



## Colorado Rocky Mountain School

### **WILDERNESS ORIENTATION PRIMER**

**NOTE:** Throughout this primer, there will be several essential forms that all parents and students must review. Please click on all linked PDFs: CRMS expects all incoming students and parents to be thoroughly familiar with their contents.

#### **What do I need to do in advance?**

To ensure a smooth Wilderness session for all concerned, it is vitally important that you begin working on these five items:

1. Thoughtfully complete and submit the [CRMS Wilderness Questionnaire](#).
2. Buy and/or collect the equipment outlined on the [Wilderness Equipment List](#).
3. Make sure you have had a physical examination and that the medical requirements have been met as outlined in the papers from the Health Office in the New Student Medical Packet. If you have asthma, be sure you talk to your doctor about how to best manage your condition and please review the [“Coping with Asthma on CRMS Trips”](#) PDF.
4. GET IN SHAPE—your experience will be much more enjoyable if you are in good shape! If you’re not already physically active, begin a program of walking, biking, running, or swimming that will prepare you for the physical challenge of the program.
5. Read each of the following PDFs:
  - [Wilderness Fitness Expectations](#)
  - [Coping with a High Altitude Environment](#)

#### **What do I need to bring?**

Most of the items you’ll need are available through the CRMS Bookstore (excluding packs and sleeping bags) or a good mountaineering shop. Roaring Fork Valley residents are encouraged to visit Summit Canyon Mountaineering in Glenwood Springs (970-945-6994); they have offered to give CRMS students a small discount and are knowledgeable about the gear and equipment necessary for CRMS trips. Out-of-town folks are encouraged to visit their local mountaineering shops; in the absence of such a shop we recommend REI. The CRMS Bookstore carries a number of the equipment items required for Wilderness. For information on prices and ordering deadlines for these items, download the [“Equipment Purchases Through CRMS”](#) PDF. Please call early to ensure availability.

**NOTE:** While carrying all of your gear and food on your back for an extended trip like Wilderness does involve hard work, it doesn’t have to be unduly uncomfortable. We have created the Wilderness Equipment Checklist to identify the gear and equipment you will need to remain comfortable in a wide range of possible scenarios. If you have additional personal items that you wish to bring that are not on the equipment list, please discuss them with your leader. Also note that you will be helping to carry a share of the group gear and food, usually somewhere between 15-20 pounds.

The following three items (boots, pack, sleeping bag) are super important: please use extra care when selecting them.

- **BOOTS:** A good pair of hiking boots adds comfort and safety to mountain travel and with proper care will last for many years. A quality boot will have a supportive upper section and a sturdy sole and be designed for both on-and off-trail travel while carrying packs loaded with up to 40-55 pounds. Low-top or shoe-style hikers are generally not appropriate for Wilderness. There are many brands and styles to choose from; expect to spend at least \$75-150+ for a quality pair of boots. Finally, it is important to break in your boots by wearing them on short hikes in advance!
- **PACKS:** Internal-frame backpacks with a capacity of 4,000 to 5,000 cubic inches (65- 80 liters) that are designed for on-and off-trail backpacking are best. It is also important to get the right-size shoulder harness and waist straps to match your body size. Purchase a pack from a mountain sports store that takes the time to help customize the fit. Borrowing a pack can work, but more often than not it leads to unnecessary discomfort as it can be difficult to get a good fit. CRMS is able to provide a limited number of quality packs to rent at \$5/day. For sizing questions and availability, please contact the CRMS Bookstore at (970) 963-3984. If purchasing a new pack, expect to spend \$150-250+ for a quality backpack.
- **SLEEPING BAG:** Fiberfill (or synthetic) bags are less expensive than down, are warm even when wet, and dry quickly. While they are bulkier and slightly heavier than down for the same loft, fiberfill bags are the best option for use at CRMS. If you already have a down bag, know that you will need to take extra care to keep it dry at all times to ensure it will keep you warm. A “three-season sleeping bag” should have a suitable temperature rating to approximately +15/20 degrees F. (Temperature ratings are designed to communicate the lowest comfortable temperature that a bag would keep an average person warm. Those who know they are “hot” sleepers, meaning they use fewer covers and put off a fair bit of heat when they sleep, may want a 20-30 degree bag. Conversely, those who are “cold” sleepers may want a slightly warmer sleeping bag.) Expect to spend \$100-250+ for a quality sleeping bag.

Additional information on some of the other items on the Wilderness Equipment List:

- **CLOTHING AND FABRICS:** Do not bring cotton fabrics. In an outdoor environment, wearing layers of synthetic fabrics works best and allows flexibility to remain comfortable in a wide range of weather conditions. Several layers of light clothing keep you warm and can be adjusted to changes for both weather and activity. For example, wearing a synthetic long underwear top, a fleece sweatshirt, or medium weight wool sweater and a fleece jacket allows you to adapt to changing conditions. It is important that all your clothing be comfortable, quick-drying and warm. Fabrics such as polyester, polypropylene, fleece, acrylic, rayon, wool, or name brands like Polartec™, Thinsulate™, COOLMAX® and Capilene™ are just a few favorites of outdoor enthusiasts, since they retain much of their insulating qualities when wet. Do not bring cotton fabrics because they do not provide warmth when wet, dry slowly, and are relatively heavy.
- **SLEEPING PAD:** The most simple and reliable pads are “closed cell” foam that you can find at most any outdoor sports store. Inflatable sleeping pads can be quite comfortable but add weight, and vulnerability. If you choose to bring an inflatable sleeping pad, also purchase an appropriate repair kit and know that you will need to take extra care to avoid a puncture.
- **RAIN GEAR:** Good-quality coated-nylon rain gear is adequate for our use and can be found relatively cheaply. Cheap plastic or poncho-style jackets are not appropriate for rain protection in the high country. Pullovers or hooded jackets are excellent. Gore-Tex™ or other breathable-waterproof fabrics work excellently but can be quite expensive.

- **GROUND TARP:** A small lightweight nylon tarp or sheet of durable 6mm plastic is used as a ground cloth under your sleeping pad at night and as a shelter during solo (which provides the opportunity for students to have structured time away from the group). Grommets on corners are helpful. Ground tarps should be ~5'x 8' maximum-size.
- **TOILET KIT:** This kit should only include a travel-size toothbrush and travel-size toothpaste. Moleskin™ and/or Molefoam™ for blisters, and foot powder, are optional, but a good idea if you have a history of blisters. Girls: menstrual cycles may be affected by changes in activity and or environment; bring a double supply of tampons or pads. Do not bring lotions, deodorant, and other toiletries in order to keep your load to a reasonable weight. Your leaders will provide additional information about caring for yourself and going to the bathroom in the outdoors. Rest assured that all basic necessities can be attended to and will be addressed to ensure comfort.
- **PRESCRIPTION GLASSES:** Blowing dust, rain, snow, and Colorado's dry climate can cause problems for contact wearers in the backcountry. It is a good idea to bring backup contact lenses and/or glasses to ensure you can enjoy the beautiful sights you will see on your trip.
- **MEDICATIONS:** Prescription medications brought on trips should arrive in the original container with the prescription label intact. The prescription label is documentation for your use of the medication during your expedition. The container should not include other medications, vitamins, etc. We also recommend bringing a spare set of medications, in case the first set gets lost or wet. Since many medications have contraindications involving sun exposure, high altitude or other environmental implications, you are asked to disclose all medications to the director of health services and the trip leader upon arrival to CRMS.

**NOTE:** Each year, students show up with some equipment that is inappropriate or ill-suited for our purposes. In our experience, there is often confusion surrounding the following items:

- ***Leave all knives behind*** (including Swiss Army or Leatherman-type knives). These items are prohibited in the dorms and on campus and should be left at home. CRMS provides knives for use on all outdoor trips.
- ***Do not bring heavy, insulated ski parkas*** for Wilderness; lightweight insulated shells work best to keep you warm and dry and can compress into a small space when not in use.
- ***Water bottles*** need to have a secure, screw-top closure and be drip-free. Bottles with straws and flip-tops, and water bladders used in hydration packs, are generally not appropriate. Nalgene-brand bottles are popular, but reused Gatorade bottles work just as well and are free.
- ***CRMS prohibits students from bringing electronic devices*** on CRMS trips--the only exception to this rule is a digital camera. iPods, Kindles and other reading devices, cell phones (even ones with cameras), personal locator beacons, and video games must all be left behind on campus. If you have questions about what is permissible, please contact the school. Furthermore, if you would like to learn more about our emergency communication protocol, please feel free to get in touch with the Active Curriculum office.

## IN SUMMARY

Thank you for taking the time to read the previous information and to download and read all the links on the Wilderness webpage. Taking the time to fully understand what you need to attend to before arriving at CRMS will help make your Wilderness Orientation session experience more enjoyable and the busy beginning of the year less hectic. You are now done reviewing the Wilderness Primer, if you are a parent please ask your child to now also review all of this content. Please contact Darryl Fuller at [dfuller@crms.org](mailto:dfuller@crms.org) with any questions.