for them, if you haven't already done this. Please don't give them candy or food, as some members may have allergies.

You and your lodge members will also be able to sign one another's shirts or hats. Be sure and thank the Lodge Mothers, Senior Mates, Labo Interns, Labo Tutors and others who helped you at camp. You will see the other USA delegates again when you all return to Tokyo at the end of the exchange.

Once camp is over, you usually only have about a week left in Japan. It's time to look in your journal and make sure that you have done everything you wanted to do in Japan, including your shopping.

If your suitcase hasn't already been picked up at your host home (before or during camp) for shipping back to Tokyo, this may happen a few days after you return from camp.