

JOHNSON PASS BACKPACKING

INFORMATION PACKET



Alaska Geographic

Your connection to Alaska's parks, forests, and refuges

COURSE OVERVIEW

This expedition takes place in the Chugach National Forest, on a section of the Iditarod National Historic Trail, on the Kenai Peninsula. The goal of this expedition is to connect Alaskan teens to their communities and their public lands while learning fundamental backpacking and wilderness skills. The group will be traveling 23-miles, carrying everything they need for four nights in their backpacks, setting up camp in a new spot every night, and enjoying food together around a warm fire. Chugach National Forest backcountry rangers and trail crews will be stopping by to connect with the group to talk about what it means to be a National Forest ranger.

The expedition will start and end in Anchorage. A group van will drive from Anchorage to the trailheads and back. If you will be traveling from outside of the Anchorage area, please get in touch so we can help arrange travel logistics.



COURSE ITINERARY

This is an example itinerary that is subject to change based on weather conditions, availability of USFS staff, transportation delays, and for unplanned opportunities.

DAY 1 - June 17th

Group meets in Anchorage at 4pm to go over trip logistics and camping gear. Further details will be given prior to this date.

DAY 2 - June 18th

At 8:30am group meets at the AK Geo Anchorage office located at 421 W 1st Ave STE 250, Anchorage, AK 99501 for departure to Johnson Pass trailhead. Camp at established campsite along the trail.

DAY 3 - June 19th

Backpack, explore, camp

DAY 4 - June 20th

Backpack to Johnson Pass North trailhead, walk to Granite Creek Campground to camp for the night

DAY 5 - June 21st

Drive back to Anchorage for early afternoon pick-up at 12:30pm at our Anchorage office located at 421 W 1st Ave STE 250, Anchorage, AK 99501



EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH

This field course is an active learning experience set in remote locations on the Kenai Peninsula. Students will be expected to actively and positively contribute to the expedition by participating in group discussions, being present during conservation work, and practicing a group-focused expedition mentality. They will be expected to positively participate in building a fun, effective, and inspiring team of peers. All participants will sign a student contract as a commitment to the expedition (found under "paperwork" link).

Activities will rotate through labor-based projects, relaxation time, moderate level exercise, and strenuous level exercise. Participants need to be able to hike up to 10 miles a day with a 30lb backpack on rocky, rough, and uneven terrain, sometimes off-trail. Participants should be able to self-regulate emotions in various weather conditions such as wind, rain, hot, and cold with mosquitos present. Participants will be sleeping in tents with another group member. No experience with trail work, hiking, backpacking, or camping is necessary to participate. **Participants should be in good physical condition and prepared for all weather conditions.**

The group will be constantly supervised and guided, but each individual is responsible for attending the trip physically and mentally prepared for variable conditions.

Please reach out to discuss these expectations further if you have any questions.



WEATHER

Weather in Alaska is unpredictable. Please come prepared for a wide range of weather, especially cold and wet conditions. Temperatures can dip close to freezing in the evening and may warm up to the 80's during the day. Mosquitoes can be abundant at any time in the summer. Our course activities will continue rain or shine, but the itinerary may change based on weather conditions that call for safety concerns.

FOOD

All food will be provided, including hot drinks and snacks. Menus are extensively planned and portions calculated to ensure enough calories and variety. If you have specific dietary needs to discuss, please provide as much information as possible on our dietary request form (included in paperwork). Unless specifically discussed prior to the program, students are not allowed to bring their own food as all food must fit in bear-secure food containers.

CAMPING

The group will move camp each night to designated camp areas along the trail. Participants will be in tents with 1-2 other participants, to be determined by trip leaders on the first day. We will closely follow wildlife-related safety precautions. All food and smell-ables (such as toiletries) will be stored outside tents in a bear proof container. Students will camp together with AK Geo instructor tents immediately nearby.



ORIENTATION INFORMATION

Orientation will take place in Anchorage, and students will be returning home after orientation (unless discussed otherwise).

On the day of our orientation, please bring all of your packing list items along with you. Your items do not have to be packed, as we will spread everything out and repack into backpacks (bring your things in shopping bags, trash bags, etc is fine). You will also be issued all the gear you need to borrow. Once our bags are packed, we will load them up into our van and you will not have access to them again until we arrive at the trailhead the next day. The only items you will bring home after orientation are items you decided you did not need to bring on the trip, and hiking clothes for beginning the trail.

Please refer to the itinerary above for date/time details. If you are coming from out of town, please contact education@akgeo.org or 907-771-8466 as soon as possible.

CLOTHING & GEAR

All essential clothing and gear will be provided at no cost.

COVID-19 INFORMATION

Please see our updated Covid policies and procedures on the Safety & Risk Management page on akgeo.org. We strongly encourage participants to be fully vaccinated. All participants will take an at-home rapid test at orientation. Masks may be required in indoor spaces at time. The safety of our staff is crucial to the success of this trip and our future summer programs for students - please do not attend the trip if you are presenting symptoms of a respiratory illness.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Due to a high volume of applicants and our time sensitive logistics for each trip, we request that students inform us no later than **10 days** before the beginning of a trip if they will not be able to attend the expedition. Failure to do so can jeopardize eligibility for future trip opportunities.