

Explore the Temperate Rain Forest

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:

Opal Creek, tucked away in a secluded valley in the Western foothills of the Oregon Cascade mountain range, is a gem of old-growth forest, pure creeks, and magical groves. This forest is about a 2.5 hour drive southeast of Portland, near Mill City, Oregon. Its beauty and rich resources have sparked controversy and struggle, invoking debate about the value of wilderness protection and showing the strength of citizens uniting against the destruction of our forests. Gold was discovered in Opal Creek 1859, and a small mining camp was built during the Depression era. When mining was no longer profitable in the area, the U.S. Forest Service tried to open the entire valley to logging. Fortunately, a grassroots environmental protection effort, which gained national attention, culminated in Opal Creek's protection and designation as a wilderness area in 1998. Now the mining camp has been converted to an environmental education center, and rents facilities out to various groups. Protecting the beauty of Opal Creek has been a long effort, carried out by many dedicated people. When you see the giant, verdant forests, and the unbelievably clear and pure streams, you'll understand, too, why people care so strongly about this valley.

What to Expect:

The first day of your trip you'll drive to the trailhead with the Backpack the Cascades trip group, then hike in three miles along a flat trail into the self-sustaining backcountry mining camp at Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center. On the last day of your trip, we'll pack up and head back to Portland the evening before New Student Orientation begins. Participants on this trip will be staying in a large bunkhouse with hydro-electric lighting and composting toilets. Limited showers are available although there may not be access to hot water. Days will be spent hiking, where you only have to carry what is necessary for that day, typically between 5-15 pounds. You will learn about the rich history and fascinating ecology of the area, while exploring the vibrant temperate rainforest. You will also get to play in the stunning waters of Opal Creek, and slide down smooth natural rock waterslides! The mileage on day hikes could be as little as 5, or as many as 15 miles, on easy to difficult trails depending on which group you hike with during the day. It is also possible that you may have the opportunity to travel off trail, and so it is important to have sturdy footwear. All trips are non-smoking.

New to hiking?

No problem! This trip is designed for beginners.

How to Prepare:

- **Break in your boots:** Since we'll be day-hiking remember that new boots can cause painful blisters. It is *very important* to break in your boots by wearing them with appropriate socks 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 at Opal Creek! Some examples of typical meals include: curry, pizza, mac & cheese and much more. The kitchen at Opal Creek makes fantastic food, and this trip is the best choice for any special dietary needs. Group meals are prepared as vegetarian, and trip leaders bring non-vegetarian snacks for those who want them.

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. If you don't have your own outdoor clothing or equipment, we provide what you'll need for free. 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. The rules and regulations of the camp will need to be respected at all times. Exploring the old mining equipment or underground shafts is prohibited because of the danger of a collapse. 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.

Have a great summer, and we'll see you in August!