

Oh, How Things Have Changed

When it comes time to send their own children to camp, many alumni don't have any doubt in their minds—their children will be going to SLC. One recent example is very telling. The alum called from California and said we want our son to go to SLC. "Great," we said, "but have you considered that this will mean cross country flights at the beginning and end of each stay and for Visiting Days?" We told this alum that we would be delighted to have his son in camp, but suggested that he first check out a couple of California Jewish camps that we think highly of. A few weeks later, the same caller: we checked out the other camps, thanks for the suggestion, and we want our son to go to SLC. Which he now does.

There are other alums who remember camp fondly but hesitate to consider it for their children or grandchildren because they don't realize how much SLC has changed since they were campers. If you are one of those alums whose impression of SLC is frozen in your mind, we want to make sure you understand how much has changed. Here are some of the biggest differences!

When we went to camp, there was no electricity in the cabins—only flashlights after dark. Today, not only do all the cabins have interior and exterior lights, but most of the bulbs throughout camp are compact fluorescents!

We had open gang showers and had to walk to the washhouse at night. Today, all of the washhouses at camp have been rebuilt with private shower stalls and a significantly upgraded look and feel (including skylights, no less!). Each Mainside cabin also has a toilet and a sink, and the youngest kids have showers inside as well.

Many of the kids used to live in tents. While we LOVED them, some of us might balk at asking our own kids to live in them today. No worries—every camper at SLC lives in a cabin today. The interiors have all been painted (no wall to wall graffiti). Every single cabin in camp has been rebuilt or significantly renovated in the past 20 years (except in Work Program, where select 15 year olds love having a chance to live in throw back cabins similar to the ones we had).

In the old days, the counselors lived in separate counselor cabins. No more. All campers (again, except in Work Program) have counselors living in the same structures as the campers, albeit with their own rooms so the staff has a little semi-private space, which we believe is healthy.

There was no curfew at night—even young staff could stay up until all hours. It might have been fun when we were young staff, but it was no way to make sure staff were rested and able to give 100% to their campers every day. Today there are curfews, and staff must check in and check out when leaving camp. Accountability and professionalism have been increased dramatically.

When it rained, the only place to be active was the Little Playhouse. Today we have a fancy 10,000 square foot gymnasium, as well as a number of other new or improved indoor spaces. Few camps can rival the amount of rainy day space we have.

The beach was rocky and rutted. Today both waterfronts have been renovated—real sand beaches, attractive landscaping, cabana-like tents for shade. They are a “wow” for alums who are seeing them for the first time.

The food was, well, what do you expect of camp food? We have raised the bar dramatically. Corn and cheese and buttered noodles are no longer considered meals. Today, the food isn't just OK—it is VERY good. Breakfast bars and salad bars provide multiple additional options, as does the separate vegetarian menu.

No trips. When we came to camp, we pretty much stayed in camp, until the day we left. Today, all kids go on trips, and the older they get, the more trips they go on, culminating in the three day trip for our oldest teens to either Boston or Washington, DC.

And how about these activities we never had? Golf (driving cages, putting green, sand trap), beach volleyball, gaga pits constructed just for this Israeli form of dodgeball, hockey rinks, digital photography, archery ranges, kayaks, windsurfers, climbing tower, fitness center, Neil Diamond Music Program, water trampolines, high and low ropes courses, and more.

Did you know that orientation for staff now lasts 8 days? That we have staff from 12 different countries?

So much at camp has changed since we were kids. It would be impossible to describe it all. Virtually every aspect of the operation has been upgraded and made more sophisticated.

But some things haven't changed. The stunning SLC vista is still incredible, whether you look over the lake from Mainside with Breakneck Ridge in the background or whether you look over the lake from Teenside at our dramatic Main Building. The staff is still awesome—spirited, caring, and talented. And the campers still walk away with new personal skills, a stronger sense of character, and memories that last a lifetime.

If you have a child in your family, come take another look at SLC. We've come a long way, baby!