

## A Day as a Volunteer At Camp Kernow



Standing in the woods, the children point eagerly as bats flutter across their heads, their feeding noise heard through a bat detector. This is one of my favourite activities at Camp Kernow, creeping through the woodland late into the night with a bunch of excitable children; hunting for the nocturnal animal they've closely experienced moments before.

Being a volunteer at Camp Kernow involves many roles and opportunities. Waking up in the morning and walking across to camp with spectacular views, your head is filled with activities and the group on site. The children are encouraged to be involved with cooking, so there's always room for help in the kitchen, supervising small groups of children chop salad and make egg mayo for lunch, setting up the serving table for breakfast and picking fresh fruit and salad from the food garden.

The compost toilets also need a spruce up each morning; a daunting task at first but just another thing to be done once you get the hang of it. This is especially so when you know how beneficial it is to the environment, vegetation and camp!

There are usually some activities to prepare in the mornings too – setting up the climbing equipment, preparing the archery range or gathering ingredients for campfire cooking. As a volunteer, one of the most beneficial elements of this camp to both you and to the children/teachers is the breadth of knowledge that comes with the activities. I can now reflect on my knowledge of local wildlife and nature but also my professional development as a trainee teacher, observing some excellent running of activities.

The evenings were some of the most spectacular moments. The kitchen is 'hands on children style' creating homemade burgers for the BBQ, making homemade coleslaw (which most children have never tried before!) and adding fresh mint from the garden to the potatoes. Sometimes the children achieved zero food waste at meal times, which was always something to celebrate! We always ate outside if the weather permitted with everyone on site present. Following dinner, washing up was always an interesting affair, ensuring that the children wash and dry properly! Fortunately for singing, this task passes quickly enough.

As the evening continues, children go on all sorts of adventures, with you along to add to the excitement and encourage their participation and enthusiasm. As the tiredness creeps in, supervising children toast marshmallows on an open fire before bed is the final task of the day, before tucking up in your own sleeping bag. Unlike other residential's I have experienced, Camp Kernow has something special about it. Maybe the off-grid element, or the personal 'family-like' feeling that is achieved through the consistent unit of staff and only having one group camp at a time is responsible. This was such a memorable experience for me personally and I have gained so much from my time there. I would recommend Camp Kernow to any seeking a similar adventure!

Rachael Hill, Trainee Teacher and Camp Kernow Volunteer 2014