

What is the Odyssey?

The Odyssey involves teenagers embarking on a physical journey of several hundred kilometres through varied landscape that presents them with physical, emotional and spiritual challenges.

This creates opportunity for self-reflection and rest in beautiful surrounds.

The Oakhill Odyssey is not just another adventure camp; it is a journey to the soul!

Students will start the journey as teenagers and finish as young adults.

Goals and Outcomes

INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES

- To enable each learner to experience independence in the outdoors, in an unfamiliar environment.
- To enable learners to develop their own leadership skills and adopt their own personal leadership styles, self-confidence and self-esteem.
- To allow personal development and growth through physical and mental challenges.
- To allow learners to appreciate the simplicities and necessities of life.
- To encourage learners to set their own personal goals, to be self motivated, accept challenges and to experience exhilarating moments of true achievement and the attainment of own personal goals.
- To encourage reflection and spiritual growth.
- To enable learners to learn and improve a range of outdoor activities and skills.
- To enable learners to appreciate the rich diversity and uniqueness of the Garden route landscape and heritage.
- To enrich each individual's knowledge, understanding and appreciation of a range of natural wonders, heritage and literature of the region.

SOCIAL OUTCOMES

These outcomes are achieved through each learner's interaction with their peers and people they meet on the Odyssey.

- To encourage learners to develop co-operative skills, tolerance and understanding of themselves and others.
- To allow learners to experience life in a small community and be exposed to all of its components such as decision-making, controversy and trust.
- To provide opportunities of getting to know other people, and truly appreciate them for their values and qualities.
- To provide opportunities for developing new friendships.

- To provide opportunities for the development of leadership

When?

The first group will leave early morning on 27 February 2012.

The last group will arrive back at Oakhill campus on 20 March 2012.

Brief description

The Odyssey will take place over 21 days on the Garden route. The Grade 10 learners will be divided into 4 groups. Each group will be accompanied by 2 adult leaders. The Journey will start and finish at the Oakhill campus.

Each group will journey on a 400km loop through the Garden route using a variety of means to cover the diverse terrain. During the 21 day journey groups will hike, mountain bike, canoe and horse back ride to their different destinations.

The 4 groups will be doing the Odyssey at the same time traveling a day apart from each other on the route.

What will the students do?

Students will be in “control” of their own journey!

They will be responsible for setting up camp , making decisions about the route, preparing meals, leading their groups and much more.

Along the way they will encounter all types of activities and challenges that will help them grow as group and more importantly grow as individuals.

Food supplies

Students will receive boxes with food supplies every 2-3 days at drop off points. These boxes will contain more than enough supplies that form part of a healthy balanced diet.

Each group will be responsible for their own meals. The students will have to decide how the food supplies are distributed, used for meals, transported to camp sites, and what meals to prepare.

Accommodation

Overnight accommodation on the Odyssey varies from camping to basic log cabins to lodge accommodation with the majority being camping.

Groups will mostly camp at campsites with basic facilities. There are some occasions where the campsite is in the wild with no facilities, fresh water will be supplied at these sites.

Each day...

Groups will journey every day to their next overnight stop. On route they will encounter challenges as a team and as individuals. At some locations there will be specific activities to enhance team cohesion and personal growth.

Around the campfire at night groups will discuss the days events , challenges , problems etc. and have time to do self reflection

At specific locations students will spend time in solo sessions. During these sessions they will spend time with themselves doing self reflection, plan their lives, writing down thoughts and experiencing nature

Groups and Staffing

With the current gr. 9 numbers, there will be 4 groups of 10 learners going on the Odyssey in 2012:

2 female groups and 2 male groups. Each group will consist of 10 students and 2 adults.

3 additional adults will co-ordinate between the groups for supplies, equipment and emergencies. The adults leading the groups will be teachers.

Route

The Odyssey takes the students on a 400 km journey through the heart of the Garden Route.

Groups will head out of Knysna, travel over the Outeniqua mountains, then head down to the coast. Groups will finish their journey in at Oakhill.

The route takes the students through a variety of landscapes and past some of the most beautiful areas in the Garden route.

Beaches, forests, mountains, Karoo and rivers are just a few to mention. Students will travel between 15 km – 30 km a day by hiking, mountain biking, paddling or horseback riding.

What kit do the students need ?

The most important items needed for the expedition will be walking boots, a rucksack, sleeping bag, waterproof jacket and your own mountain bike.

Kit list

- Fully detailed kit lists will be provided within the next 2 weeks and discussed with the learners.
- NO electronic devices will be allowed on the Odyssey except cameras. An iPod, cell phone or Gameboy will be a distraction and learners will miss out on all the fun there friends are having!

Communication

- There will be a postal service running for the duration of the Odyssey.
- Every 5 days letters will be picked up and dropped off to and from the groups.
- There will be a central location on the school campus where letters can be mailed or picked up.

The Odyssey is a physical and emotional journey and will be very challenging at times.

We encourage you to write letters to your child to support them through this journey.

An encouraging letter from home can mean a lot and uplift a child's spirits.

Safety

- The safety of the students is the most important issue for all involved in the Odyssey and will not be compromised over any other goals.
- All camp sites and routes have been thoroughly explored by staff members. A support vehicle will be on route for the entire duration of the Odyssey. All staff members will have a cell phone and a two-way radio – for use in areas where phone reception is lacking.
- Professional river guides have been hired to lead paddling sections.
- Qualified Instructors have been hired for all the adventure activities that students will encounter.
- Mountain rescue has been involved in planning the Odyssey route to ensure the route is safe and accessible in case of emergencies. They will be on 24hr standby for the duration of the Odyssey and are ready assist with any type of emergency that may occur. This includes a helicopter for an airlift to Knysna/George if needed.
- Later this year all the adult leaders and learners involved will undertake an outdoor survival course presented specially for Odyssey preparation by the Anti-Poaching Association of South Africa at the Knysna Elephant park.
- All the group leaders and 2 students from each group will do a basic first aid and CPR certification course.

Medical cards

Each student will have a medical information card strap to their backpack. This card will contain all the important medical information about the learner.

Preparation

To enable learners to fully enjoy everything that the Odyssey offers, they must be prepared.

In the 4th term and early next year training and preparation sessions will be held to help the learners prepare for their expedition and teach them skills and tips that will make the Odyssey an unforgettable experience.

Sessions will include:

- Bike maintenance
- Water safety
- Navigation and orientation
- Outdoor survival
- First aid and CPR

BASIC FITNESS ...

A basic fitness level is required to do the Odyssey.

The route has been typographically setup in such a way that anybody can do the Odyssey BUT it will be a lot easier if you have a basic fitness level.

This will enable you to enjoy the beautiful scenery and activities along the way appose to being to tired to even notice your surroundings.

I suggest that the learners go for a run, hike, mountain bike or paddle of about 15 km as much as possible in the time leading up to the Odyssey to get them use to these activities and distance of travel.

Help from parents

- **Transport** – a Bakkie to setup the Odyssey and for a support vehicle; petrol ; trailers
- **Support staff** - Professional guides/instructors, group leaders, Doctors on call, medics
- **Packing food** – Packing of food boxes and meals

Costs involved

- **Camping and accommodation**
- **Trail and conservancy fees**
- **Food** - +- R 60 000 of nutrition
- **Equipment** - Bicycles, canoes, horses, trailers
- **First aid kits**
- **Preparation**- training and courses

Solo Session

- During the Odyssey, learners will go through a 30 hr solo session
- One of the activities that each learner must complete during the solo session is to write a letter to themselves that will be given back to them at their final assembly in gr. 12
- The solo session is truly the highlight of the Odyssey.
- Because it is such a challenging, emotional and spiritual time we would like parents to write a letter to their child for support during the solo session.
- An encouraging letter from loved ones while a child is alone in the wilderness for 30 hours can be the spark needed for a life change.
- Letters will be distributed to the learners as they go into solo. Letters are due 1 week before the start of the Odyssey

Parents role

- Support the Odyssey and your child.
- Letter for your child
- Indemnity forms – will be handed out in January 2012
- Any form of support is more than welcome

As planning for the Odyssey moves forward, all information, FAQ's, costs, etc. will become available on the schools website. Any important updates will be sent to you via ADAM.

For any questions, feedback, sponsors, support or just for a chat about the Odyssey feel free to contact me.

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