

My Experience at Ramah Outdoor Adventure

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My experience at Ramah Outdoor Adventure this past summer was one that I will never forget. Not only did it change me emotionally, but it also broadened my horizons; I now feel like I can do anything. Because of Ramah in the Rockies, I am a happier, better person, and this is partly because of the experiences I had on my masaot (excursions).

My first masa was that of horseback riding. Though I had previously been terrified of horses, my new friends and counselors had encouraged me to push myself. By the third day on the trip, I was having a fantastic time. I had become closer with my old friends, and made several new ones. But I hadn't found a horse on which I felt comfortable, or that would do what I asked, so, my counselor assigned me to a stark white horse named Malach (angel).

As I tightened the girth (the strap which keeps the saddle on), I thought to myself how I was finally starting to overcome my fear of horses and how proud my parents would be if they saw me now. I even considered that I might like to take up horseback riding when I returned home to Boston.

That day on our trail ride, we approached a steep hill. When Malach started up the incline, I felt the saddle start to sway back and forth. As I turned around to inform my counselor, the saddle slipped, and I fell underneath the horse. Though my backpack broke my fall, and I wasn't physically hurt, I was quite shaken up. If I had been in any other setting, I would have never mounted another horse again, but, with the help and encouragement of friends and counselors (the ones who had prompted me to go on the masa), I quickly got back on the horse and continued my day as usual. I greatly enjoyed the rest of the trip, and continued horseback riding until I went home three weeks later.

I had originally been set to go mountain biking and white water rafting for my second masa. Biking has always been something that has come naturally to me, so I felt very comfortable and safe with the idea of spending 3 days biking and 2 days white water rafting. Coincidentally, one of my good friends was set to go on a long backpacking trip through Rocky Mountain National Park, along with only five other campers. I had never been interested in serious backpacking before, and I thought I wasn't interested in trying it. When she asked if I would be interested in switching masaot, I declined politely without giving it much thought. That same night, as I lay in bed, I realized the reason that I was at Ramah Outdoor Adventure was to challenge myself in new and fun ways. The next morning, I asked my friend if she was still interested in trading, and she said 'yes'.

As I met with the group of campers with whom I would be hiking, I realized what a challenge this would really be. We were to hike eight miles uphill, everyday, with 40 pounds on our back! Every night, it would be below freezing, and we would be getting up before six every morning. Before Ramah, I would not have been at all interested in any of the above experiences, but I decided to try them.

Though the backpacking trip was the most physically challenging experience I have ever had to do, I am very glad that I did it. I got caught in a hail storm, and I couldn't breathe much of the time due to altitude. At kabbalat Shabbat when I returned to base camp, I realized how proud of myself I was and all that I had accomplished in just four weeks.

I am now a much stronger person (emotionally and physically), and my confidence is much greater. I had the time of my life at Ramah Outdoor Adventure, and I cannot WAIT to return next summer.