



THE CAMPSITE AT SHIELD RANCH

Programming at the Campsite can be added on to your group's visit or retreat. Designed to further connect visitors to the land, these experiential programs are led by Shield Ranch staff and associated educators.



Science & Environmental Enrichment

Environmental education and science learning for youth and adults focused on the local ecology and issues in Central Texas.



Community Building, Mindfulness & Inspiration

Being immersed in nature makes us happier, healthier and more connected. Mindfulness programs, teambuilding, writing and community activities like campfires.



Sustainability & Conservation

The Campsite is an educational model of sustainable building and system. Learn more about human impact on the environment around us through experiential learning and on conservation projects.



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Program Menu & Descriptions

Fees from the Pricing Sheet:

1-2 Hours of Programming: \$60 per staff member needed

Half Day of Programming (3-4 Hours): \$85 per staff member needed

Full Day of Programming (Up to 6 Hours): \$140 per staff member needed

*1 staff member per 15 participants; for groups larger than 15, additional program staff needed.

Welcome, Orientation, Overview

Orientation – 20-30 minutes – all ages – *included in every visit to the Campsite*

Host staff welcomes your group and orients you to the Campsite at Shield Ranch facilities and shares with you the history of this incredible conserved land. Learn about the ecosystem, natural features, and the conservation story. Host will introduce the Campsite's 100% off-grid systems, some of which are the first of their kind to be permitted in Texas. Get oriented to the Campsite facilities, rules, safety precautions, practical needs of your visit, and ask any questions. We will challenge you to be a steward of the facilities and natural environment along with us!

- ADA accessible
- Rain or shine

Guided Overview Hike with Shield Ranch Foundation Staff – 2-3 hours – Adults & all ages

Hit the trail for a general overview of the Campsite and Shield Ranch ecology, conservation story, cultural history, and natural features. Visit Rocky Creek, the historic settler's cabin and explore elevation changes and scenic views.

- Ability to walk moderate trail

Science & Environmental Enrichment

Birding with an Experienced Birder – 2-3 hours – Adults & youth ages 13+

Birding with an experienced birder provides an education in the tools, objectives, skills, and knowledge to see some of the 190 bird species on Shield Ranch, as well as continue birding anywhere! We provide use of binoculars, scope, and field guides. For beginners and advanced birders.

- Ability to walk moderate trail
- ADA accessible

Cultural History Hike to the Settlers' Cabin – 1-2 hours – Adults & youth ages 9+

Shield Ranch is designated a National Historic District. Join a guided hike to the site of the historic home constructed in the 1870s and lived in by the Doepenschmidt and Haas families, both German settlers. Begin the walk right at the Campsite where the settlers' stone fence circles our site. Learn the history of the settlers, the historical context of the 1870s and how they lived off the land.

- Ability to walk moderate trail

Night Hike – 2 hours – Adults & youth ages 9+

Dusk is a special time to experience wildlife. The sounds and sights will change as the sun sets and we walk back to the Campsite in the moonlight.

- Ability to walk moderate trail

Ecology Experience – 3 hours – Adults & youth ages 9+

With an experienced naturalist, learn the ecology of Shield Ranch through identifying native plants, wildlife, and discover how it's all connected using observation tools and experiential learning.

- Ability to walk moderate trail
- ADA accessible

Night Sky Stargazing and Astronomy – 2 hours – Adults & youth ages 9+

The dark skies are a Hill Country treasure. Observe stars, planets and more using a telescope with an experienced educator. Learn the connections, stories, and history of the night sky using technology with opportunities to gaze and ask questions.

- Ability to walk moderate trail
- ADA accessible

Creek Education and Exploration – 2 hours – Adults & youth ages 9+

Put on a pair of water shoes for this activity involving walking along and wading through Rocky Creek. Learn how to predict and find evidence of water quality by searching for macroinvertebrates that live in the creek. Learn about the aquatic ecosystem and discover what may become visible during your visit!

- Ability to walk moderate trail

Wellness, Community Building & Mindfulness/Reflection/Inspiration

Forest Bathing – 2-4 hours – Adults and youth ages 13+

This guided sensory experience, based on the Japanese healing art of “shinrin-yoku” (translated to “forest bathing”), focuses on the positive health impacts of spending time immersed in the natural world. Participants will use their senses to connect with the nature around them through guided invitations and prompts. Group sharing circles and moments of reflection are woven throughout this mindfulness experience.

- Ability to walk moderate trail
- ADA accessible
- Rain or shine

Natural Solitude Experience – 1-3 hours – Adults and youth ages 13+

A rare moment to spend time in the natural world alone. Facilitated by a guide, groups will be led and prompted on a solo staggered hike or solo sit-spot. Concluded with a regrouped facilitated debrief to reflect and incorporate learning.

- Ability to walk moderate trail
- ADA accessible

Nature Writing and Reflection – 2 hours – Adults & youth ages 9+

Using prompts inspired by the natural landscape of the Campsite at Shield Ranch, this facilitated writing experience for all ages will help participants slow down, use their senses, reflect, and connect. Engaging writing activities help everyone get something different from putting pen (or anything!) to paper.

- Ability to walk moderate trail
- ADA accessible
- Rain or shine

Campfire with s'mores, songs, reflection, and storytelling – 2 hours – Adults & youth ages 9+

What could be a more iconic way for a group to come together than under the starry sky at the Campsite? Our staff will set up a safe and enjoyable fire, while facilitating prompts for songs, storytelling, and reflection among the group. S'mores will be provided! (Available only when weather conditions allow for a safe campfire.)

- Ability to walk moderate trail
- ADA accessible
- Adaptable indoors by the fireplace

Team Building: Your Eco-Community – 1-4 hours – Adults & youth ages 9+

What would your ideal world in harmony with nature look like? Tackle complex questions about how our actions impact the world around us. A group workshop that challenges us to think creatively and teaches vital communication and empathy skills. Participants are guided through games, activities, and discussions in both small and large groups to consider the perspectives of their peers and act to be a part of conserving the natural world.

- Ability to walk moderate trail
- ADA accessible
- Rain or shine

Nature-Inspired Art – 3 hours – Adults & all ages

Be inspired by the original artist — nature! Guided close observation informs hands-on art for all levels. Experiment with natural pigments, sketching, sun prints, plant rubbings, weaving, and more.

- ADA accessible
- Rain or shine
- May include an additional cost for supplies

Sustainability & Conservation

Central Texas Water Essentials – 1 hour – Adults & youth ages 9+

A must for Central Texas residents. Learn about where our water comes from, the unique way that it's stored, the exciting ecosystem that thrives in it, current issues in water conservation and how you can make a difference in your community. Shield Ranch covers 10% of the Barton Creek Watershed. We'll dive into learning about water conservation and the Campsite's 100% rainwater collection system.

- ADA accessible
- Rain or shine

Hands-On Conservation Project – 2-6 hours – Adults & youth ages 15+ (subject to availability based upon timing of projects)

Join in a hands-on, team conservation project with the goals of restoring the land and improving soil health, native flora, wildlife habitats, water quality and quantity. Activities may include brush removal, planting native seeds, trail maintenance, citizen science and more depending on the season. You'll learn the safety, tools, and techniques of the project with an experienced guide.

- Projects vary in ability; some ADA accessible projects may be available.

Shield Ranch Conservation Story – 1-2 hours – Adults & youth ages 15+

Take a deeper dive into the Shield Ranch conservation and management story through learning about some of our past and current research and management projects and learning outcomes on the land. Can be incorporated with landowner education and techniques for conservation.

- ADA accessible
- Rain or shine

Sample Schedules

Day Visit Sample Schedule: Community Building
8am Arrival
8:30am Coffee and light breakfast served in the Pavilion
Welcome orientation with Campsite staff
10am Your group's work facilitated by your team
12pm Lunch served, Free time
1:30pm Guided Forest Bathing walk with Campsite staff
3pm Your group's reflection facilitated by your team
4pm Departure

Day Visit Sample Schedule: Environmental Enrichment
7am Arrival
7:30am Birding (Trails)
10am Welcome orientation with Campsite staff (Pavilion) with snacks
10:30am Central Texas Water Wisdom (Pavilion)
11:30am Lunch served (Pavilion)
12:30pm Free time
1pm Ecology experience (Trails)
3pm Departure

2 Night Overnight Sample Schedule: Conservation Focus
3pm Arrival and shelter assignments

4pm Welcome orientation with Campsite staff in (Pavilion)
4:30pm Central Texas Water Wisdom (Pavilion)
6:30pm Hosted dinner and free time
8pm Night hike
10pm Sleep
7am Breakfast served in the Pavilion
8:30am Hands on conservation project (trails)
12pm Hosted lunch (on the trails)
12:30pm Hands on conservation project (trails)
3pm Free time
4pm Team Building: Your Eco-Community Activity
6pm Dinner
8pm Hosted campfire with s'mores, songs, reflection, and storytelling
Sleeping
7am Breakfast
8am Creek Exploration
11am Free time
12pm Departure

2 Night Overnight Sample Schedule: Community Building & Mindfulness
3pm Arrival and shelter assignments
4pm Welcome orientation with Campsite staff in (Pavilion)
4:30pm Your group's work facilitated by your team
6:30pm Hosted dinner and free time
8pm Team Building: Your Eco-Community Activity
10pm Sleep
7am Breakfast served in the Pavilion

8:30am Your group's work facilitated by your team
12pm Hosted lunch
1pm Forest Bathing
4pm Free time
6pm Dinner
8pm Campfire with s'mores, songs, reflection, and storytelling
10pm Sleeping
7am Breakfast
8am Your group's work facilitated by your team
12pm: Departure