



# Essential Information Packet

## Welcome to the ORION LEAP session!

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](http://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](mailto:AURORA@psu.edu)
- 📞 program questions:  
(814) 865-3890
- 📞 registration questions:  
(814) 865-3880

### Arrival Information

- Where:** Beard Field (meet at entrance). You will be shuttled to the Snider Agricultural Center.
- When:** Friday, August 4, 9:45 a.m.,  
check-in begins at 10:00 a.m.,  
program kick-off immediately after.
- Bring:** Personal gear and clothing from **Gear List**,  
lunch for the first day

### 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 8. Students will then be shuttled back to Beard Field.

## 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.

## Early Move-In

**As an AURORA student, there may be an opportunity to arrive early to University Housing for the fall.** Once arrival details are published, information will be posted at [arrival.psu.edu](http://arrival.psu.edu) under the "Special Programs" section.

To ask any questions, please contact the assignment office by writing to: [assignmentoffice@psu.edu](mailto:assignmentoffice@psu.edu) or by calling: (814) 865-7501.

# 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. Visit your local outdoor retailer for your shopping.

## 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 (5 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

- 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. **VERY IMPORTANT!**
- 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.
- ID Card**  
Can be driver's license or Penn State student ID
- Health Insurance Card**
- Dorm Key**

## 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**
- Watch**
- 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:

<b>Breakfast</b> <i>Daily options include:</i>	Oatmeal, granola cereal, bagels with Sunbutter and/or jelly			
<b>Lunch</b> <i>Daily options include:</i>	Sandwich thins or tortillas, Sunbutter & jelly, pepperoni, hummus, tuna, cheese, carrots			
<b>Dinner</b> <i>Varies each night but may include:</i>	<u>Tacos</u> Rice, beans, cheese, fajita veggies, salsa	<u>Trail Grits</u> Grits, salami, cheese, broccoli, baked beans, Fritos	<u>Hiker's Mash</u> Mashed potatoes, veggies, summer sausage, cheese, black beans	<u>Mac &amp; Cheese</u> Elbow noodles, cream cheese, cheese, chili beans
<b>Snacks</b>	Your personal snack pack includes an apple, orange, nut-free trail mix, and granola bars			
<b>Desserts</b> <i>Daily options may include:</i>	Pudding, no-bake cheesecake, cookies, Rice Krispie's treats, and other items			

## Allergies & Dietary Restrictions

**All AURORA Programs are nut free.** 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.

