

# **Sierra Club National Outings Leadership Training Program**

## **Highlights**

- Learn how to plan your own Sierra Club National Outing
- Grow skills and self-confidence in outdoor leadership

## **Includes**

- Training in relevant outdoor skills
- Completing an Individualized Leadership Development Plan

## **O V E R V I E W**

This National Outings Training Program is designed to train and equip you as a new leader with the necessary skills to lead safe, happy, and inspirational Sierra Club National Outings. The two phases of training, Home School and in-the-field, cover approximately six months. During the home school phase, which can last up to five months, you design, plan, and submit your own National Outing and then develop a meal plan and practice interviewing participants for that trip. You will complete this phase on schedule and under the guidance of a mentor.

The field phase culminates during five days of practice under the direction of several veteran National Outings trainers. The following information details the Training Program and what you should expect, plus additional information to help you decide if this journey is a good one to begin. By applying for this trip, you will begin the process of becoming part of a group of dedicated volunteer leaders offering world-class outdoor trips.

Once you become part of the program (after registering for the training, applying, and participating in 2-3 interviews), you and other trainees will receive a congratulatory and informational call from the program training-managers. The training program will be reviewed in detail, and you will be encouraged to complete assignments since with your Mentor. There is a considerable amount of material to be learned before the field training phase. The Home School phase—trip planning and preparation—constitutes 80% of the lessons, with the remaining 20% completed during field training. During both phases, you will follow an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that you, along with the trainers, complete. You will finalize it with the trainers and mentors at the end of field training and a copy forwarded to you.

Consider enrolling in this training class, joining hundreds of other Sierra Club leaders in a 100-year tradition, leading people into beautiful and inspirational mountains, forests, deserts, and encouraging stewardship of these unique places. In addition, the connections you may make are invaluable and can be a frequent source of future support. Please read this detailed content to assess your interest.

## **About Sierra Club's National Outings Program**

With more than 100 years of wilderness travel experience and as a part of the largest grassroots conservation organization in the country, Sierra Club Outings offers more than 350 trips annually to unique destinations worldwide. We aim to provide a variety of quality outdoor adventures. Our programs are run in the U.S., Canada, and abroad. They including backpacking, base-camping, canoeing, kayaking, bicycling, rafting, sailing, skiing, snowshoeing, day hiking, service trips, lodge trips, and family vacations. Domestic trips are generally 5–10 days in length, while international trips may last up to three weeks. National Outings provides services to about 4,000 participants per year. The 350 trips per year are led by approximately 500 volunteer leaders supported by a small staff in the Outings Department at the Club's headquarters in Oakland, California.

## **The Reality of Being a National Outings Leader**

Since the Outings Program is dependent on volunteer leaders, the Club has developed procedures to ensure trips manage risk and run successfully.

Volunteer leaders are organized into subcommittees. For example, there are subcommittees for California backpacking, for the Southwest, Alaska, and water trips. There are 18 different subcommittees in all, and many have their own set of qualifications or requirements for leadership and approval of proposed outings. While undeniably a lot of work, you'll find the rewards far exceed your efforts. Our training trip will take you through the process step-by-step and give you hands-on experiences and case studies to improve your skills and help you gain confidence.

Upon successfully completing the training program, you will have access to additional resources to ensure your success. You may become a trainee or assistant on a trip and work with an experienced leader who will mentor you and provide post-training assistance about setting up a successful, enjoyable, safe, and inspirational outing.

## **Requirements to Become a Trainee**

1. Have the interest and ability to lead a National Outing ideally once a year or at least once every other year.
2. Register and pay for this training.
3. Complete and submit an online [National Outings Leadership Application](#).
4. Participate in interviews with the National Outings Volunteer Interviewer, Sponsoring Subcommittee Chair, and the leader of the field trip.
5. Previously participated in a National Outing.
6. Access to a computer and the Internet to complete the Home School and homework phase of the training. The homework phase of the training takes 40-60 hours during the five months leading to the field training session. Trainees will learn how to use the Sierra Club's Outings Campfire website, the National Outings Training Trip online learning, and the online National Outings Trip Submission System and will be expected to become familiar with these three systems.
7. Have the interest and ability to work closely with a Home School Mentor professionally and timely.

## **The Goal of the Program**

Home School lessons prepare you for the necessary application of many skills practiced during the field training phase.

Of additional importance, the skills you learn during this trip will apply equally to the different types of Sierra Club Outings that you may choose to lead in the future, such as a backpack, lodge, base camp, water trips, or multi-sport. During the Home School and field training, trainees will:

- Design and submit (using the National Outings Trip Submission System) a fiscally realistic outing that engages participants and furthers the conservation mission of the Sierra Club.
- Write a captivating, informative brochure that will promote the trip to a diverse audience.
- Plan an appetizing menu that can accommodate a potentially diverse group of participants.
- Conduct pre-trip interviews with mock sign-ups and accept appropriate participants for the outing.
- Participate fully in the field section of the training, both as a participant and leader-of-the-day (LOD).
- Demonstrate safety awareness, sound judgment, and decision-making as part of the leader-of-the-day team.
- Demonstrate professional communication skills and maintain professional working relationships with Home School mentor, field trainers, fellow trainees, and leader-of-the-day throughout all of Home School and field training phases.
- Demonstrate the ability to manage all logistical aspects of a full-day, base-camp trip. This includes establishing camp, following Leave No Trace practices, finding and evaluating routes, assessing hazards, and determining group energy level, among other skills.

## **Curriculum**

We will cover the following topics:

- Trip planning
- Safety management
- Participant welcoming and pre-trip interview
- Cultural history of the area you are travelling in
- Natural history of the area you are travelling in
- Coordinating trip planning with other staff members
- Nutrition and food planning
- Equipment and clothing selection
- Managing group dynamics

- Decision making and problem solving
- Wilderness emergency management
- On-trip health, sanitation, and hygiene practices
- Water purification and how-to
- Weather assessment and weather accommodations
- Leave No Trace practices
- Conservation practices during a National Outings trip
- Working with volunteer and Outings Department staff

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## I T I N E R A R Y

### Home School Phase

This phase of the program takes 40-60 hours of time during the 5 months prior to the field trip, with deadlines planned to meet specific schedules. The training is scheduled in the same way you would plan a future National Outing:

- **Due 6 months before the field trip: self-evaluation**  
You will take a self-evaluation to rate your current skills that are needed to be a National Outings leader.
- **Due 5 months before the field trip: key component: trip title and trip description text**  
You will work with your Home School Mentor to decide on the overarching trip plan you are considering. Your Mentor will "approve" your outing in the same way that your National Outings Subcommittee Chair would. In addition, you will write a 30-60 word description to promote the trip.
- **Due 4 months before the field trip: brochure**  
You will now have the chance to write the online trip brochure for your trip, which is in the same general format as this one. Your homework mentor will work with you to refine draft versions.
- **Due 3 months before the field trip: trip submission**  
You will organize and plan the trip to determine costs. You will submit this information using our online trip submission system and receive your trip budget with feedback from your Mentor.
- **Due 2 months before the field trip: food planning**  
Planning healthy and exciting meals for your mock trip is the most

challenging step for most new leaders. You will have the chance to work with your homework mentor to develop and refine your menu, recipe document, shopping list, and participant food-preference questionnaire.

- **Due 1 months before the field trip: Participant Interview**

During this step, you will welcome and interview at least two mock trip participants for your trip and decide whether to accept them or not.

- **Due shortly before the trip: field trip planning and leadership teaming**

As the last stage of Home School and prior to field training, we will ask trainees to work in pairs in order to act as trip Leaders of the Day (LOD) during field training. You and your partner will divide the day so that each of you serves as the principal leader for roughly half the day and each one serves as an assistant for the other partner half of the day. In advance, you will determine how to work together on the trip and plan for all trip components, including menu planning, supplies purchasing and packing, and then transporting it to the airport or campsite. You and your partner will prepare all the meals for that day. After completion of field training, you will submit an expense report to be reimbursed for the food costs in the same way that trip leaders account for expenses.

## **Field Training Phase and The Trip**

The Sierra Club holds multiple field training trips yearly, typically in Winter, Summer, and early Autumn. These trips are sequenced in conjunction with the Home School phase of the training program.

After you have been interviewed and start the training program, the training program team will discuss current field training trip options with you to determine the best trip for you that will follow your successful completion of the Home School phase.

After a trip has been chosen, a team member will register the trainee for that trip. Participant Responsibility and Information forms will be forwarded for you to complete and submit to the trip leader, whose responsibility is to talk with you about the particular characteristics of the trip. The leader will review the forms and call you to both welcome and to ask questions as part of the participant interview step for all Sierra Club Outings.

The field trip immerses you in Sierra Club's best practices. Three or four veteran trainers will guide eight prospective leaders through all aspects of planning, preparing, and leading National Outing trips. Lessons learned are

appropriate to Sierra Club trips, regardless of the type of Sierra Club trip you want to lead.

During each of four full days in the field, the Leader of The Day (LOD) team will put into practice what you planned during the Home School phase and will lead all aspects of our trip for an entire day (with guidance from instructors). Training days are long and full, and the trip is physically and mentally demanding. In addition to typical trip activities, such as meal preparation and hikes, there will be breaks for in-depth group discussions and daily training exercises. These daily activities will provide everyone opportunities to practice skills and think-through leadership situations that may occur on an actual trip, but the practice of being the trip leader for the day is the heart of the training trip.

Each day you will receive continuous feedback while hiking, during a nightly debrief, and detailed in an individual development plan at the end of the trip. This training program prepares you for a knowledgeable, working relationship with other Sierra Club leaders in the years ahead.

The goal is to build skills and leadership ability, and to ensure ongoing support through mentors and other Sierra Club resources so that new leaders are confident and comfortable to lead Sierra Club trips to help others explore, enjoy, and protect the planet.

### **Your Next Step**

Take a look at the trip brochure website and search training for available trips. Although you cannot sign-up for a particular trip, you may want to think about which one will suit your interests and schedule.

After reading this information, if you are interested in the training program, submit an application.

A member of the training program will contact you.