



PARTICIPANT ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The mission of Valley to Summit (“VTS”) is to provide an environment that facilitates the exploration and development of an outdoor ethic through interaction with nature. VTS adventures are day-long to multi-day wilderness adventures with the goal of immersing participants in and exposing them to wilderness variables that encourage and necessitate direct interaction with nature. The wilderness environments VTS courses live in and travel through, as well as the activities they undertake, are remote, dynamic, challenging and committing.

The health and wellbeing of our participants and staff are a top priority, as is the effective exposure of participants to wilderness settings that facilitate interaction with nature in a meaningful way that assists in the exploration and development of an outdoor ethic. To achieve these goals for a group in a wilderness setting, each participant must be fully committed to and capable of working hard, taking responsibility for him or her self, and working effectively in the group.

VTS does not specialize in integrating people with disabilities onto courses. VTS guides are experienced outdoor leaders, but they are not specifically trained to teach or supervise people with disabilities and cannot be expected to be an advocate for a participant with disabilities. VTS embraces diversity and strives to create a positive learning environment. The majority of VTS participants are not seeking an integrated experience.

The essential eligibility criteria for any given trip must be met and are applicable to all participants. If you are unable to meet certain requirements, we may be able to assist you with some modification, unless it alters the fundamental nature of the trip, compromises the health and safety of participants or staff, or places an undue financial or administrative burden on VTS.

ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION ON VTS TRIPS

Section one is the Essential Eligibility Criteria for all VTS trips. Section two is the Essential Eligibility Criteria for specific types of trips and/or activities.

SECTION 1

1.a. Safety and Judgment

Each participant must be able to:

- Effectively communicate and warn others of potential or impending dangers such as falling rocks, aggressive animals or other environmental hazards.

- Effectively signal or notify course guides or other course members of personal distress, injury or need for assistance.
- Do the preceding warnings and notifications up to a distance of up to 50 meters and in conditions with limited visibility such as in darkness or inclement weather or with loud background noise, such as high winds or while near roaring river.
- Effectively and independently perceive, understand and follow directions and instructions given by others so that you will be able to successfully execute appropriate and perhaps unfamiliar techniques to avoid hazards and/or manage risks. These directions may be given before the hazard or risk is encountered or may need to be given during exposure to the hazard and/or risk.
- Stay alert and to focus attention for up to several hours at a time while traveling in wilderness terrain, in inclement weather, attending group meetings and/or receiving instructions.
- Perceive and comprehend significant and apparent hazards, including those hazards previously identified by guides and/or other group members. These hazards may include, but are not limited to, fast moving water (rivers, creeks, surf, tides), cliff edges, loose rock, crevasses, potentially hazardous animals and insects and rugged, steep and uneven terrain.
- Respond appropriately to stress or crises such as when encountering large and/or potentially hazardous animals, severe weather, or a medical emergency.
- If taking prescription medications, maintain proper dosage by self-medicating without assistance from guides or others (except possibly in emergency situations).

1.b. Leadership and Expedition Behavior

Each participant must:

- Work effectively as a member of a team despite potentially stressful and difficult conditions. This may require problem solving on an interpersonal or group level as well as a willingness to accept differences.
- Contribute to a safe learning environment; no harassment or abusive behavior of others for any reason.

- Be able to willingly participate and equally share responsibilities to the best of one's ability with tentmates and the course group in daily tent group and course group chores. Each participant may not do an equal share each day, but over a period of days each participant should do a proportionate share. All participants are learning the skill and being challenged by the conditions and activities; there can be no expectation that any other participant will be able to continually assume a greater share of the work or that a guide can continually focus a greater share of his/her energy and time on one participant.
- Effectively communicate ideas and concerns on an individual and group level.
- Have the cognitive ability to learn necessary skills given time limitations of a VTS course.

1.c. Environmental Ethics

Each participant must:

- Learn and practice Leave No Trace camping and travel techniques.

1.d. Outdoor Skills: Camping

Each participant must:

- Learn and safely perform the fundamental camping skills of finding a campsite, setting up a shelter, and cooking with a camp stove.
- Remain adequately hydrated, fed, and properly dressed so as to remain generally healthy and be able to avoid environmental injuries such as hypothermia, heat illness (including heat stroke), sunburn or frostbite.
- Be able to follow initial instruction of the above activities and must be able to perform, after instruction, the above activities independently in cooperation with course mates without direct supervision.
- Live in a physically demanding, remote backcountry environment for the uninterrupted period of course length, which can range from two days to two weeks or more. Conditions of this environment may vary from cold (below 30°F) to hot (above 90°F) depending on course location and season and may include, but is not limited to, rain or freezing rain, snow or hail, uninterrupted sun and/or wind, or the absence thereof. The remoteness is such that it may require at minimum 1 day's travel, but perhaps in excess of several day's travel, to reach the nearest, road, trailhead, town and advanced medical care.

SECTION 2

Section 2 outlines the additional essential eligibility criteria specific to course types and activities. Thus, in addition to satisfying the above elements, all participants must satisfy the essential eligibility criteria listed below that are specific to the course they are considering.

2.a. Wilderness Hiking Course

Each participant must:

- At a minimum, be able to travel over and negotiate through varied wilderness terrain with a backpack weighing up to or exceeding 35 pounds for overnight trips and up to or exceeding 15 pounds for a day trips.
 - Travel conditions may include, but are limited to, rough, rugged, uneven steep and sloping terrain, human made and animals made trails, rocky terrain that may range from smooth bedrock to extensive areas of large rock boulders (boulder fields), needing to cross rivers and creeks without the aid of bridges up to three feet or more in depth, ascending, descending or traversing slopes covered in snow, rocks or vegetation, bushwhacking off trail through thick standing and/or downed vegetation and any and all travel can occur during periods of inclement weather.
 - Travel distances can range from less than one mile to more than 6 miles in one day.
 - Travel durations can range from less than one hour to more than 7 hours in one day and occur on successive days.
 - Have average strength and endurance and basic balance and agility to safely travel through such terrain with a backpack.
 - Have the ability to have a third point of contact for balance purposes, such as with hand(s) or to hold a walking stick, for travel through deep rivers or ascending or descending slopes.
 - Be able to stay alert and to focus for several hours at a time while traveling.
 - Although groups will often be able to take hourly breaks or camp early if weather becomes hazardous, occasionally this is not possible. Examples include: descending/ascending a 2000' boulder choked gully; descending a peak with a threatening thunderstorm; descending a mountain pass in similar conditions.
 - Resupplies of food occur every 5-10 days (depending on course type, route, and pre-arranged logistics). Thus, participants need to be able to carry gear, food, and

personal items or personal medications (such as insulin) needed for that period. A limited amount of necessary personal items may be sent in at each re-ration.

2.b. Kayaking, Whitewater and River Expedition Courses

Each participant must:

- Control a paddle and pull it through the water in order to steer and propel the boat forward.
- Be able to perceive, understand and respond to commands given by a boating partner or communicate such commands to boating partners (such as in a tandem canoe, double kayak or paddle raft) used to maneuver a boat to maintain proper heading or avoid obstacles.
- Be able to exit a capsized boat (wet exit), fend for self while in water away from the boat, attain and maintain correct body position if out of boat in a rapid, exit out of the water to shore, grab onto another boat or rope for rescue purposes and/or perform self rescue or cooperate with assisted rescue.
- Navigate around camp on shore in order to get to camp and complete camp chores and basic living needs.