



CAMP
EXCHANGE
USA 2025



INTRODUCTION

A partnership between Epic Exchange and CIEE (Council on International Educational Exchange) enables participants from various parts of the world to participate in this unique seasonal J-1 Camp Exchange program.

Led by the U.S. Department of State in partnership with CIEE, BridgeUSA brings together the next generation of current and emerging young leaders through unmatched cultural and professional exchange programs.

This summer, work as a camp counselor at an American summer camp! You will spend 8 to 10 weeks in the great outdoors, where you will gain new skills, learn to be a leader and experiential educator and make friendships that will last a lifetime, all while doing what you love and sharing your passion with kids.

Become an educator, mentor, and leader to a group of kids for around 9 weeks, develop important skills and gain critical work experience in the education field. No matter which role you choose, you will be an ambassador for your country, discover America through one of it's most unique traditions and develop skills like critical thinking and leadership that will serve you throughout life.

Just picture it: horseback riding, rock climbing and sailing, all on the same day. Staying up late, telling ghost stories with campers by the campfire and hiking to a private lake nestled in the woods.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of kids ages 5 to 17 attend summer camp at the thousands of camps located in rural areas across the U.S. The specific activities may vary from camp to camp, but an atmosphere of fun, friendship and discovery stay the same.

Campers and counselors alike have the chance to try new activities each day, learn important skills individually and as a group and make friendships that last a lifetime. Whether you are a first timer or returner on the program, we will guide you through the entire process from start to finish.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE

You will spend around 9 weeks working at a summer camp leading, teaching and encouraging campers to develop their talents and have fun. You will be placed in a position suited to your strengths such as sharing your particular passion and knowledge with others or as a camp counselor, guiding campers through the daily camp activities.

As a camp counselor you will be placed in one of two roles or a combination of the two:

Activity Specialist

You will guide campers through a specific activity/activities each day. Depending on the camp, activities range from ceramics to music lessons to waterskiing to specialties such as dance or skateboarding.

Cabin Counselor

Whether you are helping campers write an email home to their parents or checking in to see how bunkmates are getting along, you will be the children's activity master, supervisor and source of guidance throughout the program.

No matter which role you are assigned, you will take part in a transformative cultural exchange experience that will allow you to:

- Develop essential leadership and teaching skills and independence
- Establish lifelong friendships with your peers, mentors, and youth
- Share a part of yourself and your culture through meaningful interactions with both campers and peers
- Gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for U.S. culture



LIFE AT CAMP

Working as a Camp Counselor means between 8 and 10 weeks of dedication and long hours in a remote location. Due to the nature of these locations, it is important to prepare to live and work in a small community with minimal privacy.

Camp will be where you eat, sleep, work and relax with your group of campers and fellow Camp Counselors from America and around the world. You will work around six days a week and on your off days, you could explore the local community.

Many camp counselors will live in a bunk with the campers which means that you will have very little privacy and some camps may also have a no-cellphone policy while on duty. Camps have a zero-tolerance policy for alcohol, drugs and cigarettes while at camp and some camps may have certain dress codes.

Each day at camp will bring new challenges and experiences. The lessons in leadership and the friendships you make will last a lifetime. You will essentially be

helping campers have the best possible experience throughout the summer.

For many international camp counselors this program is the first time living and working in another country and homesickness is very common.

Your first days at camp (sometimes referred to as pre-camp) will usually be for settling in, getting to know fellow staff, the facilities and understanding your role at camp so that you are comfortable when the kids arrive.

The summer may be broken up into various sessions depending on the camp's structure, for example, if the camp offers campers two sessions then session one's campers might be at camp for the first four weeks and the second four weeks will be for the session two campers.

Each camp will differ in the way they operate and the camp that hires you will be able to provide you with more details in regard to their structure.

“MORE THAN
JUST A SUMMER
JOB”



TYPICAL DAY AT CAMP

Below is an example of what a typical day at camp might be like:

- 7:00 Wake up
- 7:30 Breakfast
- 8:15 Flag raising and announcements
- 9:00 – 11:30 Morning activities
- 12:00 Lunch
- 13:00 Rest hour
- 14:00 – 15:15 Afternoon activities
- 15:15 Snack time
- 15:45 – 17:00 Team sport activity
- 18:00 Dinner
- 19:15 Evening activity
- 21:30 Lights out

Activities and routines will differ for each camp depending on the type of camp.

AFTER CAMP

The summer is almost over, and you have said your goodbyes to your campers and making plans to visit your new friends. Now, get out and see America! Travel with new friends or travel alone.

After a successful camp season, you will have an optional 30 days to travel the country, learning about the landscapes, cultures and people that make the U.S such a diverse and fascinating place to live. From coast to coast and everywhere in between, you will find sites that inspire and amaze you.

Climb to the top of the Statue of Liberty in New York City, cross the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco or explore the great Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. No matter where you go, you will get a taste of what makes the U.S so unique.

TYPES OF CAMPS

The majority of placements are in traditional camps which can be co-ed or serve only female or male campers where many different activities are offered. For many families, it's a long-held tradition for children to attend the same summer camp their siblings, parents, or even grandparents did when they were young, creating a unique and close community atmosphere. Below are just a few other types of camps that you could be placed at.

Summer Camps are located throughout the country in mostly rural, nature-based settings and you will have the opportunity to get placed at one of the 300+ summer camps in our network depending on your skills and experience.

Girl Scouts

These camps only serve female campers and are often run in one- to two-week sessions throughout the course of the summer. Girl Scout camps are generally focused on building wilderness skills and participating in "outdoorsy" activities. Most Girl Scout camps use primitive tent cabins for their housing.

Disadvantaged/Underprivileged

These camps run or sponsored by outside community groups often serve low-income campers from inner cities or extremely rural backgrounds. These camps are often quite rustic in nature as they are dependent on philanthropic organizations and other groups for funding.

Agency/Nonprofit

These camps are affiliated with a social or advocacy agency that assists with funding. Many serve co-ed campers from all walks of life in the same facility, on separate campuses, or through different sessions for boys and girls. These camps can range from very rustic to traditional in their cabins and buildings. Many agency camps appear to be similar to private camps, but often follow a mission aligned with the affiliated agency.

Religious Affiliated

Most of these camps are affiliated with either the Christian or Jewish faiths and incorporate both religious and non-religious activities. The emphasis on religion varies greatly from camp to camp.

Speciality

These camps focus on a particular sport or activity like horseback riding, sailing, or theatre. Speciality camps may also serve specific populations such as campers who have ADHD or have suffered a loss.

Religious Affiliated

Most of these camps are affiliated with either the Christian or Jewish faiths and incorporate both religious and non-religious activities. The emphasis on religion varies greatly from camp to camp.

Special Needs

These camps serve campers with one or more disabilities including those who are emotionally, mentally, or physically disabled. Speciality needs camps often offer the most challenging camp experience, yet can be the most rewarding. Many of these camps serve more than one type of disability, serving campers with a range of mental and physical disabilities during one session or specializing in one disability each session.



LIVE,
WORK
AND PLAY
AT AN
AMERICAN
CAMP THIS
SUMMER

ACTIVITIES AT CAMP

Summer Camps offer a wide variety of games, sports and activities for campers to engage in. There is a constant search for international counselors from across the world with a background or experience in teaching some of the activities listed below.

We will work with you to find a camp that could best use your specific skill set.

1

Water Sports

Swim Instruction, Diving, Lifeguarding, Synchronized Swimming, Kayaking, Whitewater Kayaking, Flat Water Kayak, Canoeing, Crew, Motorboat Driving, Sailing, Surfing, Wakesurfing, Wakeboarding, Water-skiing, Windsurf

2

Arts & Crafts

Batik/Printing, Candle Making, Ceramics (Wheel/Kiln), Fine Arts, Glass Blowing, Handicrafts, Jewelry, Leathercraft, Metalwork, Model Making, Naturecraft, Painting, Puppetry, Sculpture, Silversmithing, Stained Glass, Textile, Tie Dye, Weaving (Loom), Woodworking

3

Land Sports

Baseball, Basketball, Cheerleading, Fencing, Field Hockey, Figure Skating, Golf, Gymnastics, Hockey (Ice/Street), Lacrosse, Martial Arts, Soccer, Softball, Tennis, Track & Field, Ultimate Frisbee, Volleyball

4

Target Sports

Archery, Riflery

5

Extreme Sports

ATV, BMX, Cycling, Go-Karts, Moto-Cross, Mountain Bike, Mountain Boarding, Skateboarding

6

Outdoor Skills

Animal Farm, Fishing, Gardening, Geocaching, Hiking, Orienteering, Outdoor Cooking, Primitive Camping, Rock Climbing, Ropes (High/Low), Shelter Building, Trip Leader/Driver, Trip Leader, Zip-Lining

7

Horseback Riding

Dressage, English Riding, Horse Care, Vaulting, Western Riding

8

Teaching

Physical Education Teacher, Special Education Teacher, Teacher

9

Media

Computer (Programming/Graphics), Creative Writing, Newspaper Production, Photography, Videography, Radio Broadcast, Recording and Sound Editing, Video Editing, Bass (Guitar), Brass, Bugle, DJ, Drums, Guitar, Keyboard, Piano, Rock Band, Singing/Vocals, Song Writing, Strings, Ukulele, Wind Instruments

10

Dance & Fitness

Aerobics, Ballet/Tap, Choreography, Contemporary, Hip Hop, Jazz, Kickboxing, Weights & Fitness, Yoga, Zumba

11

Performing Arts

Circus, Costuming, Lights/Sound Magic, Set Design/Construction, Theater, Theatrical Make-Up.

12

Science

Astronomy, Culinary Arts, Electronics, Environmental Education, Model Rocketry, Wildlife Ecology



YOUR J-1 VISA

As a part of the process, each applicant will need to apply for a J-1 Visa by attending an in-person interview at the nearest U.S Consulate. We will provide each applicant with the necessary documentation, guidance and visa preparation during the visa application step.

The non-refundable \$185 J-1 Visa fee is due during the visa application step and is typically paid directly to the U.S Consulate in the local currency. The payment method will be determined by the U.S Consulate.

The final decision to grant or refuse a J-1 Visa will always be with the U.S Consular officer during the in-person interview. Epic Exchange can never guarantee that any applicant will get their J-1 Visa granted. Visa approval / refusals rates differ by country.

INSURANCE

The CIEE in-house Insurance Plan is included for all participants. This policy provides a comprehensive combination of benefits along with CIEE support that is available 24 hours a day to assist participants with any type of medical or emergency situation. This arrangement ensures that our program participants are assisted by CIEE staff familiar with the program and in a position to provide a much higher level of service. The CIEE Insurance Plan covers most illnesses including viruses. The period of insurance will not exceed 5 months for any participant. Any participant who is unvaccinated against COVID-19 is encouraged to purchase additional insurance to cover any COVID-related illnesses, the policy currently provides coverage for COVID-related issues only for vaccinated participants. However, the plan also has restrictions with regards to pre-existing conditions. The health, safety, and well-being of our participants is very important to us and we will continue to assess the current guidance with regards to travelling to the United States. Policy information can be found at www.ciee.org/insurance

FLIGHT

It will be the responsibility of the applicant to book and pay for their flight to the U.S and back to their home country. The camp may pick up the applicant at CIEE gateway airports (JFK, EWR, BOS) or specify an alternate arrival airport. Applicants should not book flights before they have a visa approved.



ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

Below are the basic requirements for applying to the program:

- At least 18 years old by the June 1st in the year of program start
- Advanced or fluent English proficiency
- Between the ages of 18 - 27
- Currently working, studying or recently graduated
- Have a plan in place to continue working or studying upon return to home country after the program end
- Possess some of the skills listed on the "Activities at camp" page
- Possess experience working with kids
- No criminal record
- Available to travel from May/June - August/ September. Be available for a minimum timeframe of June 20th - August 15th
- Ability to pay for the program fee, visa fee, round trip flights and \$800 spending money

HOW DO YOU APPLY?

Online applications can be completed and submitted on the following link: <https://epicexchange.co.za/camp-exchange-usa.html>

The deadline for submitting a completed application for the same year is April 1st. The ideal time to apply is between November and February. Spaces are limited each year and we work on a first-come, first-serve basis. The application process typically takes between 2 - 3 months and this timeline can be affected by various factors like how quickly the applicant works on all documents, steps and also visa appointment availability.

Please feel free to contact us at info@epicexchange.co.za for any further questions.

*Epic Exchange cannot guarantee any applicant a placement, the final decision will always be with the camp. Not all participants who passed their 1st interview will be guaranteed a placement at camp.





Basic Package

First time participant without a placement at camp

- ✓ Application assistance and vetting
- ✓ In-person or webcam interviews to determine eligibility (required)
- ✓ English Eligibility screening (required)
- ✓ Visa processing assistance
- ✓ Visa sponsorship including DS-2019 Form issuance and \$35 SEVIS fee.
- ✓ Periodic pre-departure program resources and tools
- ✓ In-person or online Pre-departure Program Orientation
- ✓ CIEE Insurance coverage throughout the program from arrival in the U.S to program end date
- ✓ 24/7 support in the U.S by CIEE
- ✓ Up to 30 days of travel anywhere in the U.S after successful completion of your contract
- ✓ Completion Certificate and references available from CIEE upon successful program completion
- ✓ Courier fee for documents needed for Visa appointment (not exceeding \$25)
- ✓ Accommodation and food while on duty for the duration of the camp contract

R385
Registration
fee

R7000
Program fee

\$185
J-1 Visa fee

R...
Flight cost

WHAT DO YOU GET PAID?

- ✓ Applicants will earn a once off payment (pocket money) at camp for 9 weeks (63 days) of work.

\$2000

The frequency and payment schedule will be determined by the camp. For contracts beyond 9 weeks, camps have been instructed to pay an additional \$35 per day to international counselors.

The Program Registration fee payment is due before the interview with Epic Exchange and is fully refundable in the event of an unsuccessful interview. The Program fee is non-refundable and is due before an application will be submitted.

Booking and payment of flights to the U.S and back is the full responsibility of the participant however we recommend not booking any flights before the visa has been approved.



Direct Placement

First time participant with a placement at camp

- ✓ Application assistance
- ✓ In-person or webcam interviews to determine eligibility (if required)
- ✓ English Eligibility screening (If required)
- ✓ Visa processing assistance
- ✓ Visa sponsorship including DS-2019 Form issuance and \$35 SEVIS fee.
- ✓ Periodic pre-departure program resources and tools
- ✓ In-person or online Pre-departure Program Orientation
- ✓ CIEE Insurance coverage throughout the program from arrival in the U.S to program end date
- ✓ 24/7 support in the U.S by CIEE
- ✓ Up to 30 days of travel anywhere in the U.S after successful completion of your contract
- ✓ Completion Certificate and references available from CIEE upon successful program completion
- ✓ Courier fee for documents needed for Visa appointment (not exceeding \$25)
- ✓ Accommodation and food while on duty for the duration of the camp contract

R8250
Program fee

\$185
J1 Visa fee

R...
Flight cost

WHAT DO YOU GET PAID?

- ✓ Applicants need to negotiate their payment for the season with the camp directly.

The Program fee is non-refundable and is due before an application will be submitted.

Booking and payment of flights to the U.S and back is the full responsibility of the participant however we recommend not booking any flights before the visa has been approved.



Returner Placement

Re-hired participant with a placement at camp

- ✓ Application assistance
- ✓ In-person or webcam interviews to determine eligibility (if required)
- ✓ English Eligibility screening (If required)
- ✓ Visa processing assistance
- ✓ Visa sponsorship including DS-2019 Form issuance and \$35 SEVIS fee.
- ✓ Periodic pre-departure program resources and tools
- ✓ In-person or online Pre-departure Program Orientation
- ✓ CIEE Insurance coverage throughout the program from arrival in the U.S to program end date
- ✓ 24/7 support in the U.S by CIEE
- ✓ Up to 30 days of travel anywhere in the U.S after successful completion of your contract
- ✓ Completion Certificate and references available from CIEE upon successful program completion
- ✓ Courier fee for documents needed for Visa appointment (not exceeding \$25)
- ✓ Accommodation and food while on duty for the duration of the camp contract

R10 000
Program fee

\$185
J1 Visa fee

R...
Flight cost

WHAT DO YOU GET PAID?

- ✓ Applicants need to negotiate their payment for the season with the camp directly.

The Program fee is non-refundable and is due before an application will be submitted.

Booking and payment of flights to the U.S and back is the full responsibility of the participant however we recommend not booking any flights before the visa has been approved.