

Vivre Sans Frontières 2011

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VSF CAMP PROGRAMS

Program & Admissions

VSF is a French-American organization. The French camp organizations we represent, our partners since 1996, offer what we consider to be the best educational summer camp programs in France, we are therefore proud to be able to offer children from around the world the best French immersion camp program in France for foreign children!

We welcome boys and girls ages 6 through 17 from every race, creed and culture.

This is an Immersion Program. 90% of the campers are French natives and all activities are in French. 2 years of French studies are recommended to attend VSF (exceptions will be considered after evaluation by the Program Director).

All VSF camps have been carefully selected and are located in some of the most beautiful regions of France, rich in history and culture. Through our program and activities VSF campers are therefore constantly exposed to the cultural and historical significance of the country.

Health & Safety

Our camps are all accredited and regulated by the French government and all have an excellent safety record. The primary concern of each staff member is the health and safety of each camper.

We have staff with first aid qualifications and have pre-established contact with local doctors, dentists and hospitals in case of need. Full records of treatment are kept and parents are always alerted in a real emergency. For some small accidents, e.g. bumps, scratches, grazes, we will not normally contact parents unless deemed necessary.

VSF provides every camper with full medical insurance coverage. Each family receives a detailed description of coverage prior to departure.

Fire Safety Drill: All children are made aware of safety procedures and shown exits and assembly points before they start camp.

Camp Staff

Specific program activities and teaching strategies are used to maximize campers' communication and group participation skills. All Camp Counselors are experienced and possess a government licensed school diploma The BAFA (*Brevet d'Aptitude aux Fonctions d'Animateur*) or are in training. They are responsible for the supervision, safety, leadership, and planning regarding the daily activities during the entire camp session.

The low camper-to-counselor ratio (6/1 for young children and 9/1 for teens) ensures attention to children individual needs, their physical health, hygiene, their social growth and development. In this unique program, the positive encouragement given by well-trained counselors will make the most of your children's summer camp experience.

At camp, kids get to know themselves and others. Along with all the fun and laughter, summer camp often involves overcoming fears, resolving conflict, and accepting other viewpoints and abilities. Our caring expert staff is there to help your children develop their self-confidence and sense of adventure, along with vital social skills!

Our primary goal is to see that each child feels at home within the community.

(please take note that here is at least one English-speaking counselor in each camp to help beginners)

Activities

Each day, during the diverse activities and field trips organized by the Camp Director and his team of counselors, children have the opportunity to practice their language skills with their new French friends. Each day includes as well some quiet time for relaxing and socializing. After dinner, each group joins for the traditional "veillée": stargazing, songs, skits, storytelling, drama, comedy, dances, games, and talent shows... Time with friends that makes every evening magic!

Depending on the age group of your child, activities are either planned in advance by the camp director and its team or they operate on a rota choice system. All camps have a fixed program. Details of this program of activities on our website (on your chosen camp page), if you have any questions, please call and speak to one of our team member.

Take note that due to the large numbers of activities available at each camp site we cannot guarantee to fit every activity into each holiday for every single child– there is just not enough time! Also, some off-site activities or field trips may only take place on certain fixed days of the week and may depend on the weather conditions (the only thing we have no control of: weather conditions!...unfortunately).

Off -Site Activities and Field Trips

Some of the evening entertainment (mainly for 13-16 years) may take place off-site (example Bastille Day July 14th). If you do not want your child to take part in any off site activities or excursions you must make this clear with us before departure.

Swimming

Please clearly indicate swimming ability on the **Swimming Certificate**. Lifejackets or buoyancy aids are always worn for water sports, except for body-boarding, surfing and snorkeling sessions. Alternative activities are arranged for non-swimmers at most centers. Participants must be able to swim 25 meters to participate in Kayaking on the River; surfing and wave skiing on the sea, power boating, wave-skiing and any Water sports on the Sea. Water confidence is adequate for all other camps offering water sport activities.

Age Groups

We have three age groups 6-12 year olds, 12-14 year olds, 13-16 year olds the 'overlap' between these age ranges allows flexibility when there are a few years difference between brothers and sisters. It also means that (for example) a mature 10 year old may join a holiday for 10-13 year olds, while a 'young' 10 year old may be much happier on a holiday for the 7-10 age group. You know your own child best, but please feel free to discuss the options with our Staff. Within these separate age bands, our practice is to group children of a similar age together for accommodation and activity arrangements, whenever this is feasible. (This may not be possible on some holidays when numbers are small, but this is rarely a problem because the interest in activities provides a common bond).

Two or more children of the same sex, if you wish, can be in the same room together. If you particularly want your children to be accommodated together, then please request this at the time of booking on their application. If there is an age difference the younger child could, if it's possible, join the older one's accommodation and the older child would be expected to support his younger friend/sibling. As always, our Staff will be pleased to advise you on any aspect of our accommodation groupings. Please note that our sleeping arrangements are single sex and it is not possible for brothers and sisters to share accommodation.

Food & Catering (it's French cuisine of course!)

Fun may be important, but so is food! In recognition of this fact, our camps are committed to provide three healthy, high-energy meals per day, a balanced diet and plenty of variety. Each camp also provides a drink and a small snack mid-morning and mid-afternoon if the program allows. A vegetarian alternative can be provided, if requested before the start of the holiday. We can accommodate most special diets required on medical or religious grounds but we will require full details at time of booking.

- Breakfast: Typical French Breakfast, with a choice of cereals, toast and preserves; hot chocolate or coffee, yoghurts and fruits.
- Lunch: Either a choice of hot meals with vegetables and salad or a packed lunch including sandwiches or bread rolls with a choice of fillings, packet of crisps; piece of fresh fruit...
- Dinner: A hot meal including vegetables and mixed salads, fresh fruit or choice of French deserts;

During camping itineraries campers and counselors prepare meals together.

Sensible Bedtimes

Even the fittest youngsters feel tired after a full day of activities followed by our evening entertainment program (veillées), so we try to insist on sensible bedtimes for youngsters to ensure that everyone gets a good night's rest. Exact times may vary from centre to centre, but are usually between approximately 9:30 pm for 7 year olds to 10.30 pm for 13-17 year olds.

Night Time Supervision

It is part of the camp staff's role to get everyone to bed reasonably on time – sometimes easier said than done! Once 'lights out' has been called, the staff on duty for the night takes over. They re-assure the anxious, encourage the high-spirited to settle down and continue their vigil until all is quiet. At centers where children need to leave their tent or lodge to get to the toilet facilities, security staff patrols the camp-site or

accommodation area throughout the night. During the night a member of staff can be contacted at any time should the need arise. Centre doors are locked, although these can be opened from the inside in case of emergency.

No Experience Necessary

VSF's Summer Immersion program provides challenge and enjoyment for everyone. You don't need any previous experience to enjoy all the activities offered but in order for each participant to have a good experience we feel it is important to have the basic knowledge of the French Language, just enough to be able to communicate and understand the cap staff. Our staff is able and ready to instruct foreign campers of all levels of competence from novice to proficient, and there is always an English speaking counselor to assist children if it's absolutely necessary. A reasonable level of French is required for the well being of the child, and of the entire group.

Discipline & Responsibility

Living alongside and mixing with other children is a valuable part of the holiday experience and we try to ensure that no-one feels left out. Every member of the group has an equal right to enjoy themselves and we keep a close check on teasing, bullying or any other anti-social behavior that may spoil an individual's enjoyment. Our experience over many years means that this rarely becomes a problem, but please tell your children that if they feel they are being picked on, they should inform their group leader or any other member of staff immediately. The "don't tell" ethos which often exists in schools is not applicable with VSF.

If your child should make contact with you regarding any negative aspect of their holiday, please check whether our staff has been informed. If not, please let us know as soon as possible so that we may take immediate steps to remedy the situation. When necessary, we will be firm with children who are jeopardising the enjoyment of others. If problem behavior is persistent or serious, we will contact the parent or guardian to decide on further action. We reserve the right to send any child home immediately at parents' expense. No refunds will be considered for any children sent home for behavioral reasons. (Conditions for participation Policy).

Supervision

No child is allowed off site unless accompanied by camp staff. Children are fully supervised at all times.

Smoking & Alcohol

An 'official' supervised smoking area for camp counselors is also set aside, although smoking is heavily discouraged. Smoking in unauthorized areas will be viewed as a serious offence for which guests could be sent home. Consumption of alcohol is banned at all centers.

Bedding

All our holiday centers automatically supply bedding. Depending upon the centre, bedding consists of pillow and pillowcase and either duvet, cover and sheet or sleeping-bag with inner sheet.

Personal Hygiene

While Group Leaders are responsible for taking care of the children also outside of daily camp activities, they will also be supervising the children during shower times and before bedtime and encourage regular use of soap and toothpaste. However all children are expected to take personal responsibility for showering and cleaning their teeth during their holiday.

Clothing & Equipment

A detailed list of necessary clothing and supplies is sent to parents along with their child's PRE-TRIP package well in advance of departure. We provide all the equipment necessary for all the activities, although youngsters do need to bring personal items such as water-proof jackets, hats, footwear and casual clothes. We ensure that children are equipped with activity equipment which conforms to European standards.

Approved lifejackets are provided and must be worn during water sports sessions. Strict range disciplines are enforced for archery. Climbers are always protected by helmets and a safety rope, and all our motor-sports vehicles have their speeds regulated. Please note that we are continually up-dating our equipment to reflect current best practices and therefore equipment used may differ from that shown in photographs in our brochure.

Laundry

If your child is staying for more than one week, please note that each camp provides one machine wash a week. Laundry service is provided at camp except when the children follow an outdoor camping itinerary.

Contacting your Child

Communicate in writing, send your letters by Fax! Campers are encouraged to write letters to their friends and family. They may receive letters at all times from friends and family. The mail distribution is done every day at the time of the daily gathering, early each evening. Parents can also send faxes. Most centers have a fax machine for in-coming messages/letters.

Please observe camp policy about phone calls.

A "No Phone Call policy" generally applies to all French resident camp programs however each camp has its own policy, this information will be sent in every camper's personalized Pre-trip /Pre-camp packet in June.

In general, campers are not permitted to use the telephone, except in case of emergency and if authorized by the camp Director. They have no access to the phone, unless for special reasons.

Apart from the fact that your child is probably in the middle of an activity session, in the shower, eating dinner, and therefore far from the telephone, our experience has shown that children really do settle in much better if undisturbed by personal telephone calls, that is why telephone calls are generally not permitted during the camp session. We will, of course, pass on any important personal message.

If you have questions please contact our team it will be our pleasure to give you all the news concerning your child's integration and his general behavior.

One way we minimize homesickness is by not allowing children to call home (unless it is an emergency) which gives them a chance to settle into the camp program.

A daily report is sent to us by the camp director who often meets the counselors of each group to make sure of the well being of everyone. But of course, our team is available to respond to parents questions concerning their children's adaptation and progress at camp.

VSF Updates – A Blog for each camp!

Several times a week, we will be posting news updates on the children, their activities and schedule, a great way for parents to stay informed on their children during camp.

Personal Email updates:

During camp our team is in constant contact with the camp Directors and the camp staff. VSF will keep parents informed by email once a week about their children personal experience at camp.

Visiting the Camps

If you would like the opportunity to visit the camp location please let us know in advance if you are considering a visit.

However, we also encourage parents to consider letting camp be a “parent-free zone” for their child. Part of the camp experience is leaving home to enter a new world, and developing independence and self-sufficiency.



Great food,
beautiful scenery,
fun activities and caring staff!

From our French Immersion Camp Program
Your children will take home memories that will last forever.



The Smart Vacation for your kids!