

Dear Backpacker,

Thank you for registering for **Women's Fall Backpack**. We hope you are looking forward to this program as much as we are! Please read this letter thoroughly in addition to [Your Visit to Tremont](#) to learn important information about the trip.

### **HOW TO PREPARE:**

You don't have to be an Olympic athlete to be able to backpack, but you *do* need to be in good shape. The Smoky Mountains are characterized by rolling hills and steep slopes that are a challenge to any hiker. Attaining access to the more remote areas of the park is one of the more satisfying aspects of backpacking. You must be in good physical condition and, in consideration of others, be able to keep up with the group, hiking 5-8 miles per day in rugged, mountainous terrain while carrying a heavy backpack (roughly 20-25% of your body weight). In addition to carrying your own gear, you should expect to carry group gear, including tents, food, and stoves.

We will teach you techniques that should lessen the difficulty and enhance your enjoyment. However, you can help by preparing yourself physically *before arriving*. Exercise your legs, your heart, and your lungs by hiking around your neighborhood, on hilly terrain, or even up and down stairs. Wear your hiking boots while doing so to break them in. If you come prepared, you will enjoy our hike together all the more.

### **WHAT TO BRING:**

Bringing appropriate clothing and equipment is vital for both your safety and comfort. Be sure to read [Notes on Appropriate Gear](#) to help you make better-informed decisions on what items to bring with you. Please do not hesitate to bring items in question. Before hitting the trail, you will have an opportunity to review with your Tremont staff leaders what you have packed so that we might minimize excessive and unnecessary weight.

It may help to know the temperatures that we might expect. The month of October has seen an average daily high of 75 degrees F., and an average daily low of 43 degrees F. Keep in mind, however, that your hike may take you through higher elevations, which can sometimes mean a dip in temperature of fifteen degrees or more, which can cause temperatures to dip below freezing. Also keep in mind that the Smokies are a very wet and humid climate; expect that it will rain at some point during your time here!

### **LEADERS:**

I am pleased to be the Tremont instructor who is leading this trip. Visit our website to learn more about me and the rest of our [faculty](#). I will be your primary contact regarding details. If you have any questions, contact me by e-mail at [elizabeth@gsmiit.org](mailto:elizabeth@gsmiit.org). Please understand that it may take several days for me to respond since most of my work time is spent outdoors with groups.

### **ROUTES:**

As in past years, we will choose our route from several exciting options. Routes may range from 1,400 feet to over 6,000 feet above sea level. Expect about 5-8 miles of hiking each day, though some days may be shorter.

### **ARRIVAL TIME:**

Please arrive at Tremont on Thursday no later than 7:00 PM. When you arrive, drive past our wooden Stop sign. Down the drive you will see some parking on your left. This is directly

below the Activity Center. Go up the stairs from the parking area and meet Elizabeth in the Activity Center. On Thursday night you will be staying in our platform tents, which have bunks and access to a shower.

Our orientation will begin at 7:15 PM. We will get to know each other, check over personal gear, distribute food and group equipment, review the route, and discuss backcountry etiquette and low-impact camping techniques. In the morning we will have breakfast, finish packing, and depart for our trailhead.

**TRANSPORTATION TO TRAILHEAD:**

Tremont will provide transportation to the trailhead in a van. You can leave your vehicle safely here at Tremont.

**DEPARTURE TIME:**

The program will end at Tremont on Sunday late afternoon. Our shuttle will likely return to Tremont around 3:00 or 4:00 PM. You are welcome to take a shower in our dormitory before departing.

**PHONE:**

If someone needs to reach you during the program, a message can be left at our office number: (865) 448-6709 (Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00-4:30; Saturdays 10:00- 4:30). Please note that one is available in the office to retrieve messages after 4:30 on Saturday. For after-hours *emergencies only* the National Park Service may be called at (865) 436-1294.

We look forward to sharing the wonders of the Smokies with you. If you have any questions or special requests, feel free to call. See you soon!

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Davis  
Lead Teacher/Naturalist

**GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS INSTITUTE AT TREMONT**

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