



Denali Backcountry Adventures:

July 4 -9, 2021

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 thirteenth summer of leading backcountry 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, don't hesitate to ask Justine at youth@denali.org.

Program Specs

- 1 night orientation campout on Denali Education Center property
- 5 days, 4 nights backcountry camping at Wonder Lake Campground
- Located in the Denali National Park backcountry
- Participants will hike each day
- Group size maximum: 10 students, 2 instructors.

What to Expect

Denali Backcountry Adventures appeals to high school students looking to practice low-impact hiking 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 - camping in Denali National Park has something to teach adventurers of all skill levels. From learning how to route find in the trailless backcountry, perfecting camp cooking, to learning about the natural history of the Denali area, everyone will have plenty to gain.

The intact subarctic ecosystem of Denali National Park provides a stunning classroom for exploring undisturbed taiga and tundra, as well as discovering firsthand an untrammelled wilderness. Unique in its backcountry management protocols, Denali has no established routes or backcountry campsites. Although this year, DBA will be a basecamp style trip, students will have the opportunity to hike in different ecosystems and practice low-impact travel techniques.

Orientation – July 4-5

Orientation will begin at **4pm on Sunday** at the Denali Education Center (DEC) yurt. Parents are free to leave after the first hour. Students will stay with the group on the Denali Education Center campus that night and the following morning before heading off into the park.

Backcountry Expedition – July 6-9

Monday around noon, the group will start their journey to the Wonder Lake Campground. This will take most of the rest of the day. Once at the campground, the group will make camp - which will serve as their home for the next 4 nights and days.

This program is designed to help participants build a foundation for living comfortably outdoors. Expect to work hard – to find your pace, break in your hiking muscles, and work together to get all camp tasks done – but expect to play just as hard – climb high into alpine tundra, learn all about the things you are seeing, and explore remote wilderness.

Food

In order to follow COVID-19 safety protocols, meals prepared as a whole group will be limited. Making backcountry meals together is always a fun learning experience, but safety is paramount. Students will be provided with individually packaged breakfasts and dehydrated dinners, with communal boiling water to rehydrate. Lunches and snacks will be packed by each student on Monday morning with the assistance of DEC staff following safety protocols. Fun cooking can still happen though - desserts and creative meals will help mix things up!

Camping

Due to COVID-19 and the need to maintain safety protocols, especially in the backcountry, Denali Backcountry Adventures will run as a base camp style camping experience this year. This will allow each student to have their own tent to maintain social distance even while sleeping. A basecamp style experience will also ensure that access to hand washing and other sanitation techniques that would be difficult to carry in a backpack.

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 physical and mental strengths. 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 how to be in the backcountry using low impact 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 hiking 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 micro-trash. Pack out all trash.
- Deposit solid human waste in cat holes 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.