

Summer school

Carry on camping

Going back to school for the holidays? It's much more exciting than it sounds. Geoff Heath-Taylor explores the summer camps and activities that children (and adults) can't wait to sign up for

I DO love the beginning of the summer hols. They always seem to stretch out ahead for ages and ages.' So observed Julian, crime solver, intrepid adventurer, older brother of Anne and Dick and cousin to George. Seventy years have passed since the Famous Five first turned detectives, but their sentiments about school holidays remain as pertinent as ever.

For children, the summer holidays hold a magical quality, but, for parents, the prospect of six, 10 or even 12 weeks with no school can fill them with foreboding. A family holiday might occupy a week or two, but what about the rest? Mercifully, there's a lifeline available—summer camps—and demand for places is soaring. Schools and their splendid facilities no longer lie desolate during the long summer months, but, instead, host everything from pony camps to science courses.

'Almost as soon as term finishes in June, the school is filled with all sorts of different sounds, including excellent jazz, choral and orchestral music,' says Caroline Lawson-Dick of Uppingham School. 'We have the most wonderful facilities here and are delighted to be able to share them with the hundreds of children and adults who join us each year on one of our 30 or so summer courses.'

Apart from the obvious income from course fees, or rent if the site is used by an external organisation, schools benefit from free advertising, with greater exposure to more children and their parents. 'It was like Hogwarts—I wish I could have gone there,' one teenager said after attending a camp at Brambletye, a prep school in West Sussex.

Some courses are only one or two days long, but others span 10 days or even two weeks. The combination of team activities and meals and sleeping in dormitories allows strong and often long-lasting friendships to be made. For many, summer camps can be >

Spoilt for choice: there are hundreds of summer courses available in sports, art, music and more



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the highlight of the holidays, an opportunity to meet like-minded children.

For those parents who wish they could be having as much fun, many schools offer summer camps and courses for adults, often running them in tandem with children's camps. Marlborough College Summer School offers several hundred different courses, including bridge, bird-watching and flower arranging.

Summer camps and courses aren't limited solely to activities and hobbies, however. Revision and crammer courses are also popular, especially among sixth-form students and school leavers preparing for university. The hardest task for parents is choosing which camp. Cricket or creative writing? Lacrosse or viola lessons? It's tempting to do a different course each week.

One thing is for sure—the summer holidays won't seem nearly so long, for anyone, when days are spent riding, cycling, swimming, sailing, studying and writing. As Anne responded to Julian in *Five Go Off in a Caravan*: 'They go so nice and slowly at first. Then they start to gallop.'



The summer holidays will race by with a busy schedule of activities

Five of the best

Uppingham School

The summer school at Uppingham has been running for more than 15 years. Courses include music, drama, sport, science and technology, art and creative writing. This year, building on its strong musical tradition, the school has introduced a 'solo singing weekend' with coaching from professional opera singers Catherine Griffiths and Andrew Kennedy. In addition to dozens of courses for children, Uppingham also offers orchestral and choral courses for adults.

(<http://uppinghamsummerschool.co.uk>; 01572 820800)

Marlborough College

Every year during July and August, Marlborough College offers an incredible 600 courses and workshops for children and adults. According to Master of College Jonathan Leigh, 'Summer School continues to be an eclectic combination of art, culture and sport'. From fitness boot camp and school of rock to Stone Age arrow-making and water-colour classes, the breadth of subjects and activities available is outstanding. Children can be

dropped off each day or they can stay with their families in the school accommodation.

(<http://summerschool.co.uk>; 01672 892388)

Eton College

The 10-day residential course at Eton was set up to help State-school students with aspirations to attend the world's top universities. The variety of classes seeks to expose students to a range of cultural, sporting and academic opportunities and is geared to train them in interview techniques as they prepare for Oxbridge and Russell Group places. Eton subsidises the cost and means-tested bursaries are available to ensure no student is unable to attend on financial grounds. Week-long choral courses are available for young people aged between 16 and 20 and rowing coaching on Dorney Lake is open to boys and girls aged 12–17.

(01753 370100; www.etoncollege.com/SummerCourses.aspx)

Sevenoaks School

In 2006, Sevenoaks became the first major UK school to switch from A-levels to the International Baccalaureate (IB). A number of other high-profile independent schools have since followed suit and the Sevenoaks summer-review course was introduced to help those studying for the IB. The courses are three days long and they provide students who have completed their first year of the IB with a structured review of what's been covered. Intensive tuition from Sevenoaks teachers in a range of subjects is coupled with training in exam techniques.

Board and lodging are available. (www.sevenoaksschool.org/summer; 01732 455133)

Millfield School

Millfield in Somerset offers several activity camps for children up to the age of 17. Coaching at the senior school is available across a number of sports, from squash and badminton to athletics and swimming. Adult weekend courses are also available in the summer holidays. In addition, the prep school hosts several week-long multi-activity summer camps for children aged 5–14 with activities including painting, trampolining, riding and archery. (<http://millfieldschool.com>; 01458 444320)

