



# Summer Backpacking

## Preparing for the Olympic Science Expedition

A guide for students and parents

August 2–14, 2020



## Welcome!

Greetings from Olympic National Park. You are about to embark on the adventure of a lifetime. Over the course of two weeks, you will visit beautiful places and overcome physical and intellectual challenges with a group of people who share your passion for new experiences. On this trip, you ask the questions, you find the answers, and you go home with fantastic stories to tell.

You are about to become part of an expedition team whose success depends on trust, communication, and participation. Friendships forged on wilderness expeditions can last a lifetime. Two NatureBridge Environmental Science Educators will lead your team. These educators have years of experience leading groups into wilderness areas and introducing people to the natural beauty of wild places.

We hope that you have a wonderful trip that will inspire you to continue exploring and learning about the world around you. If you have any questions, please ask us. It is our job to make sure that you get the most out of this experience.

Looking forward to seeing you this summer!

*The NatureBridge Education Team in Olympic National Park*

## Program Overview

Immerse yourself in backpacking, in environmental science, and in the wonder of exploring a national park on this exceptional two-week experience. After spending two days at our picturesque campus on Lake Crescent packing and preparing, you and your group will set off on an eight-day backpacking expedition through Olympic National Park. You will hike 5-10 miles each day to a new campsite, carrying everything you need in a large backpack that weighs 40-50 lbs. While traveling across gorgeous forest and mountain landscapes, you will learn the essential skills of backpacking and discover what it means to be a field scientist. You will design and conduct your own science investigation, strengthen your leadership skills, and form new friendships. After you complete your trip, your group will return to the NatureBridge campus, shower(!), and celebrate your accomplishments. The next day, you and your group will create powerpoints about each of your science investigations and present them to National Park staff, NatureBridge educators, your family, and peers. Students have used their NatureBridge Summer Backpacking experience and research for high school capstone projects, college entrance essays, and job resumes. This challenging and fun adventure will likely be one of your most meaningful and rewarding experiences.

## In this packet, you will find information about:

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## Required Paperwork

Let's get this out of the way first! Before the program begins, we need some information from you. NatureBridge requires you to complete the following documents before attending our program:

- [NatureBridge Participant Registration form](#) – Requires a parent or guardian's signature.
- [NatureBridge Medical Exam](#) - To be completed and signed by a Physician, Licensed Nurse Practitioner, or Physician's Assistant.
- [NatureBridge Backcountry Student Contract](#) – Requires a student signature.
- Complete the [Student Pre-trip Survey](#).

**Please submit all forms to Katie Draude by May 15, 2020.**

Email forms and direct questions to:  
Katie Draude, Summer Programs Manager  
Email: [kdraude@naturebridge.org](mailto:kdraude@naturebridge.org)  
Phone: 415-598-9832

## Pre-Trip Preparation

**“Do I have enough backpacking experience for this trip?”**

Yes, you do! No prior backpacking experience is necessary. We expect that you have a positive mental attitude, that you have a willingness to learn, and that you are an active participant in the entire experience. If you meet those expectations, this will be a rewarding experience for everyone.

### Physical Preparation

Students, please prepare physically for the course through regular exercise. You will be hiking 5-10 miles per day with 40-50 lb. backpacks on uneven terrain, up and over mountain passes. Practice hiking before the trip with a weighted backpack and the hiking shoes you plan to wear. Conditioning will help you to avoid injury and will add to your enjoyment and ability to participate in the course.

### Equipment List

Look over the gear list and compile your gear for the trip. Please contact Katie with questions about specific gear needs or if you need to borrow equipment.

**(Continues on next page)**

## Travel Logistics

Olympic National Park is on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington. It is your responsibility to get to and from Olympic at the beginning and end of the program. Travel options are listed below. Please note that the program starts and ends at our NatureBridge campus on Lake Crescent in Olympic National Park. The campus address is 111 Barnes Point Road, Port Angeles, WA 98362.

### Program Dates: August 2–14, 2020

#### Travel by Plane

We offer a shuttle service to and from Seattle International Airport (SEA) on the first and last day of the program. You can purchase a one-way or round trip ticket for the shuttle at the same time you pay tuition on our online registration site. This service costs \$50 each way (\$100 round trip).

**\*\*Important\*\*:** To use the shuttle, participants should purchase tickets for a flight that arrives before 12 p.m. on Sunday, August 2nd and departs after 1:30 p.m. on Friday, August 14th.

#### Travel by Car

Please plan to drop off your student at the NatureBridge campus on Lake Crescent in Olympic National Park between 3:30–4 p.m. You can refer to [our Google map](#) for directions. At the end of the program, you are invited to attend student presentations on Thursday, August 13th (see information below) or arrive at campus on Friday, August 14th to pick up your student. Please be prepared to depart campus by 12 p.m. on Friday.

#### Student Presentations on Last Day

The final evening on campus (Thursday, August 13th), we will host student presentations at our Barnes Point campus in Olympic National Park.

Parents and families are invited to see the presentations. Dinner will be served that evening, followed by student presentations. Presentations should run about 1.5–2 hours.

#### Lodging Options in the Olympic Area for Family and Friends

If you wish to stay in the area before or after the trip, there are some great options for lodging either in Olympic National Park itself or in nearby communities.

For lodging and camping options within the park, visit the Olympic National Park website page, "Lodging Within Olympic National Park" at <http://www.nps.gov/olym/planyourvisit/lodging.htm>. Lake Crescent Lodge is the closest option and is in walking distance of our Barnes Point campus.

**(Continues on next page)**

## Sample Itinerary

Day(s)	Topics/Activities*
Sunday, August 2	<p><i>Arrival/Orientation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Arrive at our campus on Lake Crescent in Olympic National Park between 3:30–4 p.m., begin to learn about the place and to get to know the other members of your group.</li> <li>● Sleep in a dorm-style cabin on our campus.</li> </ul>
Monday	<p><i>Backpacking preparation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Look at individual and group gear to make sure everyone is fully prepared.</li> <li>● Intro to field science investigations and scientific inquiry.</li> <li>● Sleep in a dorm-style cabin on our campus.</li> </ul>
Tuesday	<p><i>Introduction to Olympic National Park ecology</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore the trails around Lake Crescent with your group.</li> <li>● Continuing preparing for backpacking and your field science project.</li> <li>● Sleep in a dorm-style cabin on our campus.</li> </ul>
Wednesday, August 5 to Wednesday, August 12	<p><i>8-day backpacking expedition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You and your trail group will depart for your 8-day backpacking expedition.</li> <li>● Groups will hike 5-10 miles each day to a new campsite, carrying backpacks weighing 40-50 lbs.</li> <li>● Learn and practice camping and backpacking skills.</li> <li>● Collect data for the field science investigation that you designed.</li> <li>● Explore the beautiful national park wilderness.</li> <li>● Students, with their trail groups, will camp in tents each night.</li> </ul>
Wednesday afternoon	<p><i>Return to NatureBridge campus on Lake Crescent</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clean up gear.</li> <li>● Take showers and relax.</li> <li>● Celebrate your accomplishments!</li> </ul>
Thursday	<p><i>Prepare for research presentations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Analyze data, prepare presentations.</li> <li>● Clean any remaining gear.</li> <li>● Present environmental science research to NatureBridge staff, National Park Service staff, and friends and family</li> <li>● Closing campfire</li> <li>● (Optional departure)</li> </ul>
Friday, August 14	<p><i>Depart</i> Thanks for participating in the Olympic Science Expedition!</p>

\*Note: Schedule subject to change due to conditions in the park or other external factors. Students will be updated of any changes as they occur.

## Equipment List

In addition to the following packing lists, we believe it is important to provide specific information on choosing the proper gear. Packing too light could leave you cold and miserable, while carrying too much would be an unwelcome burden. Please read each item carefully.

### How to Select Equipment

Selecting appropriate gear is a process that can be overwhelming and expensive. Review your current collection of clothing and gear, and only buy or rent what you really need. If possible, borrow from friends or relatives. Many participants will come with a combination of purchased and borrowed gear. Keep in mind that you will be in the rugged backcountry and therefore function is far more important than fashion. We suggest that you rely on the expertise of knowledgeable salespeople or contact us if you have a gear question. There is no substitute for actually trying on boots, gear, and clothing. One retail chain with a comprehensive selection is Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI). REI also rents high quality backpacking gear at reasonable rates and sometimes sells used gear that is in good condition. If you purchase gear, consider leaving the sales tag on until you get to campus; our educators may suggest that you borrow gear instead if they think our gear will be more appropriate for backpacking.

If you cannot find something on the packing lists, we may be able to loan it to you during the program. **Please let us know well in advance what you need.** NatureBridge has a supply of gear for participants to borrow, including backpacking backpacks, fleece jackets, rain gear, and some sleeping bags. Look over the gear list and start putting together your gear for the trip. **There will be no opportunity to purchase gear once you have arrived to the program.** Please contact us with questions about specific gear needs, and let us know if you need to borrow equipment and what size you will need.

### Bring Two Bags to the Program

- Your backpacking backpack, containing all items on the equipment checklist. For more information on the type of backpack, see below.
- A small daypack (such as a school backpack) that you will use to carry items such as extra warm layers and your water bottle while on day hikes and that will remain in a locked building while you are backpacking.

### What You DO NOT Need to Bring (NatureBridge Will Provide These Items)

- Food or snacks (unless you have highly specialized dietary needs that you have discussed with our staff ahead of time). We have limited storage for extra food and so we ask that you do not bring any food, except for snacks for your transit to and from our Olympic campus.
- First aid equipment
- Map and compass
- Stoves, fuel, group cooking equipment
- Tents
- Bear canisters
- Toilet paper, soap, hand sanitizer
- Water purification
- Permits or radios

## Part I: Required Backpacking Packing List

### Backpacking Clothing

Weather in Olympic is variable during the summer. Temperatures can reach the 70s and 80s during the day, and fall to the 30s and 40s at night. Summer snow and afternoon thunderstorms are also possible. A good layering system is necessary to accommodate the varying conditions. With the exception of one T-shirt, **you should not bring cotton clothing**; cotton dries slowly and does not provide any insulation when wet.

**\*\* Items with blue asterisks** may be able to be provided by NatureBridge. It is essential that you reach out to Katie ([kdraude@naturebridge](mailto:kdraude@naturebridge)) before the program to ensure that the item is available.

#### Footwear

**Broken-in hiking boots or sturdy athletic shoes** - This may be the most important piece of equipment you wear. It is not necessary to purchase a pair of expensive, heavy, all-leather hiking boots.

Lightweight boots or athletic shoes with good ankle support are just as comfortable and more affordable. No skate shoes (e.g. Vans, Converse). The perfect boot is lightweight, has a leather or nylon/leather exterior, good padding, and a rugged sole. A brand new boot (even well-fitted) can cause serious blisters and ruin your trip. If you buy new boots, please wear them for at least a month before you arrive.

**3 pairs of wool or synthetic socks** - No cotton socks – they hold onto moisture and can cause blisters.

**Extra pair of lightweight shoes or sandals** - To wear in camp, potentially for stream crossings. No flip flops.

#### Upper Body

**WaterPROOF rain jacket with hood\*\*** - Gore-Tex or seam-sealed coated nylon. No insulated snow parkas. No rain ponchos or plastic rain gear – they will rip easily and not protect you very well in Olympic's rainstorms.

**1-2 fleece jackets, wool sweaters, or down jackets\*\*** Not too bulky. No cotton!

**1 long underwear top\*\*** - Lightweight silk, wool, or synthetic. No cotton!

**2 T-shirts** - One for hiking and one for in camp. Cotton or synthetic. No tank tops - heavy backpacks chafe bare shoulders.

**Sports bras** (as needed)

#### Lower Body

**WaterPROOF rain pants\*\*** - Gore-Tex or seam-sealed coated nylon.

**1 pair of long underwear bottoms\*\*** - Lightweight silk, polyester, or wool. No cotton.

**1 pair of pants** - Quick-drying hiking pants. No cotton, no jeans.

**1-2 pairs of shorts** - Lightweight, quick-dry. No cotton. For hiking or wading in water.

#### ☐ Underwear

#### Head and Hands

**Sun hat\*\*** or baseball cap

**Warm hat\*\*** (“beanie”)

**Lightweight mittens or gloves** - No bulky ski gloves.

#### Personal Maintenance Kit

**Personal medications** - 2 sets of each that you take (in case one gets misplaced or damaged), for a duration of 14 days. This includes inhalers and epinephrine pens. An educator will distribute personal medications (prescription and over-the-counter) during the trip.

**Prescription glasses**, including a backup pair, in a hard case - You must bring two pairs in case one breaks. Contact lenses and contact solution (small bottle) can be brought on the trip, but you must also bring prescription glasses as a backup.

**Sunglasses**

**Toiletries** - Toothbrush, small toothpaste, lip balm (at least SPF 15), small tube of sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher), bug repellent.

**Menstruation/Period products** (see note on next page)

## Personal Gear

**1 backpacking backpack\*\*** - Capacity of at least 65 liters, internal frame packs preferred. Your backpack must have sufficient space to carry your clothing, food, and some group gear, including a bear canister. Your pack must have well-padded shoulder straps and a thick padded waist belt. Your pack will weigh 30-50 lbs.

**1 sleeping bag with stuff sack\*\*** - Should be rated to at least 30°F or colder. A mummy style bag with drawstring hood is preferable. We prefer bags with synthetic fill because, unlike down and flannel, it insulates even when wet. A bulky, flannel sleeping bag is not adequate. Be sure your sleeping bag can be compressed into its own small stuff sack.

**3 large-sized plastic garbage bags** - For waterproofing gear.

**1 sleeping pad\*\*** - Thin, lightweight mattress that insulates you from the cold ground. Ridgerest and Thermarest are examples of the type of sleeping pad to consider; a closed-cell foam or inflatable backpacking pad is acceptable.

**Flashlight or headlamp\*\*** with spare batteries - Small and lightweight

**2 water bottles** — Quart- or liter-sized with leak-proof screw-top lids.

**1-2 bandanas** - To serve as your “plate” for trail lunches and other personal needs.

☐ **Small mug\*\***

**Bowl\*\*** (Tupperware bowl with lid works well)

☐ **Spoon\*\***

**Knee/ankle brace** - Required for students who normally use them for physical activity. Consider also bringing trekking poles if you have knee problems.

## Optional Items

**Trekking poles** - Recommended for students with knee or ankle issues.

**Camera** - Students will not be able to bring cell phones on the backpacking portion of the course.

**Warm pants for cold nights** - Fleece pants, pajamas, or sweatpants are fine. No jeans.

**Small brush** or comb

**Small paperback book** or field guide

☐ **Personal travel journal and pen/pencil**

## A Note about Periods in the Backcountry

Menstruation is a concern for many young people when they go backpacking. A change or increase in physical activity can alter your menstrual cycle. Even if you do not expect to get your period, we recommend that you bring supplies as if you were expecting it. If you are prone to yeast infections, bring Monistat (or another yeast infection treatment) as a precaution.

At NatureBridge, we practice a “Leave No Trace” camping ethic. Therefore, we hike out everything that we hike in. Each student will receive double-bags to dispose of used period products. These bags will be carried out and disposed of in a dumpster. Used products stored in this manner do not typically attract animals. Another option is to avoid carrying waste by using a reusable menstruation device, such as the “Diva Cup” or “Mooncup.” If you want to bring this, please try it at home before coming to Olympic.

Our educators are experienced in helping participants manage their periods in the backcountry. There will always be at least one female educator on your course, and a female educator will lead a hygiene meeting before the backpacking portion of the trip begins to provide tips, answer questions, and address any concerns.



## Part II: Equipment for Cabin Days (“Frontcountry”)

For this section, consider items that you will appreciate before or after a long expedition in the wilderness. These items will not go on the backpacking portion of your course. They will be stored in a locked building.

**3 sets of extra clothes** for the first and last couple of days of traveling and hiking. Bring clothes that you might normally wear to school or extra hiking clothes – you will be out in the field and potentially getting dirty.

**One slightly nicer set of clothing** for the presentations on the last day.

**Towel**

**Bedding** (pillow and twin-sized sheet to cover the cabin mattress)

**Other toiletries (see Additional Notes, below)**

- Shampoo, deodorant, soap, lotions, etc. Liquids should be in 3 oz. containers or less if you are bringing them in carry-on luggage.

**Entertainment and snacks for travel days -**

There is limited storage for electronic devices and food while on course, so please minimize these items.

**Small backpack/day pack** (for day hikes)

**Cell phone (see Additional Notes, below)**

### Additional Notes

#### *About toiletries*

On your backpacking trip, every scented item will have to be stored in a bear-proof canister that you will carry with you. Scented items include all food, toiletries, toothpaste, lip balm, sunscreen, medications, etc. Space in these canisters is very limited, and animals will seek out scented items that are not properly stored. For this reason, you will be restricted to only bringing a toothbrush, toothpaste, sunscreen, and lip balm on the backpacking part of the course. Soap, shampoo, deodorant and lotions can be retrieved from storage upon your return to cabins.

#### *About cell phones*

One of the beautiful opportunities of the Olympic Mountains Wilderness Expedition is the chance to “unplug” from electronics and social media. The rugged nature of the trip and potential for varying weather conditions is not a suitable environment for expensive electronic devices. Furthermore, cell phones often do not have reception in Olympic National Park (depending on your service provider), and therefore are not dependable emergency devices. Our Educators carry emergency radios with National Park Service frequencies and satellite phones.

As such, it is NatureBridge’s policy that **students do not have cell phones during the program**, and especially not on the backpacking portion of the course. However, we **do** encourage students to bring their cell phone for communication purposes on travel days at the start and end of the program. We will provide you with important NatureBridge phone numbers before your trip.

We recognize that many students also use their phone as their primary camera. **We recommend that students bring a separate digital camera or disposable camera to take photos during the backpacking part of the trip.** Each trail group will carry a NatureBridge digital camera for the group to use. At the end of the course, photos will be compiled and posted on a photo-sharing site.

## What Not to Bring

- Drugs and alcohol - This is a federal offense in U.S. national parks. Tobacco products (including cigarettes and e-cigarettes) are not allowed, even if a student is 18 years old.
- Knives and other weapons, bear spray

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What will the sleeping and restroom facilities be like during the program?

These facilities vary throughout the trip. When students stay at the Olympic campus on Lake Crescent they will be in dorm-style cabins with restrooms and showers (showers may be in the cabin or in a larger bathhouse). During the backpacking portion of the trip, Scholars sleep in tents and go to the bathroom outside. Educators are experienced at teaching participants about going to the bathroom in the woods, so do not worry if that will be a new experience for you! Once the students return from the backpacking trip, they will again stay in the cabins on campus. Laundry is not possible during this program.

### Who are the NatureBridge Educators?

Our environmental science educators have years of teaching experience in outdoor and environmental education programs and an enthusiasm for exploring the natural world. In addition to direct teaching experience, all of our educators have a Wilderness First Responder medical certification.

### What communication will we have with our parents/family during the program?

There will be periodic, but infrequent email updates from Katie Draude, Summer Programs Manager, during the course. We will also post pictures of the students on the NatureBridge Facebook page throughout the program. Please do not expect updates during the time that students are backpacking - we will only post photo updates to Facebook on frontcountry days.

## Conclusion

There is a lot of information in this document and we know that it can feel a little overwhelming to embark on an adventure like this. We want you to be prepared, not anxious, for the trip. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Katie Draude, the Summer Programs Manager, at 415-598-9832 or at [kdraude@naturebridge.org](mailto:kdraude@naturebridge.org) and we will be happy to help. **See you soon!**