

What to Expect



Our Philosophy

Williwaw expeditions are designed to provide a safe and meaningful **wilderness experience** balancing challenging **adventure** and **exploration** with **fun**. Our goal is to have you depart from your expedition with a sense of achievement and confidence, strong bonds of friendship, new knowledge and skills, and fond memories.

What to Expect

Each day will present something different. Your enthusiasm and energy are essential to the success of each expedition. You will work together with a motivated group of young people exploring, learning and laughing. Although your instructors are skilled at working to bring the best out of your group and helping you along the way, the quality of your experience has a great deal to do with the group's enthusiasm and positive attitude.

The First Day

If flying, your instructors will make every effort to be waiting at the gate, but due to heightened security they may not meet you until you enter the baggage claim area. They will be wearing a Williwaw t-shirt to help you identify them (please see the Travel & Mail Stop Information for more details about your trip). Upon arrival, your instructors will have you call home to let your parents know that you have arrived safely. From here, you will claim your luggage and meet the rest of your group.

Once we have all arrived, we make sure that each student has the appropriate clothing and equipment, and if not, will make arrangements for you to purchase any needed items that day. From here, we load up the van and are off to a campsite near our first backpack.

As a way to remind us that we are bound for the backcountry and that we need to focus on the group to maximize our experience - your instructors will collect all phones, walkmans, I-Pods, etc. and place them in a safe location for the duration of the trip. If, during an opportunity that we have to call home, you would like to use your cell phone – your instructor will be happy to dive into the bag and find it for you.

If the weather cooperates and we have time, we might stop for a swim or take a break, before arriving at our camp for the evening. That afternoon we figure out how to set up tents, spend time getting to know the rest of the group, cook our first dinner together and learn more about some of the details of our expedition.

A Typical Day

Every day is unique, but on a typical day you should expect to develop your outdoor skills, experience amazing scenery and laugh and enjoy the day with your new-found friends. Since we operate in the hours of daylight, we get up relatively early to make the most of the day. One of our cook groups will put together breakfast, we will gather our gear – and either hit the trail, load up our boats or set sail for the day. A typical day may be learning how to read whitewater and paddle our inflatable kayaks, traversing and exploring the remarkable Mahoosuc Notch, summiting a peak in the 100 Mile Wilderness, stopping for a swim and lunch at an alpine lake in the Cascades or sailing and navigating our way to our anchorage for the evening. After reaching our destination, we have time to set up camp and prepare dinner, play a game or just relax and hang out with friends. We end each night with an evening meeting – to talk about our successes and challenges that day and discuss our plans for tomorrow.

The Group Experience

Living and working with a group is an important skill that is naturally developed in the wilderness or at sea. We will rely on each other each day to learn new skills, have fun and arrive safely at our destination. We are reminded of the importance of relying on each other and the responsibility of being a part of a group.

Responsibilities

With the guidance of your instructors, you will accept more responsibility as the expedition progresses and take real ownership of your trip. Whether serving as leader of the day, navigator, or planning and cooking meals, you will be directly involved with the daily operations and success of the expedition. Sharing responsibility is critical to a successful expedition. Each day we rotate responsibilities and you will have a different task – one day you may be responsible for planning, cooking and cleaning up after all meals, and the next day you may have map and compass in hand, keeping track of where we are and how far we have gone. Each expedition is slightly different, but typical responsibilities include: Leader, Navigator, Cook & Clean, EOD and Pack & Rack.

Serving as a Leader is a time for you to develop your leadership skills with the guidance of your instructors. As leader, you will help facilitate group decisions, keep your group motivated, initiate breaks and meal times, determine where we stay for that evening and run our evening meeting. Your instructors help to create an encouraging and respectful atmosphere and are there to support you.

Our Safety Standards

Safety is our primary concern. All of our activities are developed with specific safety procedures clearly outlined, and instructors are experienced and competent adults who are skilled at working with groups and making sound and safe decisions. Keeping this in mind, and the fact that we are traveling as a group in the backcountry, some of the things that you might be accustomed to in your life at home will be quite a bit different. For example: you will always be with at least two other people (most of the time with eleven others!) and swimming is only with a buddy and with an instructor present. We realize that these policies may seem to be a little overbearing, but they are only in place to assure the group's safety while traveling in the backcountry. It is not a matter of trust. Clearly, you have demonstrated your trustworthiness by having your parent's trust you to participate in such an experience. It is simply a matter of safety.

Challenge

Each expedition is challenging, but not beyond the reach of anyone in reasonable physical condition. They are designed to assure success. This doesn't mean that it will *always* be easy. You will find that with a little determination and a little help from your group – you can accomplish just about anything. If you make it a point to stay active and in shape before your expedition begins, you will enjoy your trip that much more.

The Expedition Journal

Our complete itinerary, maps, duty rotation and interesting facts are contained in your group's *Expedition Journal*. When you are the Leader, you will be responsible for keeping it safe and dry, and recording a group journal entry at the end of the day, and passing it on to the next day's Leader. At the end of your expedition, your instructors will make copies and send them out to you along with a compilation of photos – as a reminder of your Williwaw expedition.