



ties during the month, they may also cover requirements in Cooking, Camping, Orienteering, Pioneering, Wilderness Survival, and other nature-related merit badges.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

The patrol leaders' council can involve parents in the program feature this month by:

- Asking qualified parents to assist with instruction in camping and hiking skills.
- Inviting parents on the backpacking outing.
- Asking parents to provide transportation to the starting point for the hike, if necessary.

PATROL LEADERS' COUNCIL

The PLC should meet in the middle of the previous month to plan troop activities for this program feature. If you don't complete all items on the following agenda, continue planning at PLC meetings after each troop meeting.

- Decide on the route and destination for the hike. If permission will be needed, assign someone to secure it.
- Decide whether it will be a day outing or a longer trek.
- Review skills needed for the hike.
- If the troop will be camping overnight, plan special activities. If special gear will be needed, assign someone to obtain it; seek help from the troop committee, if necessary.

- Plan details of troop meetings for the month. Assign patrol demonstrations, covering skills that will be needed for the hiking activities.
- Hold a junior leader training session on advancement (*Scoutmaster Handbook*).

FEATURE EVENT

Backpacking Outing

Backpacking offers a multitude of program adventures for your troop. A hike or trek can let Scouts interact with nature, test their physical abilities, offer photo opportunities for your camera bugs, and help new Scouts meet their hiking and camping requirements through First Class.

You may want to organize the hike in stages, based on the skill levels and physical capabilities of the Scouts. One part could be relatively easy so that inexperienced Scouts can get a taste of backpacking. The second stage would give the more experienced young men a more challenging trail. Finally, the third stage would be a challenge for the older Scouts—almost a wilderness survival outing.

An unfamiliar route and destination would be best for the Scouts. Give them a topographic map and compass to find their way, or follow an established trail.

Conduct various activities along the route. Depending upon the needs of the group, you might want to consider one or more of the following highlights: