



VISIONS
SERVICE ADVENTURES

ITINERARY: MONTANA ROOTS GAP PROGRAM

September 18

Welcome to Montana

Welcome to Gallatin Valley, Montana, which Native American tribes called “the valley of the flowers.” Settle into your home away from home on Kelly Creek Ranch, located just ten minutes from downtown Bozeman. Nestled next to alpine peaks and mountain streams, adjust to rhythms of ranch life, participate in team-building activities, and get to know your fellow participants, leaders, and the “Codes of the West.” For curriculum and educational activities during the program, we also utilize the VISIONS office downtown.

September 19 & 20

Orientation

Draft your goals for the experience ahead, discuss leadership roles, expedition behavior and shared responsibility. Relax and enjoy your new home that is a safe place to be yourself in a supportive environment. We will take breaks for day hikes, exploring, working on the ranch and enjoying each other’s company. A local wildlife biologist will also join us for dinner to discuss local wildlife and ecology of the region.

September 21 - 26

Hiking in the Montana Backcountry

Work your mind and muscles on a hiking trip in Montana’s beautiful Gallatin Mountain Range. Enjoy the simplicities of the outdoors, challenge yourself, and support and laugh with new friends. Also, discover more about this important and diverse ecosystem, learn navigation skills, expedition behavior and backcountry cooking. No prior experience required and this is well suited-suited for beginners and beyond!

September 25 / 26 - 27

Arrival of Additional Students

The arrival of a few additional students who may join the program following the hiking trip. Students return from the hiking trip on September 26th and the 27th is an opportunity to relax and prepare for the week ahead.

September 28 - October 1

Regenerative Agriculture & Cattle Ranching

Travel over Bozeman Pass to Paradise Valley, the original entrance to Yellowstone National Park. Towering peaks cast lazy shadows over the valley as the mighty

Yellowstone River meanders through. Nestled in this valley is Barney Creek Ranch, which was homesteaded in 1867 and passed down through the family generations.

Barney Creek practices regenerative agriculture, raising cattle that feeds the local community and beyond. You will work on the ranch, learning about soil regeneration and agroecosystems. Move cattle herds to new pastures, construct a fence, build a bridge and be a part of the daily realities of ranching in the Rockies. If you've ever been intrigued by the romance of ranch life, this is your opportunity to live, work and feel it while hosted by this dynamic ranch family.

October 2 - 4

Storytelling, Film, Photography & Writing

Take in all that you have experienced thus far and begin learning the techniques of storytelling. Guest speakers and lecturers will demonstrate methods of storytelling through film, photography, writing and perhaps even music. You will have the opportunity to further develop your capstone project and start thinking about the creative form you wish to present it.

October 5 - 13

Wilderness Medicine

Switch gears for a fast-paced and fun 72-hour Wilderness First Responder course that taps into anatomy and physiology lessons as well as the fundamentals of saving someone's life. The first four days will be spent in the classroom learning the basics of injuries and illnesses in challenging environments. Enjoy a rest day on day five to re-group. For the remaining four days of the course, you will practice hands-on scenarios that occur in remote environments. Upon successful completion, participants receive their Wilderness First Responder and Adult CPR certifications.

October 14 - 16

Sustainable Living in the Modern World

Travel west to idyllic Pony, Montana, once a prosperous gold mining community on the eastern edge of the Tobacco Root Mountains. We will stay near River Camp (located on the Jefferson River and part of the Lewis & Clark Historic Trail), our home for the next few days. Participants will sleep in a modernized earthlodge with design principles originating from the northern Great Plains Indians. Immerse yourself in the natural world and explore sustainability issues. Experience self-sufficiency on a modern scale as you learn to meet survival needs with little more than your bare hands. You will use basic construction skills to build with scavenged resources so that you can be a responsible outdoors person for life. Towards the end, you will have a chance to discuss, evaluate and develop green business concepts to drive change towards a sustainable world. Beginners welcome, as instructors take an inclusive approach and teach everything you need to know!

October 17

Friends & Reflection

Travel back to homebase, unpack and reflect on all that you have done so far. Take time to develop more of your capstone project, sit around the campfire, gaze at the stars and enjoy time with friends.

October 18 - 23

Permaculture & Sustainable Farming

Topics this week include food systems and the social capital movement. We work with a permaculture expert who will instruct on how to design a homestead that produces healthy, organic food. Participants will plan and create composting methods for the ranch, observe water and sunlight patterns in order to design a proper permaculture model, and determine ways to mimic a forest ecosystem with berries, fruit trees and perennials. The ultimate step is to develop a permaculture plan for the ranch that will create a sustainable and edible landscape.

Afternoons will be spent working on the ranch and at neighboring Gallatin Valley Botanical Farms at Rocky Creek. Get your hands dirty and help harvest root vegetables that feed the local community during the winter months. Learn about sustainable and organic farming practices, and become more connected to your sources of food. Leave each day feeling empowered as a farmer and a contributing member of the community. One day will be spent at the Bozeman Community Food Bank, where you will participate in poverty simulations discuss food security.

October 23 - 25

Farm to Table, Culinary Arts

Take all that you have learned about food systems to the table. Spend a day creating local food fusion cuisine with a chef who was raised on the northern coast of Colombia. Prepare food that you have harvested and foraged, learning to cook delicious meals with simple ingredients.

The next day, delve more into the culinary arts spending a day with master hunters passionate about hunting for their food and utilizing all parts of the animal. Participants will be provided with a recently harvested hind quarter of elk to learn the techniques of cutting, packaging and preparing wild game. That evening, cook a meal with elk fresh steaks (vegan and vegetarian options always available).

Wake up early and hit the road to Wilsall, Montana, to spend part of a day on North Bridger Bison Ranch. An icon of the West, bison roam freely on this ranch, which is rooted in principles of holistic management and regenerative agriculture. The ranch provides healthy and ethically harvested bison meat. Witness the field dressing and evisceration of the bison, done with honor for the animal and the land that supported it. That night optionally enjoy bison meat for dinner, evermore connected to your food and to the land.

October 26 - 29

Land Stewardship, Wildlife Conservation & Hunting Ethics

Hear from experts, professionals and locals about the challenges and opportunities facing the West. Lecturers and speakers will give an overview of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, current issues in wildlife management and species biology. Also spend time in the field learning about hunting as a primary tool for wildlife management. Master hunters will talk with us about life lessons in hunting, self-sustainability, and different beliefs about the ethics of hunting. Finally, we travel to the Manhattan Wildlife Association rifle range as an optional excursion. Each participant will learn the basics of rifle safety, shooting and respect for firearms, and will have the option to practice shooting a rifle in a secure setting.

We will also use these days to examine land stewardship and the importance of private and public land for wildlife. Discussions will be held on how elk impact ranching and farming operations, the roles that landowners play in land stewardship, and access issues and debates. We will hear about Montana's population growth and the impacts of losing open space.

October 30 - 31

Pumpkin Harvest & Cider Press

Some time for a break, projects on the ranch, and helping with the annual pumpkin harvest and cider press at Rocky Creek Farm. Create your own unique Halloween costume and let's have a party!

November 2 - 4

Wildlife Ecology & Microhabitat Selection

Hit the road again and travel south into the Gallatin Canyon (looking for bighorn sheep along the way) to Jack Creek, a 4500-acre nature preserve. The preserve is an important wildlife migratory corridor between Yellowstone National Park and the Madison Mountain Range. An experienced biologist will share her knowledge about the many species that occupy this diverse ecosystem and the challenges they face.

Travel throughout the preserve to see elk migration patterns and timber surveys. Explore microhabitats and learn about predator species in the area, such as grizzly bears and wolves. Topics will also include federal policies as they relate to wildlife, human interaction issues, disease and adaptations. There will be ample time to also enjoy the stay at the mountain lodge under the quiet blanket of Montana's Big Sky.

November 5 - 7

Mindfulness & Life Skills

Embark on a personal journey to develop a practice of mindfulness, resilience, motivation, empathy, compassion and leadership through the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute, which was founded by Google executives. The course will help participants develop their full potential in both a professional and personal setting. The program will provide you with practical tools to be applied immediately and in future endeavors. In the midst of uncertainty, complexity and disruption, SIYLI cultivates mental focus, clarity and resilience.

November 8 - 13

Capstone

The final days of the program are dedicated to the capstone project, when we again utilize the VISIONS office. This is an opportunity to reflect on all that we have experienced, and revisit some of your favorite places for deeper learning and reflection. Prepare a rough draft through any creative form including film, photography, writing, music or something else of your choosing. Capstone presentations will be made at the end of the program, giving participants a chance to both critique and admire the work of their peers. Also enjoy more time with your program friends making meals together, sitting around the campfire, playing music, helping at farms and enjoying outings. We will have a closing celebration to reflect on all of our accomplishments and ideas for a more sustainable future.
