



Essential Information Packet

Welcome to ORION for Commonwealth!

To best prepare for your trip, please read the Essential Information Packet carefully and completely. It contains important details and knowledge that we have gleaned from over 25 years of operation. After you've finished reading, complete the checklist below to ensure your preparation!

- ❑ Review **Gear List** and acquire all items
- ❑ Visit findAURORA.psu.edu for more info and FAQs
- ❑ Follow AURORA on social media for updates
 - 📷 [@pennstateAURORA](https://www.instagram.com/pennstateAURORA)
 - 📘 [fb.com/pennstateAURORA](https://www.facebook.com/pennstateAURORA)
- ❑ Pack all your gear and embark on your expedition!

Contact Us

We'd love to answer your questions.

- ✉ AURORA@psu.edu
- 📞 program questions:
(814) 865-3890
- 📞 registration questions:
(814) 865-3880

Arrival Information

Where: Snider Agricultural Arena, Penn State University Park campus

When: Monday, August 15
check-in begins at 10:00 a.m.,
program kick-off at 10:30 a.m. (*attendance required*).

Bring: Personal gear and clothing from **Gear List**, lunch for the first day

Parking

Parking for check-in and dropoff is provided in the Ag Arena parking lot. For students parking their car for the duration of the program, **parking passes are available on your ORION application for a cost of \$25.**

Backpacking

Although each ORION expedition will vary, participants should expect to spend several days and nights backpacking with their group. Each participant can expect to carry a 30- to 40-pound pack containing food, gear, and personal items 4–10 miles a day on variable terrain at a pace decided by the group. **(Participants are encouraged to physically prepare before arriving.)** During this time, you will learn a great deal about yourself and others as you hike, camp, keep a journal, and explore. Together with your peers and instructors, you will learn the proper methods of environmentally conscious camping, including group cooking, tarp placement, water purification, and backcountry hygiene.

Additional Info

Conclusion and Departure

FINAL MORNING: Return to the Ag Arena for breakfast; Clean and de-issue gear; Discuss remainder of course requirements and assignments; Fill out program evaluations

DEPARTURE: Program finishes at 11:00 a.m. on August 19. Students may then be picked up by parents or shuttled to the parking garage for their vehicle.

Cell Phone Policy

Cell phones are not permitted on your trip. You may bring them on opening day, but they will be left in a secure location with any bags or extra items for the duration of your experience. Cell phones distract from the experience that your AURORA trip aims to provide in the backcountry. Your trip leaders will have cell phones for use only in case of an emergency.

Physical Preparation

The best way to prepare for ORION is to spend some time undertaking physical conditioning—if you are used to sitting in a classroom all day, start walking and then increase to running, hiking, swimming, and any other cardiovascular activity that will help get you in shape. Physical preparation, specifically walking, is a good way to break in your boots.

Hiking Boots

The most important piece of equipment that you will bring. Be sure the boots you have are truly made for hiking. They should fit you well with some wiggle room and be well broken-in and sturdy. If you are buying new boots, be sure to work with your local outdoor retailer to ensure that you have the proper fit and correct boot for your feet. Blisters are a common complaint with ORION participants. If your feet are sore on the trail, you will not enjoy the program as much as you could.

Clothing and Layering

Excerpted from Rick Curtis' The Backpacker's Field Manual

The clothing layers should consist of several different types of fabrics. Cotton is comfortable and breathable, but it absorbs and retains water, and therefore it will NOT keep you warm if it gets wet. Also, it can be difficult to dry. For this reason **you should NOT bring cotton clothes** such as sweatshirts, sweatpants, socks, or jeans. We strongly encourage you to wear nylon, polyester, or synthetic clothing. **Wool, synthetic fleece, and polyester fabrics don't absorb water so they keep you warm even if they get wet.** Fleece also dries very quickly. A wool sweater or fleece jacket provides warmth on a cold evening. These are essential to your comfort on the trip!

Group Gear

ORION will provide all necessary group gear and equipment. This includes backpacks, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, tarps, stoves, first aid kits, maps, and other items. You are welcome to bring your own personal backpacks, sleeping bags, and sleeping pads if you desire, but they will be assessed by our staff before departing on the trip.

COVID-19 Policies & Protocols

We are committed to the well-being of our students and staff. By constantly evaluating our response to COVID-19, we will stay current with industry-standard practices to best ensure the safety of everyone. For the most up-to-date information, please visit our website.

Follow-up Classes & Assignments

There will be two follow-up evening class sessions, one in September and one in October, that you can attend from your home campus. You will reconnect as a small group and focus on ideas of leadership and wellness. A few assignments will be completed early in the semester. These assignments are not designed to overwork you; they will help you understand wellness and reflect upon your AURORA experience. More information regarding your classes and assignments will be provided in the course syllabus.

ORION Gear List

To best prepare for ORION, please obtain the items listed below. Our expert staff has meticulously assembled this list throughout ORION's history to ensure that all essentials are covered.

CLOTHING & FOOTWEAR

- T-shirts (2-3)**
Should be made of synthetic material or wool.
NO COTTON! No thin strap tank tops; they don't protect your shoulders from your backpack straps.
- Rain Jacket and Rain Pants**
Lightweight, waterproof, breathable. Expect rain!
- Midweight Fleece or Wool Sweater**
Insulating for cool nights.
- Shorts/Pants (2-3 pairs)**
Loose fit, synthetic. Hiking or athletic shorts, hiking or windproof pants. NO COTTON, NO JEANS!
- Socks (4 pairs)**
Should be hiking-specific and made of synthetic material or wool. NO COTTON!
- Underwear (2-3 pairs)**
Synthetic works best, compression shorts help prevent chafing. NO COTTON!
- Hiking Boots (1 pair)**
Your most important piece of equipment. BREAK IN!
- Camp Shoes (1 pair)**
Must be closed-toed. Old sneakers or Crocs work well.
- Cloth or Surgical Mask (2-3)**
Must fit securely. Must cover nose & mouth.
- Hand Sanitizer (2oz bottle)**

DO NOT BRING on the trail Electronics* or Cotton Clothing! *This includes iPods, iPads, computers, cell phones, and other devices.

No Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco, or Weapons (this includes pocketknives)!

OTHER ITEMS

- Rapid COVID-19 Test (1)**
You must bring at least one rapid, at-home test kit with you. Choose an option that only requires one test and **does not rely** on the use of a cell phone. Check expiration date to ensure validity of test for duration of the trip. If this purchase is an undue financial burden, please contact us for support.
- Water Bottle (1)**
Should be 1 liter, leakproof. Nalgene work well. An additional bottle will be provided for you. CamelBak or similar bladders work fine as well.
- Headlamp/Flashlight (1)**
Small and light, bring extra batteries.
- Bowl (1)**
Eating vessel, should be lightweight and small. Tupperware works well.
- Eating Utensil (1)**
Sporks are ideal, but not necessary. Should be sturdy.
- Personal Items**
Toothbrush & toothpaste (travel size), personal medications (personal epi-pen, allergy medicine, inhaler, ibuprofen or acetaminophen), menstrual products, bug spray, sunscreen.

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Backpacking Chair** (Crazy Creek or similar)
Available for purchase on opening day (\$40.00).
- Bandana**
For a variety of purposes.
- Mug** (For hot drinks)
Available for purchase on opening day (\$20.00).
- Baseball Cap**
- Camera/GoPro**
Not your cell phone!

ORION Food

The ORION menu has been adapted and modified throughout the years. Our expert staff has assembled an array of trail-friendly foods that are packed with energy and nutrition to fuel you throughout your ORION experience. All food is provided by the program, though you are welcome to bring additional snacks.

Below is a typical menu for an ORION expedition:

	OPENING DAY	TRAIL	TRAIL	TRAIL	FINAL DAY
BREAKFAST	Bagels and Cream Cheese provided at Ag Arena	Oatmeal Bagel Granola Peanut Butter Jelly	Oatmeal Bagel Granola Peanut Butter Jelly	Oatmeal Bagel Granola Peanut Butter Jelly	Breakfast sandwiches
SNACKS	Snack Pack GORP Granola Bars Apple Orange	Snack Pack GORP Granola Bars Apple Orange	Snack Pack GORP Granola Bars Apple Orange	Snack Pack GORP Granola Bars Apple Orange	N/A
LUNCH	Bring your own!	Flatbread/Tortilla PB & J, Hummus, Tuna, Pepperoni, Cheese, Carrots	Flatbread/Tortilla PB & J, Hummus, Tuna, Pepperoni, Cheese, Carrots	Flatbread/Tortilla PB & J, Hummus, Tuna, Pepperoni, Cheese, Carrots	N/A
DINNER	Stir-Fry (Broccoli, Carrots, Zucchini, Rice, Green Pepper, Onions, Chicken, Soy Sauce)	Tacos (Tortillas, Black Beans, Green Pepper, Onion, Rice, Fajita seasoning, Salsa, Cheese)	Hiker's Mash (Mashed potatoes, Veggie soup mix, Summer sausage, Cheese)	Mac & Cheese (Elbow Noodles, Cheddar Cheese, Cream Cheese, Tuna)	N/A
DESSERT	pudding, No-Bake Cheesecake, Fig Newtons	pudding, No-Bake Cheesecake, Fig Newtons	pudding, No-Bake Cheesecake, Fig Newtons	pudding, No-Bake Cheesecake, Fig Newtons	N/A

Allergies & Dietary Restrictions

We can easily tweak our menus for vegetarians, various food allergies, and dietary restrictions. *PLEASE be sure to make note of your restrictions on your Health Form so that we may cater to you.*

Our programs are Gluten-Free *Friendly*. This means that all dinners are made with gluten-free ingredients, and our breakfasts and lunches have gluten-free options. Our bagels and sandwich thins are *not* gluten-free, and are only optional choices at certain meals.

If you have questions or concerns for food-related questions, please contact Drew Lehnerd at (814) 865-3927.

