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GENERAL TRIP INFORMATION

(Leader: Please copy and distribute)

Guests who participate in our adventure or backpacking programs spend a significant amount of time in the Colorado backcountry. Backpacking and hiking removes guests from the comforts and conveniences of civilization for a challenging yet exciting experience, unique in its opportunities for ministry. The ruggedness and remoteness of the Colorado backcountry provide Noah's Ark with an unparalleled setting for wilderness ministry.

It is important that you understand what to expect from your wilderness experience. While such an experience can appear extremely difficult, it is important to remember that these trips are designed and geared for those with little or no backcountry experience. The commitment of Noah's Ark and our highly trained and professional guide staff is to provide a positive and rewarding wilderness experience.

WEATHER

They say that if you don't like the weather in Colorado, just wait five minutes. "They" may lack a degree in meteorology, but the old bromide holds true, especially in the backcountry. It is not at all uncommon for the same multi-day backpacking trip to experience everything from cloudless days with highs in the upper seventies to snow, whatever the month. The typical pattern, if there is such a thing, tends toward sunny mornings, thunderstorms in the afternoon, and clear evenings. July and August generally experience the warmest weather, but the most rain as well. Be prepared for anything! Even when staying in the campground at Noah's Ark, use the recommended quality sleeping bag and be prepared for cold nights.

TERRAIN

Noah's Ark lies in south-central Colorado in the shadow of five of Colorado's 54 fourteeners (peaks with summits higher than 14,000 feet). Our campground and lodge sit at approximately 8,000 feet. The elevation of most of our backpacking trips and day hikes averages around 10,000 feet, though most of our multi-day backpacking routes cross passes often reaching above 12,000 feet. The terrain is rugged and often steep, requiring teamwork and good physical conditioning, as well as patience and a good attitude. Groups desiring an even greater challenge often have the opportunity, contingent on the guides' discretion and the group's ability, to attempt one of the many "14'ers" towering over the wilderness. ***Please note that, due the very nature of adventure activities, all activities, and especially backpacking trips, will be physically challenging.***

ALTITUDE

Guests from areas of the country lower in elevation often experience mild symptoms of acute mountain sickness, commonly known as altitude sickness, as a result of their quick elevation gain. Most will acclimatize quickly, but the best method of prevention and treatment is to **drink large amounts of water throughout the trip**. This preparation should begin as you travel to Colorado or earlier. If symptoms become too severe on the trail, dropping in elevation can generally alleviate them. Trips into the backcountry journey a considerable distance from medical facilities. Our guides are trained in wilderness first aid, and the Buena Vista area has staffed medical clinics which can be contacted should such a need arise.

TRAVEL

Our wilderness trips generally travel on established trails, both to minimize impact on the backcountry and for ease of travel, but our routes occasionally require off-trail travel. The number of miles covered each day varies widely, depending on the objectives and physical abilities of the group, weather and terrain. Two to four miles a day is typical. Trips may base camp in one location for several nights, or set up camp in a different location each evening, depending on the desires of the group and requirements of the route.

We highly recommend that you purchase Colorado Search and Rescue cards (CORSAR) for each member of your group. They only cost \$3/person and can help to alleviate some of the financial burden of an evacuation from the backcountry should one occur. More information about these can be found on the group leader page.

All trips abide by the **"Leave No Trace" Outdoor Ethics** principles:

1. Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
2. Dispose of waste properly.
3. Leave what you find.
4. Minimize campfire impacts.
5. Respect wildlife.
6. Be considerate of other visitors.

The United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service permits us use in the Pike, Gunnison, San Isabel, and San Juan National Forests. The Forest Service limits group size to 15 people, including our guides, which requires us to divide larger groups into units of 10-13.