



YOUR FIRST CAMPING EVENT

Don Rodrigo Bernardez

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So you've had enough of Shire meetings and you're ready for your first camping event? Great! Here are some ideas to help you get ready.

CAMPING WITH THE SHIRE

An SCA event can be confusing to a newcomer. We have different customs from the mundane world and it's sometimes hard to fit in at first. People are friendly but they all seem to know each other and what's going on. It's really easy to let yourself be isolated and miss out on the time of your life. In Cloondara, we generally have a Shire camp at large events and newcomers are encouraged to join us. We can help answer questions and introduce you around. If for some reason we're not attending the event, let us know and we'll try to hook you up with someone that is going and willing to show you around. Remember that we want you to have a good time so you keep coming back!

Whether you are camping with the Shire or with a separate household, it is polite to offer to help with camp chores. This can include set up and tear down of the camp and, if possible, any loading or unloading and equipment maintenance.

If necessary, the Shire can usually help with transportation to an event. This is arranged one on one at a meeting or by posting a request to the Shire Facebook group. It is polite to offer to help with the cost of gas. Be sure you let your ride know how much stuff you plan to bring and

make sure there is enough room for everything. Also make sure your time schedules are in sync – many SCAdians like to stay late on Sunday to enjoy planned activities. Don't wait until 8 AM Sunday morning to mention that you must be home by 9 AM!

NECESSARY ITEMS

So what do you "need" to bring? Actually, you really don't "need" to bring anything for your first event – we can generally loan you everything you need, aside from your personal items. The following is really the bare minimum you'll want to either bring or arrange to borrow:

- **Garb** – you are asked to wear pre-1600 garb at SCA events. This helps maintain the illusion that we're living in the Middle Ages. You'll also be more comfortable in garb because that's what everyone else will be wearing. Don't get too concerned about being perfect at your first event – everyone will know you are a newcomer and will not expect you to know everything about medieval textiles. Make an attempt at garb and you'll fit in. Again, the Shire can loan you garb if you need it or arrange to have garb for you at the event. It is polite to offer to clean garb before returning it. Be sure to ask before washing garb, however, as some materials can be damaged by improper washing.
- **Accessories** – you'll soon learn that medieval garb does not include pockets, so

you'll eventually want to get a belt pouch or shoulder bag to hold all those odds and ends. A hat helps on sunny days and eliminates the need to wear sunglasses (you weren't really going to wear them, were you?). It gets cold at night, so a cloak is a good thing. This can be an old blanket tossed around your shoulders. If you don't have a cloak, you can get away with wearing warm clothes under your garb (T-tunics are very forgiving!).

- **Feast gear** – when food is served, you'll want to have something to put it on. It is polite to provide your own plate and utensils when invited to share food. A wooden plate or bowl will do just fine (try Goodwill for a cheap source or visit the Merchants Row at any large event). You'll probably want a knife and spoon as well. Forks are optional – most people didn't use them in the Middle Ages – and fingers are always period. You're also going to need a mug or goblet for sampling the various liquid refreshments available in camp. Most SCAdians use a belt holder to keep a mug handy. The Shire does have loaner feast gear available.
- **Sleeping bag or blankets** – it does get cold in some of the areas where we camp, so don't skimp on your sleeping arrangements. A good sleeping bag can be essential in the colder months. If you choose to "go period" and sleep with just blankets, make sure you have enough. Sharing your sleeping area with another is also a great way to keep warm and very period!
- **Toilet Kit** – morning breath may be period, but even people of the Middle Ages brushed their teeth and took a bath (more

frequently than you'd think!). Bring what you need. Most SCA events are held at sites with running water, showers and flush toilets, supplemented by the ever-popular porta-potties. However, there are a few sites where the facilities are limited. This information is normally posted in *The Page* and/or the event Facebook page, so check with someone in the Shire if you're not sure. By the way, it is always a good idea to include insect repellent and sunblock in your toilet kit.

TENTS

The Shire owns a large sunshade that is usually set up at large events and serves as our main gathering point. Feel free to bring a mundane tent and use it. There are certain parts of the camp that are restricted to period tents but this is generally just around the main tourney field. If you're not sure, ask before pitching your tent. Crash space in someone's tent or pavilion is an option and can usually be arranged at a meeting or by posting a request to the Shire Facebook page.

FOOD

The site fee charged for each event covers the cost of site rental and related expenses. You are expected to make your own arrangements for food. For your first event, it's easiest to just join in with the Shire. Depending on who's going and what the event is, we may have a formal meal plan where we share costs (usually around \$25) and volunteers handle meal planning and cooking. Of course, we all pitch to help with the preparation and cleanup.

Ice chests and coolers are permitted but we ask that you cover them with a tablecloth or blanket or keep them out of site. Stoves are

usually available as well, but since they are personally owned, you should check beforehand to make sure someone is bringing one.

SCAdian cooking is as simple or as elaborate as you want. Some folk can't be bothered with cooking and cleanup, so they feed on dried meats, cheese, bread and fruit. Some prefer one-pot meals like hearty soups and stews. Others go with full multi-course meals. If you have some special dietary requirements, do everyone a favor and let the cooks know before the event. If your diet is really restricted (e.g. you only eat eucalyptus leaves) give the cooks a break and bring your own food.

DRINK

Most sites are provided with water but there are a few where water is non-potable or unavailable. This information is normally posted in the site information on an event page, so check with someone in the Shire if you're not sure.

Alcoholic beverages are normally permitted at events (wet sites) but there are certain sites where they are either banned (dry) or where containers should not be visible and should not be discarded on site (discreetly wet). Again, the event page will have this information, so check with a Shire member.

Beverages are freely shared within the Society, particularly at campfires and Bardic Circles. However, it is polite to provide for yourself and to bring a little extra to share with others rather than to just assume that there will be freebies available (unless, of course, you are a bard!). It is bad form to just help yourself to a group's keg or bottles or to rifle through someone's ice chest without invitation or without asking first.

A small warning - many SCAdians brew their own stuff and potencies vary, so you might want to ask what something is before accepting a drink. Not all home brews or drinks are alcoholic, by the way. There are many period recipes for non-alcoholic drinks that are popular in the Society.

CHILDREN

The SCA is family oriented and all age groups are welcome. The environment is safe and friendly and you'll find a lot of help readily available. At large events, the Society organizes a Page School with a variety of activities for different age groups. This is not, however, a babysitting service. Page School is intended to help children learn about the Society and have fun. Your support and involvement is expected and appreciated.

PETS

You'll be surprised at the variety of animals you'll see at SCA events. Falcons, rats, goats, dogs and horses are not unusual. Generally, the animal must be under your control and you must abide by any local county ordinances. Of course, you are expected to clean up after your pet. Dogs must be kept leashed. You should also be conscious of the climate extremes to which your pet may be subjected (hot days, cold nights) and plan accordingly. Some sites have prohibitions against pets, so if you plan on bringing one, check the event page or talk to a Shire member to make sure it's okay.

PRIVY ETIQUETTE

Privy etiquette? No, I'm not kidding. When you have a lot of people sharing facilities, a little politeness goes a long way.

- Identify a privy which appears to be available (green showing at the knob).
- Knock on the privy and then wait 4 seconds. Some folks neglect to lock the privy properly. Don't be that guy.
- Confirm there is toilet paper available in the privy.
- Do your business.
- Completely close the lid on the seat of the privy (this will allow the fumes to escape out the top of the privy rather than accumulating IN the privy).
- Exit the privy and close the door softly. This is especially important late at night when there may be folks sleeping near the privy.
- If you used the last of the toilet paper in the privy (or nearly so) or if you identified other privies that have no toilet paper notify the event autocrat.

SOME DOS AND DON'TS

Unlike mundane campers, we camp to be near friends. Most SCA camps will welcome newcomers, particularly if the camp has been thrown open for a party. It is courteous, however, to ask before joining a group.

Pavilions are people's homes. It is rude to enter uninvited. Call out and ask permission before entering. Generally, parties in pavilions are private, unlike those around campfires. It's usually a good idea not to intrude without an invitation.

The Kingdom Law specifically forbids the use of Coleman type lanterns outside a tent. We also discourage the use of flashlights and other non-

period lights if possible. This helps maintain the ambience and protects people's night vision.

This being the West and subject to grass fires, there are specific policies governing the use of fire and open flame. You should be familiar with these policies. Any Shire member should be able to fill you in or you can find the policies at http://www.westkingdom.org/wk_firepolicy.htm

A few really bad things to do:

- Give alcohol to a minor. This can get you thrown off site immediately.
- Leave a fire unattended.
- Wash your dishes in the restroom. This is unsanitary and impolite.
- Shampooing your hair at the communal water faucet Again, this is unsanitary and impolite.

A FINAL WORD

You may have noticed that in several places I have used the word "polite". The SCA is founded on the principles of chivalry. Courtesy and respect are expected in our dealings with each other. If you are polite and helpful, you will find many new friends in the Society. If you are selfish and self-absorbed, you'll find yourself very lonely at events. Remember, the choice is yours!