

### **BACKCOUNTRY EXCURSION DESCRIPTION**

The Backcountry Excursion is a backpacking opportunity which is offered only to students who have been selected to participate in YI 2012. The Backcountry Excursion takes place during our stay in Yosemite National Park, and space is limited to 24 students. Students who participate in this experience spend three days and two nights in the backcountry of the Yosemite Wilderness, while students in the regular program spend all their days on the valley floor of Yosemite National Park.

The Backcountry Excursion is physically and mentally strenuous. Two trail groups carry all of their supplies on their backs up steep mountains, sleep in tents, cook their own food, and depend on one another -- in unpredictable weather. The trail options are dependent on weather and snow conditions at the time of the trip. Typically one group will head up the Snow Creek switchbacks on day 1 and camp near North Dome. On day 2 they will hike to Yosemite Point near the top of Yosemite Falls and camp there. On day 3 the group will descend the upper Yosemite Falls trail. The second group will do the exact opposite trek beginning at Yosemite Falls and ending on the switchbacks. All plans are subject to change at the last minute in order to ensure the safety of the students. Regardless of the route taken, the week in Yosemite National Park will be an exciting adventure!

### **BACKCOUNTRY EXCURSION REQUIREMENTS**

A recommendation from a P.E. teacher or coach is required. If selected for the Backcountry Excursion, the valley program is no longer an option. In other words, you can't switch back.

Backcountry Excursion participants must bring items on both the Backpacking Equipment List and the Field Science Clothing and Equipment List. Note that in addition to your own things, you will also be carrying 10 to 15 pounds of food and group equipment in your pack. In the end your pack will weigh 20 to 30 pounds.

### **REQUIRED BACKPACKING (NON-SNOW) EQUIPMENT LIST**

The items on this list are to be brought by each participant in addition to the items listed on the Field Science Equipment List. Please follow this checklist closely when packing for your trip. Your safety and comfort depend on your being fully equipped.

#### Clothing

- Hiking boots - Must be broken in and waterproofed.
- Rain jacket and pants - Gore-tex or coated nylon. No plastic or vinyl.
- Pile jacket or wool sweater - not too bulky.
- Three pair wool or synthetic socks
- Underwear – bring the minimum you need
- Long underwear – silk, wool, or synthetic top and bottom
- T-shirts – one for hiking; one for in camp
- Shorts - one pair (could be zip-off shorts from hiking pants)
- Pants – one pair quick drying hiking pants
- Wool or fleece hat
- Wool or fleece mittens or gloves
- Lightweight hat with brim - to shade your face

- Sneakers – to wear in camp
- Bandana

#### Personal Gear

- Backpack - capacity of at least 3,000 cubic inches, internal frame packs preferred
- Sleeping bag and stuff sack – should be rated to at least 20 degrees F.
- Sleeping pad - Ensolite, Ridgerest or Thermarest types.
- Garbage bags - 3 for protecting pack and other gear from rain.
- Dark glasses or mountain goggles - must screen ultraviolet light
- Lightweight eating gear - cup, bowl, spoon.
- Two water bottles – quart-sized.
- Flashlight or headlamp, spare batteries and bulb - small and lightweight.
- Chapstick and sunscreen – at least SPF 15.
- Other toiletries – toothbrush, toothpaste, personal medications
- Journal and pen/pencil

#### Optional Gear

- Wool or pile pants
- Liner socks
- Straps - 4 straps for securing gear to pack
- Paperback book
- Camera

#### DON'T FORGET TO LEAVE ROOM!

In addition to your own things, you will also be carrying 10 to 15 pounds of food and group equipment in your pack. Be sure to leave room (and a weight allowance). Your pack in the end will weigh 20 to 30 pounds, so the more you can do without, the lighter it will be!

#### A WORD ABOUT TOILETRIES

On your backpacking trip, everything with any sort of scent will have to be stored in a limited number of bear-proof canisters that you will carry with you. This includes all food, toiletries, toothpaste, lip balm, sunscreen, lotion, etc. Space in these canisters is very limited, and bears will readily go after any scented items not properly stored. For this reason, students are restricted to only the toiletries on this list for the backpacking portion of the program. Soap, shampoo, deodorant and lotions can be retrieved from storage upon your return from the backcountry.

#### FIELD SCIENCE EQUIPMENT LIST

- Day pack big enough to fit the items below and some of the group lunch
- Rain gear - waterproof not just water resistant. A rain suit (jacket and pants) is much better than a poncho because it keeps all of you dry
- Warm knit or fleece cap for cool and possibly rainy days.
- Two water bottles - unbreakable one quart plastic bottles with screw-on, leak proof tops, such as soda or sports drink bottles. NO glass bottles please.
- Notebook & pencil (in ziplock bag)
- Extra layers of warm clothing
- Bandana - serves as your field lunch placemat/crumb-catcher + many other fun uses

- Hiking boots - one pair of broken in lightweight waterproof hiking boots that will keep your feet dry as well as happy after a long day on the trail
- Tennis shoes or sneakers for evening activities and use around camp
- Pants - three rugged pairs (including one pair of warm pants)
- Shirts - three rugged shirts, plus a few lightweight shirts for warm weather
- Sweater or fleece - two lightweight wool or fleece layers are best; avoid cotton
- Jacket - an insulated layer, such as a parka with hood is a good choice.
- Socks - five pairs of socks (wool or synthetic preferred no cotton)
- Thermal underwear (bottoms) - polypropylene or capilene very warm and lightweight - no cotton.
- Water proof mittens - mittens are warmer than gloves
- Pajamas
- Towel
- Toiletries - shampoo, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, sunscreen, lip balm, moleskin, personal medication
- Hand sanitizer
- Sleeping bag - synthetic or down fill; sheets and blankets are fine if you don't have a sleeping bag
- Sunglasses - to prevent sun blindness in the high altitude sun reflecting off the snow and granite
- Lightweight hat with brim - baseball hat or other type to shade sun
- Flashlight - with spare batteries and bulb
- Plastic bags - trash sized to keep your things clean and dry as well as small sizes to put between your sock and shoe on wet days.
- Alarm clock - to get you up on time.