



Voyageur Backpacking

Features of the Voyageur Backpacking Trip

- Participants entering 9th or 10th grade. Minimum age: 14
- Group size: 4-5 participants and 1 leader
- 9 days backpacking on the Superior Hiking Trail in Minnesota
- 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 of Lake Superior

Voyageur backpackers venture to the Superior National Forest in northeastern Minnesota, where they'll spend nine days hiking along the Superior Hiking Trail as it snakes along the ridgeline above Lake Superior. The trail offers spectacular views of Lake Superior and the Porcupine Mountains, along with adventurous hikes up rocky ridges, through deep old growth forests, and past spectacular waterfalls.

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 practices. 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
- 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

The Superior Hiking Trail offers many steep uphill challenges and the trail itself is not level. 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.

As a black bear population is present in this area, it is vital to practice safe bear camping principles. Trip groups will keep a meticulously clean cooking area and store food away from where they sleep at night to reduce the chance of a bear encounter

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 comfortable 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 the rustic Voyageur tent village. These are large canvas walled tents with bunkbeds tucked away in the woods near an outhouse and group fire ring.

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 SHT and embark on their adventure!

Participant Expectations

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

- Embraces challenges
- Makes conservative risk management decisions
- Works 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 begins to give feedback.
- Creates a safe and inclusive atmosphere
- Takes 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:

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