

# Backpack Mt. St. Helens New Student Trip (NST)

## About the Location:

The iconic Mt. St. Helens, Loowit, Lavelatla, Loowitlatkla, or Louwala-Clough is the object of many names and legends, and it's no wonder given its impressive stature and recent history of eruptions. Mt. St. Helens is the Northwest's most active volcano. There, you can see close-up the aftermath and natural recovery of the 1980 eruption, which blew the top off of this once cone-shaped mountain. You'll be on the traditional lands of the Cowlitz people, who know the mountain as the lady Lavelatla, which means "smoking mountain," who blew her top off in anger and jealousy at her husband Tahoma (which we know as Mt. Rainier), and knocked his head off as well.

This National Monument is spectacular in August, with views of the impressive volcano, purple lupine flowers, and a cacophony of emerald green. You'll see waterfalls, bubbling springs, and sweeping views of the mountain. 40 years after the eruption, you can still see the blast zone and bear witness to nature reclaiming the landscape. Keep an eye out for Roosevelt elk, black-tailed deer, and mountain goats as you hike through open meadows and islands of old growth trees that survived the blast.

## What to Expect:

The first day of your trip you'll drive about 3 hours to the trailhead, and camp at a nearby campground. For five days you will backpack through an alpine landscape, and camp beside sparkling lakes and streams. 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 often steep as you climb up above tree line, and are rated moderate to difficult with elevations ranging from ~3,500 to 7,000 ft. 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 routes, campsites, and day hikes. On the last day of your trip, we'll pack up and head back to Portland the evening before New Student Orientation begins.

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 meadows. We'll go over these practices during the trip.

August weather in the Pacific Northwest is usually beautiful, but in the mountains the weather can be sunny and 80° F at noon, then be snowing by 4 p.m. Nights are generally cool to cold in the mountains, and the temperature can sometimes drop below freezing at night. 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 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 Pacific Northwest'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 *high* physical rigor.

## What will we eat?

We eat well in the backcountry! Some examples of typical meals include: curry, mac & cheese, and pancakes (with fresh huckleberries!). 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.

## 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!**