



Middle School Adventure 1

Upper San Juan River Expedition Description

June 4 - 8, 2026

Ages 11-14 years old

1. Receive Expedition Description

- Letter from Executive Director
- Expedition Details
- Frequently Asked Questions
- How to Pack & Packing List

2. Apply & Pay Deposit Online

- Please follow the link on the GCY website to submit your application.
- Your deposit of \$400 (\$50 if applying for financial aid) is required with your application to secure your place.
- If you have questions about paying your deposit, please ask the GCY Office.

3. Complete Pre-Trip Requirements

- Plan and carry out your Service and Youth Earnings Requirements. Engaging with and responding to weekly emails before the expedition will fulfill your Educational Requirement.

4. Final Payment & Preparation

- Your final payment and any outstanding paperwork are due at least one month before your expedition (**May 4th, 2026**). You may [make payments on the GCY website](#).

5. Enjoy your GCY Expedition!

Please contact the GCY Staff with any questions
928.773.7921 • expeditions@gcyouth.org



2131 N First St Flagstaff, AZ 86004 Phone: 928.773.7921 Fax: 928.774.8941
office@gcyouth.org www.gcyouth.org

Dear Parents & Guardians,

Welcome to Grand Canyon Youth! We are so pleased to have your youth joining us for a life-changing adventure.

Grand Canyon Youth (GCY) is a nonprofit organization based in Flagstaff that provides outdoor experiences to young people ages 10-19. We believe that all young people can benefit from time spent in natural places. GCY serves schools, groups, and youth from across the country.

Our programs are educational in nature: in addition to exploring the outdoors, your youth's journey with us will include hands-on science, art-making, time for reflection, teamwork, and much more.

For over 25 years, GCY has run hundreds of expeditions with thousands of participants from across the country! Our office staff will guide you and your youth every step of the way as you prepare for their adventure. Thank you for choosing to send your youth on a Grand Canyon Youth expedition. Nature and wilderness have the power to transform lives, and we are honored to share this opportunity with your youth.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions as you prepare your youth for their GCY expedition.

Sincerely,



Emma Wharton, MSW
GCY Executive Director

In service to our mission and values, GCY would like to acknowledge that this expedition visits the ancestral homelands of the Nucu (Ute), Pueblos, Diné (Navajo), Hopitutskwa (Hopi), and Nuwuvi (Southern Paiute) peoples, past and present. We recognize with gratitude the people who have stewarded these lands since time immemorial and the vibrant Native communities who make their home here today.

Connect with GCY





**Middle School Adventure 1
Upper San Juan River
Thursday, June 4th - Monday, June 8th, 2026**

Expedition Details

Total Price per Participant: **\$860**

Deposit:	\$400	Due: With application
Final Payment:	\$460	Due: May 4th, 2026

**Financial aid may be available for this expedition. If requesting financial aid, your deposit is adjusted to \$50. Find the Financial Aid Application at the end of the online Youth Application.*

Expedition Begins

12:30 pm, Thursday, June 4th, at the Grand Canyon Youth office (2131 N. First Street, Flagstaff). Dress in what you plan to wear camping (quick-dry clothes, hiking shoes, and layers). Make sure you have two full water bottles. After a short orientation, you will get into vans, eat lunch (provided by GCY), and head to Sand Island near Bluff, Utah, for the night!

Expedition Returns

Approximately 4:30 PM, Monday, June 8th, at the Grand Canyon Youth office.

Parents/Guardians will be called or texted if participants are returning more than a half-hour late or early.

What sets Grand Canyon Youth apart?

GCY provides some of the only access to the rivers and canyons of the Southwest dedicated to youth programming. We are committed to serving youth from a variety of backgrounds, so anyone who is interested has the chance to participate. Additionally, by completing GCY's Pre-Trip Requirements - community service hours, youth earnings, and an educational component - participants gain a strong sense of ownership over their program. GCY supports each expedition financially by offsetting about half of the trip price with money from donors, grants, and other fundraising efforts. All of this makes GCY stand apart and provide unique, educational, high-quality expeditions.

About the Middle School Adventure Expedition

Participants sign up independently from all over and come together to join in this shared experience. Some may already have outdoor experience, while for others, it may be their first time exploring the outdoors and camping. Everyone is welcome to participate; you will work together to develop teamwork skills and build a community. Expect to be involved with several science and educational projects on this expedition.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this expedition right for me?

- GCY does have very specific physical eligibility requirements. Please read them carefully here: <https://gcyouth.org/essential-eligibility>
- Our expeditions are for curious, enthusiastic individuals with a desire to discover the educational power of the river; no camping or river experience is required.
- You don't need to be super athletic, outdoorsy, or outgoing to enjoy this experience: you just need a sense of adventure, the willingness to exert yourself, and the desire to give back to your community and work as part of a team.
- We can accommodate many special needs; ask for additional information if needed.

How do I get there?

Youth come from all over to participate in our Grand Canyon expeditions! You are responsible for your own travel to and from Grand Canyon Youth's Flagstaff office, including any overnight arrangements needed before or after the expedition. Travel to and from the river from our office is provided.

What are we going to do out there?

Being in nature means taking a break from the hustle of everyday life. You will spend your days sharing meals, playing games, hiking to incredible vistas or cultural sites, learning about the place, and having a lot of fun! Everyone works together: setting up camp, doing science projects, cooking dinner, and washing dishes. Come ready to work & learn!

Who is coming with me?

Your group will include youth from across the country – sometimes from across the world! Each expedition has a Trip Coordinator, an adult leader in charge of helping you prepare and making your expedition successful! Your Trip Coordinator will communicate with you prior to the expedition and be your main group leader throughout the expedition. At the river, you will meet your guide crew. Our guides have a passion for working with youth. Many GCY guides are alumni of our expeditions! You may also have scientists or community experts along for the expedition.

How difficult will the expedition be?

It is helpful to be in decent physical condition for your adventure. You will be outside, active, and in the hot sun every day. This is part of the fun, but it can be challenging. Having worn-in footwear and knowing how to stay hydrated are great places to start. Besides rafting and hiking, plan on being involved in loading and unloading boats, packing and unpacking gear, and setting up and taking down camp. Even if you're not 'outdoorsy', do not know how to swim, or have never camped before, everyone can participate and succeed!

What if there is an emergency?

Most emergencies can be prevented. GCY field staff will give safety orientations once youth reach the destination. Everyone is encouraged to take extra care looking out for themselves and adhering to safety guidelines. GCY field staff are certified Wilderness First Responders, and travel with a satellite phone and first-aid materials. Field staff and Trip Coordinators will reinforce safety guidelines throughout the trip. If there is an incident, the GCY office staff will work with guides to organize support. If you are nervous about any aspect of the expedition, please contact us for more information.

What is the weather going to be like?

The weather in the Southwest is as unpredictable as the place itself. Prepare for all kinds of weather, and to be outside all day every day. Your expedition could be hot and sunny, cold and drizzly, or both! Pack layers to help you adjust to the range of temperatures and conditions. You can check the weather prior to your expedition by searching the forecast for **Mexican Hat, Utah**.

Find more Frequently Asked Questions at: www.gcyouth.org/expeditions/individual-expeditions/#FAQs

Packing for Your GCY Expedition

Middle School Adventure

How to Pack: Space is limited, pack as lightly as possible!

You need two bags for this expedition. All of your personal items should be packed into a plastic **trash/yard bag, pillow case, or soft gym bag** labeled with your name. This will be your "camp bag." GCY provides a waterproof dry bag or "blueberry" to pack your camp bag into when you get to our office.

Your second bag is a **small school-sized backpack**, or "day pack." Please avoid rigid packs designed for electronics. You will receive a smaller dry bag to place this day pack in; however, since it will be with you and accessible throughout the day, keep in mind that things in it may get wet.



Left: Your "camp bag" with personal items will be packed into a dry bag, then rolled and buckled to stay dry.

Right: A school backpack works perfectly as a "day pack."

**Bags are not to scale*

GCY will provide...

A Personal Flotation Device (PFD), river helmet, dry bags for your personal gear, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, and ground tarp. Tents are available, but most groups will sleep out under the stars! Other gear coming along includes boats, a full kitchen, an outdoor bathroom ("groover"), all food and snacks, first aid supplies, drinking water, and a kit of games, books, and art supplies.

Borrowing from GCY

Please check with GCY before purchasing any items: we have many items available to borrow at our warehouse, including river shoes and rain gear. We know that kids grow quickly and purchasing outdoor gear can be expensive. Stop by GCY to try things on; otherwise, we can set you up on day one!

Do Not Bring

If you do not see an item on the Equipment List, it is because **we have intentionally left it off**. Avoid bringing heavy clothing, towels, jeans, nice shoes, or leather boots. GCY expeditions are intentionally technology-free, so please do not bring any electronics (cell phones, gaming devices, headphones, etc.). Anything you bring may get lost or ruined! Also leave behind all money, wallets, and other valuables (if traveling independently, bring enough money for your meals, a post-expedition shower, and incidental expenses). GCY will provide plenty of snacks, so unless you have discussed the topic with GCY due to food allergies/intolerances, please **leave all food and drinks** at home as well.

We will meet in Flagstaff for a brief orientation and gear check before traveling to Sand Island to camp. Please arrive wearing items from the following packing list.

Middle School Adventure Packing List

Medications

- ★ **Please bring TWO SETS of any prescription and/or critical medications** (inhalers, Epi-pens, daily medications, etc.). One set will stay with you, and the other will be stored by your guides.
 - **REMINDER: Youth must be able to manage and administer their own medications.**
- ★ **Additional personal medications:** over-the-counter medications or supplements as needed.

Day Pack (small backpack):

- ❑ **Sarong / lightweight cotton pants:** Bring 1 for sun protection and cooling off. Lightweight scarves or hospital scrub bottoms work well.
- ❑ **Rain gear:** 1 Rain jacket (no ponchos) & 1 pair of rain pants (yes, even in summer).
- ❑ **Sun hat:** With a large brim and chin strap. Wearing a hat is required.
- ❑ **Sunglasses and retention device (strap):** Chums or Croakies, for example.
- ❑ **Eyeglasses:** If needed. If you wear contacts, bring an extra set and backup glasses, just in case. MUST have a retention device/strap for eyeglasses (Chums or Croakies, for example).
- ❑ **Water bottles:** 2 Nalgene-type screw-top plastic bottles. You need at least 2 liters. Camelbaks or other hydration packs are not recommended.
- ❑ **Locking Carabiners:** 2 metal clips (at least 3 inches long and locking) that let you attach your day bag and water bottle to boats. Find them at outdoor shops. Do not need to be climbing grade.
- ❑ **Bandana:** Bring 1 to wet and tie around your neck, under your hat to keep cool, or use as a washcloth.
- ❑ **Waterproof disposable cameras:** (optional) Large or expensive cameras are not recommended.
- ❑ **Sunscreen:** At least a 6 oz. bottle with high SPF. Do not bring spray sunscreen.
- ❑ **Lip balm/Chapstick:** must have SPF.
- ❑ **Bug Spray:** optional but useful if the bugs are biting!

In your Trash/Yard Bag, Pillow Case, or Small Soft Duffel (Camp Bag)

- ❑ **Quick-dry shorts:** They should be made of nylon or fast-drying material (not cotton!). Athletic shorts, swim trunks, or leggings all work well. Bring 2-3.
- ❑ **Sun shirts/Sun hoodies:** Long-sleeved, lightweight, cotton shirts are ideal for sun protection. Button-up dress shirts work well. Wearing shirts is required. Bring 2-3.
- ❑ **Lightweight fleece jacket:** Bring 1.
- ❑ **Socks:** Bring 2 pairs.
- ❑ **Underwear:** Bring 3-4 pairs.
- ❑ **Sports Bras:** Bring 2-3. We recommend a sports bra instead of a swimsuit top for comfort. If you choose to bring a swimsuit, please do not bring one that ties in the back.
- ❑ **Pajamas:** Bring 1 set of a T-shirt and lightweight pants or shorts to sleep in.
- ❑ **River shoes:** 1 pair of sport sandals with a thick sole and heel strap, such as Tevas, Chacos, or Keens.
- ❑ **Athletic shoes:** 1 pair of running/P.E. shoes with good traction for hiking. Should be well worn-in.
- ❑ **Personal toiletries:** Toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shampoo (optional), period care products (tampons with cardboard or no applicators are suggested), skin lotion (8+ oz - the desert is dry!). Choose travel-size and biodegradable products when available.
- ❑ **Headlamp:** Pack it with a new set of batteries.
- ❑ **Small journal and pen or pencil:** (optional).
- ❑ **Pillowcase/Small Travel Pillow:** There is no room for a regular pillow in your bag. We recommend stuffing extra clothes into a pillowcase to create a substitute.
- ❑ **Plastic bags:** (optional) These can separate dirty and clean clothes in your camp bag.