



LITIII – Isle Royale Backpacking Trip

Features of the Isle Royale Backpacking Trip

- Participants age 14-16
- Group size: 6-8 participants and 2 leaders, coed
- 9 days backpacking on Isle Royale
- Hiking with a heavy backpack (30-45 pounds) 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. Remote and undeveloped, the shores can be visited by watercraft, but the only way to see the interior is to walk across it. Because the island has only one large predator population (wolves) and one large prey population (moose), it has become the subject of a long term ecological study on predator/prey relationships and is an ideal place to observe these two iconic species. The 46 mile long island 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 and camp on the shores of Lake Superior or interior lakes during the 9 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.

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 ferocious 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 Olson 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, and has a willingness to challenge themselves.

Time at Camp Olson YMCA

The time spent at Camp allows the group to begin to form and prepare for the time spent on trail. While at Camp, participants will be staying in tents. They will have two full days of structured time in preparation for their trip which includes trip and leadership orientation, prepping, packing, and teambuilding. On the third day, the group will depart for the North Shore, spending the night on mainland before catching the 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 with willingness to learn and grow
- Makes conservative risk management decisions
- Works productively with everyone in the community
- Effectively communicate with or to other participants or leaders regarding potential hazards/risks, personal distress, injury, or need for assistance
- Age-appropriate social skills and ability to self-monitor and make safe decisions when immediate supervision is not possible.
- 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
- Be in good physical and emotional health
- Ability to hike 6-12 miles on uneven terrain carrying 30-60 pounds.
 - Start breaking in hiking shoes at least 3 months before the trip!