

Adult Summer Camps: Come Out and Play



Planning a vacation exhausts me. Amid anguished decisions about where to go and what to bring I find myself thinking wistfully of my childhood summer camp, when others took care of the details and all I had to do was show up, play, and make my own bunk. Imagine my delight when I found out about Women's Quest Fitness Camp in Winter Park, Colorado, a place where you don't have to be ten years old to get that carefree experience.

My only concern on the day I left for the Rockies was whether I had packed my swimsuit and running shorts. As a budding triathlete, I was eager to meet Colleen Cannon, the former world-class triathlete who founded Women's Quest as a sports-oriented camp that would help women "let go, play hard, and be free."

By the end of the first day a morning hike through fields of wildflowers and a mountain bike ride along skinny trails I had realized this was no jock club. Sure, there were opportunities for athletic challenge, but the focus was more on supporting each other than logging miles. Everyone cheered when a 50-year-old who hadn't ridden a bike in ten years

came barreling triumphantly through the trees. Other members of this diverse group of 35 women included a 27-year-old who hoped the camp would motivate her to quit smoking and a 42-year-old cancer survivor who was giving herself a well-deserved getaway.

After lunch we attended lectures on topics such as Herbs and the Female Athlete, and Nutrition and Body Image. One night we built a fire in the sweat lodge and, sitting around glowing embers, confided our desires and fears. Each morning I awoke to chiming bells and a voice calling, "Rise and shine for yoga." In the timbered main room of the Wood-spur Lodge, where picture windows framed an expanse of snowcapped peaks and brightening blue sky, a soft-spoken instructor led us in stretching.

I surrendered to the pleasure of slowing down. The prospective ex-smoker led us on the day we hiked up the Continental Divide, and I dawdled behind. Back at the lodge we paired up to exchange foot massages. Lost in the moment among 35 new friends, I hadn't felt this good since I was a kid.

-AMY MCCONNELL

DESTINATIONS

For more information about Women's Quest Fitness Camps, call 303/443-5930. For camps in your neck of the woods, check out www.grownupcamps.com on the Web. Fodor's *Great American Learning Vacations* is also a good resource. Or try one of these.

WRIGHTWOOD, CALIFORNIA

Camp Mom at Verdugo Pines
A former Girl Scout, Myra Peck styled this retreat on summer camps she attended in her youth. Then she invited only mothers. Peck's vision translates to days filled with volleyball, crafts classes, and archery; nights with campfires, s'mores, and sing-alongs. Located in the Angeles National Forest at an elevation of 6,000 feet, the camp gives you easy access to wilderness. You can go on guided hikes, take a water aerobics class in the Olympic-size pool, or relax under a shaded tree by a lake. You'll be housed with seven or eight other campers in a pine log cabin with bunk beds. Camps are scheduled for one weekend each in May, July, August, and October. The cost is \$189. Call 888/633-2226.

HOG ISLAND, MAINE

Maine Coast Field Ecology Camp
The National Audubon Society has run this island refuge for 60 years. Experienced naturalists lead walks through mudflats, salt marshes, and a spruce forest, and along the rocky shoreline. You'll learn how to identify native wildflowers, use a seine to dredge for marine life, and determine the sex of a lobster. One day is reserved for a boat trip to observe nesting ospreys and eagles at nearby islands. Other activities include swimming, volleyball, and hiking