





Essential Information Packet




Welcome to URSA!

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
Penn State University Park campus

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.

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.

Additional Info

Service Expedition

During URSA, you will spend the day doing different service projects in the local community. In general, our service projects consist of manual labor, often outdoors. It is important that you prepare both mentally and physically for this work. That also includes proper clothing. More information about clothing quantity and material will follow but be sure to prepare for a variety of types of work.

You may want a T-shirt and shorts for a project painting a fence, or you might want pants and long sleeves for a weeding project. Come prepared for all of the above!

In the evenings, you'll sleep outside in a pavilion at Penn State's Nature Center, Shaver's Creek. You will not have access to showers during your trip, but will have access to running water and flushing toilets.

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

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

Footwear

The most important piece of equipment that you will bring is sturdy, comfortable, closed-toed footwear. Hiking boots are a great option, as some of the service sites are likely to be dirty and muddy. They should fit you 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, be sure to 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 URSA 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.

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.

URSA Gear List

To best prepare for URSA, please obtain the items listed below. Our expert staff has meticulously assembled this list throughout URSA'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 for males, cotton bottoms are acceptable for females for hygiene purposes.
Compression shorts help prevent chafing.
- Sturdy Footwear (1 pair)**
Your most important piece of equipment. BREAK IN! Must be closed-toe; hiking boots are a great option.
- Camp Shoes (1 pair)**
Must be closed-toed. Old sneakers or Crocs work well.
- Comfy Clothes**
PJs or other comfy clothing for evenings back at basecamp. These options may include some cotton items.
- Hand Sanitizer (2oz bottle)**

OTHER ITEMS

- Water Bottle (1)**
Should be 1 liter, leakproof. Nalgene work well. An additional bottle will be provided.
- 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 Drivers license or Penn State student 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

- Bandana**
For a variety of purposes.
- Mug** (For hot drinks)
- Watch**
- Pillow**
- Baseball Cap**
- Camera/GoPro**
Not your cell phone!

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

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

URSA Food

The URSA 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 URSA experience. All food is provided by the program.

Below is a typical menu for an URSA 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 bread, deli meats and cheese, tomatoes, lettuce, sunbutter and jelly, carrots, hummus, cookies, chips			
Dinner <i>Varies each night but may include:</i>	<u>Tacos</u> Rice, refried beans, cheese, fajita veggies, salsa	<u>Hiker's Mash</u> Mashed potatoes, veggies, summer sausage, cheese, black beans	<u>Pizza and Chips</u>	<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.

