



Isle Royale Backpacking

Features of the Isle Royale Backpacking Trip

- Participants entering 10th or 11th grade. Minimum age: 15
- Group size: 4-5 participants and 1 leader
- 14 days backpacking on Isle Royale
- Hiking with a heavy backpack most days for up to 12 hours
- Designated campsites
- Opportunities for day hikes
- Hiking up and down hills along the coast and inland of Isle Royale

Isle Royale National Park, the largest island in Lake Superior, presents a unique backpacking environment. The Minong and Greenstone Ridge Trails will challenge your strength and endurance, and provide picturesque views of the valleys and Lake Superior. During your trip you will hike 6-10 miles per day on the 160-mile trail system and camp on the shores of Lake Superior or interior lakes during the 14 days hiking throughout the island. Participants should come into this trip with prior trail experience and be ready to take on the challenge of intense hiking with a small group.

What you will take away from the trip

The purpose of the trip is to develop group collaboration skills and leadership abilities including but not limited to humility, empathy, awareness, resourcefulness, resiliency, optimism, adaptability, and respect. Participants also gain exposure to wilderness skills including camping, hiking, and risk management, and explore the ecology of the area.

Each participant will practice giving and receiving feedback, reflecting on their leadership, camping skills, backpacking techniques, and working as a group to overcome challenges. Leaders will teach these skills before gradually turning the leadership of the trip over to the participants. Each day participants will take over more of the daily responsibility of the trip.

Wilderness Skills

Wilderness skills involve camping, backpacking and Leave No Trace. These skills allow the participant to gain confidence and a level of comfort that make all of the above possible.

Participants can expect to learn the following wilderness skills:

- Leave No Trace techniques
- Hiking skills: pace, posture, pack fitting, etc.
- Safe group travel and use of safety equipment
- Importance of equipment care
- Organization and packing of group and personal gear
- Route selection and terrain reading
- Map and compass reading

- Campsite selection and set up including tents and tarps
- Cooking meals independently including stove use and trail baking

Challenges of the trip

Isle Royale offers many steep uphill and rocky challenges. This type of hiking is particularly hard on those with knee, back and ankle problems and it is not recommended to go on this trip if you have a history of these musculoskeletal issues.

Depending on the weather, bugs have the potential to be particularly fearsome on this trip. It is recommended that you bring lightweight long sleeve shirts and pants and be able to comfortably hike in buggy, hot conditions.

Camp Manito-wish YMCA works hard to ensure that each trip leader has extensive experience in wilderness travel, youth development and risk management. For the success of the group, it is imperative that each participant has a positive attitude, makes conservative risk management decisions, works well with others who they do not get along with, and has a willingness to challenge themselves.

Time at Camp Manito-wish YMCA

The time spent at Camp allows the group to begin to form and prepare for the time spent on trail. They will have two full days of structured time in preparation of departure on the third full day. While at Camp, participants will be staying as groups in Smith Leadership Cabins. These cabins are furnished with bunkrooms, bathrooms and a common area with a kitchen.

The first day is spent introducing community standards and getting to know groupmates. During the next two days, the group will cover basic first aid and emergency procedures, pack their food and equipment, spend time on the low challenge course and go hiking to ensure that their equipment is in order. After these first three days, groups will drive to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan where they will catch a ferry to Isle Royale!

Participant Expectations

We expect each participant to best support their group and their own growth by maintaining the following:

- Embraces challenges
- Make conservative risk management decisions
- Work productively with everyone in the community
- Sets personal goals leading to personal growth as relates to self-awareness
- Develops communication skills by identifying what appropriate communication in relation to needs, effectively communicating their own needs to the entire group and listening and understanding each individual's needs
- Accepts feedback by applying and discussing suggestions from others and gives feedback to others
- Create a safe and inclusive atmosphere
- Take initiative in group tasks and self care

Risk Management

Our participants are active players in risk management. Actively teaching and relying on participants for risk management minimizes injury and illness and we hope these skills translate to healthy decisions in areas outside of Camp. Objectives include:

- Recognize what group dynamics and how behavior within the group affects safety
- Understand the multitude of risks faced in the wilderness, be able to identify them and distinguish between healthy and unhealthy/unsafe risks
- Practice good personal hygiene, proper waste disposal and proper food handling situation
- Understand First Aid Kit contents and other safety equipment and be able to use basic supplies if necessary.