



# **FIELD RESEARCH COURSE**

## **PRE-TRIP INFORMATION**

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# Welcome!

Greetings from Yosemite National Park. We are very excited that you'll be joining us on our Field Research Course this year. We have some beautiful routes and exciting projects planned. All we need now is excited and well prepared students. That's where this document comes in; here you will find all that you need to prepare yourself physically and mentally for the trip. Please read this thoroughly and call us if you have further questions. We look forward to meeting you soon.

## Paperwork

Let's get this out of the way first! Before we head off on our adventure, we need you some information from you. Here is a checklist of documents that we need before you go on the expedition.

### Checklist

NatureBridge health form\*

NatureBridge Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks Form

NatureBridge Student Contract

\*Requires a signature from your doctor

**Please complete these forms now and return them to us in the included return envelope.**

## How to get to Yosemite

Yosemite National Park is in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California. It is your responsibility to get to and from Yosemite at the beginning and end of the course. You should plan to arrive at our Crane Flat Campus at 2:00pm on Saturday, July 28<sup>th</sup> and depart at 12:00 noon on Friday, August 10<sup>th</sup>. Here are some travel options.

### Plane

We offer a shuttle service to and from Fresno Yosemite International Airport on July 28<sup>th</sup> and August 10<sup>th</sup>. This service costs \$40 each way (\$80 return). Your flight must arrive before 11 am on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and depart after 4 pm on the 10<sup>th</sup>. If you would like to use this service, please contact us prior to purchasing tickets to discuss flight times.

### Train and Bus

Our nearest Amtrak station is Merced. From there, you can get the YARTS bus to Yosemite Valley, where we can meet you and take you to our campus at Crane Flat.

### Driving

If you're planning to drive, send us an email so that we can help you arrange carpooling with other participants. Here are some driving directions:

#### Directions from the San Francisco Bay Area and Points North

- Enter the park via Highway 120
- Expect a 4.5 to 5.5 hour drive from San Francisco
- In stormy weather consider using Highway 140

**Directions from Southern California**

- Enter the park via Highway 41 from Fresno
- Expect an 8-hour drive from Los Angeles
- In stormy weather, consider using Highway 140

**Directions from the East**

- Enter the park via Highway 120
- Be sure to call the National Park Service at (209) 372-0200 for road and weather conditions before planning to use this route. It may be closed anytime, especially from November to May

**Directions from the West**

- Enter the park via Highway 140 from Merced
- Expect a 4 to 5 hour drive from Monterey

**When You Arrive at the Park**

Present your gate pass (included in this package) at the park entrance to waive the park entrance fee. You will receive this in an e-mail from NatureBridge prior to your trip. Tell the Rangers at the gate that you are going to NatureBridge's Crane Flat campus (not Yosemite Valley) and they will direct you. Our Crane Flat campus is on Highway 120, about 1 mile east of the Crane Flat gas station. Here is a map of the park showing the location:

## Taking care of yourself

Unless you are an experienced backpacker, the thought of living in the wilderness for over a week can be a little daunting. Rest assured that our Field Educators have a great deal of experience leading wilderness expeditions and will be able to help you live happily and comfortably in the backcountry. The following sections are designed to help you prepare for this experience and arrive at NatureBridge with all that you need for the trip.

### **Equipment**

Generally, people are most comfortable with their own clothing and equipment. However, we appreciate that backpacking gear can be expensive. NatureBridge has some gear that you can borrow, including: a backpack, a sleeping pad, a sleeping bag, a fleece jacket, and a rain poncho. Please **let us know well in advance what your needs are** and we will try to find gear that fits you.

When you arrive in Yosemite to prepare for our backpacking trip, you will want to have two bags:

- Your backpack, containing all items on the equipment checklist.
- Another bag which will remain at basecamp, containing clothes to wear on campus before and after the backpacking expedition. Consider items that you will appreciate after a long expedition in the back country: shampoo, deodorant, PJs, a pillow, etc.

In addition to the equipment checklist (at the end of this document), we believe it is important to provide some more information on choosing the proper gear. Packing too light could leave you cold and miserable, while carrying too much will be a serious burden. Safety and preparedness, for all our participants, is our primary concern. The following descriptions and lists will provide critical information and insight about gear and clothing that you will need for your adventure. If you need further help, your educators have many years of experience using backpacking equipment, ask them questions!

### **How to Shop For Equipment**

Selecting appropriate gear is a process that can be overwhelming and expensive. Check your current collection of clothing and gear, and only buy or rent what you really need. If possible, borrow from friends or relatives. Keep in mind that you will be in the rugged backcountry and therefore function is far more important than fashion.

### **Buying and Renting Gear**

Many participants will come with a combination of purchased, borrowed, and rented gear. You need not buy the most expensive gear to get equipment and clothes that meet your needs. Shop around, ask friends, and find the best deals. Some stores including REI actually sell used gear that is in good condition. Here are some suggestions on where to get outfitted for your trip.

One retail chain with a comprehensive selection is Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI), with outlets throughout the country. REI also rents high quality backpacking gear at reasonable rates. Call for a catalog and location of their nearest store: (800) 426-4840.

In the Bay Area, Marmot Mountain Works is an excellent source of equipment and information and they have stores in Berkeley (510) 849-0735.

We suggest that you rely on the expertise of knowledgeable salespeople to make your gear selections, rather than just purchasing items from a mail-order catalog. There is no substitute for actually trying on boots, gear, and clothing.

## **Sleeping Bag**

A mummy style bag with drawstring hood rated 20 degrees or lower is ideal. We prefer bags with synthetic fill (Polarguard, Primaloft, etc.) because, unlike Down and Flannel, they insulate even when wet. If you already own a Down bag, be aware that extra care is required to keep it dry.

Be sure your sleeping bag can be compressed into its own small stuff sack.

A bulky, flannel sleeping bag is perfectly acceptable for the backyard slumber party, but is not appropriate for the backpacking portion of this trip.

## **Backpack**

Your backpack must have sufficient space to carry your clothing, some group gear and food. We recommend you choose a pack with a minimum of 5,000 cubic inches. Your pack must have well-padded shoulder straps and a thick padded waist belt.

The differences between external and internal frame packs are not nearly as important as solid construction and good fit. Try it on! Load it up with 45 pounds! Walk around!

## **Sleeping Pad**

These are thin, lightweight mattresses that insulate you from the cold ground. Ridgerest and Thermarest are examples of the type of sleeping pad to consider.

## **Staying warm and dry**

In general, Sierra summers are dry. Temperatures can reach the mid 80s during the day, and fall to the 30s and 40s at night. Freak snowstorms and afternoon thunderstorms are always possible.

Warm weather is easy -- just wear shorts and a T-shirt. It is the nighttime and wet days that require a good layering system. Layering involves wearing a few layers of clothing that can be taken on or off as conditions change throughout the day.

### **Base layer**

The best base layer to wear next to your skin is light or mid-weight synthetic long underwear.

### **Insulating layers**

As your primary insulating layer, we suggest a thick fleece jacket or wool sweater. An additional lightweight fleece, wool, or down top or vest is optional. Finally a warm hat is essential for cold nights.

A note on 'down' jackets: down layers are very compressible, lightweight, and wonderfully warm, but are expensive and useless when wet. If you already own down, be sure to have an excellent waterproof layer to protect it, both when you wear it and when it's in your pack.

### **Waterproof layer**

Each participant must bring a waterPROOF layer for the upper body. Gore-Tex is a breathable, waterproof material used in most expensive rain gear. A mid-weight Gore-Tex "shell" is ideal (Not a thick insulated jacket). A less expensive nylon shell will work but be sure to buy one that is seam-sealed and fully waterproofed (ie. "coated nylon"). Rain ponchos are your cheapest option, however they tend to shred apart quickly. If you must bring a poncho, invest in the best-coated nylon model available, with metal snaps and sewn seams. Plastic rain gear is also an option, but can break down very fast.

## **Taking care of your feet**

### **Boots**

Your feet will thank you if you bring a good pair of hiking boots. It may be the most important piece of equipment you wear.

It is absolutely critical that you wear a pair of comfortable hiking shoes. It is not necessary to purchase a pair of expensive, heavy, all-leather hiking boots. If you already own a pair of all-leather boots that are broken-in to your feet and that you have used before then that is your best bet. Otherwise, there are a number of good lightweight but supportive boots that are just as comfortable and more affordable.

The perfect boot is lightweight, has a leather or nylon/leather exterior, good padding, a good lug sole and is well broken in.

It is very difficult to fully waterproof boots (water has a way of getting in) but it is helpful if you treat your boots with commercial water repellent to minimize water absorption.

Finally, a brand new boot (even well-fitted) can cause serious blisters and ruin your trip. Please, if you buy new boots, make certain they are broken-in before you arrive... Start wearing them at least a month before you arrive.

### **Socks**

Some hikers prefer a single thick synthetic/wool blend sock while other use a two-layer system (thin liner with thick outer sock). We strongly recommend that you take some training hikes to both break in your boots, and experiment with different sock options.

**Do not bring cotton hiking socks.**

## A few words about feminine hygiene

Menstruation is a concern for many young women when they go backpacking. A change or increase in physical activity can alter your menstrual cycle. Having extra products ensures that you will be covered if this occurs. The list below contains recommended items to bring so you are adequately prepared should you have your period while on your trip. We recommend panty liners as a backup for tampons even if you typically wear only tampons. Doubling your protection reduces the chances of spotting. Even if you do not expect to get your period, we recommend you bring a small amount of supplies in case you fall into the cycle of other participants.

- Twice the number of supplies you normally use during your period
- 3 – 4 large Zip-Lock® -type plastic bags
- A travel pack of feminine wipes or baby wipes
- Yeast infection treatment (Monistat) if you are prone to infections

At NatureBridge, we practice a Leave-No-Trace® camping technique. Therefore, we pack out all that we pack in. The plastic baggies work well for keeping fresh supplies clean and dry and will be used for storage of used products, as well. Because of the short duration of your backpack trip, there will be no way of disposing of these items until we get out of the backcountry. In our experience, used products stored in this manner have not been known to attract animals. Other options are some plastic devices called the keeper and mooncup.

There are several soaps on the market that do not require the use of water. The use of this type of soap for your hands after pad or tampon changes is a convenient way to clean up. A travel pack of feminine wipes or baby wipes will help you to stay clean and fresh, as well.

Should you bleed through your clothing, there are several things that you can do. If you know that you are going to have your period while on course, most educators are not adverse to you bringing more than the recommended amount of underwear from the clothing list. Also, if you catch the spotting soon enough, rinsing the garment out with water, away from streams and creeks for contamination factors etc., is very effective at removing stains.

Lastly, know that if you need help, educators have been trained and are very experienced in helping you deal with your period in the backcountry. There is somebody menstruating on every trip with females attending. Your educators are approachable and know that being discreet is a priority.

## What to bring

For this expedition, NatureBridge will provide food, water purification, tents, ground tarps, bear canisters, stoves, fuel, pots, group cooking equipment, toilet paper, biodegradable soap, maps and compasses, wilderness permits, and first aid equipment and radios.

Here is a list of what you need to bring. Read the notes above for details of these items:

### **Required Clothing:**

- Hiking boots (must be well broken-in)
- Waterproof and hooded rain jacket and rain pants
- 1-set long underwear top and bottom (NOT cotton)
- Fleece jacket or thick wool sweater
- Fleece pants or quick dry warm pants
- 1 - 2 pair lightweight shorts, quick drying, used for wading as well, flat or seamless waist preferred (less likely to create blisters)
- 1 pair lightweight pants, flat or seamless waist preferred (loose fitting, quick drying pants-nylon or 50/50 or 60/40 polyester/cotton blend No Jeans)
- 3-4 pair of thick hiking socks
- Camp shoes, one pair (sandals or old sneakers)
- Sports Bra or supportive bra
- Sun hat (baseball caps are O.K., but hats with a full brim offer better protection)
- 1-2 T-shirts for hiking
- 1 long sleeved shirt (non-cotton)
- 2-3 pair underwear
- 2 bandannas/handkerchiefs
- Wool or fleece hat (beanie)
- Gloves or mittens (lightweight and warm, not bulky ski gloves)

### **Required Personal Equipment:**

- Backpack (See notes above about choosing a backpack).
- Any Personal Medication (2 sets of each) and any ankle or knee brace that you currently use
- Trekking poles or old ski poles if you are prone to ankle/or knee injury
- Sleeping bag (rated 20 degree or lower, as light as possible) with stuff sack
- 1 sleeping pad

- 1 large nylon stuff sack for clothing
- 3 large heavy duty garbage bags (for lining and waterproofing your backpack, sleeping bag, and clothing stuff sack)
- 2 water bottles (1 quart each, wide mouth, leak-proof screw top, Nalgene® type work well. Gatorade bottles with screw tops are cheap, light and will work for this trip.)
- 1 bowl (light weight, plastic, durable)
- 1 spoon
- 1 Mug (Small plastic thermal mugs work great)
- Sun-screen (SPF 30 minimum)
- Mosquito repellent (consider citronella or non-DEET products)
- Lip balm with sunscreen
- Dark sunglasses
- Moleskin, pre-cut is best (for blister prevention)
- Toiletries\* (toothbrush, toothpaste)
- Feminine hygiene products
- Headlamp or small flashlight with extra batteries
- Journal and writing utensils
- 4-5 zip-lock bags of varying sizes
- 2-3 hair ties

***Optional Items:***

- small brush or comb
- Camera
- Binoculars
- Field guides or paperback books
- Camp towel (small and quick-drying)
- Gaiters

\*On your backpacking trip, everything with any sort of scent will have to be stored in a limited number of bear-proof canisters that you will carry with you. This includes all food, toiletries, toothpaste, lip balm, sunscreen, lotion, etc. Space in these canisters is very limited, and bears will readily go after any scented items not properly stored. For this reason, students are restricted to only the toiletries on this list for the backpacking portion of the program. Soap, shampoo, deodorant and lotions can be retrieved from storage upon your return from the backcountry.

**In addition to your own things, you will also be carrying 10 to 15 pounds of food and group equipment in your pack. Be sure to leave room (and a weight allowance). Your pack in the end will weigh 30 to 35 pounds, so the more you can do without, the lighter it will be.**

## **What NOT to bring**

Please, for bear safety and weight concerns do not bring the following items for the backpacking expedition: deodorant, soap, shampoo, conditioner, books, magazines, first aid kit, mouthwash, mirrors, tissues, toilet paper, snacks, hair products, cosmetics, lotions, money, games, toys, stuffed zebras or other animals, jewelry, cell phones, radios, CD players, electronics, candy, and pillows. For safety, your educators will be carrying 2 radios with extra batteries and an extensive first aid kit with extra supplies. Cell phones are not a dependable emergency device for the location we will be in Yosemite National Park.

## **Conclusion**

There is a lot of information in this document and we know that it can feel a little overwhelming to embark on an adventure like this. We want you to be prepared, not anxious about the trip. If you have questions, or concerns, please call us at 209 379 9511 and we will be happy to help. See you soon.