

# Intriguing Summer Employment: A Guide To Seasonal Opportunities

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For many people, summer is a time to have fun and take a break from the normal routine whether that routine is school, work, or both. Summer employment can be an opportunity to explore interests, fulfill dreams, expand on experiences, or simply face new challenges. There are many opportunities to work at exciting places throughout the United States and abroad. As with any job, your interests and skills play a large part in the types of jobs you will pursue.

## Kinds of Summer Jobs

The most common summer experiences are with recreational camps and amusement parks. However, there are also opportunities within National Parks, cruise ships, resorts, waterfront areas, tour escort companies, as well as possibilities overseas. For more information about overseas employment, please refer to the *Work Abroad* guide and other resources available in the Career Center Library.

### Recreational Camps

Recreational camps are found in all parts of the country and are usually looking for enthusiastic people to help out in a variety of ways. Counselors, special topic instructors, and maintenance and kitchen staffs are among the types of positions camps hire. Camps may be single-sex or coeducational with campers ages varying from 6-18 years of age.

In addition to cabin responsibilities, counselors are often asked to be special topic instructors. Special topic areas may include horseback riding, swimming, canoeing, arts and crafts, drama, chorus, archery and riflery, tennis, camping, and various other outdoor sports. Camps may be church-affiliated, spiritually oriented, or strictly recreational; they may also cater to a specific type of camper like persons with disabilities or disadvantaged youths.

The camping season is usually eight to twelve weeks long from May to August and the length of stay for campers will vary. Room and board are usually included as part of the employment package, but this policy may vary. Some special topic areas require



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certification (e.g., lifesaving, CPR, first aid, equestrian training) in order to be hired. Sometimes camps will provide opportunities for certification during the pre-season training period. Willingness to obtain the necessary certification is definitely beneficial for employment.

The best time to apply is between January and March. Camp counselor experience is beneficial for people interested in education, rehabilitation services, leisure services and studies, special education, and any special topic area (music, theatre, etc.) that may be offered at the camp. While obtaining related experience is beneficial for you, it is not a requirement for pursuing an exciting summer with recreational camps.

## National Parks

Within the national park system, there are two types of employment opportunities. You may be hired by the National Park Service as a federal employee or by private concessionaires within the park. Both employers tend to provide housing and meals at low-cost. Both also have grooming standards with the National Park Service being slightly more lenient.



Jobs within the National Park Service range from visitor programs to law enforcement to road and park maintenance. Private park concessionaires offer a wide variety of positions from kitchen staff and rooms keeper to guest relations. Your best chance for employment with parks is a willingness to accept a "less glamorous" entry level position. Most temporary positions require irregular hours of work, including weekends, holidays, and evenings.

Because of the many applicants interested in working with the National Park Service, seasonal jobs are very competitive. Applicants may apply for employment year round and must complete the computerized application form (10-139). Job listings and applications can be found on the seasonal Web site at [www.sep.nps.gov](http://www.sep.nps.gov). For further information, contact the Seasonal Employment Program (phone 1-877-554-4550 or e-mail NPS\_SEP@NPS.GOV) or contact the park in which you are interested. A list of the national parks with contact information can be found online at [www.nps.gov/parks.html](http://www.nps.gov/parks.html).

Private concessionaires are also available in the resource listed above with the application period varying by employer. For information and job openings, look in the Summer Jobs, National Parks, and Camps files, located in the Career Experience Opportunities Office (A4128 UC).

## Amusement Parks

Like recreational camps, amusement parks hire people for a wide variety of positions. Although there are opportunities at the parks in Florida, do not forget parks in other areas of the country. Employment opportunities range from maintenance keepers to air brush artists and photographers to ride operators, internal auditors and singers. Oftentimes, parks will provide low-cost lodging and meals, uniforms, and free or reduced admission for guests to the park. Length of required employment will vary.



## Tour Escorts

Working as a tour escort can be one of the most rewarding and demanding seasonal jobs. Many people see the glamour of travel, but may not realize the detail and crisis management techniques involved with leading groups. Being a tour escort is a 24 hour a day job involving commentary on the region or site as well as finding lost luggage, helping people who are ill, and dealing with accommodation problems.



Tour escort companies may have domestic and/or international tours. The main duties of a tour escort include facilitating local arrangements and providing regional commentary when necessary. International tour escorts tend to work with local arrangements only. When conducting an international tour, someone from that country usually provides the commentary. United States tour escorts typically provide commentary on the area as well as perform routine tasks. Domestic tours outnumber international tours three to one.

The peak season for tour programs is May through October, with tours lasting from seven to twenty-one days. Tour escorts report being paid \$80 - \$100 a day including tips while on tour. The tour company typically pays all housing and meal expenses.

Positions with tour companies are highly competitive. They are looking for people who love working with people, which in many ways is more important than

enjoying travel. Tour escorts should have knowledge of the area in which they would like to work. Experience leading groups, patience, communication skills, and energy are all valuable skills for a tour escort. As with many summer jobs, persistence is the key in finding a position with a tour company.

Most organizations provide training for their tour guides at the specific work site. However, there are organizations that offer additional information and training on becoming a certified tour guide. For example, the International Tour Management Institute at [www.itmitourtraining.com](http://www.itmitourtraining.com) has classes in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Boston.

Prior training is not required in this industry, but the ability to demonstrate a keen interest in and commitment to becoming a tour escort is a necessity.

### **Cruise Ships**

Like the national park system, cruise ships employ people directly or through private concessionaires. Crew members are usually hired by the cruise liner personnel office and include positions in the hotel department, catering department, and engine department. Catering is the largest area, followed by the hotel department which employs housekeepers, bellhops, laundry personnel, and tradespeople (carpenters, painters, etc.). Crew members tend to have the most difficult jobs with the least privileges.

Staff members may be hired by either the liner or a private concessionaire/employment service depending on the ship and the position. Activities directors are staff members typically hired by the liner. Entertainment, casino, gift shop, fitness, photography, and beauty salon personnel are typically hired through private concessionaires. Another type of employees on cruise ships are the officers. Officers include professional staff responsible for navigating the ship, running the ship's hospital, and performing general administrative duties.

Benefits of cruise ship employment include free or reduced room and board, few expenses, permanent residence while in port, and an opportunity to travel and participate in port activities. However, you may have to share quarters with other staff members. Uniforms or a clothing allowance will be provided. The typical work week is seven days a week for six to eight hours a day.



Cruise ship employers will expect proof of citizenship (passport, birth certificate, voter registration) and may require a photograph. You should address cover letters to a specific person if possible and refer to the names of the ships associated with that company. Show the employer your commitment through doing research on that particular ship.

### **Waterfront Areas**

During the summer months, many tourists flock to waterfront areas where they enjoy beaches, rivers, or lakes. Most waterfront employers require some special training either as a lifeguard, rafting guide, or sailing instructor. Red Cross life guard training, CPR certification, and advanced first aid certification are often required. Water front resorts may hire typical hotel and restaurant personnel. Some employers will require pre-employment training such as attending white water river guide school. Shuttle drivers are often needed at river-based companies and usually require a special driver's license.



## Things to Consider

There are many fantastic opportunities for summer employment. You should consider financial concerns, location preference, type of work required, and any other personal issues that may be applicable to you. While developing skills and making contacts may not be your primary goal for summer employment, you should keep these things in mind. Summer employment can be a time to strengthen skills, expand experiences, and reinforce recreational interests. Furthermore, the summer experience should be fun and rewarding!

There are many opportunities to work at intriguing places during the summer and get extremely valuable experience. It is important to remember, however, that **a job in a spectacular place is still a job**. Working on a cruise ship, at a camp or national park, or at an amusement park is hard work. What makes these jobs rewarding is your exposure to a variety of people and places as well as the opportunities you have outside of your work hours.

As with any job search, applying can be tedious. Persistence is the name of the game! It is also important to demonstrate your enthusiasm and commitment to gaining this experience every time you contact the employer. Write powerful letters; follow-up regularly; apply early (usually by March); be responsive to getting the necessary training! Research the benefits and requirements for the work environment and the organization.

When communicating with summer employers, be specific about the dates you are available to work. Florida students have an advantage over other college students because they are typically available from May 1 through August 15, which is much longer than the average college student. Pointing out this advantage may offset the inability to work through Labor Day which many employers prefer.

Again, be persistent with your efforts and demonstrate your enthusiasm for intriguing summer employment. Good luck!

## Twelve Important Questions

1. Will I make enough money to cover my expenses when I return?
2. Will I be able to return in time to prepare for school? Summer employment may overlap with Greek rush, residence hall responsibilities, etc.
3. In what area of the country do I want to work?
4. Will I be able to come home at all during the summer?
5. Will I have time away from work to enjoy the area in which I am working?
6. In what types of positions am I interested?
7. Do the types of positions I am interested in require any special training?
8. Am I willing to work in a "less glamorous" entry level position?
9. Will the employer cover room and board?
10. Does the employer pay for transportation?
11. Will I develop skills applicable to future employment?
12. Will I make contacts that might prove beneficial in my career?

## Resources Available

Specific job titles may be found in the Career Center Library's Occupational Files. For example: Entertainment Attendants (IIB 39-3000). To learn more, please speak with a Career Advisor.

