



UNCONVENTIONAL BY NATURE

HAWTHORNE  
VALLEY *farm*

## **PARENT PACKET HAWTHORNE VALLEY FARM TRIP**

Your child is about to embark on a wonderful adventure with their classmates! Going away from home for a full week with the class and teacher can be a challenge for a child, but it's an experience that will foster their sense of confidence! Your child may already be accomplished at overnight family visits, sleepovers with friends, or overnight camps, or they may have never spent a night away from home. For parents, it's natural to feel some level of worry when you send your child to stay in a new environment. We assure you that our staff is fully trained to help your child navigate this adventure and have fun. We encourage you to reach out to us if you have **any** questions or concerns.

The Place Based Learning Center at Hawthorne Valley has welcomed school-aged children to the farm for 50 years. Time and time again, we see the value of having a farm experience and how much it benefits children of all ages. The farm and the animals speak to a child with warmth and love that is truly an inspiring experience. This trip is an opportunity for your child to experience independence in positive and safe ways and will lead to their enhanced confidence. The staff working with the children are warm, friendly, and committed to ensuring the most meaningful time possible for your child.

### **What can parents do to help prepare their children for the Farm Trip?**

Be positive! Encourage them and offer support through their feelings of concern or fear. We all feel a little anxious when taking on new experiences, but these opportunities to overcome the challenge and recognize our personal accomplishments help us all grow.

### **STUDENT HEALTH FORMS**

**Please Access NOW!** <https://hvamarketing.wufoo.com/forms/z1f3bx5017akiji/> These forms provide us with the necessary information about your child's dietary issues or special needs. We must have a form for every child attending. These forms need to be submitted at least 4 weeks prior to your trip. If medications are required, please give it to your class teacher in the original packaging. Teachers are responsible for the administering all medicines.

### **CLOTHING**

Please adhere to the attached packing list. We recommend you check the weather conditions in Ghent, NY before the trip to ensure that you have packed adequate clothing and gear for your child to be comfortable during the week. The children will be outside most of the day in all types of weather.

### **What will my child be expected to accomplish on the trip?**

Children will take care of their own belongings, and clean both their rooms and the communal spaces in the house and dining hall. They will be waiters at meals. The animals will depend on them to bring food and clean the barns/paddocks. Many parents have admired at how much more mature and willing to take on responsibility their child was upon returning home after a week on the farm.

Your child will also be encouraged to be responsible for themselves in ways that they may not have experienced at home. Your child will make important (guided) choices for themselves each day such as what clothing is appropriate for

their scheduled activity and the weather, how much food to serve themselves, and how to be timely, helpful, and collaborative. They will be encouraged to taste new dishes, push themselves through tasks that they may not have ever experienced, and do good work that they can be proud of.

### **What challenges are most common during the trip?**

Homesickness does occur from time to time. We caution parents about putting surprise notes in suitcases. We've found that when children are first unpacking, it is a bit too soon to be reminded of home. You can send your child a letter to: Hawthorne Valley Farm – Main House, 327 County Route 21C, Ghent, NY 12075, Attn: Your child's name/school. Please make sure that all class parents agree on letter writing as it can be challenging for children if one child receives a letter, and another does not. It is our experience that phone calls home can make homesickness worse. We welcome you to call the teacher and staff to discuss whether it is a good idea to speak with your child. One good solution if a child needs to call parents is that he/she can call in the morning. This is soothing in the evening - the hardest time--and the morning often finds children too busy to want to call! If there is a morning phone call, it is a less emotional time, activities are happening, and your child will be anxious to get out with friends, so a totally different mood prevails. If you do find it necessary to speak to your child, be sure to stay light, supportive, and positive.

Another challenge on the trip can be bed wetting. This is not an unusual problem for younger students and is one that we handle with discretion and care. All of our mattresses are plastic covered. If your child uses disposable undergarments at home, please discretely send them – we will make sure that a private changing area is provided. If this won't work for your child, the teacher can remove the sleeping bag and pajamas when other students are out on an activity, wash, and dry them, and no one will ever know. Please assure your child that this is not an uncommon situation, and it can be worked with. It is always good to get a child up to use the bathroom late in the evening. Talk to your teacher about what works best for your child.

### **FOOD**

Our meals are all organic and vegetarian. We serve seasonal fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and baked goods made right here on the farm. We eat family style in our large, sunny dining hall with set tables and enjoyable conversation. If your family does not dine at a table or take meals together, your child may find this challenging. We do not make custom dishes for children who don't wish to try new foods. Our meals have a wide array of options and sides – protein is found in plant-based sources as well as dairy and eggs from our hens. We encourage children to take a “farmer's taste” of new foods, and they generally like several items and most times will enjoy the whole meal. Part of the third-grade experience is to harvest and prepare the soup, bread, and butter for the evening meal, and this task develops the child's relationship to the farm and food which encourages tasting, and they often forget any apprehension with tasting and enjoying new foods. We are very watchful of children's eating patterns and try to step in with solutions if we feel a child isn't eating enough to meet their needs. Our meals are planned with children in mind, and we have decades of experience creating child friendly menus. If you would like to experience farm meals in preparation for the trip, you can purchase a cookbook [online](#).

#### *Sample Meals and Snacks*

**Breakfast:** Hot cereal with honey and raisins, fresh fruit, or applesauce, yogurt, toast with butter and jelly, milk, hot tea

**10 am Snack:** Popcorn and juice tea

**Farm Lunch:** Green salad with one of the farm's sauerkrauts, brown rice, stir fry vegetables with toasted sunflower seeds, marinated tofu, tamari

Variations: Polenta and roasted vegetables, pasta and vegetables, roasted potatoes with vegetables, chili and corn bread, bean burritos with salsa. A salad is served with all lunches.

**4 pm Snack:** Seasonal fresh fruit

**Supper:** Salad, Soup (freshly made from scratch by your students!), bread (usually baked by the students or from our farm bakery), cheese, hard boiled eggs, or almond butter.

In most cases with advanced notice, we can accommodate vegan, nut-free (*we are a strict peanut free facility*), gluten free, and many other medical dietary allergies but are not able to provide meals to order according to taste.

Refined sugar is not available at meals. Sweeteners are honey, maple syrup, and unrefined sugar.

## **STAFF**

Classes have been visiting the farm for almost 50 years. Our staff have decades of experience in teaching children. Each fall and spring semester, young interns join us. These are people in their 20s or older, usually having graduated from college or taking some time off to do hands-on work. They are often education, biology, or environmental majors. They are carefully screened and trained by our full-time staff. The full-time staff and the interns, together with the class teacher, work with the children. Children are never without adult supervision. Activities are conducted in groups of 5-9 students. There are also times when the class is together. All employees in the PBLC are background and reference checked prior to hire.

## **PACKING**

Please, no candy or gum, phones or electronic toys. A packing list is attached to this packet. Pack enough for the week. The key is to pack so that the luggage can be self-contained and carried by the child, especially if your class is traveling by train. LABEL EVERYTHING. If things are not labeled, it is nearly impossible to match with your child! No spending money or expensive jewelry should be brought to the farm. Please limit stuffed animals to just one very special (and small) friend.

## **SCHEDULE**

Wake-up is at 7 am, except for a few who will start the day at 5:45 am to begin animal feeding! Everyone gets a turn to feed the animals either in the morning or evening. It is a job much loved by students, especially in the early hours when only they, a staff member, and the farmer are in the barn with all the animals. In the same way, children will rotate through other duties like waiting tables and kitchen chores.

Breakfast is at 7:30 am and housekeeping is at 8 am. Our activities begin at 8:30 am. Mornings might include yogurt making, food preparation, bread baking, barn cleaning, wood chopping, or a gardening project. Afternoon activities include butter making, exploring, hiking, and seasonal maple syrup tapping or apple cider pressing. Older or returning classes have varying activities that are class/age appropriate coordinated with the teacher.

Our day follows the rhythm of in-breathing contemplative or quiet times, and out-breathing active times. There are two snacks as well as three hearty meals. A quiet time on bunks follows the noon time meal. The day ends with all gathered together for a quiet story time.

## **FARM PRODUCTS**

The class can take a taste of the farm home with them. Our **Bread and Cheese package** includes a loaf of Hawthorne Valley Farm fresh baked bread and a piece of farm cheese. The cost of this package is **\$14.00** per child. This is entirely optional. This cost will be included on your school's invoice. Our Farm Store is not available to classes during their stay.

## **MEDICAL**

The Philmont Fire Co., about 3 miles away, has an Emergency Medical Response Team and medical fire ambulance vehicle that responds to Hawthorne Valley Farm in about 8-10 minutes. In the city of Hudson, 12 miles away, is a county hospital, and more rescue squads are readily available. All full-time staff have a minimum certification in CPR-First Aid. We have traditional first-aid supplies - i.e., bandages, disinfectants etc. We have an extensive supply of homeopathic remedies. We are glad to share them with the visiting students as needed.

**If you have any questions, please contact: [vsp@hawthornevalley.org](mailto:vsp@hawthornevalley.org)**

**PACKING LIST FOR:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Label all items with permanent marker or sewn-in labels
- Please adjust the weight/type of clothing depending on the month you are visiting. We can have very cold nights in April and later in the fall. During late spring months and early fall, hiking boots would replace winter boots, snow pants are not needed, etc.
- Do not bring items with you that cannot be soiled, damaged, or, on rare occasions, lost.

**WINTER & EARLY SPRING**

**MANDATORY ITEMS**

**SEASONAL ITEMS**

Rubber Muck Boots – 1 Pair		Winter Boots (insulated/waterproof)	
Slippers 1 Pair		Balaclava	
Socks – 6 pairs (Wool/blend)		Snow pants – 1 pair	
Warm PJ's		Winter Gloves – 2 pairs	
Underwear – 6 pairs		Warm Hat – 2 (must cover ears)	
Warm Jacket – 1		Warm Scarf/neck warmer - 1	
Seasonal Hat -1		Long Johns – at least 2	
Vest to fit under jacket - 1			
Water Proof Coat			
Rain Pants		<b>OPTIONAL FUN STUFF</b>	
Long Pants – 2 pair		Disposable Camera	
Sweat Pants – 1 pair		Special Stuffed Animal or doll	
Long Sleeved Shirts-4		Special Blanket	
Short Sleeved Shirts - 2		Musical Instrument	
Sweatshirts/Sweaters - 3			
Thermal Shirts – at least 2			
Sneakers/work shoes			
<b>PERSONAL ITEMS</b>			
Sleeping Bag & Pillow case			
Laundry Bag			
Hand Towels			
Comb and Brush			
Toothbrush, paste, floss			
Tissues or handkerchief			
Sunscreen			
Sunglasses with security strap			
Book Light/ flashlight/head lamp			
A book to read for quiet time			
School supplies requested by teacher			
2 plastic grocery bags for rubber boots			

We kindly request that you do not send your child to the farm with the following items:

- Cell phones, hand-held games, MP3 players, radios, or any other electronic device
- Money
- Precious Jewelry
- Candy or gum