

Sierra Club National Outings Leadership Training Program

Highlights

- Learn how to plan a Sierra Club National Outing
- Grow skills and self-confidence in outdoor leadership
- Shared training experience with other future leaders

Includes

- Training in basic leadership skills applicable to different trip-types
- One-to-one mentoring by seasoned leaders
- Learning progress recorded in an Individualized Development Plan

OVERVIEW

This National Outings Training Program is designed to train and equip 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 seven months. During the Home School phase, which lasts six months, each trainee designs, plans, and submits a mock National Outing and then develops a meal plan and practices interviewing participants for that trip. You will complete this phase on schedule and under the guidance of a mentor.

The field phase culminates during six days of hands-on practice under the direction of several veteran National Outings leaders. 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 have been accepted into 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. Managers will review the Training Program in detail, letting you know that a mentor will be assigned to you. Before the start of training during an informational, group call, you will meet other trainees and the mentors.

The Training Program staff will encourage you to complete assignments to established dates since considerable material must be covered 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, the trainee will follow an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that the trainee and trainers complete. It will be finalized by the trainers at the end of field training and a copy forwarded to the trainee.

Consider enrolling in this training class and join hundreds of other Sierra Club leaders in a 100-year tradition to lead people into beautiful and inspirational mountains, forests, and deserts, and to encourage stewardship of these special places. In addition, the personal connections you 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 around the world. We aim to provide a variety of quality outdoor adventures. Our offerings include adventures in the U.S., Canada, and abroad, 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.

National Outings and the Training Program:

Since the Outings Program is dependent on volunteer leaders, the Club has developed procedures to ensure trips are safe and successful. Volunteer leaders are organized into subcommittees. For example, there are subcommittees for California backpacking, for the Southwest, for Alaska, and water trips. There are 18 different subcommittees in all, and many have their own set of special qualifications or requirements for leadership and for approval of proposed outings. (A new leader's training continues once they become a member of a subcommittee.) While undeniably a lot of work, you'll find the rewards far exceed your efforts. Our leadership training 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 successful completion of 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. Complete and submit an online [National Outings Leadership Application](#).
3. Have previously participated in one or more National Outing.
4. Participate in interviews with the National Outings Volunteer Interviewer, Sponsoring Subcommittee Chair, and the leader of the field trip program in order to be accepted to the training.
5. 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 in October. Trainees will learn how to use and need to become familiar with the Sierra Club's Outings Campfire website, the National Outings Training Trip online learning, and the online National Outings Trip Submission System.

6. Have the interest and ability to work closely with a Home School Mentor in a professional and timely fashion.
7. Willing to pay a modest fee for the training trip.

Goal of the Program

Home School lessons prepare trainees for the necessary application of many skills, which are practiced during the field training phase.

Of additional importance, the skills you learn during this trip will apply equally to the different types of future Sierra Club Outings that you may choose to lead, such as 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.
- Write a detailed trip Safety Management Plan.
- 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 program, both as a participant and leader-of-the-day (LOD).
- Demonstrate throughout field training safety awareness, sound judgment, and thoughtful decision-making as part of the leader-of-the-day team.
- Demonstrate professional communication skills and maintain professional working relationships with the Home School mentor, field trainers, other trainees, and partner leaders-of-the-day.
- As a leader of the day, 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 hiking routes, assessing hazards, and determining group energy level, among other skills.

Home School and Field Trip Curriculum

We will cover the following topics:

- Trip planning
- Safety management
- Participant welcoming and pre-trip screening
- Cultural history of the area you are traveling in
- Natural history of the area you are traveling 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

ITINERARY

Home School Phase

This phase of the program takes 40-60 hours of time during the 6 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. Afterwards your mentor will review your Individual Develop Plan.

- **Due 5 months before the field trip: create key components for your mock trip: effective title, detailed itinerary, and appealing trip description**

You will work with your Home School Mentor to determine on a mock trip that you will plan. Your Mentor will "approve" your trip name and itinerary 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 5-4 months before the field trip: Safety Management Plan**
Using the mock trip itinerary details, you will write a Plan that could be used in the field as a ready reference in case of emergency.

- **Due 4-3 months before the field trip: the promotional brochure**
You will now have the chance to write the online trip brochure for your mock 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 2-1 months before the field trip: screening**
During this step, you will welcome and screen at least two mock trip participants for your trip and decide whether to accept them or not.

- **Due 1 month 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 a three-day menu, recipe document, shopping list, and participant food-preference questionnaire.

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

Prior to field training, we will ask trainees to work in pairs to be 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 these food expenses in the same way that leaders would for actual trips.

- **Immediately following Field Training**

As required for Sierra Club National Outings leaders, you will learn about the post-trip reports and forms, submit an expense report for on-trip food expenses, and meet with members of the National Outings office staff.

Field Training Phase and Trip

The Sierra Club holds multiple, yearly field training trips, 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 potentially accepted into the training program, the program team will discuss current field training trip options with you to determine a suitable one that will be connected to and follow the completion of the Home School phase.

After a training trip has been chosen, a team member will register you for it. Trip approval forms will be forwarded for you to complete and submit to the field training trip leader, whose responsibility is to present the characteristics of the trip. The leader will review your forms and call you to welcome and to ask questions as part of the participant screening step for all Sierra Club Outings.

The field trip immerses trainees 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. Although this is base-camp training, 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) pair will put into practice what you both learned during the Home School phase and will lead all aspects of our trip for an entire day (with the field trainers' guidance). Your turn to be the trip leader for a day is a key part of the training trip.

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.

Each day you will receive continuous feedback while hiking, during a nightly debrief, and detailed in a personal development plan (IDP) 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.

Our 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:

Review the National Outings' trip website for the National Outings Training Trips. When planning for one, remember that the Home School phase begins about six months prior to the training trip, and that the Training Program plans for them to be together and sequentially completed.

Although you cannot register for a training trip until you have been accepted into the Program, you can consider which one suits your interests and schedule.

After reading this information, if you are interested in our Training Program, submit an application.

A member of the Program will contact you.