





Essential Information Packet




Welcome to ORION!

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) 865-3927
-  registration questions:
(814) 865-4972

Arrival Information

- Where:** Snider Agricultural Arena
- When:** Monday, August 18
 - 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 drop-off is provided in the Ag Arena parking lot. Students who wish to park their car for the duration of the program are able to do so for a nominal fee and will receive more instructions about how to purchase a permit closer to the start of the program.

Backpacking

During ORION, you will embark on a 5-day, 4-night backpacking expedition in a group of 10 incoming students with 2-3 leaders. At night, you will sleep outside. During the day, you can expect to carry a 30- to 40-pound pack containing food, gear, and personal items while hiking 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 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 Friday, August 22. Students may then be picked up by parents, shuttled to their dorm, or drive themselves home.

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 trip. Cell phones distract from the experience AURORA aims to provide in the backcountry. Your trip leaders will have cell phones for use only in case of an emergency.

Pre-Program Communication

At the start of summer, an AURORA team member will contact you via the phone number provided during registration to discuss what to expect on your expedition and answer any questions you may have. If we are unable to reach you by phone, we will follow up via email to arrange a phone call.

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 equipment and group gear. This includes backpacks, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, tarps, stoves, first aid kits, maps, and more. You may bring your own personal backpack, sleeping bag and sleeping pad if you prefer, but they will be assessed by our staff before departing on the trip.

Hiking Boots

The most important piece of equipment that you will bring. Be sure the boots you have are hiking specific. They should fit well with some wiggle room and be well broken-in and sturdy. **Breaking in your hiking boots is essential to have the best experience possible.** To break them in, start by wearing them around the house and for short walks. Gradually increase wear time and distance. If you are buying new boots, work with your local outdoor retailer to ensure that you have the proper fit for your feet.

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.

Backcountry Hygiene

Hygiene on the trail will be addressed by your leaders. You will hike through remote areas without shower or bathroom facilities. Your leaders will teach you to stay clean, purify water, deal with human waste, and more. Hiking in remote locations does not require you to forgo cleanliness. Having their period on the trail is a common concern for some participants; no worries! Your leaders will teach you how to handle your hygiene, trash, and other concerns.

Follow-up Classes & Assignments

After your AURORA expedition, you will have two follow-up evening class sessions, one in September and one in October. You will reconnect as a small group and focus on leadership and wellness topics. You will also have a few assignments to complete 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 about your classes and assignments will be provided in the course syllabus.

Early Move-In

As an AURORA student, there may be an opportunity to arrive early to University Housing. Once arrival details are published, information will be posted at arrival.psu.edu under the "Special Programs" section.

To ask any questions, please contact the assignment office by writing to: liveOn@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.

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 for males, cotton bottoms are acceptable for females for hygiene purposes. Compression shorts help prevent chafing.
- 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.
- 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 ID (be sure to bring a physical ID, not a copy on your phone).
- Health Insurance Card**
- Nut-Free Lunch (1)**
For opening day only. Must be peanut, tree-nut free.

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Camp Chair** (Crazy Creek or similar)
- Bandana**
For a variety of purposes.
- Mug** (For hot drinks)
- Watch**
- 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.

Below is a typical menu for an ORION expedition:

Breakfast <i>Daily options include:</i>	Oatmeal, granola cereal, bagels with Sunbutter and/or jelly, coffee, tea			
Lunch <i>Daily options include:</i>	Sandwich thins or tortillas, Sunbutter & jelly, pepperoni, hummus, tuna, cheese, carrots			
Dinner <i>Varies each night but may include:</i>	<u>Tacos</u> Rice, refried beans, cheese, fajita veggies, salsa	<u>Pasta</u> Penne, pasta sauce, chicken, parmesan cheese	<u>Hiker's Mash</u> Mashed potatoes, veggies, summer sausage, cheese, black beans	<u>Mac & Cheese</u> Elbow noodles, cream cheese, cheese, chili beans
Snacks	Your personal snack pack includes an apple, orange, nut-free trail mix, granola bars, rice krispies treats, and fig bars			
Desserts <i>Daily options may include:</i>	No-bake cheesecake, cookies, and other items			

Allergies & Dietary Restrictions

All AURORA programs are peanut and tree nut free. We can easily tweak our menus to accommodate vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and dairy-free diets, as well as other food allergies or dietary restrictions. *PLEASE be sure to make note of your restrictions on your Health Form so that we may cater to you.*

If you experience any changes to your allergies or dietary restrictions after registration, please contact the program as soon as possible so we can ensure we are able to accommodate this during your trip.

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

