## New Student Trip Description Backpack Oregon's Cascade Mountains

About 70 miles southeast of Portland, tucked right against the western slope of the Cascades, Bull of the Woods Wilderness lies relatively undisturbed by logging operations, giving a glimpse of how grand this entire region's forests were at one time. Here, huge Douglas fir, western hemlock, and western red cedar tower over an understory of huckleberry and rhododendron, providing habitat to elk, black-tailed deer, and the legendary spotted owl. As one naturalist has said, "if you like forests, this is the place to be."

This description does not cover all aspects of the trip, but it will give you a few more details about this adventure. Due to the many variables of outdoor trips, it's impossible to describe exactly what the trip will be like.

You will be carrying a backpack that will weigh somewhere between 30 and 50 lbs., depending on your weight and your physical condition. If you have never backpacked before, borrow a pack, fill it up with four plastic gallon jugs of water (1-gallon weighs 8 lbs.) and walk around your neighborhood to try it out. The pack may seem pretty heavy if you have never tried backpacking before, but you'll soon get used to it. IT IS ALSO VERY IMPORTANT to wear your hiking boots to break them in if they are new. We find that most people who do these things have fewer blisters and a better time on the trip.

The trails are rated easy to moderate, with elevations ranging from 2,400 to 5,558 ft. We suggest you do some exercise like running or walking this summer to get yourself into shape. As you might expect, not everyone in the group will want to hike at the same speed, so there are probably going to be some compromises made on routes, campsites, and day hikes. On the average, the group expects to hike about 5 miles a day wearing backpacks, with a possible layover day in the middle.

There are animals that will eat your food unless it is hung from trees. Mostly these are squirrels and chipmunks, but bears can be found in the area as well. We have never seen a bear on our trips here, but participants do need to be careful not to leave food in their packs, clothes, or tents at night.

Mosquitoes and flies can be plentiful or non-existent, depending on how cold the nights are and how dry the season has been. Yellow jackets (wasps) can be pests at this time of the year, and people with the potential for severe reactions to stings need to carry anaphylaxis kits with them.

Common injuries which could occur on this trip include blisters on feet (from people not breaking in their new hiking boots before they come on the trip), people cutting their feet as a result of walking barefoot, people cutting themselves with pocket knives, people burning their fingers by handling pots on a stove without hot pads or gloves, spilling boiling water, and sunburn from not applying enough sunscreen. These are all preventable with a little caution and common sense. Please note that our trips go to remote areas and medical help is usually at least one day away. Our trips generally carry satellite phones, but remember that service is not available in many wilderness areas and river canyons. Please complete and return the online Health & Diet Questionnaire to inform our trip leaders of any conditions or illnesses that you have.

Fire danger can be very high in August, and the threat of a wildfire is real. Participants need to be very careful with any type of fire. Our trips are non-smoking for this reason.

Water from streams and lakes needs to be filtered or treated before you can drink it. We have pumps and tablets to do this, which remove or neutralize Giardia, bacteria, and viruses. It's also important to practice minimum-impact camping techniques such as packing out all litter and food waste, not using soap in streams or lakes, and not camping on fragile meadows. Instructors will brief the group on low-impact camping techniques at the start of the trip.

There are few places left in western Oregon that can match the pristine, untouched beauty of this ancient forest. This is a great place to begin your college journey, returning to our roots in nature while making new friendships and preparing for the new adventures ahead. Have a great summer, and we'll see you in August!