The Outdoor Action Frosh Trip is a 6-day wilderness trip for entering students that takes place the week before Orientation Week. For the past twenty-four years, this program has been many student’s first exposure to Princeton. The experience of backpacking along the Appalachian Trail in Vermont, or canoeing on the Delaware River, or rock climbing in the Delaware Water Gap with a group of first-year students and two OA Leaders is a unique and special way to enter the University community.

The purposes of the trip are multifold: to give first year students the opportunity to meet other members of their class and make new friends before school begins; to serve as a transition experience to help reduce anxiety about starting college; to help students learn about Princeton through the experiences and role modeling of upper-class leaders; to teach self-reliance and increase self-confidence through learning new and challenging outdoor skills in the context of a supportive group environment.

One participant commented, “I had never camped before and I had a wonderful time on the trip. It was a great workout, great exercise, and a great way to get to know other frosh. ...It turned out to be just the thing I needed to start my adjustment to Princeton.”

At the same time, the trip fosters respect for others and the diversity within the group. It is your first opportunity to interact closely with your new classmates from a wide variety of backgrounds. As one student noted, “It was a great introduction to a small portion of the Princeton community which is incredible in its talent, diversity, and perspective.”

OA often becomes a lasting part of the Princeton experience. For many students, friendships made on the Frosh Trip last all four years. One participant stated, “I can’t believe I even considered passing up this wonderful experience. At the end of the trip, I knew I had eleven true, wonderful people I could call friends. I encourage all entering students to participate.”

Another goal of the Frosh Trip experience is to encourage an understanding of the natural world. Outdoor Action is committed to protecting the environment and preserving our valuable natural resources. You will learn all the basic outdoor skills you will need to be comfortable on the trip. Your leaders will also emphasize “leave no trace” camping and recycling as a vital part of the wilderness trip. “I loved the lunch breaks when we would sit outdoors, relax, feel the wind through our hair, and enjoy the sunlight. I really had a great time learning about the outdoors.”

Each group consists of 8 - 10 participants and two OA Leaders trained in wilderness camping skills, group dynamics, and first aid. The groups are independent for the week, carrying all their own equipment and food as they hike, canoe, or bike through backcountry areas in the Delaware Water Gap, the Pine Barrens, the Catskills, and the Black Forest.
Since its beginnings, an important aspect of the Frosh Trip has been the inclusion of faculty and staff members on the trips. This gives the first-year students a greater exposure to the breadth of the University community. We would like to encourage you to participate in this outdoor experience. Specialized camping equipment will be provided by OA. You will only need personal clothing items. The fee for the trip will be $125.00, which covers all food, equipment, and transportation costs. No previous outdoor experience is necessary. All trip planning and instruction is handled by the OA Leaders.

We hope you will be able to join us on this unique trip. If you wish to participate, please fill out an application form and return it to Clio Hall. Applications are available at the OA Office on the OA Web site (www.princeton.edu/~oa/) If you have questions about the program, please contact the Program Director, Rick Curtis, at 8-3552. Decisions about participation will be made in early July after all the frosh applications have been received.

A Day on OA

Rolling out of your cozy sleeping bag into the crisp morning air, you leave the tarp that kept you warm and dry last night. After a breakfast of pancakes or cereal you pack up and head out. Each day brings new vistas along the trail or the river. Lunch might be a chance to talk about how you spent your summer, or learning about what life at Princeton is like.

Several miles and few rest stops later, you get to your next campsite. After setting up camp, you can practice your culinary skills cooking dinner (from chicken fajitas to spaghetti) and maybe end with cheesecake for dessert. You can learn an incredible amount about a group of people by living and working with them every day. After a relaxed evening discussion as the stars shine overhead, you crawl into your sleeping bag for a good night’s rest.

The Frosh Trip offers a range of different activities. We place participants into trips appropriate to their level of physical condition.

**Backpacking** trips will hike anywhere from 3-10 miles a day (~3-7 hours). You will hike in one of a number of Eastern wilderness areas such as: the plateaus of central Pennsylvania, the crags of the Catskills in New York, the scenic Appalachian Trail in Connecticut, Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, or the summits of the Green Mountains in Massachusetts and Vermont.

**Backpacking and Rock Climbing** trips combine backpacking and one day of rock climbing. You will hike anywhere from 3-10 miles a day (~3-7 hours). One day will be spent at a climbing site along the Appalachian Trail learning basic rock climbing techniques and climbing safety.

**Backpacking and Canoeing** trips combine 3 days of hiking and 3 days of canoeing. You will cover anywhere from 3-10 miles hiking a day (~3-7 hours) or 8-15 miles canoeing per day (~4-8 hours). The trips explore the quiet flatwater or easy whitewater on the Delaware River.

**Canoeing or Kayaking** trips travel anywhere from 8-15 miles per day (~4-8 hours) and range from quiet water canoeing or kayaking on the lower Delaware River to easy whitewater canoeing on the upper Delaware. Each night you will camp along the river in state park or private campgrounds.

**Outdoor Adventure** trips camp out on wilderness property at the Princeton-Blairstown Center and will be able to do different activities each day including the high ropes course at Blairstown, a day of hiking on the Appalachian Trail, a day of canoeing on the Delaware River, a day of trail maintenance or other service project, and a day of rock climbing.
The Outdoor Action Program

History

Since its inception twenty-four years ago, the Frosh Trip has been the first Princeton experience for over 8,200 incoming students. During the year more than 1,650 students participate in the more than 150 different trip activities that OA offers.

Leader Training

All our leaders complete a rigorous training program that includes backpacking skills, wilderness first aid, leadership, and safety management. The OA Leader Training Program is one of the most extensive and emulated of any college outdoor program and is responsible for Outdoor Action’s excellent safety record.

Special Needs

Remember, OA is for everyone who wants to participate. There are trips for observant Jewish students and a number of trips that can accommodate the needs of students with disabilities such as visual, hearing, or mobility impairments. We can also accommodate special dietary needs such as vegetarian or Kosher students.

Questions About the Frosh Trip

Q: Who participates?
A: Last year 54% of the incoming class (612 students) participated on 72 different trips. This included students from all 50 states and Puerto Rico and from many foreign countries.

Q: What if I have never been camping before?
A: Don’t worry, more than half of the participants have never been camping before. On the trip your leaders will teach you all the basic skills you will need to be comfortable.

Q: What about cost?
A: In order to support faculty and staff who wish to participate we charge 50% of the regular trip fee.

Q: Do I need any special equipment?
A: No. OA provides all the group camping equipment and can provide backpacks and sleeping bags to those who need them. You will need to bring personal clothing and lightweight boots for hiking.

Q: What kind of shape do I need to be in?
A: OA has a variety of trips at many different levels of fitness. We will place you in an appropriate trip based on the information in your application form. We encourage everyone to engage in some type of regular physical activity in preparation for the trip.

Comments from Past Participants

I think the trip was the best thing that could have happened to me. I learned more about myself and Princeton and got to know ten terrific people. It made the transition of coming to college a whole lot easier.

I wanted to say that the leaders deserve a lot of credit. They made the trip such a fun experience. They were fantastic!
Nothing could have prepared me better to make the jump from a class of 45 to one of 1100.

This was one of the best ways I can think of to meet some other freshmen. It was great! Thanks.

I really enjoyed my Outdoor Action trip and would recommend it to any incoming frosh. Even more than the beauty of the wilderness I enjoyed the instantaneous camaraderie that developed in our group. I feel it will continue throughout the year. All of our numerous questions about Princeton were knowingly and gladly fielded by our leaders. We learned a lot, worked together, and had a great time.

I cannot tell you how glad I am that I participated in OA. I’ve made some really great friendships. It was a wonderful way to be introduced to Princeton and I would strongly recommend it to EVERYONE!!

I had heard from a friend who went on the trip last year that it was a great experience and that I should definitely go... It definitely met my high expectations. I learned a lot more than expected. The most valuable part was getting to know people really well and becoming friends with them.

For more information on the Frosh Trip see: www.princeton.edu/~oa/

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