



Compass Points

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Compass Points?

Compass Points is a unique wilderness backpacking program run by Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp that offers opportunities for growing in faith, living a simple life in Christian community, and exploring the wonders of God's creation. Each adventure program is tailored to the unique desires of the group. The core of each week-long trip is a three-day backpacking experience. Groups then choose two additional days of activity from backpacking, rock climbing, whitewater rafting, Low and High Ropes challenge course, or a service opportunity.

Where is Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp located?

Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp is located in the San Isabel National Forest, southern Colorado, about two hours southwest of Colorado Springs. Backpacking trips occur on 8 different trails, most of which are a short drive south of Rainbow Trail. Our base camp is at 8,500 feet and trails go as high as 14,000 feet.

How does our trip start?

All Compass Points trips begin at Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp. Groups arrive around 3:00 PM on Sunday afternoons and RTALC Guides outfit campers with group and personal equipment give an orientation regarding the specific adventures of the week. The evening includes a hearty meal, time to get to know guides and staff, time to pack, and closes with worship and devotions.

What is the trip like?

Each adventure filled day is centered around worship, prayer, and Bible Study. We believe that the journey is as important as the destination and work to build strong Christ-centered relationships in the midst of hiking to the top of a mountain peak or rafting down the Arkansas River. Each day is filled with new challenges and the schedule of a week depends on the options the group chooses.

How big can our group be?

United States Forest Service regulations limits each chartered group on trail to 13 people, plus two RTALC guides. The minimum size of a group is 10 people. Groups larger than 13 people can charter more than one trip. RTALC offers three chartered trips per week.

Are the trips safe?

Any wilderness adventure has some degree of inherent risk due to weather, wildlife, terrain, and distance from advanced medical care. However, we take great pride in offering trips with well-trained guides who are certified in Wilderness First Aid and CPR, and are able to adjust to changing situations and keep the groups safety as a primary consideration. Our guides also carry radios and SPOT satellite transmitters to contact RTALC base-camp in the event of an emergency and initiate established procedures for medical care, rescue, or evacuation if needed.

Are the trips physically difficult?

Any physical activity at high altitude is strenuous. We work to set an “All-Day Pace” on trail that allows the group to travel together and enjoy their time together. We do recommend that all participants prepare themselves physically for the trip and offer training tips in the Pre-Trip materials we send out.

Can I get altitude sickness?

While serious side effects are uncommon, headaches, dehydration, sun sensitivity, and loss of appetite can occur. Even the more serious symptoms of altitude sickness are easily cured by moving down in elevation. Drinking lots of water and staying away from coffee and soda prior to and during the trip greatly reduces the effects of these symptoms.

Will I stay clean on trail?

Personal hygiene is always important, but you will get dirty on trail. Due to our low-impact practices, we discourage the use of most toiletries while on trail including deodorant and commercial toothpaste. (Don't worry, we do brush teeth and no one else will be using deodorant either) These products can damage the fragile mountain environments and attract wildlife. RTLC guides will teach appropriate low-impact practices for staying healthy in the backcountry. Modern shower and bath facilities are available at Rainbow Trail.

What is the weather like?

Weather conditions often vary hourly in the high country with temperatures in the 30's at night and the 80's during the day. A warm afternoon can give way to an evening of wind, rain and even snow! The secret to a good adventure experience is to prepare for the worst and expect the best. Being prepared and having a good attitude can turn even the most unexpected circumstances in amazing life-long memories.

Do I need to buy a lot of equipment for the trip?

No, Rainbow Trail provides tents, backpacks, cook sets, first aid kits, food, stoves, and other group gear; guides, trail permits, and all specialty equipment for activities. Participants need to provide personal clothing, a good pair of boots, and a sleeping bag (compact is preferred). Personal backpacks are welcome, guides will help determine they are adequate for the week.

What will we eat?

Rainbow Trail takes pride in serving great food and plenty of it, even on trail. On trail groups prepare simple hearty meals. At the end of the week we have a steak and trout cook-out to celebrate the adventure. We are accustomed to meeting the needs of those with food allergies and other special dietary needs.

Can we smoke on trail?

The mountain environment we travel in is very fragile. Use of tobacco products, alcohol and illegal drugs in any form is not permitted. This applies to both campers and their sponsors.

Can we fish?

A Colorado fishing license is required to fish lakes and streams within the areas of our Compass Points trips for anyone over 15 years of age. You can fish if there is a body of water available and you have a current Colorado license as well as your own gear.