

PACIFIC NORTHWEST EXPEDITION

July 20 to August 10, 2011



ORIENTATION DAY

July 20

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 21 to

July 24

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.

SAILING THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS

July 25 to

July 30

We travel to Anacortes, the gateway to the San Juan Islands, to board our boat. After loading up provisions and our group gear for the week, we depart the dock, set sail, and are underway. Our boat is an excellent platform for teaching and exploring the islands. We decide on our itinerary as a group – taking into account the weather forecast, wind patterns and tidal predictions. Undoubtedly, our plan will find us exploring uninhabited islands and secluded harbors of the San Juan Islands – Orcas Island, Sucia Island, and Stuart Island. Over the course of the week, our skills as sailors and navigators will build as we take time to discuss sail theory, anchoring and docking, coastal navigation and seamanship. We return to Bellingham at the end of the week, and set out toward North Cascades National Park.

NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK - BACKPACKING

July 31 to

August 7

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," down the Chilliwack Valley, over awe-inspiring Whatcom Pass and down to Ross Lake.

CASCADE MOUNTAINS – WHITEWATER RAFTING

August 8 to

August 10

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.