

Trail Life USA Troop 317

Johns Creek, Georgia

Frequently Asked Questions

General Information

1. How does Troop 317 differ from other Troops? What is the mission and vision for the Troop?

Troop 317 is not unlike any other Trail Life USA Troop in its overall look and feel. We conduct our meetings and run our Troop via the guidelines set forth by the Home Office (TLUSA). However, Troop 317, like every other Troop, has its own "personality."

Troop 317's main distinctive is our discipleship orientation. That is, our adult leaders work to train and equip young men to be mature and impactful disciples of Jesus Christ through the vehicle of outdoor adventure, as embodied in the principles and precepts of TLUSA.

2. In what ways would you expect a youth to benefit from the Trail Life experience? What are the expected outcomes from a Trailman's exposure and involvement in TLUSA and in Troop 317?

Trailmen will expect to have fun at meetings and on our trips. While having fun, they will accomplish many things that will build skills, character, and confidence for a lifetime. No other program today offers young men the variety of experience and opportunity for growth of the whole person.

A young man gets out of Trail Life what he puts into Trail Life. He may choose to pursue leadership in his patrol and the Troop. He may choose to focus on advancement. However, he might just have fun enjoying the activities we offer and the friends he makes in his patrol and the Troop. No matter his pursuit, he will be exposed to God's Word and God's people in a variety of settings and situations that will impact him in this life and the life to come.

3. I know that TLUSA and the Troop is focused on Christian principles and meets at Perimeter Church. Is the Troop advocating Perimeter's specific theology? Are there potential conflicts if we come from other denominational backgrounds – Baptist, Catholic, etc.?

We hold to the historical teachings of the Bible, which we hold to be the infallible and inerrant word of God. We will always strive to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) whether a person holds to the teachings of Scripture or not. We also recognize that there are doctrinal differences between many denominations. Our goal is never to divide, or to focus on specific differences in the various denominations. Rather, our intent is to consistently teach what we believe the word of God says.

We have members from multiple churches and denominations, so we seek to focus on the vast number of areas where there is agreement between us.

4. How is TLUSA organized? What ages are included and how are they separated?

TLUSA is organized by school grade, into three separate programs:

- Woodlands Trail – Grades K-5
 - Foxes (K, Pre-1st and 1st graders)
 - Hawks (2nd and 3rd graders)
 - Mountain Lions (4th and 5th graders)

- Navigators – Grades 6-8
- Adventurers – Grades 9-12

5. Who are those in leadership positions for Troop 317? What is the leadership structure? Can parents be involved in leadership meetings?

The Troop Committee, in conjunction with our sponsoring ministry, provides overall directional leadership to the Troop leaders. The Troop leaders execute the program within their specified program, and work together on crafting an overarching theme for the monthly meetings and campouts.

Parents are welcome to participate in our Troop Committee Meetings each month, and we in fact encourage (and in some cases require) them to do so.

6. Where do I find more information on Trail Life in general? Are there recommended books or websites?

The best resource is the TLUSA national website: www.traillifeusa.com. Another great resource is your son's Trail Life Handbook. We will be referring to it often, and all of the advancement requirements (with the exception of Trail Badge Requirements) are contained in the Trailman Handbook.

7. What kind of time commitment is required for the Trailman? Are there participation minimums?

Other than our two “stand down” months of July and December, during which there are no scheduled meetings or campouts (but could be some special events), Troop 317 operates year-round. Our meetings are held once per week, on Tuesday nights, from 7:00pm-8:30pm. We meet every Tuesday night of the month, with the exception of the meeting following a campout, which is generally reserved for the Patrol Leader's Council (PLC) meeting. During the PLC, the Navigators and Adventurers work on specific advancement activities.

However, there is NO Woodlands Trail meeting on the Tuesday nights when we have a PLC.

The Navigators and Adventurers have a campout during the nine months each year that we are active – generally the 3rd weekend of each month, plus a week for Summer Camp (typically in June). The Woodlands Trail program generally strives for a day outing on the 2nd Saturday of each month.

At each rank or award along the path, there is a requirement that the Trailman participate in a number of activities. With regard to Troop meeting participation, we believe that a 60% participation rate, while less than ideal, is a reasonable expectation.

8. What goes on at the Tuesday night meetings? Are they mandatory?

Our meetings begin at 7:00pm sharp (although Trailmen often arrive at 6:45pm) with the Opening Ceremony. At this time, the youth form up by Program/Patrol for the procession of the colors (the USA and Troop 317 flags), the Pledge of Allegiance, the Trailman Oath, and a brief prayer. The various Programs are then dismissed for more Program-specific activities and training.

For Navigators and Adventurers, meetings generally include 3 elements: “Troop Time” during which there is group instruction, a guest speaker, a briefing on an upcoming campout, etc. During “Patrol Time” the Trailmen may review advancement progress with their Program Lead or Trail Guide, or

develop a duty roster/meal plan for an upcoming campout. Lastly, depending on time constraints, "Game Time" includes playing a game like "Capture the Flag" or Ultimate Frisbee. Each segment lasts 20-30 minutes depending on the meeting. Advancement activities (e.g. Leader Conferences, Boards of Review, and Trail Badge Instruction) can take place during any segment.

For Woodlands Trail members, the same 3 elements are present, but in shorter time periods. We dismiss the Woodlands Trail program at 8:10pm.

The Navigators and Adventurers meeting ends at 8:30pm with the Closing Ceremony which includes announcements, Wisdom for the Wild (a brief devotional), the retrieval of the colors, and a prayer. The Troop cleans the Uptown Auditorium of trash to ensure that we "Tread Lightly."

While Troop meetings are not mandatory, it only makes sense that if a Trailman is going to do well, advance, and have fun, he will participate in the life of the Troop to the fullest extent possible. Certainly, if your son obtains a leadership position in the Troop, we would expect him to prioritize his leadership commitment, and participate to the greatest degree possible.

9. How much should we expect to pay in annual fixed costs (membership, etc.)?

Our Activity year runs from August to July. Annual dues (payable in August) are currently \$100 for Navigators and Adventurers, and \$60 for our Woodlands Trail members. There is a \$10 discount for additional youth in the program.

There is another annual fee, paid directly to TLUSA via Trail Life Connect, of \$26. This annual fee is due each year on the anniversary of your son's joining date.

10. How much should we expect to pay for the uniform?

Our Travel/Troop Meeting uniform consists of a Trail Life USA shirt (collared, polo-style, color-specific to your son's individual program), and clean blue jeans. During appropriate weather, shorts are allowed instead of jeans. These shirts are ordered via the TLUSA store website: <http://trailifeusastore.com> and cost \$22-\$24.

In addition to the Travel/Troop meeting shirt, you should also plan to purchase at least one Activity T-shirt (color-specific to your son's individual program) as part of your uniform. T-shirts are also available at the TLUSA store, and run \$12-\$15.

As your son reaches 4th grade (Mountain Lion) in the program, we ask that each Trailman also obtain a formal uniform. Our formal uniform consists of a Shirt, Pants, Socks, and a Belt. These are also available at the TLUSA store, and run about \$125. The Troop provides the shoulder loops and Troop-specific patch, so there is no need to purchase those separately.

In addition, remember that your Trailman is likely to grow, so please consider uniforms to be an ongoing expense. Troop 317 values the uniform as an important part of the program. Youth are expected to be in the appropriate uniform for all Troop events, Leader Conferences, Boards of Review, Worship Services and other appropriate times. A youth should learn to care for his uniform, wear it correctly, and keep it looking neat.

11. What other elective costs should we expect to have (campouts, Summer Adventure, camping gear, etc.)?

Our Woodlands Trail Program plans one day trip per month – usually on the fourth Saturday of each month. Those trips are designed to be FREE, if possible. Other types of trips will depend on the activities included, the distance from home, etc.

The Navigators and Adventurers plan 10 campouts per year. There are 8-9 monthly campouts at an average cost of \$40-\$50, again, depending on activities, distance from home, etc. Summer Adventure (once per year – 6 days, 5 nights) for the Navigators and Adventurers usually costs around \$375. On occasion, the Troop may also plan one "SuperTrip" across a 4-day weekend, at an average cost of \$175. We will provide plenty of advance notice for the higher-cost trips, so that families can plan accordingly.

We would LOVE for our Adventurers to try and plan a High Adventure trip. This type of trip will usually cost significantly more than a monthly campout. These trips can be once in a lifetime experiences, therefore expensive, and we provide opportunities for fund-raising, etc. to help offset the costs for our Trailmen.

12. Are there scholarships?

There are a limited number of scholarships (camperships) available on a case-by-case basis at the Troop level. We strongly encourage participation in all of our fundraisers, which can help to offset the cost of campouts, especially our SuperTrips or Summer Adventure. Troop camperships are available only after a Trailman has taken full advantage of fund-raising activities and the youth's own personal earning potential has been taken into account.

It is our desire that no youth would miss the full participation with the Troop due to financial difficulties. While it is not the intent of T317 to exclude anyone from Troop activities based on cost, families must understand that there will be a cost to be an active part of the Troop and families should budget accordingly. Please contact your Trail Guide or Program Director for more details surrounding our campership policy.

13. Can a youth participate in extra-curricular activities (sports, band, debate, etc.) on Tuesday night and still be in the Troop?

Yes, being in TLUSA does not preclude the youth from participating in other activities. We believe that there are multiple avenues of personal and character development. We obviously believe strongly in the role that Troop 317 plays in that arena, but other activities have their place, as well.

That being said, it is a rare Trailman that can simultaneously do a full season of other activities AND a full season of Trail Life, and do both well. We leave the final decision about priorities to the youth and his family, trusting in the family's wisdom to choose the slate of activities that they feel would best help their son.

Once a Trailman reaches high school (Adventurers), he can actually earn credit for a Freedom Experience by participating in a sport or other personal activities. Please talk with the Adventurers Advisor for more details.

14. How will a new Trailman be assigned to a patrol?

TLUSA and our Troop are both organized in an age-and-stage arrangement, where youth of similar ages and grades will be together in a patrol. We strongly believe that the age-and-stage method more closely aligns with our vision and mission for the Troop, and fits more closely with the overall TLUSA methodology.

Depending on his grade when he joins, a new Trailman will either be part of a new patrol, or (in the case of older youth joining for the first time) he will be assigned to a patrol with other youth that are similar in age and grade.

15. Can we request that he be assigned to a particular patrol, in order to be with a friend?

We know that anything is more fun when done with a friend, so we try to accommodate any and all requests of this type. We will also keep in mind the balance of the Troop needs, the size of the patrols, the advancement track of the existing patrols, etc. The Troop will make the best judgment possible, while being flexible to change, should a serious need arise.

16. What kind of time commitment is required for the parent? (more info in the Parent section of FAQ)

It has been our policy for at least one parent per family to serve the Troop in some way. We have many varied positions that a parent can fill, some of which take more time than others. Committee Members, Trail Guides, Trail Badge Instructors, Troop Committee "assistants", campout volunteers, campout drivers, Advancement coordinators, etc. are all needed roles that can be filled by parents.

It is our desire that you serve in an area of your giftedness and passion, in order to make your service more meaningful and more rewarding. Please contact your Program Leader to discuss how you can volunteer and best serve the Troop.

17. What kind of activities are parents typically involved in? (more info in the Parent section)

A parent can best support the Troop by working in a Troop Committee position, supporting the activities of the Troop in a "back office" manner. Positions like Membership Coordinator, Program Coordinator, Advancement Coordinator, and Finance Coordinator all need assistance from time to time with administrative and record keeping details.

If a father wishes to be more involved with the Trailmen, he can apply to be a Trail Guide. The Trail Guide works directly with individual patrols in a small group setting. He also spends time with youth during Troop meetings and campouts on advancement and spiritual mentoring.

In the Woodlands Trail Program, we definitely need more parental involvement – especially from the Dads.

18. What about boys with single parents?

Boys with single parents are particularly encouraged to join. Our Troop Leaders are mentors and positive male role models for young men without a father figure in the home. Moms can help with the Troop Committee and take on roles that fit around their hectic schedule.

19. Can Moms participate in the camping trips or other activities?

It's important that our Troop utilize the skills and talents of every willing and able adult to make our Troop as good as it can be. Due to our emphasis on discipleship, mentoring, and role modeling, we've found it to be more effective if Dads are the main parents who spend time in the direct-contact roles on the outings and campouts. This is a critical time in the life of your son, as he seeks to embrace and exercise his masculinity. Solid role models are important, in that they show what it looks like to be a man who follows Jesus Christ.

The nature and breadth of our program requires that every family be an active part of our Troop. There are many roles that our Troop Moms play well: Committee Members, Trail Badge Instructors,

Court of Honor Committee, etc., so there is no reason that a Troop Mom can't fully engage and support our Troop in the areas in which she is gifted and feels passionately about.

20. Is a background check done before an adult can participate in Troop activities or can become a leader?

Yes. As we submit Adult Applications for review, the TLUSA Home Office performs a criminal background check and will notify the Troop if any relevant information is discovered. Each registered leader is also required to complete a comprehensive Child Safety and Protection course prior to be accepted as a leader. Leaders are recruited and selected by the Troop Committee with the full participation, engagement, and approval of the Chartered Organization.

21. What kind of training is required for leaders? What training, certification, or approvals are needed for the various types of involvement?

At a minimum, every adult who attends a campout is required to review and agreed to abide by the TLUSA Child Safety and Youth Protection policies. The policy is available online, and we ask that each participating, non-registered adult review and sign an acknowledgement of the content.

Our registered leaders undergo additional training, both at the national and Troop level, including a more comprehensive Child Safety and Youth Protection course, which takes about 90 minutes to complete.

For certain types of activities (water-related, climbing, shooting, high adventure) National and Troop policy require more specialized training in that specific area. Much of this training is now online and is easily accessible.

22. What kind of adult guidance or supervision is provided on the campouts?

At a minimum, two registered adult leaders, or one registered adult and a registered parent, are required for all trips or outings. This "two-deep leadership" is always in place. Troop 317's outings typically have around 5-8 adults participating.

If we do not have enough adult participation, we may have to cancel an outing. While this has never happened, we DO encourage adults to participate as much as possible, to avoid this possibility.

23. Who should I contact with other questions?

You should have the contact information for the Program Lead or Trail Guide for your son's patrol. He will serve as the first point of contact for any question that you have about the Troop, your son's advancement, upcoming outings/campouts, etc. Also, any member of the Troop leadership is available to answer your questions, either via e-mail or phone call.

24. What is the process for getting my son signed up for Troop 317?

- National registration with Trail Life USA (via a link provided by the Troop at registration).
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- A basic Medical Form
- Signature and acknowledgement of the Parent Agreement.