



Denali Backcountry Adventures: May 29-June 2 & July 17-21, 2017

Program Information

Welcome to Denali Backcountry Adventures! This program is sponsored by the Denali Education Center and the National Park Service through the Murie Science and Learning Center. We're looking forward to our twelfth summer of leading backpacking excursions in Denali National Park and Preserve. The opportunity to develop awareness, knowledge, and skills that increase participants' understanding and enjoyment of Denali is a privilege that leaves an impression lasting a lifetime. Please read this thoroughly before the program. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Program Specs

- 1 night orientation campout.
- 4 days, 3 nights backpacking.
- Located in the Denali National Park backcountry
- Terrain includes dwarf birch tundra, high alpine tundra, boreal forest, rivers, and gravel bars.
- Total hiking distance of ~11 miles.
- Group size maximum: 8 students, 2 instructors.

What to Expect

Denali Backcountry Adventures appeals to high school students looking to practice basic and low-impact expedition backpacking techniques, hone outdoor leadership skills, and learn about research methods and techniques of field researchers. No prior experience is necessary to participate in this program - backpacking in Denali National Park has something to teach backpackers of all skill levels. For new backpackers, this adventure is a great introduction to backpacking and Denali National Park. For experienced backpackers, it is a great way to test and sharpen your skills while immersing yourself in the subarctic ecosystem.

The intact subarctic ecosystem of Denali National Park provides a stunning classroom for exploring undisturbed taiga and tundra and discovering firsthand an untrammeled wilderness. Unique in its backcountry management protocols, Denali has no established routes or backcountry campsites. The group will have the opportunity to design their own adventure unhindered by trails or established camping destinations. With this privilege comes a significant responsibility to help protect the wilderness resource for future users by adhering to the principles of Leave No Trace. Denali Backcountry Adventures takes this responsibility seriously; Leave No Trace principles will be introduced and applied throughout the program.

Orientation – May 29/July 17, 2017

Orientation will begin at **1pm, on Monday** at the Denali Education Center (DEC) yurt. Parents are free to leave after the first hour.

Backcountry Expedition – May 30-June 2/July 18-21, 2017

Tuesday morning the group will board a bus from the Wilderness Access Center that will transport them to the backcountry unit in which they will be hiking. For the next four days and three nights the group will be a self-sufficient team, depending on themselves and each other.

This program is designed to help participants build a foundation for living comfortably outdoors. Expect to work hard – to find your pace, manage your pack weight, and break in your hiking muscles – but

expect to play just as hard – climb high into alpine tundra, cook delicious meals on single burner stoves, and explore remote wilderness.

Moving Camp

The pace will be slow at first as everyone adjusts to their packs and the terrain. Hiking on alpine tundra and glacial river bars is slow-going and the group will not cover many miles the first day. Tundra and gravel bar hiking can be difficult terrain and not conducive to a quick pace regardless of your skill level, but it is an experience you will always remember and grow to enjoy!

The group will practice expedition-style backcountry travel, breaking and moving camp daily. As the group learns to work, travel, and live together, the instructors will continue to facilitate students' leadership responsibilities. Students will be called upon to lead the group, navigate, cook, and clean.

Food

During the course of the trip the group will prepare tasty and nutritious meals over small backpacking stoves. A typical food list for this program consists of pasta, rice, beans, cereals (granola, oatmeal), grains, butter, cheese, nuts, peanut butter, dried fruits, etc. The menu can have more fats and protein than what one might be used to. Denali Backcountry Adventures is able to accommodate most dietary restrictions and allergies, please discuss these needs with program staff upon registration.

Expectations and Preparations

Read through these paragraphs carefully before attending Denali Backcountry Adventures. They will give you an idea of what to expect from the program and help you prepare yourself mentally prior to the start of the trip.

Please keep in mind that Denali Backcountry Adventures is not *just* a hiking program. One of its primary goals is to explore Denali National Park and Preserve – both as a protected place and as a subject for ongoing research. Guiding principles and themes may include:

- Balancing preservation and use.
- The role wilderness plays in our society and its history.
- Current research projects in the Park and their role in management decisions.

Group Travel and Living

Denali Backcountry Adventures is first and foremost an experience in community living and teamwork. The group will operate as a self-sustained, mutually-supported team. It is important to remember that everyone is coming to the expedition with different expectations, motivations, doubts, and varying levels of physical and mental strength. You might find that you need to make compromises and sacrifices in your own expectations to support the other members of the group.

Each person's attitude and actions affect the group, and it is therefore important to come to the program with a team mentality. To prepare for the group aspect of the program, think about other teams you have been part of and what made them successful. Learn from these past experiences and plan to be an active and positive contributor to the Denali Backcountry Adventures team.

Group Contract

During orientation, the group will draw up their own "Group Contract". Group instructors will facilitate the process, but the participants will decide together what expectations they will set. Every member, including the instructors, will sign the contract indicating they agree to honor it.

Leave No Trace

Denali Backcountry Adventures is designed to teach participants low impact backpacking techniques. Traveling as a large group, they must be aware of their potential for impact and do their best to “leave no trace” of their passing. Participants will be expected to embrace and consistently demonstrate Leave No Trace principles while traveling and camping. These principles will be introduced during orientation and the group will work together to come up with strategies for following them.

Plan Ahead and Prepare

- Know the regulations and special concerns of Denali’s backcountry.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from water.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.
- In pristine areas, disperse use to prevent creation of trails and campsites and avoid places where impacts are beginning.
- In popular areas, concentrate use on existing trails and campsites, walk single file in the middle of the trail, and keep campsites small.

Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for microtrash. Pack out all trash.
- Deposit solid human waste in catholes 6 to 8 inches deep, 200 ft. from water, camp, & trails.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- To wash dishes, scrape chunks into trash, use small amounts of soap. Scatter dishwater.

Leave What You Find

- Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

Minimize Campfire Impacts

- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
- Keep fires small. Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely.

Respect Wildlife

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. It damages their health and alters their behavior.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely and according to Denali’s backcountry protocols.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.