



**Live. Learn. Learn about Desert Sustainability**

Dear Citizen Scientists and Their Parents:

In our endless quest to understand where we live, we are venturing further afield next month, heading down from the mountains of our beloved Gila & into the low country around Tucson and into the Sulphur Springs Valley. It's time to learn about one of the most fascinating -- and, *biologically diverse* -- ecosystems on the planet, the Sonoran Desert Sky Island region, which is composed of geographically-isolated, high-elevation mountains floating in a vast sea of low-elevation desert.

***Here are the trip essentials:***

**Who:** Students for whom 2019 is their first autumn in high school

**What:** A 4 -day trip to the Sonoran Desert's Sky Island region

**When:** November 4-7, 2019 (8:30 on Monday Nov 4 through Thursday Nov 7 at 4:30)

**Where:** Chiricahua Mountains (Turkey Creek region), Dragoon Mountains (Eastern Chiricahua Stronghold), El Coronado Ranch, Coronado Dairy, Forest in the Desert, Catalina State Park, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Tohono Odham Gardens, Los Morteros —plus a side-trip to Tucson's Fourth St.

**Why:** To deepen our understanding of desert ecosystems and the myriad adaptations (*plant and animal... "human-beings" included*) that sustain life in desert regions.

Travel, as you know, can be both enlightening & expensive. As always, ALCS faculty have endeavored to keep our trips as affordable as possible, camping when we can, taking advantage of student discounts, and packing as much as possible into 4 days of desert travel. 2019 marks the 8th year that ALCS has sponsored a "Sonoran Sojourn" for freshmen, & we are hoping that all students in the class will be able to attend this worthwhile road trip that offers students a glimpse into an ecosystem very different from -- yet, paradoxically, closely related to -- our Gila home country. The cost of this trip comes to \$102 per student. This fee covers two nights of camping at Catalina State Park & one night in the Dragoon Mountains; admission to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum; the cost of driving the bus & 8 meals. We are asking students to bring a "sack lunch" for Monday & to buy dinner on

Fourth Street on Wednesday. (Numerous dinner options under \$10 are available on Fourth Street.) We will return to ALCS around 4:30 PM on Thursday, November 7. If coming up with the money to pay for this trip is a hardship, please consider either of two more affordable options. First, we have established a “barebones” cost for this trip of \$40. This covers your student’s food costs only. Second, eligible households receive a school subsidy of \$20, bringing their cost to only \$20. This option is available to families who qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. The Aldo faculty will never let a student’s financial challenges get in the way of attending a school trip.

This Sonoran Sojourn trip offers students an equal balance of time in the outdoors and research time in museums. Last year the weather was spectacular, but the principle of layering prevails when you’re in the desert: a jacket or fleece is necessary, as are light clothes & a hat for warm days. So, too, is a warm sleeping bag necessary. And, while rain is rare in November, it’s always possible—so students should bring rain gear.

A packing list is attached below. If you have any questions about the trip, don’t hesitate to contact Pete at 575-654-3622 or at [prankin@aldocs.org](mailto:prankin@aldocs.org).

With kind regards,

Pete Rankin, Maddy Alfero, Nathan Shay and Orien MacDonald (Trip Chaperones)

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**Sonoran Sojourn**     Parent Signature     *Please enter check-marks below, detach this slip along the line above & return this slip to Cathie Gomez at ALCS with your payment.*

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please check both of these first two items after you verify that they are true:**

All medical information is up-to-date in our school records.

Our address & phone number are up-to-date in our school records.

**And, check one of the following three payment options, which are explained in the letter above:**

Between \$40 and \$102 is attached. This sliding fee represents your student’s food costs plus some or all of the other trip costs.

\$40 is attached; this fee represents the cost of food and camping.

\$20 is attached; this option is for families that qualify for the free or reduced lunch program.

Parent signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# Sonoran Sojourn Packing List

*Items with an asterisk (\*) beside them are available on loan from the school. "Loaners" require that students offer \$50 collateral as a guarantee that items are returned in good condition. Please let Pete Rankin or Orien MacDonald know if you need any of these items.*

- Duffel or "softside" travel bag (or backpack\*)
- Tent\*
- Cool-weather sleeping bag in a stuff-sack\*; should be rated 20 degrees or lower
- Sleeping pad\* (more important than you might think)
- Cap with a brim
- Rain poncho *or* raincoat and pants
- 2 sturdy water bottles or Camelbak-style hydration system
- Headlamp or flashlight
- Sturdy close-toed hiking shoes
- Sandals for camp (optional)
- Mess kit (sturdy bowl, cup, spoon, fork)
- Trash bag
- Hand towel and washcloth
- Bandana
- A "sack lunch" for the first day of the trip
- \$7-10 for dinner in downtown Tucson on Wednesday, Nov. 6
- Toiletries: sunscreen, lip balm, soap, comb, toothpaste, toothbrush, deodorant
- Journal, along with at least one pen & pencil
- 2 optional items for camp:
  - Lighter (for fire-starting)
  - Pocket knife with a 3-inch (or shorter) blade
  
- In general, you need **clothes for 4 days**: the clothes you wear to school on Monday, & a couple changes of clothes for Tuesday, Wednesday, & Thursday. The key word is **layering**.
  - 2 pair of socks; cotton is not recommended
  - Warm jacket—but probably not a "winter coat"; cotton is not recommended
  - Warm cap; cotton is not recommended
  - 1 long-sleeved shirt; cotton is not recommended
  - 2 short-sleeved shirts; cotton is not recommended
  - 1 pair of pants; long pants that convert into shorts are ideal; cotton is not recommended
  - Underwear, of course—including some sweatpants or long-johns for sleepwear
  - Also, a watch would be handy, so that we can stay on schedule; we are visiting a number of sites that require us to keep a strict appointment.

**Note:** All secret stashes of food should be shared with the chaperones ☺