

Profile: Jessica Lange

Hometown:

Auckland, New Zealand

Program:

Summer Camp USA

Tell us in a few hundred words which Camp you were at and what you got up to at camp?

I was at Camp Cody which is in Freedom, New Hampshire.

Camp was amazing! I had the time of my life and would go back in an instant! It was all go from the time we arrived – staff week kicked off with more information than the jetlagged brain could handle and a bit of manual labour, and before we knew it the campers were moving in and it was full steam ahead, no looking back!

For three sessions I lived in a cabin with about twelve teen girls aged 13 and 14 and for the last session, I was with girls aged 10 to 12. There were always at least 2 other counsellors living in the same cabin, so it made dealing with the girls a bit easier and a lot more fun! Despite initial expectations, the campers were fantastic – they were full of surprises and always a laugh!

Other than a cabin counsellor, I was employed as a Trips Leader. This meant that each and everyday I was in charge of taking a group of campers out on trips that they had signed up to. This included white water rafting, zip lining, mining, whale watching, deep sea fishing, baseball games, paintball, and rock climbing, just to name a few! There were long days, often waking up earlier or going to bed later than the rest of camp, but was one of the most envied jobs at camp, because I got to join in on most of the trips!

The hardest part of the summer was leaving – the people I met came to be like a big, crazy family, and camp became my home away from home.

What was your role at camp?

I was a Trips Leader and Cabin Counsellor.



Top 3 memories of Summer Camp?

1. Colour War!
2. Staff week!
3. Being at camp!

Was there a camper that stands out in your mind? If so why?

There was one camper that was assigned to my cabin, and I was warned about her before she arrived – in previous years she had had serious cases of homesickness, was bullied, and was generally a more needy camper than most. We had a few near misses – a couple of times we were near a breakdown, but I tried my hardest to distract her from what was going on, keep her busy, and keep things positive! In the end, we had a great session together and avoided all disasters!

What are some of the experiences that you had which made an impact on you?

It's hard to pinpoint exactly how camp changes you, but just being there was huge - the entire experience was really positive and challenging! It was hard work, but it was a lot of fun, and very rewarding.



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Were there any times that were hard?

The long days and seemingly very short nights made it hard at times! Everyone is there to help each other out though, and I caught up on sleep eventually!

Did you travel after camp? Tell us about your adventures – where did you go?

After camp I spent 5 days in Boston, then 5 in New York before starting a Trek America tour. I signed up for the Coast to Coast South, which is a 35 day tour that took me right down the east coast to Key West, then across the South visiting Panama City Beach and New Orleans, before trekking through Texas and up to the Canyon lands, before hitting Vegas, San Diego and ending in LA! After that I had another 5 days to kill before heading home, so flew up to San Francisco which was epic!

How was the camp food?

Camp food was...camp food. They have to serve stuff the kids will eat, so breakfasts were usually full of sugary goodness like waffles, pancakes, and French toast – with loads of syrup. My lunches were usually sandwiches, but corn dogs, curly fries, tater tots, grilled cheese and tomato soup were all on the menu! Dinners were usually similar – pizza, pasta dishes, grilled chicken. There was always a salad bar though!

What was your accommodation like?

Camp Cody had both older and newer cabins – the newer ones had small staff rooms where we could keep our stuff, but we always slept in the same room as the campers. We had no air con, so very hot nights could be uncomfortable, but other than that the only problem was making sure the campers made their beds and swept the floors!

Would you do it again?

Without a doubt!!!

What is something unexpected/different/strange about USA compared to home?

It is BIG, but the people are very friendly!

Do you have any advice for someone who wants a Summer Camp adventure?

If you have ever thought about going to Summer Camp – just DO IT. Don't hesitate, have an open mind, don't worry too much, just get there and enjoy yourself. Also, don't over-pack, but don't forget to take warm clothes and an extra pair of flip flops!

Did you have a good experience going on Summer Camp USA with IEP?

IEP made Summer Camp easy. The application and placement process was a breeze, the hardest part was waiting to hear back from a camp!

What did you value about going to Summer Camp with IEP?

How easy the whole process was, and how transparent everything was also – there were no hidden costs and all the information about visa applications were clear and simple!

Did you gain anything from Camp that will benefit you in what you do next?

I am more resilient and more likely to persevere with things than before camp. I am also aware that I am able to function on a lot less sleep than I thought possible!

What is next for you?

A "real" job is lined up, but I'm definitely keen to head back to camp, for one more summer at least!



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