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How to organise a “Pony Club Camp” weekend

Complexity rating: moderate

The Pony Club regularly arranges fun and training weekend camps for its members, but why should it only be the youngsters who have all the fun?

Aim: to organise a camp weekend with some longer rides, fun activities and uninterrupted as well as completely unashamed non-stop horsey talk.

You need:

- a date (choose something well in advance to give yourself the opportunity of sending out several invites and reminders – you can use the society’s yahoo list IceHorsesGB@yahoogroups.com
- a venue (minimum, a field for paddocking the horses and – a separate area - for parking lorries and pitching tents); nice rides along routes you know, no more than ca 40 mins drive away. Most people who are willing and able to travel with their horses at all, tend to have their own electric fencing, etc. – But check that they do, or help with finding someone who has spares.
- ideally, enough space for everyone to assemble under a roof (shed, stable) – if the weather turns out poor.

Simple suggested programme:

Fri eve or Sat morning	arrival; riders look after their own needs
Sat	longish ride with lunch break (pub meal, or riders provide their own food)
Sat	evening – bring and share BBQ/bonfire – everyone contributes to a shared meal
Sun	breakfast, riders look after their own needs
Sun	shorter ride (good for the horses, and allows people to set off for home in good time)

Additional programme points:

- invite a local professional to give a talk on a point of general interest for riders
- invite a local craftsman to hold workshop for making something together (reins, head collars)
- ask one of the participants to give talk / organise common activity
- ask all participants to contribute some feature to make the evening a success
- instead of one of the hacks, have a fun competition or training session
- watch a (more or less technical) video on Icelandic horses together
- etc, etc, etc.

Points to consider:

- Make sure that the venue is safe and secure for riders and horses (it is always a good idea to carry out a risk assessment)
- If you want to fill the day (Saturday), do not start the ride too early.
- Do not exceed max. of 20 miles overall as not all horses or riders might be as fit as your own.
- Do plan for extra time – it always takes longer to get going in a group than on your own.
- Be quite sure of your route.
- For emergencies, have your vet’s and farrier’s tel. number in a handy place.
- Be wary of charging any money, in which case you become the organiser of a proper “event” with all the legal implications that has. Make it clear that everyone provides for their own needs, and is responsible for their own actions; make sure that you expect everyone to be properly insured. If the venue costs anything, divide the charge equally between all participants, and do not charge any more.

Tip: Think of yourself in terms of a **facilitator**, rather than an **organiser**. You initiate and make things happen in the first instance, but from then on, all participants look after themselves and are responsible for themselves and their horses. That way, you will probably do less work by way of preparation, are more relaxed, and do not feel let down or upset, if things do not turn out quite the way you envisaged it. Once it has started, all participants are equals in shaping the event.