

Hike & Paddle Oregon's Alps New Student Trip (NST)

About the Location:

Nestled in the remote northeastern corner of Oregon, next to Washington state and Idaho, lie the spectacular mountains nicknamed "Oregon's Swiss Alps." The Wallowa Mountains tower to nearly 10,000 feet and are much more similar to the Rockies than the Cascade Mountains of Western Oregon. Pronounced "Wal-OW-ah," meaning "fish trap" in the Nez Perce language, this rugged and remote range shoots up around Oregon's largest natural lake, Wallowa Lake. If you ever watched the 1975 movie, "I Will Fight No More Forever," this valley was the home of Chief Joseph and his Nez Perce tribe. Now it's the home of bronze sculptors, loggers, artists, craft beer brewers, and ranchers. Vegetation and weather are similar to that found in the Idaho, Wyoming, and Colorado mountains; August weather is typically dry and sunny early in the day, with potential thunderstorms in the afternoon. Wallowa Lake has an amazing natural setting, tucked in a basin between jagged peaks. This wild corner of the state features some of the most spectacular scenery Oregon has to offer, and you will get to gaze up at glacier-capped mountains from a stand-up paddleboard in the middle of the lake!

What to Expect:

You'll be camping in tents at Wallowa Lake State Park, eating great food made by you and your fellow tripmates. You'll have access to flush toilets in nearby restrooms. The Wallowas are about a 7-hour drive east of Portland, and totally worth the trip. On the last day of your trip, we'll pack up early, head back to Portland, and arrive late in the afternoon, the day before New Student Orientation begins. During the trip we will have adventures every day, including canoeing and stand up paddle boarding on Wallowa Lake and spectacular hikes into the Eagle Cap Wilderness, the "crown jewel" of the Wallowa Mountains. Of course, there will also be time to relax back at camp, swim at the beach, and to get to know the other new students on your trip. Because there are lots of day hikes, good fitting comfortable hiking shoes or boots are important. Having lightweight hiking boots with ankle support is the best, since it helps protect you from twisted or injured ankles (low cut hiking shoes have no ankle support). As you might expect, not everyone in the group will hike at the same speed, so we'll do what is best for the group when it comes to routes. On the average hiking day, the group expects to hike about 8 miles wearing light daypacks; sometimes more mileage, sometime less.

The weather can be a beautiful 80° F at noon, and then be snowing by evening. It's not unheard of to have a little snow in late August up at the high lakes in the Wallowas, where we'll be hiking some days. The camp is at 4,400 feet in elevation, just a short half mile hike from the shores of Wallowa Lake, so expect warm sunny days and cool nights. Afternoon thunderstorms with lightning can occur but tend to be fairly short. It's rare, in this dry part of Oregon, to have a rainy period lasting several days in August, but possible.

We 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. We'll go over these practices before we head out.

New to hiking, canoeing, or stand up paddle boarding?

No problem! This trip is designed for beginners and is perfect for those interested in spending time both on land and on the water.

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. 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.

What will we eat?

We eat well on this trip! Some examples of typical meals include: curry, pizza, mac & cheese. Unfortunately, *gluten free and vegan meals* cannot be accommodated. If you need vegan or gluten-free meals, check out one of the other great trips, such as Hike & SUP the Columbia River Gorge.

During the trip, there may be times when we 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. 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 risks?

Common injuries which could occur on this trip include: 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, or hornets are very common 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).* 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. [Learn more about possible risks here.](#)

Please note that while medical help is available within 10 miles from the camp, at a small hospital in the town of Enterprise, it's a fairly remote area. Our trips generally carry cellular phones, but remember cellular service is not always available in rural or remote areas. Trip leaders are trained as Wilderness First Responders.

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