#### 14. What is your cancellation policy?

A nonrefundable deposit of 20% of the full tuition will hold your place in the group and is due with the initial application. The remaining balance is due 30 days before the beginning of your trek. If you sign up within 30 days of the trek start date, the full tuition is required in order to reserve a place. Wilderness medicine courses do not accept deposits and so full tuition payment will be required upon registration.

If you need to cancel your enrollment, the 20% deposit is nonrefundable at any time. If you cancel 45 days or more before the trek start date, the remaining 80% of your tuition is fully refundable. Less than 45 days prior to the trek start date, no paid tuition is refundable. A full refund will only be made if an application is not accepted or if the expedition must be canceled.

#### 11. Do trekkers carry cell phones, computers, etc.?

No–A Cottonwood Gulchscreen-free expedition is an opportunity to take a break from modern technology. This is not because we view technology as *bad,* but we have found that when we step away from cell phones, computers, and television for a few weeks, a whole new element of personal growth is possible. Trekkers interact with each other more readily, they learn to be creative in the outdoors, to entertain each other, and consequently they return home with a healthier relationship toward technology than when they arrived. Our staff carry cell phones and satellite phones in case of emergency, and parents can always contact the directors via email or phone. Digital cameras (as long as they are not on a phone) are highly encouraged. Trust us, this break from technology is a good thing.

#### 1. Do you offer scholarships?

Yes, we offer need based scholarships up to fully funded tuition, funded by our endowment and by the generous donations of alumni and others interested in outdoor education. These scholarships are awarded on the basis of need and decisions are made by the Cottonwood Gulch scholarship committee. Timely submission of application materials will help to ensure financial assistance. We attempto to accommodate every worthy applicant on a first-come-first-served basis. We encourage families to contact us directly if they are in need of financial assistance or have questions regarding our scholarship program. Donations in support of this, and all our programs, are always welcome. To inquire about scholarships, or to make a donation, send an email to enrollment@cottonwoodgulch.org. You can also download a copy of the application here:

[**Cottonwood Gulch Scholarship Application**](https://cottonwoodgulch.org/scholarships/)

#### 10. What will we eat?

Our Basecamp and group cooks take pride in feeding Trekkers well. Each meal is prepared with both nutrition and taste in mind, using mainly fresh ingredients. While in Basecamp, groups eat family style in our mess hall, often enjoying organic vegetables from our own garden,. On the road, when groups are camped with their vehicles, the group cook prepares all meals with the assistance of a rotating kitchen detail. When backpacking, trekkers prepare their own food — carefully selected and packaged by the cook — over camp stoves. One group is known to have had vegetarian sushi in the backcountry, while another finished the road loop with a banquet of steak, mashed potatoes, Caesar salad and chocolate cake. We believe in the importance of fueling our bodies properly in this challenging environment and take pride in the multitude of delicious meals cooked on trek.

#### 9. How athletic does my child need to be?

Anyone in normal physical condition should have no difficulty participating in all activities. Our expeditions build to the more challenging activities, so that trekkers have time to adjust to altitude and climate, while gaining confidence and experience, before tackling our most challenging hikes. Each activity can be challenging to any level of athlete: we often split into smaller groups, especially on backpacking trips, with routes and destinations geared towards the ability and interests of the members of the group. That said, all trekkers should be able to hike at least 3 miles on uneven terrain carrying a small day pack. In our backpacking groups (Mountain Desert Trek, Prairie Trek, Turquoise Trail, Wild Country Trek), trekkers should be able to carry 50+ pounds for several miles on uneven terrain for 2-10 days at a time. The better shape you’re in when you arrive at the Gulch, the more enjoyable of an experience you can expect. Trekkers are encouraged to challenge themselves at all times in an age-appropriate manner.

#### 2. How do trekkers get to our campus and back home?

Most of our trekkers fly in and out of the Albuquerque International Sunport, where they are met by group staff and shuttled back to Basecamp or off on the road. Trekkers from the local area are often dropped off at Basecamp or at the Albuquerque Sunport by their parents (who are always welcome to visit). Some families choose to make the travel part of a family vacation, and enjoy a visit to the Southwest together before dropping off their trekker.

#### 3. Who are the other people in the expedition?

Trekkers and staff for the expeditions come from not only, all over the United States, but all over the world. While there is no simple way to describe a typical trekker, the one quality that unites most trekkers is curiosity. For many of our younger trekkers, this is the first time they have ventured into the wilderness. For our older trekkers, the expeditions may be either a wholly new experience or the continuation of previous experiences, either at the Gulch or in other outdoor programs. Trekkers often have strong interests in a wide range of topics, from music to mineralogy, from wilderness leadership to wildlife biology, from creative writing to cartography. Many of our trekkers are the friends, siblings, children and grandchildren of former trekkers and staff at Cottonwood Gulch, though each year a large percentage are brand new to the Gulch.

#### 4. How many staff are in each group? How big are the groups?

During summer we have one staff member for every five trekkers in the group. There are between 10 and 20 trekkers in each group, although group sizes do vary. There is a designated group leader for each expedition who sets the itinerary and is responsible for all aspects of the group. In each group there is also an expedition cook and one or two other instructors who are designated as a naturalist, sociologist, historian or artist.

#### 13. Can I reach a group on the road in the case of an emergency?

Yes — many expeditions spend the majority of their time in the backcountry, far from telephones and usually out of cell phone coverage. However, group leaders carry satellite phones in the backcountry, and all staff carry cell phones and check in with the director regularly over the course of the loop. In case of emergency, a director can reach the group, in person or with a message, within 24 hours. For normal communications, the groups send and receive mail every day at Basecamp and at least once a week on the road. Trekkers have opportunities to phone home when they visit towns for supplies, about once every 10 days.

#### 12. What are the projects like? Are they individual or group projects?

Each summer we encourage trekkers to tackle a project of their own in an area of particular interest to them. Projects vary from year to year and group to group. Younger groups, such as the Outfit, focus more on collective projects, while the older groups pursue primarily individual projects. In recent years, trekkers have surveyed wildlife and plants creating a field guide to the Zuni Mountains, diagrammed the geologic timeline from pre-history to the present, pursued projects in photography ranging from portraiture to historical reenactment, created silver and ceramic artwork, discovered and documented dinosaur bones and archaeological artifacts, cut down trees in overgrown forests to learn about ecosystem management, recorded and produced audio logs and original songs to document the summer, researched the history and politics of the Los Alamos Laboratory. Each year we hire professional artists, archaeologists, naturalists, and farmers to work directly with the trekkers, helping them develop and complete their own customized projects.

#### 5. How do you manage risk?

Cottonwood Gulch has been leading quality expeditions into the Southwest since 1926. We emphasize sound decision-making skills to avoid the risk of being caught unprepared in the backcountry. Instructors undergo a criminal background check and are certified in Wilderness First Aid; many instructors also have a Wilderness First Responder or Wilderness EMT certification. First aid kits are carried by the staff instructors and all staff are trained in who to contact if the situation is beyond the scope of their training. As with all active pursuits, there is inherent physical risk, though rest assured that we are committed to a high standard of risk management in all of our programs and firmly believe that prevention is the best medicine.

#### 6. How do you travel on the road?

We use passenger vans and a gear truck for each expedition. The truck, which we call the commissary (COM) truck, carries all the food, water, and tents we need as well as our mobile kitchen and personal gear. It also carries scientific equipment including GPS units, a selective library, many art supplies, and audio recorders for capturing sounds of the expedition. We establish temporary base camps in undeveloped areas and stay there for three to eight days, taking day or overnight trips from the base camp to explore the area. When groups are away from the Cottonwood Gulch Basecamp, we spend every night on the road camping — either sleeping in tents or underneath the stars.

#### 7. Where do the trips go?

We are based in New Mexico, but we travel to all Four Corners states: New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado. Our wilderness destinations are mostly areas that few others visit, including the Gila Wilderness of southern New Mexico, the Blue Range primitive area of the White Mountains in Arizona, Cedar Mesa and the La Sals in southern Utah,, the Delores Valley in the southern Rocky Mountains of Colorado, and the Sangre de Cristos in northern New Mexico. Every expedition will visit ancient puebloan sites including Chaco Canyon, Canyon de Chelly, Keet Seel, Grand Gulch, Hovenweep or Bandelier. We also travel to visit friends in contemporary communities on the Navajo Reservation and at the pueblos of Zuni, Hopi and Acoma. At each destination, we establish a temporary base camp with our vehicles and mobile kitchen. We stay in each location for severaldays, taking day or overnight trips from the base camp, in order to explore and understand the wilderness, science, and cultures of the Southwest.

#### 8. What is the access to water like on a trek?

We know that WATER IS LIFE. At Basecamp we are lucky to have delicious well water used for drinking and washing. Many of the wilderness areas we will explore on the road, both in the frontcountry and the backcountry, will not have readily available access to water. In the Southwest, we understand what a precious resource our water is. Cottonwood Gulch staff teams will take several large 5 gallon water igloos with them on each trek that leaves our Basecamp. We will teach trekkers to also value this limited resource. While we do find places to refill our water jugs on the road, trekkers should understand that we will have limited access to faucets for brushing teeth, flushing toilets, and showers. While we encourage trekkers to hydrate regularly and do not limit water intake, we teach all of our trekkers to brush their teeth with a small bit of water from their water bottle, use a portable waterless toilet for #2, how to sanitize water for drinking in the backcountry, and practice outdoor hygiene to the best of their ability.