

STEVENSON

Sophomore Wilderness Expedition 2019 - 2020 Description, Goal, and Objectives

Stevenson's Sophomore Wilderness Expedition introduces students to an exciting and rugged wilderness environment through activities such as wilderness travel and backcountry camping. The emphasis is on developing positive attitudes toward challenging situations while teaching specific outdoor skills. In this environment students are challenged to learn necessary basic skills, accomplish collective tasks, and meet the physical demands imposed on them by the environment. Constant supervision by the leaders will be provided to help ensure the safety of the student.

The Wilderness Expedition is an 11-day backpacking and wilderness experience that takes place in the rugged backcountry mountains of Henry Coe State Park or the Ventana Wilderness. Each participant is placed in a crew with 7-9 other sophomores. Accompanying each crew are two experienced adult instructors (Stevenson faculty or hired outdoor professionals) and two senior or junior student co-leaders.

The Wilderness Expedition is offered in the sophomore year for several reasons. Stevenson believes sophomores, as they approach adulthood and ever more complex demands and pressures, benefit from the kind of personal testing involved in this program. The events and stories of the Expedition provide vivid raw material for building the collective memory of a class. The course is designed to result in increased leadership skills, individual responsibility, and mutual respect on the part of the participants.

The Expedition consists of the following activities:

ORIENTATION

Introduction to basic skills -- such as compass and map orientation, stove use, rope work, and shelter building -- occurs during several sessions prior to leaving Stevenson. Personal gear must be inspected during this period as well.

TRAINING EXPEDITION

This phase covers the first few days of the course in the mountains and takes place en-route to the backcountry. During this time the emphasis is on using the skills learned during the orientation. Students are involved in group problem solving to develop individual and group confidence. The leaders' role is primarily to raise questions about group procedure and development, to answer specific skill oriented questions, and to provide an historical and ecological perspective on the locale.

THE EXPEDITION

After the training expedition, the crews will have a series of objectives to meet such as hiking to specific campsites, mountain peaks, or a rendezvous point. The crews are expected to demonstrate leadership and independence in organizing themselves and their schedule. Crews must stick together, make every attempt to follow through with their objectives, and abide by prudent wilderness procedures. The leaders' role is primarily that of observer and the leaders intercede only if safety becomes a concern.

SOLO

The solo usually occurs in the middle of the Expedition phase. During solo, each student is asked to camp alone in a small well-defined area without diversionary material (books, etc.). Students are also requested to fast during this time. However, students with specific dietary needs may take snacks. Students have shelter materials and all the proper gear. Solo is a time for rest and personal reflection. While on solo, the students are monitored carefully by the leaders and are within signaling distance of each other. Solo typically lasts between 24 and 36 hours.

GOAL

To provide a monitored, risk-taking, small-group wilderness experience for Stevenson sophomores in a teaching atmosphere that allows and encourages personal growth. Prudent safety practices govern all activities.

OBJECTIVES

1. Enhance self-confidence by overcoming initial hesitation, accepting responsibility, and recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses.
2. Experience sensible self-denial by focusing on one's basic needs without the frills and barriers of modern society.
3. Broaden compassion for others, empathy, deferring personal wishes to help the group, tolerance of and concern for others who are different.
4. Develop perseverance in completing tasks, commitment, and leadership.
5. Improve personal and group decision-making skills.
6. Enhance sensitivity and judgment concerning risk/safety situations.
7. Experience critical self-examination and reflection.
8. Develop an appreciation for the wilderness environment.
9. Learn minimum-impact ethics regarding the care and use of public lands.
10. Transfer these principles to day-to-day life back at home and in school.