

SCA Camping Preparation Class

Before you go on a long trip, remember to do the following things

- Read all official materials from the event so that you are aware of rules and activities offered. Much of this will be available on line.
- Have your car inspected a week or so before the trip (in case they need to get parts!) and make sure you have appropriate Car coverage (CAA/AAA)
- Check your house- set thermostat, hot water tank, etc.
- Clean the fridge out
- Take out the garbage!
- If you have security monitoring, let them know you will be away
- Maintenance- be sure to have someone to come in to
- Water plants
- Feed pets
- Make the house look lived in (collect mail, mow lawn etc)
- Don't forget to get this person a present!

For out of country events, Pennsic in particular

- Ensure you have appropriate Medical insurance and Personal identification
- Be sure you have appropriate funds (US travelers cheques are accepted everywhere) Some Pennsic merchants take cheques and credit cards, but the troll booth does not.
- Bring a waterproof container for the alternate currency.
- Be sure that your important paperwork (including Pennsic pre- reg stuff) is easily accessible
- Indulge yourself a bit- have a long bath, see a movie, etc

Getting started

- Prepare your packing list, using the lists below, and any other camping information you have in books or from the net. List everything you might want, and then pare it down.
- Find out if you can borrow something from a friend- we don't all need a clothesline!
- Do I really need this item- use common sense or check with someone
- Prepare a "Needs" list of things you don't yet have, and make or purchase them
- Check all equipment so it is in good working order.

- IF you are not accustomed to walking in the course of your day, do get in training. You will likely be walking 3-5 km a day, often in heat. Go for walks at home to get used to it.

When Packing

- Pack things into the smallest possible waterproof space- then allow for about 25% expansion
- Make sure your ride can take all your gear!
- If you can, pack the things that you will need first in the most accessible part of the vehicle.
- Be sure to pack one set of mundane clothes to leave in the car- then you can get home dry!

When traveling

- Don't wear garb over the border- do wear an "SCA" shirt of some kind if you can
- Bring munchies and drinks, but not fruit, unless you will eat it before the border
- Be ready and packed on time, particularly if you are getting a ride with someone.
- Have your ID and paperwork on you.

Once you get to the event (again, particularly Pennsic)

- Unpack and set up, and Trench around your tent ASAP
- Make a run into town if you need supplies
- Stow the car and get into garb
- Relax with the Pennsic book you are given at Troll- it has rules and Class times and merchant lists. Read all of the book and then go back and mark the things you are Really interested in- There will likely be 4-5 times more things you would like to do than you have time for. You can't do it all, and you are on vacation!
- Drink lots of water! And dress appropriately for the weather.

List of Useful Links

<http://www.pennsic.net/>

<http://www.florilegium.org/>

<http://ic.net/~blues/wars.htm>

<http://rosadioro.8m.com/pennsic.html>

<http://www.pennsicwar.org>

<http://www.currentmiddleages.org/tents/packinglist.htm>

<http://www.currentmiddleages.org/tents/pennsic.htm>

Tents

Any type you wish, nylon is fine though canvas can be had for not much more depending on style. If you buy:

- Get one that is not too garish- or to match heraldry
- Purchase one that is generously sized
- This is your house for the week!
- Standing to dress is really nice
- You will likely have more “stuff” than on a mundane camping trip
- The best tent pegs are long (10-12”) nails with washers on top (If you can’t get forged iron tent pegs that is!)

Check tent seams, window, and doors for holes and leaks *before you go*

Know how to set it up with all the parts –poles, fly, ropes etc. Practice!

At Pennsic in particular

- Be sure to use ALL tie downs and pegs. Things can blow away!
- Bring a tarp to put over the tent incase of a bad storm, and bring pegs or ropes for it too

Be prepared to let the tent down if the storm is really bad- your tarp will help keep you and your things dry

Sleeping stuff

- Be comfortable- this is your bed for the duration!
- Try to have as many layers under you as over you or the ground will steal your heat!
- Even one layer of blue foam will keep cold and damp from coming up to you
- Line sleeping bags with sheets- they are cheaper to wash!
- Do not count on your cloak to do double duty as a raincoat and your bedding!
- When beds are damp they are colder so protect them well from rain and dew.
- A pillow *can* be made with clean clothes stuck in a pillowcase, but pillows are best!
- Don’t sleep directly on your air mattress- use at least a sheet, better to have a sheet and sleeping bag

Things to do while camping

- Bring a project to work on- carving, sewing, etc.
- Singing and music making- most camping events have a bardic circle that everyone can attend- and participating is even more fun! Bring your instrument and music!
- Sketchbook for drawing, or note taking

Food

Know before you leave how you will eat at the event and make preparations

- Be sure that ALL foods, including snacks, are in damp proof and animal proof containers
- Make sure that all things that need chilling are chilled (Can you get ice for the cooler on site?)
- For a weekend it is possible to bring food that needs no heating if you don't have or don't have room to bring your stove. (Try hams, cheese, boiled eggs, bread/buns, granola bars, fruits, juice) With the exception of the granola bars, all of this is period too!
- There are many types of tinned food now available, to be eaten hot or cold- Check out Middle Eastern grocery stores for things (Dolmades, hummus, baba ghanosh)
- Bring bottled water with you- even water that is tested will have a different mineral content to it

For longer trips you have more options

- Cook for yourself/partner on your own stove
- Form a cooking group with others to share cooking and cleaning duties
- If you are at a large event or war, there may be places on site to buy food- but be sure there are things you like and that you are prepared to pay the prices!

Bring lots of garbage bags and take out the garbage every night

At Pennsic in Particular:

- If you choose to cook at war, take your cooler down with non-food items in it, and buy groceries there. IT saves space and you don't need to wonder if they will stop you at the border, or if your ice will last the trip in the hot car!
- Even if you intend to buy most of your foods from vendors on site, do bring a few things that are easy to pack comfort foods. I always have some crackers and a tin of tomato soup, just in case I don't feel well. Most of your mates will let you use their equipment in such a case.

- Do bring breakfast foods (we like granola bars and tinned fruit) This way you can have a leisurely breakfast in your own camp at your own pace.
- Do bring small portable snacks with you (small bags of dried fruit or nuts) when you leave camp. You never know when hunger might strike! :-D
- Pennsic water, even when filtered, is a funny colour and has a lot of Iron in it. This can give you a funny tummy, and that is no fun! At Pennsic you might want to bring only enough for camp use- there are lots of places to get it in “town”.

Garb

In general, you should pack one change of under clothes (shirts, under tunics etc plus mundane undies if you wear them in garb) for each day you are planning to be camping, plus 1-2 more. For over clothes (doublet, cotes, skirts and bodices) you should bring one for every other day that you are there, plus 1-2 more. Have at least one outfit suitable either temperature extreme. Choose only one (or maybe two) periods of garb so that everything will go together. Bring layers for maximum versatility.

Prepare for warm and cold, wet and dry weather!

- Seek out weather reports for where you are going to help you bring appropriate things. But for long trips (4+ days) bring a number of things with you- the long-term forecasts might not be right!
- Bring a cloak or blanket to use as one.
- Bring a hood made of wool and you might not need the above!
- Headgear- for sun protection! Large straw hats (for men and women) coifs or veils in lightweight, but opaque *natural* fibers are best
- Sensible shoes at least 2 pairs in case of rain (I like to bring Muck boots, heavy soled sandals, and period shoes. Others like to bring rubber boots, Running shoes, walking/hiking shoes- you will walk a lot!)
- Pack in waterproof containers- rough totes are great
- Dampness- every thing gets damp while camping, and very much so at Pennsic. If you are careful about enclosing things in plastic when the dew falls (dawn and dusk), this is lessened. This includes things in your tent- it is not enough to keep out the damp. Do put at least one extra ground cloth under your tent when setting up to prevent the rising damp.
- Do bring socks, it will get cold! Wool is best since it stays warm even when wet.
- Thighs- be aware when wearing skirts- you will chafe! Bring powder,

cornstarch, deodorant, shorts

- Bring something to sleep in, it can get cold at night.

Pennsic in particular

- Is prone to extremes of all kinds (very still, very windy, very dry, Very wet, very hot 100+ humidity, to very cold frost at night) Not all of these extremes will be hit every year, but it is always possible
- Plan to go in to one of the towns and do your laundry halfway through your stay. This reduces the amount of garb you need to bring significantly!

Other things you might want to bring

- Towels and bathing suit
- A basin and washcloth to have a sponge bath
- A chamber pot for in the tent and dish soap for inside the chamber pot
- Antibacterial wet naps or equivalent
- Something to sit on- towel, blanket, tarp, chair, Kes box
- Flashlight/ glow sticks, (mini Maglights are great. Large lanterns are often too bright!) or a battery powered small lamp
- Toiletries- Unscented, and biodegradable are best, include cornstarch and deodorant
- First aid kit including personal medication (bring them in the original container), sanitary products, Imodium, Pepto, etc
- Sun Screen and Bug Repellant
- Sewing repair kit
- Clothes pegs and rope for a clothesline
- Earplugs, hand fan, mug or goblet that is easy to bring with you

On beyond basic

- Dining fly, kitchen tent, extra stuff tent (good for armour!)
- Cooking apparatus
 - Set of pots and utensils (include can opener and corkscrew)
 - Grill, tripod, Dutch oven, spit or rotisserie for over a fire
 - Coleman stove/grill
- Chairs and Tables (many fold down small or roll up)
- Shovel and scythe for landscape improvements (trenches/ fire pits)
- Beds- Air mattresses, camp cots, rope beds
- Hammocks

- Laundry hamper
- Fancy (but washable) garb for courts
- Clothes rack
- Carpets for the tent floor

“Medievaling”

Eventually you will want to move up to more period items, but in the meantime you can cover some of the mundane ones.

- Small items (coolers, chairs, Tables) can be covered with cloth or stored out of sight behind screens or tents. Cloth covered tables hide many things!
- Screens of fabric can cut the sightlines to your modern tent/encampment. Be aware this can also block the breezes, and wind may push them over if you don't slit them
- Wooden boxes can be made to house the cooler, or rough totes of clothes.

HYGIENE from Bart's Pennsic Thingie

For many folks, Pennsic is their first and/or only camping experience. When camping, the standard rules of hygiene apply. There are also other, camping related, practices to be aware of that help make camping safer and more fun. It does not take much to turn camping from fun into a nightmare. Many of the causes for discomfort can be linked to disregarding some sensible rules.

3.1 General Hygiene

This topic is an old one. I had it from my parents, in the Boy Scouts, and in High School Gym class, but it is still important. If these precautions seem trivial and unnecessary, think again. The heralds have cried these through the camp for the last two Pennsics. These include:

- Wash your hands after using the privy.
- Wash your hands before handling food, especially if you are preparing it for more than yourself.
- Use clean surfaces for food preparation.
- Store food correctly. This means meats and milk products in a cooler, bread in plastic in the shade, et cetera. All meat should be kept in a cool place, even sausages. Sausages with a high fat content, even if smoked, can go rancid.
- Cover or close your garbage container. This makes it harder for flies to spread diseases.

3.2 Camp Hygiene

Camping also requires some special provisions for hygiene beyond those above. Looking through my Scout manuals reminds me of several that were so ingrained I take them for granted. I was also reminded of some safety and courtesy rules that make camping more pleasant.

Some of these are:

- Keep your cooler(s) closed tightly. The ice lasts longer, the food stays cooler, and the chances of an insect invasion go way down. Another good thought is to keep drinks in a separate cooler than food.
- Check yourself occasionally for ticks and rashes. Poison ivy is no fun, but can be contained if you catch it early, as can Lymes Disease (which has been reported in the area).

- Wash dishes completely and carefully. Get them clean!
 - Wipe off excess food before you start.
 - At least use a basin of soapy water and a hot rinse. Use a final rinse with a sanitizing solution if you can, especially if someone in your camp is sick.
 - Change the water (especially the rinse water) if it starts getting dirty.
 - Air-dry dishes on a clean surface. This may seem odd, but it is less likely to spread disease than using a towel.

- Dispose of waste water carefully. Under normal circumstances, this means keep it away from the fresh water supply, but it also applies to not dumping dirty water around the spigots. After a day or so, the area around the water spigots becomes a quagmire from people washing dishes and performing their personal ablutions there. Put the water in a bucket and do your washing elsewhere, please.
 - Use a sump hole or grease pit to dispose of wastewater and liquid waste (e.g. grease). This is your home for a while; would you pour out dishwater on the kitchen floor? This hole can be sited either near the fire pit or in some area that will not be used as a walkway. Mark it to keep people from stepping in it in the dark.
 - Use a fire pit. Cut away (and save) the sod and dig a pit larger than your fire and surround the outer edge with stones. This reduces the chance of grass fires.
 - Never leave a fire untended. If you are leaving the area for a while, or going to bed, bank the fire carefully. If you do not know how to bank a fire, put it out. (Actually, Security will probably put it out any way and, considering the way some encampments were set up, I don't blame them.)
 - Do not throw refuse in the fire. Most common plastics release toxic fumes when burned, glass bottles can shatter (explode), and cans will still need to be disposed of after the fire is out.
 - Leave the campsite cleaner than you found it. Clean up as you go (this really makes the whole trip more pleasant). When you are leaving, cover your fire pit and refill any other holes you have dug (replacing the sod is a nice touch).