

YMCA Camp U-Nah-Li-Ya Outdoor Education and Retreat Program Offerings 2026-27

Below you will find a brief description of the programs and classes we lead for groups through the Outdoor Education and Retreats Program. Please be aware that weather and other external conditions can affect what classes or programs are offered.

Daytime Programs-Year Round

Alpha Beta-This activity uses role play and investigation to challenge campers' biases, self and cultural awareness. The class is split into two groups, each that have unique cultural differences. Students take turns visiting the other group to learn more about their neighbors. Instructors lead the class through a debrief to cover ideas such as diversity, inclusion, and openness.

Arts and Crafts-A new addition to the program, this activity demonstrates how nature inspires art, encourages creativity and teaches campers how to be resourceful. Participants will use a variety of mediums to create unique pieces to take home and further remember their time in nature here at camp.

Creative Drama-Through a series of improv and quick thinking activities, campers will gain an understanding of how to think on their feet, be a good audience member and express themselves. Throughout the session, campers will have opportunities to push themselves to go beyond their comfort zones and work collaboratively.

Eco-Encounters-In combination with a guided nature hike and a variety of activities and mini games, participants will become aware of the many ecological systems of the Northwoods. In this activity campers will gain a deeper appreciation and understanding for the natural world around us, the intertwining relationships within it and the need to protect it for future generations.

Initiatives-Campers take on the challenge working together towards a shared goal through a variety of team building and trust-building exercises. Each one of the obstacles presented to the students during this activity offers a unique problem that the group must solve. The course is designed to promote self and group confidence, as well as communication and cooperation skills.

Leadership in Action-Participants learn what leadership is, the components of a good leader and how to incorporate those characteristics and qualities into play in peer and social settings. Campers will engage in activities such as the fan favorite Tanks and Commanders. The emphasis of this program is placed upon decision-making, effective communication, and leadership styles.

Micro-World-Through the use of stereo microscopes, campers will explore the beauty and awe of the Northwood on a much smaller scale. Participants will journey around camp to collect samples and specimens that they will then take back to the Nature Center to observe under the microscope. Campers will then share their findings and explorations with each other.

Nature CSI Tracking-In this activity, campers will learn how to identify and decipher various animal signs and tracks. Using their new knowledge participants will set out to find and identify animal tracks and signs around camp. They will then put their skills to the test and have to solve an animal crime scene set up by the Outdoor Education Instructor.

Orienteering-Campers will familiarize themselves with the various parts of a compass, how to use one and how to pace. After their introduction to the basics, participants will put their skills to the test and navigate a scavenger-hunt style orienteering course through out camp. At the end of the course campers will decipher their findings to come up with the meaning of U-Nah-Li-Ya.

Outdoor Living Skills-Through the explanation of the Rule of Three's, campers will learn the basics of outdoor survival. Participants will then gain knowledge of the various types of outdoor shelters and the science behind fires. Dependent on the groups preference as well as current conditions, campers will then partake in building their own shelters and/or fires to meet the expectations given by instructors.

Predator Prey-This activity is a well loved U-Nah-Li-Ya classic. Campers will start with a couple mini games to gain an understanding of population dynamics and the role of camouflage in the wild. To prepare for the final game and main event they will discuss different animal diets, adaptations and roles in the food chain. Campers will then play multiple rounds rotating roles and deepening their knowledge.

Daytime Programs-Fall/Spring Only

Archery & Slingshots-In this activity campers will learn the all of the safety procedures and requirements of the range as well as basic techniques. Campers will then proceed to practice their skills and even compete in small challenges. Dependent on group preference, participants can have the opportunity to try throwing atlatls, an ancient mammoth hunting technique. This activity is designed to meet campers at all levels and focuses on improving their resilience and self-confidence.

Canoeing-Campers will learn a brief history of canoeing in Wisconsin and its importance to Camp U-Nah-Li-Ya. They will receive safety instructions, learn the parts of a canoe as well as basic paddles strokes and maneuvering techniques. Campers will then put their skills and teamwork to the test and canoe in the Lagoon. They will enjoy mastering the basics, playing games and observing the wonderful wildlife.

Fishing-In this activity campers will learn about the various methods of fishing from past to present, learn about bait and the types of fish that can be found here in Wisconsin. Campers will then get the opportunity to go fishing using cane poles in various areas of camp, learn how to put on bait and identify what type of fish they catch. Here at camp we practice catch and release in our Outdoor Education Program.

Low Ropes-Similar to and often paired with initiatives, low ropes uses a variety of elements and obstacles such as Whale Watch, A-Frame, etc. to grow campers communication, cooperation and team building skills. This activity can be ran as its own class block or with initiatives as a combo block to incorporate more movement and balance focused activities.

Rock Climbing-As of November 2025 Camp U-Nah-Li-Ya has a brand new climbing tower! In this activity campers will learn about the various safety precautions and equipment utilized at our wall. Instructors will guide campers through what the various comfort zones are and what challenge by choice is. This is a great activity to build resilience, self confidence and utilize goal setting.

High Ropes or Zipline-The current course here at camp is designed to be run as either zipline or high ropes. Groups can choose which option they would prefer and it is an additional \$12/participant. Campers will go through all the safety policies, training and gear utilized at the course. Instructors will guide campers through what the various comfort zones are and what challenge by choice is. This is a great activity to build resilience, self confidence and utilize goal setting.

Daytime Programs-Winter Only (Snow Dependent)

Cross Country Skiing-This activity allows many campers to try something new and enjoy the beauty of winter in the Northwoods while doing it. Participants will learn a brief history of cross country skiing, the parts of a ski and poles, and the mechanics of skiing. From there, instructors will meet the group where they are at experience wise and provide the basics so that everyone is able to enjoy. Groups will then utilize the variety of trails around camp to gain confidence and experience.

Snowshoe Hike-Campers in this activity will learn about the history, mechanics and types of snowshoes. They will then get a pair of their own to practice walking around in before setting off on an all camp scavenger hunt. Dependent on snow conditions, campers will also participate in camps own form of winter Olympics.

Evening Program-Main Activity

We recommend limiting it to one main activity and one wrap up activity per night spent at camp. Groups are welcome to use evening time to relax, bond and hangout at their cabin.

Campfire-Very much a camp classic, groups can choose what type of campfire experience they are looking for. Options range from have a classic U-Nah-Li-Ya campfire led by camp staff full of camper skits and songs to a lowkey option of smores, board games and ambiance. Schools/groups are encouraged to bring their own s'more supplies.

Capture the Flag/Eagle's Nest-This activity offers an additional way for campers to burn off energy before winding down for the night. After the participants are divided into two teams, the goal for each team is to find, capture, and bring back the other team's flag to its own territory without getting caught. Camp also has a few versions of this classic game to offer: wells fargo, eagle's nest, capture the mattress, etc.

Dance Party-For this activity groups are able to use the Earth Lodge and speaker system to have a dance party with yard games and gaga ball outside. This activity allows for some structured downtime after a day filled with learning and activities. Groups are encouraged to create their own playlist, but a camp-approved one can be provided.

Message to Garcia-This is a historic camp game where campers are divided into two teams and have to send as many messages as possible to "Garcia" (staff & chaperones) without the other team intercepting them. Another good option for burning off any excessive energy at the end of the day.

Sledding-This program is only offered in winter. Groups will be able to experience the joys of sledding and bonding around a campfire while surrounded by the beauty and stars of the Northwoods.

Swamp Lady's Suitcase-This activity is essentially a reverse scavenger hunt with a bit of improv and challenges worked in. Campers are divided into teams where they decide what item or person they want to send up to the Swamp Ladies to represent their team. Once the items have been collected or the improv/challenge is completed, the Swamp Ladies will assign point. This is a wild fun game filled with laughter and quick thinking.

Evening Program-Wrap up Activity

Night Hike-This wrap up activity is designed to get campers comfortable with the world at night. This hike takes advantage of the dark with games such as Bat & Moth, tricks such as the glow-in-the-dark Lifesavers, and many other interesting activities for night. We ask that flashlights are left behind in order to maintain night vision and foster comfortability in the dark.

Ole Peterson-The legend of Ole Peterson dates back long before the beginnings of Camp U-Nah-Li-Ya all the way back to the time of lumberjacks in the Northwoods. Campers will hear the legend from Ole himself while gathered around the campfire listening in awe. A timeless Unie classic for all to hear and enjoy.

Evening Reflection-End the day with either a short story connected to one of the core values or a simple reflection activity. The goal is to give everyone a chance to slow down, think about the day, share a meaningful takeaway, and connect their experience back to the core values.