

# NORTHWEST PEAKS & PADDLES

July 21 to August 9, 2011



## ORIENTATION DAY

July 21

Arrive at Sea-Tac Airport near Seattle, Washington in morning. Your instructors will be waiting for you at your gate or baggage claim if arriving by plane or at a central meeting location if arriving otherwise. Once our group is assembled we will load up our van and begin the few hour drive north to Washington's Olympic Peninsula and Olympic National Park. Today is our orientation day and this day will be spent getting to know each other and figuring out our daily routines and responsibilities. We spend the night at a campground near Olympic National Park.

## OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK

July 22 to

July 25

After breakfast, we divide up group gear and provisions, learn to pack our backpacks and make our way north from Rialto Beach to explore the coast. This is the longest undeveloped stretch of coastline on the west coast and truly is a remarkable place. For the next few days, we take time to develop our wilderness skills, discuss backcountry safety, land navigation and low-impact camping techniques. We move at a pace that is comfortable for all while getting to know the rest of our group. Our travel is dictated by the tides, that we soon learn to predict, and we take time to investigate the fascinating tidal pools and diverse coastal forest. After returning from our first backpack, we depart for the San Juan Islands to begin our sailing component.

## SEA KAYAKING THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS

July 26 to

July 29

We travel to the San Juan Islands in northern Puget Sound. After spending some time, learning kayak safety and wet-exits, we set out in the afternoon to begin our exploration of the islands in our sea kayaks. Paddling tandem and single kayaks, we learn paddling techniques, tide and current predictions and marine navigation. Putting in our kayaks on Lopez Island, we make our way through the protected waters of this amazing archipelago. Based on weather and tides, we stay at a different island each night as we make our way toward our take out. Undoubtedly, our plan will find us exploring uninhabited islands and secluded harbors of the San Juan Islands – James Island, Obstruction Pass, Blind Island and others. We return to Bellingham at the end of the week, and set out toward North Cascades National Park.

## NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK - BACKPACKING

July 30 to

August 6

On our way east we stop to provision and do our laundry, and begin to pack for our upcoming trip into the wilderness of North Cascades National Park. Moving at a pace that is comfortable for all, we make our way through this vast wilderness past glacier fed lakes and cascading rivers, alpine meadows and craggy peaks. While out on the trail, we take time to build on our wilderness skills – discussing expedition planning, backcountry navigation and wilderness safety. We marvel at the scenery and take time to relax on high mountain passes or go for a swim in an alpine lake. This is the most rigorous section of our trip, but always a highlight for students. This part of the Cascades is truly one of the last great wilderness areas in the United States, and we spend a week exploring this amazingly wild and scenic place. Our path will most likely take us on what is called "The Walk Across the Park," up Big Beaver valley from Ross Lake, over awe-inspiring Whatcom Pass, and down the Chilliwack Valley.

## CASCADE MOUNTAINS – WHITEWATER RAFTING

August 7 to

August 9

From North Cascades National Park, we spend a day transitioning from the mountains to the river. We provision, check our mail and make our way to the river to begin our day of whitewater rafting. The Cascade Mountains in August have some dynamic whitewater, and it is difficult to predict what water levels will be on different rivers. We learn paddling techniques and whitewater navigation from our expert guides, as we spend the next day making our way down one of the area's premier whitewater rivers. While not blasting through whitewater sections, we relax over the calm stretches of the river and enjoy one of our last days together as a group. During this time, we camp at a riverside campsite. From here, we head toward Seattle to enjoy our last evening together with a final-farewell-feast. We stay at a campground south of the city that evening. In the morning we say farewell to each other where we began several weeks earlier, at Sea-Tac Airport, after an amazing experience.