

Backpack the Oregon Coast New Student Trip (NST)

About the Location:

This section of the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area is one of the largest expanses of temperate coastal sand dunes in the world, and is home to many incredible species of flora and fauna, including the Snowy Plover and coastal strawberries. You'll hike through the lands of the Siuslaw and Quuiich (or Lower Umpqua) tribes. Their legends of the area describe two young men from the Sky World who laid down blue clay, tule mats, and eagle feathers to create the land, sands, and trees respectively.

As part of the Siuslaw National Forest, these Oregon Dunes trails weave between stretches of lush forest and vast beaches. You'll camp alongside vibrant lakes, hike & play on dunes up to a mile long and 500 feet above sea level, and see spectacular views of our Central Coast. Learn to recognize plants like the sweet-smelling Sand Verbena, invasive European Beachgrass, and towering Sitka Spruce. Keep an eye out for bald eagles, black-tailed deer, sea lions, and northern spotted owls as you explore this Pacific wonderland.

What to Expect:

The first day of your trip you'll drive about 3.5 hours to the trailhead with the other groups that'll be in the area with you, and camp at a nearby campground. For four days you will backpack through great dunes and forests with your small group, and camp beside freshwater lakes and rivers. You will be carrying a backpack that will weigh somewhere between 40 and 60 lbs., depending on your equipment and your physical condition. The trails are occasionally steep as you summit the dunes, and are rated easy to moderate with elevations ranging from sea level to ~3,000 feet. On average, the group expects to hike about 4-7 miles per day carrying full backpacks, with options for additional day hikes, and a possible layover day in the middle of the trip. Not everyone in the group will want to hike at the same speed, so we'll do what is best for the group when it comes to pace, routes, campsites, and day hikes. On the last day of your trip, we'll convene with other trip groups staying in the area at nearby Camp Cleawox to trade stories, perform skits, and camp out for one more night before heading back to Portland in time to move in before New Student Orientation.

We'll work together to prepare meals, carry group equipment, and perform camp tasks. For sleeping accommodations, we provide your choice of single-person tents, shared tent space, or personal "bivy sacks," which allow you to stay cozy and dry while sleeping out under the stars. We practice minimum-impact camping techniques such as packing out all litter and food waste, not using soap directly in streams or lakes, and not camping on fragile ecosystems. We'll go over these practices during the trip.

August weather in the Pacific Northwest is usually beautiful, but along the coast the weather can be sunny and 80° F at noon, then be heavily raining by 4 p.m. Nights are generally cool, and the temperature ranges around 40° to 50°. While August is one of the drier months in the Pacific Northwest, it's possible to experience significant storms for several days, so participants should bring (or borrow) good rain gear.

New to Backpacking or Camping?

No problem! This trip is designed for beginners and perfect for any adventurous spirit who wants to explore, bond with a small-group of peers, and see some of the Oregon Coast's most spectacular trails.

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. If you borrow hiking boots from College Outdoors, our boots are synthetic leather, fairly lightweight, and tend not to cause many blisters.
- **Get moving:** it's a great idea to walk or run this summer to get yourself into shape. This trip is rated as *moderate* physical rigor.

What will we eat?

We eat well in the backcountry! Some examples of typical meals include: curry, mac & cheese, and pancakes! This trip can accommodate most dietary restrictions and allergies, as long as you let us know about them ahead of time. For vegan and other non-medical specialty diets, there is an additional \$5/day meal charge. *There is no extra cost for vegetarian diets or medical diet restrictions.*

We'll resupply water from streams and lakes and use filters and treatment to neutralize 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 optional gear for your trip. We provide all the group gear such as tents, stoves, and water filters. If you don't have your own outdoor clothing or personal equipment, we provide what you'll need for free, as long as you *request the equipment ahead of time* using the online form found on our website.

What are the policies?

Participants on College Outdoors trips are expected to follow all [Lewis & Clark College conduct policies](#). All trips are tobacco, drug, and alcohol free, including vaping, medical cannabis, and tobacco products. Nicotine patches and gum are permitted.

College Outdoors has specific policies and procedures to mitigate risks on trips, which are outlined in the [policy brochure](#) and will be explained by your trip leaders. These policies include: Respecting others, food sanitation practices, requiring the use of Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs, sometimes referred to as lifejackets), requiring close-toed shoes, staying 6 ft. away from cliff edges, practicing "leave no trace" in the outdoors, and not engaging in exclusive or sexual relationships during trips. Policy violations may result in disciplinary action and/or removal from trips at your expense.

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 (EpiPens).* [Learn more about possible risks here.](#) Please note that our hikes will sometimes go to remote areas and medical help could be hours away. Our trip leaders generally carry cellphones or satellite phones, but remember service is not always available in remote areas. Trip leaders are trained as Wilderness First Responders.

More questions? Just ask! We LOVE to talk about trips!