

Backcountry Marmot Research in Olympic National Park

Due to the many variables of outdoor trips, it's impossible to describe exactly what the trip will be like but this will give you a sense of what to expect. Questions? Get in touch at: outdoors@lclark.edu

About the Location:

This trip is our only New Student Trip offered inside a National Park; you will travel to the famous Olympic National Park in southwest Washington state. Established in 1855, Olympic National Park is home to a vast array of striking features, including old growth temperate rain forest, high glacial peaks, wild coastline, and unique wildlife. You will be in one of the country's largest wilderness areas, where diverse wildlife and diverse landscape features are at every turn. August in the Olympics usually offers warm weather, but temperatures are often cool at night and rain and occasional thunderstorms are possible.

What to Expect:

On the first day of the trip you will drive to Olympic National Park and camp in a campground. Before heading into the backcountry, you will be trained by a National Park Service Wildlife Biologist on how to conduct marmot surveys as part of critical ongoing park research. You will then backpack to a remote part of the park, where you will spend days exploring the wilderness, conducting marmot surveys in rarely-visited mountain meadows, and camping at a backcountry campground. On the last day of your trip, we'll pack up and head back to Portland the evening before New Student Orientation begins. Olympic National Park is about a 5.5-hour drive from Portland. The Olympic Marmot is a large gregarious mammal which is endemic to the park, meaning that this species is not found anywhere else in the world! You will learn about biological field data collection methods and contribute to important wildlife research as part of the efforts to save the Olympic Marmot from non-native predators and climate change. You will be carrying a backpack that will weigh somewhere between 30 and 50 lbs., depending on your weight and your physical condition. The trails are rated moderate to strenuous, with elevations ranging from 2000 - 6000ft. On the average, the group expects to hike about 4-12 miles a day wearing backpacks. Expect rugged off-trail hikes in steep terrain to the marmot sites, and plan to work hard to collect high quality research data. We practice minimum-impact camping techniques such as packing out all litter and food waste, not using soap in streams or lakes, or camping on fragile meadows. We'll go over these practices before we head out. All trips are non-smoking.

New to backpacking?

No problem! This trip is designed for beginners. And we have ideas to help you get ready.

How to Prepare:

- **Prep for the pack:** borrow a pack, fill it with 4-gallon (1 gal. = 8 lbs.) jugs and take a walk! It will feel heavy at first but don't worry - it gets easier!
- **Break in your boots:** new boots + long treks = painful blisters. It is *very important* to break in your boots by wearing them with a pack for extended periods prior to your trip.
- **Get moving:** it's a great idea to walk or run this summer to get yourself into shape.

What will we eat?

We eat well in the backcountry! Some examples of typical meals include: curry, pizza, mac & cheese. Unfortunately, this trip will not be able to accommodate a vegan diet. We resupply water from streams and lakes. Our treatment (filters or tablets) neutralizes Giardia, bacteria, and viruses.

What if I don't have outdoor clothing or equipment?

No problem! Check out our packing lists (located on your trip page) for a description of the essential and

New Student Trip Description

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optional gear for your trip. If you don't have your own outdoor clothing or equipment, we provide what you'll need. You must request the equipment ahead of time using this form: <http://tinyurl.com/c4d5g2r>

What are the risks?

The most common injuries which could occur on this trip are blisters on feet (don't forget to break in your boots), and burns from not applying enough sunscreen. *These are all preventable with a little caution and common sense.* Yellow jackets (wasps) can be pests at this time of the year, and people with the potential for severe reactions to stings should plan to bring their own anaphylaxis kits. Learn more about possible risks [here](#). All our trip leaders are trained as Wilderness First Responders.

Complete and return the online [Health & Diet Questionnaire](#) to inform our trip leaders of any conditions or illnesses that you have.