



2023 LEADERSHIP ADVENTURE SEMESTER GAP PROGRAM



ABOUT LAS

To be a well-rounded and happy individual, one must possess a wide variety of skills, habits, and character traits. Formal college education addresses many, but not all, of these skills people need to be successful. Our goal at Adventure Treks is to help young adults lead a more enriching life, and we believe our Leadership Adventure Semester (LAS) provides a different yet equally fulfilling learning adventure.

LAS offers a profound and intensive opportunity to deepen outdoor, interpersonal, and leadership skills. Students will gain mastery in outdoor skills like backpacking, mountain biking, mountaineering, rock climbing, whitewater kayaking, and canoeing; take a wilderness first responder and swift water rescue certification course; participate in meaningful service projects; and improve essential and pragmatic, hands-on life skills.

LAS also emphasizes non-cognitive traits like, communication, collaboration, and community-building—skills necessary to succeed in today’s world. These are woven naturally and intentionally into the entire gap semester as an excellent complement to the higher education experience.

2023 dates, tuition, & location

Fall - Basecamp program

- » • For ages 18–20
- September 6 to November 18, 2022
- \$15,995
- Basecamps in western North Carolina, then finishes in Costa Rica

Fall - Expedition program

- » • For ages 18–20
- September 7 to November 19, 2022
- \$15,995
- Travels throughout the Pacific Northwest, then finishes in Costa Rica

Both programs offer backpacking, whitewater rafting and kayaking, canoeing, rock climbing, and mountain biking, and the opportunity to earn up to 14 hours of academic credit.



**Adventure Treks
is Gap Year
Association
accredited!**

PROGRAM GOALS

- » To offer fun and exciting outdoor adventures that help young people gain life skills and a greater sense of self.
- » To inspire young people to develop a lifelong love of the outdoors and a conservation ethic.
- » To empower young people to create an inclusive and reflective community that maintains a culture of kindness, sense of humor, and spirit of cooperation and volunteerism.
- » To teach young people pragmatic life skills that will help them thrive in today's world.



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My instructors had incredible knowledge of the world, experiences, and stories to share, which I loved observing and learning from. At AT, I've learned to trust myself. Through experiences of becoming more vocal and leading others, one of the more profound lessons I'm taking away is the knowledge and embodiment of trusting my mind and body. AT has an atmosphere of love, adventure, and challenge unlike any other place. It's truly a community that holds space for the truest, most authentic version of yourself. I am grateful to you all for everything you've given to us!

Kate from Erdenheim, PA

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THE GREAT 8 OUTCOMES

Adding to an incredibly fun adventure, we strive for our Great 8 Outcomes to be learned through stepping outside one's comfort zone, immersion in an outdoor environment, and interaction with great role models.

Our emphasis on using the close-knit community and fun and challenging outdoor activities makes Adventure Treks the perfect place to improve the non-cognitive skills young adults need to thrive in the 21st century.

There are endless opportunities inherent in the Adventure Treks experience to practice and improve these skills, from making new friends on day one, to trying an outdoor activity for the first time, to helping orchestrate and execute an entirely student-led expedition at the end of the semester.

LEADERSHIP

We solve problems in groups. These groups need leaders with heart that bring out the best in its members. Adventure Treks provides numerous opportunities to lead and follow.

COMMUNICATION

Few ideas are the product of a single mind, and being able to effectively communicate in a constantly changing world is a much-appreciated skill. Teammates need to be able to share and articulate ideas, build trust, and understand each other.

CREATIVITY

The ability to generate multiple ideas and think out of the box is engendered by supportive, free-thinking peers.

CRITICAL THINKING

The world's problems don't have simple answers. These challenges require the ability to critically analyze a situation and formulate potential solutions that are not often obvious.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

Joining an outdoor adventure trip develops personal organization, timeliness, responsibility, and self-care skills.

RESILIENCE

Everyone encounters challenges and failures. Those who rebound from failure and see problems as opportunities will succeed when others give up.

OPTIMISM

Optimists are people who believe that problems are temporary and that they have the ability through effort and persuasion to effect change.

COLLABORATION & SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENT

Because working in teams is essential to success, the ability to work well with others is vital—even when your team is not of your choosing. Creating and maintaining fun, substantive social connections is a hallmark of success.



ACADEMIC CREDIT

Adventure Treks students have the opportunity to earn academic credit through either Portland State University (PSU) or Western Carolina University (WCU).

Portland State University

As a Gap Year Association–accredited organization, Adventure Treks students can enroll in up to four courses through PSU to earn academic credit. We will offer four courses in the communications, history, international studies, psychology, or sociology.

Students pursuing academic credit through PSU for a fall 2023 semester must register by August 15, 2023. Late registrations will incur a \$100 fee.

Families are able to pay program tuition fees and college credit fees using 529 funds through PSU. Please note that 529 funds may be used only for qualifying educational expenses; this does not include direct travel costs. We recommend consulting a fiduciary or tax specialist with any specific questions regarding the use of 529 funds.

Western Carolina University

Adventure Treks students can register for up to four courses (14 total credit hours) with WCU. Students are responsible for pursuing credit, including completing the WCU application for admission and class registration and submitting the course fees.

Learn more about academic credit [here](#).

FALL 2023

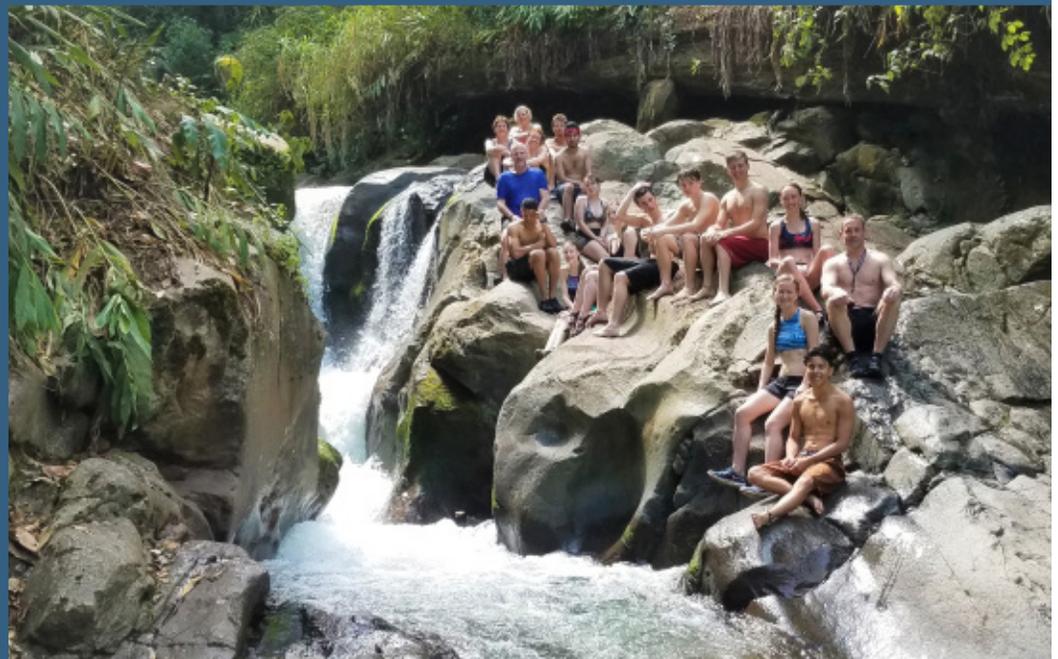
NC BASECAMP

- » September 6 – November 18, 2023
- » \$15,995
- » Academic credit available

This 74-day program is based in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina, which is consistently rated one of the top regions in the country for outdoor adventure—with more than a million acres world-class backpacking, rock climbing, whitewater kayaking and canoeing, and mountain biking just a few steps out the front door. We'll spend the last three weeks of the semester in Costa Rica, honing our whitewater paddling skills.

During the semester, we'll visit areas like:

- Turrialba, Cartago
- Pacuare River
- Pejibaye River
- Pisgah National Forest
- Nantahala National Forest
- Linville Gorge
- The Foothills Trail in Table Rock State Parks
- French Broad River
- DuPont State Forest
- Jocassee Gorges Wilderness Area
- Gorges State Park



FALL 2023 PNW EXPEDITION

- » September 6 – November 18, 2023
- » \$15,995
- » Academic credit available



This 74-day program will begin in the Pacific Northwest and travel throughout Washington and Oregon. Students will backpack, mountain bike, and rock climb in world-renowned state and national parks and wilderness areas. We'll spend the last three weeks of the semester in Costa Rica, honing our whitewater paddling skills. We'll spend time in areas like:

- Goat Rocks Wilderness
- North Cascades National Park
- Smith Rock State Park and Bend, OR
- Mt. Rainier National Park
- Olympic National Park
- Turrialba, Cartago
- Pacuare River & Pejibaye River

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LAS was exactly the semester I was looking for. This semester was a perfect mix of learning, growing, and leading and has outdoor options for everyone! During COVID, LAS was where I needed to be to still have fun and work hard. Plus, I am consistently my favorite and best self when I am at Adventure Treks. LAS set me on a totally different, and what I consider to be a much better, course for my future. It showed me what I really want to be doing.

Jessie, student from Pepperell, MA

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BACKPACKING & CAMPCRAFT

Year after year, backpacking is the most highly rated activity at Adventure Treks. There's magic in overcoming obstacles, and it's even more powerful when challenges are shared with friends. Without electronics, people can focus on what's important: themselves, their friends, and creating long-lasting memories.

Students are able to step into different leadership roles, and backpacking highlights commonalities and interests that form strong, unbreakable bonds.

Throughout the semester, students will begin planning the logistics, gear, and food needed to execute a successful backcountry excursion, culminating in the five-day capstone (student-led) backpack.

Skills covered in the syllabus include:

- Expedition management and safety
- Route-planning and permitting regulations
- Orienteering, map-reading, and navigation
- Food organization and backcountry cooking
- Efficient camp set-up and take-down
- Building temporary shelters and fires
- Leave No Trace principles
- Gear maintenance and repair



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LAS is an amazing, transformative experience for any young adult looking to become a better version of themselves while exploring the outdoors. This program offers students a beautiful landscape and facility to learn countless useful backcountry skills and leadership skills, all while having so much fun!

Tori from Colts Neck, NJ

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CANOEING & KAYAKING

Backcountry canoe camping trips offer much of the same magic as backpacking! Students will become fluent in paddling basics, drills, and river safety on both day trips and overnight trips.

Skills covered in the canoeing syllabus include:

- Essential canoeing strokes (forward and backward, J, C, pry, sweep, draw, cross draw, etc.)
- Reading a river and flat water
- Ferrying, eddying, and bracing
- Loading and unloading canoes
- Basic rescue techniques
- River packing, camping, and portaging techniques

Skills covered in the kayaking syllabus include:

- Common strokes, rolling, and bracing
- Reading whitewater and picking a line
- Surfing waves
- T-rescues and wet exits
- Safely swimming in whitewater





MOUNTAIN BIKING

Students will have access to hundreds of miles in Pisgah National Forest and DuPont State Forest or Bend, OR. (All three areas are consistently ranked as some of the world's top spots for mountain biking.)

Skills covered in the syllabus include:

- Proper body positioning for climbing and descending
- How to read the trail and pick a line
- Balance and pedal strokes
- Braking and shifting
- Trail etiquette and basic repairs

ROCK CLIMBING

We'll take advantage of the soaring granite domes in Pisgah National Forest or welded tuff walls in Smith Rock State Park to learn how to safely navigate and operate a climbing site.

Skills covered in the syllabus include:

- Advanced knot-tying
- Belaying & rappelling
- Anchor-building
- Movement techniques
- Self-rescue

WILDERNESS FIRST RESPONDER & SWIFT WATER RESCUE

The nine-day wilderness first responder course (WFR) is the standard minimum medical certification for outdoor professionals like guides, search and rescue, and educators. It's also an extremely beneficial course for anyone who takes extended backcountry trips and wants to pursue emergency medical training.

Over 72–80 hours of classroom learning and hands-on scenarios, students will cover topics like:

- Patient assessment systems and risk management
- Vital signs, trauma, and shock
- Anaphylaxis, allergies, and airway management
- Heat- and cold-related injuries
- Spinal and traumatic brain injuries
- Wounds and soft tissue injuries, burns, and blisters
- Splinting, patient packaging, and dislocations

The two-day swift water rescue course is meant for anyone who loves to recreate in moving water and wants to become an outdoor professional! This course is designed for people with little to no rescue experience; students will learn the fundamentals of survival in moving water, plus gain knowledge in hydrology and river classification; swimming and self-rescue; and boat handling and anchor systems.



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Adventure Treks is the happiest place on earth! The people I've met at AT are some of the coolest people I know. AT is the place where I truly belong and become my best self. It's shaped me in a way that has made me a better human and better outdoorsman. My five years at AT have been the best five years ever. I just want to say thank you for making my experiences unbelievable. I wouldn't be the person I am today without AT!

Sam, student from Highland Park, IL

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ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS

In addition to helping students become skilled and competent outdoorspeople, we believe young adults must possess a wide variety of skills and habits to help them live rich, independent, and self-reliant lives. Thus, students will learn “life skills” such as:

- Basic auto maintenance and repair
- Basic bike maintenance and repair
- Cooking, menu-planning, and budgeting
- Outdoor equipment maintenance and repair
- Resume-building and leadership training



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Imagine the happiest moment of your life. Now imagine if you felt that way every single day... that was my life for 74 days while at Adventure Treks. It wasn't always easy—it was quite challenging at times—but I had never been happier with a group of once strangers who are now the best friends I'll ever have. LAS gave me the best experiences of my life; I have the tools, knowledge, and connections to last me a few lifetimes, and that is a feeling you can only learn through a program that demands vulnerability, builds character, and adds depth. I woke up every day with a purpose and the motivation to challenge myself, and I am extremely proud of myself. I am forever grateful for this experience.

Adelaide, student from Louisville, KY

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INSTRUCTOR TEAM

The Adventure Treks instructor team is the heart and soul of who we are and what we do. They're more than just instructors—they're role models, mentors, and friends to our LAS students. Because we don't take this responsibility lightly, we have a rigorous and selective hiring process for professional outdoor educators who truly care about and invest in our students' personal growth and development.

All LAS instructors have significant prior experience working with young adults in the outdoors, and they participate annually in a minimum two-week training (senior staff attend three weeks of orientation). The instructor dynamic on each trip provides a variety of personalities to match our students and leads to better decision-making, as risk management is our top priority.

Minimum requirements include:

- Bachelor's degree or more advanced degree
- Wilderness first responder medical certification
- Proficiency in teaching outdoor skills
- At least several years' experience in outdoor education and wilderness programs

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I will never be a gifted enough writer to express how incredible my Adventure Treks gap semester truly was. I've never been in a community of people who love and support each other as much or as genuinely as the community I found here. We were challenged by our instructors to become better in both our lessons and lives, while living in the most beautiful outdoors environment. It was truly the epitome of a worthwhile experience.

Jordyn, student from East Hampton, NY

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Adventure Treks internships

Top-performing students may be offered the opportunity to apply for a paid internship for Adventure Treks' summer programs.

In addition to providing the unparalleled experience of working closely together on a diverse team of individuals, interns also have the opportunity to help create the same life-changing experiences for middle and high schoolers they had as a student. Plus, AT interns will have a competitive edge when applying to work as field instructors or when seeking careers in the outdoor education field.



READY TO SIGN UP FOR THE GREATEST ADVENTURE OF YOUR LIFE?

Begin the application process [here!](#)

Adventure Treks strives to foster an inclusive, welcoming, and judgment-free community of peers that celebrates individuals and the unique strengths they bring. It is the student's responsibility to arrive with a safety-conscious mindset; desire to challenge themselves and try new things; and a willingness to participate fully, help with group chores and tasks, and care for themselves and others. We expect from each student a positive and unselfish attitude and a desire to be a part of a close community of friends. Students are expected to respect others' backgrounds, gender identities, and beliefs that may differ from their own. Read more about our terms and conditions and expectations [here](#).



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