



# Princeton-Blairstown Center

*"Promoting positive growth in youth through adventure-based experiential education"*

## 105 Years of Experience

For over 100 years, Princeton-Blairstown Center has provided adventure-based experiential education to youth at our 263 acre Blairstown Campus in the northwest corner of New Jersey near the Delaware Water Gap. What began in 1908 as a summer camp run by Princeton University students to give inner-city boys an opportunity to have a fresh air experience has evolved into a year-round program that offers transformative experiences that strengthen character, build leadership and encourage environmental stewardship. Today, Princeton-Blairstown Center offers structured programs that engage youth in developing tools identified as fundamental for educational success in the 21st Century and build on such strengths as:

- *Leadership*
- *Teambuilding*
- *Conflict Resolution*
- *Effective Communication*
- *Healthy Decision Making*
- *Group Social Awareness*
- *Problem Solving and*
- *Service Learning*

At Princeton-Blairstown Center, environmental education is a given. What better place to study about the natural environment than our 263 acre property filled with woodlands, Bass Lake, streams and wildlife? Creating awareness about the natural world and providing participants with the opportunity to know the world of nature and science firsthand form the base of all of our environmental education course offerings.

Regardless of learning style, our experiential and environmental education curriculum can have a significant impact on a young person's confidence and performance level. Princeton-Blairstown Center's courses offer sequential instruction in an integrated program designed to broaden a child's social and emotional learning, ultimately challenging each young person to reach his or her full potential.

# Experiential Education

## Course Offerings

### Teambuilding 101

In this introduction to teambuilding, participants face challenges and participate in activities that promote getting to know each other, trust, respect, communication, planning, decision-making and group accomplishment. This course helps participants begin to bond as a group and deepen their understanding of team unity.

### Teambuilding 201

This experience builds upon the offerings of Teambuilding 101, by providing more rigorous challenges to the team; including outdoor living and campfire cooking. Participants have the opportunity to set both individual and team goals, while supporting the team as a whole. An emphasis on group social awareness is developed within activities during this course. High ropes elements, such as Giant's Ladder and Wilder Woozy, that require partner work and the Flying Squirrel and M Belay, that require team assistance are also offered. The Wall is a great culminating event for a group focused on teambuilding.

### Leadership 101

In this introduction to leadership, participants learn the basics about various leadership styles. Through a series of initiatives and low-ropes course elements, participants engage in activities that require them to be a leader at times and a follower at times, thus allowing them to see both sides of the leadership coin. This course helps participants find their own personal leadership style.

### Leadership 201

This experience builds upon the offerings of Leadership 101, by providing more leadership opportunities to individual participants and the group as a whole. Participants may be asked to lead a hike or activity for the group. Through our process of debriefing, each participant leader will be provided with timely and genuine feedback on their leadership. Leadership 201 also includes a more in-depth discussion and activities regarding conflict resolution. This class helps participants understand and improve their own leadership style and is a great course offering for peer leader groups and student government groups.

### Problem Solving 101

In this introduction to problem solving, participants are engaged in initiatives and low-rope elements that are designed to test their critical thinking and problem solving skills. Whether they are challenged with the Line Up Log, Three Islands or Elephants Graveyard, participants must work together to find the solution. Participants will learn to brainstorm solutions, hypothesize risk and ultimately find their way. This course helps participants begin to understand the basics of problem solving and appropriate risk taking.

### Problem Solving 201

Building upon Problem Solving 101, this experience provides a series of more vigorous challenges, including the Log Jam, Nitro's Crossing and Towers of Brahma. Requiring heightened levels of communication, planning and trust, this course is great for upper-classman and those who have visited PBC before. With the increased degree of difficulty of the challenges, healthy decision making and risk taking are key components of Problem Solving 201.

### Communication 101

In this introduction to communication, participants begin with a full understanding and create a visual Full Value Contract specifically on communication within the group. Then through a series of initiatives and low-rope elements, participants will be required to effectively communicate with each other to successfully complete challenge after challenge. This course helps participants learn the valuable communication skills of listening and respect.

### Communication 201

This experience builds upon Communication 101, by introducing the simple, yet effective, tool of a blindfold. Participants will spend half of their time blindfolded, having to rely on their partner to help them navigate the Blind Maze or Minefield elements. Those participants not blindfolded will have to find a way to effectively communicate with their blindfolded partner. Many of the same elements used for teambuilding, leadership and problem solving can be used with blindfolds to help deepen the need to communicate effectively. Participants will not only improve their communication skills, they often leave with a deeper understanding of their senses and the lives of those without full use of all their senses.



## **Adventure 101**

In this introduction to group problem solving, participants face challenges and participate in activities that develop trust, cooperation, leadership, communication, planning, decision-making and group accomplishment. Individual self-confidence and creativity are also fostered. This is a great course for multi-day trips to PBC that incorporate components from the above courses. This course helps participants feel good about themselves, each other and the outdoors.

## **Adventure 201**

A logical sequel to the Adventure 101 course, Adventure 201 activities involve greater risk taking and more physically demanding challenges. Participants have the opportunity to set individual and group goals, while always supporting the group as a whole. Some of the more challenging low-rope elements include Fidget Ladder, Porthole, Seagull Swing, Swinging Log and the Wall. High rope elements that may be included include the Bird's Nest, Giant's Ladder, Pirate's Crossing, Target Jump or Wilder Woozy. This is a great course selection for groups that have visited PBC before and are here for more than one day.

## **Service Learning**

Under the guidance of our Facility Management and Program Teams, PBC offers a variety of service learning opportunities and projects. Ranging from work in the Stamp Garden to conducting trail maintenance on one of our many trails on property, let us help you achieve dynamic results by providing an enriching community service project to your participants.

## **Garden Study**

This course will introduce participants to the Stamp Garden at PBC, allowing them to gain hands-on experience with botany and horticulture. Participants will learn about soil and composting, as well as basic garden management. Depending on the season, participants may be able to taste the fruits of their labor.

*NOTE: These are the introductory programs in each area. For returning or advanced-level participants, PBC offers highly-customized advanced level courses. Please contact Roberto Gil Jr. ([rgil@princetonblairstown.org](mailto:rgil@princetonblairstown.org).) to custom design the course work for your group.*

# Environmental Education Course Offerings

## Forest Ecology Study

PBC is the perfect place to study the forest closely, as our classroom is our 263 acres of property. This hands-on course allows participants to understand the relationship between the forest and humans, and the importance to our wildlife in many ways. Tree and leaf identification will be included so that participants understand the differences between deciduous and coniferous trees and their respective roles in the forest. Participants can also learn the life story of a tree by looking at a cross-section of a tree.

## Wetlands Study

Bass Lake and Blair Creek offer the perfect location for participants to discover the wetlands local to PBC. Participants will gain a better understanding of how everything they do to the environment impacts a much larger area than they could have guessed, from a forest bog all the way to the ocean. Spending time studying Blair Creek, participants will learn about leaf packs and bio indicators that indicate changes in water quality. Bass Lake offers a great opportunity to study pond ecology.

## Wildlife Adaptations Study

This course will introduce participants to the concept of genetics. Participants will learn how plant and animal adaptations make them especially capable to survive in their specific environment. By exploring the various animal life on property, and their bio artifacts, participants will better understand how animals adapt to the environment they live in. An extension of this course may include discussion of genetics in human beings, like eye color.

## Birds

This course looks at the birds local to PBC and common in the Northeast. Participants will discuss habitats, ranges and field markings of various local and migratory birds. They will learn how to effectively use binoculars, field guides and the basics of bird identification. They will also study the diet of owls through the dissection of sterilized owl pellets.

## Reptiles and Amphibians

The course looks at the amphibians and reptiles local to PBC and common in the Northeast. Participants will discuss habitats and food chains for the reptiles and amphibians.

## Insects

What better place to study entomology than the natural environment, filled with insects. Participants will use nets and field guides to collect and identify insects local to PBC.

## Watersheds and Our Drinking Water

This course helps participants to understand that since we all live in a watershed we all have a responsibility to keep it clean. By the use of watershed models and PBC's own topography, participants will understand where their water comes from and their impact on the environment. Participants can also learn about the different methods used to clean water, and also gain an understanding of how difficult it is to keep water clean.

## Sustainability and Alternative Sources of Power

Sustainability is the capacity to endure. In ecology the word describes how biological systems remain diverse and productive over time. PBC offers a great opportunity for discussion and hands-on discovery of sustainability in action; whether looking at our composting area or studying our garden, participants will learn how we can make a positive impact on our environment. PBC also provides the perfect place to discuss and learn about alternative fuel sources, through our use of solar panels and dam-driven hydroelectricity.

## Geology and Soil Study

PBC's Blairstown Campus is the ideal place to study the difference between sedimentary, metamorphic, and igneous rocks because they are all around us. Participants receive the hands-on ability to enhance their classroom lessons and perform some of the tests used to determine rocks from minerals in the field. Participants can also closely study and contrast the soil found in a forest, field and wetland.



# Outdoor Education and Expeditions at Princeton-Blairstown Center Course Offerings

## **Orienteering 101**

Participants are challenged to use a map to find locations on PBC's property. Before the group departs for their location, they are taught how to correctly interpret a map and its relationship to the terrain. Orienteering supports group skills in areas such as planning, decision making, goal setting and leadership.

## **Orienteering 201**

Building upon the skills learned in Orienteering 101, participants are placed somewhere on the PBC 263 acre property and must find their way back to a central location. This course is a great way to wrap up the orienteering and compass learning participants have gained, putting their skills to the test.

## **Outdoor Cooking**

The course incorporates a few different program topics into one course. Participants learn the history of fire-making and the basics for campfire building. They will also learn basic food handling skills and will have the opportunity to cook and eat their own edible creations.

## **Outdoor Survival**

This course also incorporates a few different program topics into one course. Participants learn the history of fire-making and the basics of campfire building. They also learn how to create a primitive shelter out of items found in the environment. During the winter months, additional cold weather skills could be learned like fire-making, winter shelters and the like.

## **Overnight Camping**

In this course, participants aged 13 and older will challenge their limits physically and mentally as they experience first-hand the basics of backpacking, hiking in the woods, setting up camp, preparing meals and breaking camps. This course helps develop important life skills such as logical decision-making, effective problem solving and working as a group. It also addresses principles of preservation and ecology as the participants learn the basics of Leave No Trace camping.

## **Raft-building**

This course is a great option for teambuilding, creative thinking and problem solving. Participants are provided with a limited supply of materials and may supplement their materials with resources found in nature. The goal is simple, build a raft that floats and could be used to move supplies from one side of Bass Lake to the other.

# Expeditions

PBC is proud to offer a selection of expedition options based on age, skill level and number of nights. Whether the expedition is focused on hiking, canoeing or both, PBC has the right expedition for your group. We can offer experiential education focused expeditions on the Appalachian Trail such as teambuilding or environmental education expeditions with a focus on the ecology of the Appalachian Trail. No special equipment is needed, as PBC has everything your group needs to succeed in this endeavor.

## Day Hikes

With our proximity to the Appalachian Trail, as well as a state forest, we can offer a number of great off property hikes. With over 17 routes, varying in length and difficulty, we can plan a day hike that best meets your group's skills and experience, while providing a great challenge. Here are a few of the routes we can offer.

- Camp Road to Blue Mountain Lakes Road, 7.3 miles – 4 to 5 hours. Hike part of the Appalachian Trail (white). 400 foot rise in elevation. As you walk along the ridge, you will have great views. Relatively flat hike for the day – ridge walk.
- Camp Road to Millbrook Road, 3.5 miles – 2 to 3 hours. Hike part of the Appalachian Trail (white). As you walk along the ridge, you will have great views. 400 foot rise in elevation. Possible addition: Rattlesnake Swamp Trail (orange) offers about a 300 foot descent and a 300 foot ascent back up to Catfish Firetower. This addition will add just over 2 miles to the hike.
- Coppermines Trail to Blue Mountain Lakes Road, 7 miles – 6 hours. Starting point is 45 minutes away. Coppermines Trail (red) to North on Appalachian Trail (white) to Blue Mountain Lakes Road. First few miles are a gradual uphill ascent with a 1000 foot rise in elevation. Ridge walk for the rest of the day with drops and rises of about 100 feet.

## Backpacking

Let PBC coordinate a great overnight backpacking trip on the Appalachian Trail for you. Trips can range from overnight to a weeklong trip. With access to over hundreds of miles of hiking trails in the area, we can plan a trip that will push your group to work together to set up/breakdown camp, cook and truly build team consensus and skills. Below, you will find a sample of the 1, 2 and 4 night trips we can offer.

- Camp Road to Crater Lake, approximately 10 miles, 2 days. Hike the Appalachian Trail (white) beginning at Camp Road. Day 1 features 6.8 miles beginning with a 400 foot rise in elevation. Walk along the ridge for great views. Decline to Millbrook Road for road crossing and then prepare yourself for an





incline afterward for approximately 1 mile until you hit the ridgeline. Camp off the trail with a view of Fairview Lakes. Day 2 features a relatively flat 3 mile hike to Crater Lake, where you will be whisked off to PBC for showers and lunch.

- Crater Lake to Sunrise Mountain, just over 14 miles, 3 days. Hike the Appalachian Trail (white) beginning at Crater Lake, where after a small uphill hike, you will hike along the 1500 foot ridgeline until you get to Brink Road shelter, approximately 5 miles, where you will set up camp for the night. After a great night, get ready for incredible views as you leave Brink Road Shelter and hike the AT for 6.7 miles today until you find the Gren Anderson Shelter, where you will set up camp for night two. Today's hike features a gain of 1056 feet and a loss of 890 feet, as you take in the views of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. Your final day of hiking has you crossing Sunrise Mountain, where you will have lunch at the beautiful pavilion at the summit.
- High Point State Park to Millbrook Road, approximately 29 miles, 5 days. Spend 5 days on the Appalachian Trail starting at High Point State Park at an elevation of 1500 feet. Camp out at Rutherford shelter on night one. Day 2 features slight ups and down to Gren Anderson shelter, a loss of 200 feet. Continue south from Gren Anderson shelter to Brink Road shelter, featuring both elevation gains and losses, experience the highs and lows of mountain hiking. After a night spent at Brink Road shelter, hike the Appalachian Trail near Buttermilk Falls and spend your last night off trail near Blue Mountain Lakes Road. Your last day of hiking features a gradual loss of 200 feet in elevation as you descend from Blue Mountain Lakes Road to Millbrook Road and PBC.

### Canoeing

With the Delaware River in close proximity, let PBC plan an exciting river expedition for you. With over 47 different access points, 17 of which offer camping sites, we can plan a leisurely day trip to a more strenuous 5 day, 4 night canoe excursion or anything in between. Give us a call and let us help you explore the river Washington crossed. Below are samples of the trip's itineraries.

- Poxono boat launch to Kittatinny Point Visitor Center, 8 miles, 5.5 hours with lunch. This portion of the Delaware River features low flow conditions and calm waters. This trip is ideal for beginners. For an even shorter trip, you can go from Poxono to Worthington, or Worthington to Kittatinny, cutting the trip nearly in half.
- Dingman's Ferry Access to Poxono Access, 18.5 miles, 2 days. Spend 9 miles on the Delaware River on Day 1 while you face some moving water, including small riffles and class 1 rapids. River depth

varies and may have to walk boats in some shallow areas. Camp out at Valley View. Day 2 features similar river/water conditions as you canoe another 9.5 miles to Poxono Access for pick up.

- Matamoras to Poxono, 36 miles, 3 days. Day 1 features some moving water, including small riffles and class 1 rapids, as you travel the Delaware River from Matamoras to Sandyston. Day 2 has you canoeing in similar conditions from Sandyston to Peters campsite, the New Jersey side. Your final day, features similar river conditions as you travel to Poxono access for pick up.

## Trail & River

Want to get the best of both worlds? Allow PBC to plan a trail and river expedition for you featuring some of the above trips. Length and difficulty of course can be suited to your group's needs and abilities.

## Rock Climbing

Had your fill of the high rope elements at PBC? Let us plan a trip to Rick's Rocks for your climbing pleasure. Rick's Rocks is a natural rock formation, a short hike up the Appalachian Trail from Millbrook Road. Rick's Rocks features two climbing sides, both approximately 80 feet. For an easier challenge, climb the natural crevice up and take in incredible views before descending back to base. The right side features a more challenging climb, with a flatter surface and more difficult ascent. Again, the sense of accomplishment and spectacular views are worth the struggle.

## Retreat Accommodations

Accommodations at the Blairstown campus are comfortable and close to nature. We can house up to 120–130 people. We have 10 beautiful log cabins that are each outfitted with 6 bunk beds and can sleep 12 people. Wood stoves in the cabins make winter stays cozy. The cabins each have a front porch and a view of Bass Lake. Two washhouses serve the site with clean, modern facilities. We also have several lodges with indoor facilities. For those groups seeking a camping experience we offer many camp sites to choose from with campfire rings and kitchen platforms.

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To book your program, please contact Pat Karl for a customized approach to your budget and needs at [pkarl@princetonblairstown.org](mailto:pkarl@princetonblairstown.org) or 908-362-6765 x1.

To learn more about PBC, visit our website at [www.princetonblairstown.org](http://www.princetonblairstown.org).

To learn more about customized faculty and staff professional development trainings, please contact Roberto Gil Jr. at [rgil@princetonblairstown.org](mailto:rgil@princetonblairstown.org) or 908-362-6765 x4.

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