

Conservation & Border Studies

Program Orientation

Meet your group and Overseas Educators at the Tucson International Airport. Drive to a nearby state park featuring classic Sonoran desert landscapes, monolithic mountains, and epic sunsets. The group will be here for the first five days, building bonds, setting intentions, enjoying day hikes into mountains and canyons, and establishing a strong foundation for the upcoming journey. We will also discuss strategies and best practices for staying healthy and well while traveling during a pandemic.

Watershed and Soil Restoration, Endemic Plant Propagation, Patagonia, Arizona

The group will head west to the small community of Patagonia, Arizona. Less than twenty miles from the Mexico border, the town is known for placing an emphasis on community engagement and activism. Spending two weeks with a local non-profit, we'll dive into hands-on work, learning about conservation methods specifically in the context of soil, plants, and water. Especially in the desert, it is vital to slow the movement of water as a means to retain this precious resource and to slow erosion. Integral to that is the propagation of endemic plant species that will retain water, hold soil, and can withstand the harsh climate of the desert. The group will spend two weeks learning about the interplay of these processes, working on watersheds, identifying and collecting native plant seeds (fall) or planting native plant species (spring), and working in a local nursery that nurtures the plants through various stages of development. On weekends, the group will take time to explore local hikes, including sections of the Arizona Trail. We may also schedule a talk with local activists and take a trip into Nogales (a town that straddles the U.S.-Mexico border), or simply take care of group and personal needs.

Organic Farm and Permaculture Site, Patagonia, Arizona

Just a few miles down the road from our conservation site lies a desert oasis, a sustainable agriculture and permaculture farm founded in 2005. Nestled in one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet, the community has transformed the

land and has educated thousands of students interested in permaculture, organic food production, natural building, and connection with the natural world. Depending on current needs at the farm the group may work on water conservation, adobe brick building, food cultivation/harvesting, and any other projects that need tending.

Accommodation for our conservation and organic farm projects will be a dorm/bunk style arrangement, with immediate access to a bathroom and shower. In collaboration with your group leaders, students will create a meal plan and grocery budget and prepare meals in an onsite kitchen.

Outdoor Adventure

Arizona is truly a remarkable state, and it is now time to head to the backcountry and explore the rich ecological diversity and beauty of this region. Known as “Sky Island”, the Sonoran region is one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems on the planet! Depending on availability of water, trail maintenance, and snow, the group may hike parts of the Arizona Trail, head into the rugged Rincon Mountains, or hike in the Sonoran desert landscape, which is stunning during the Spring season. You’ll enjoy days of backpacking in the scenic landscapes and enjoy cooler nights with epic starry desert skies. In order to immerse ourselves and experience the wilderness fully, we’ll spend five to six days backpacking roughly six to eight miles per day. To deepen our experience, we’ll hike in the company of a local guide who offers insight into ecology, celestial and map/compass navigation, history and geology, and nature-based mindfulness practices.

Straw bale Structures and Earthen Plasters, Elgin, Arizona

Having learned about conservation, agriculture, and sustainability on a larger scale, we now spend time with an amazing family who graciously hosts us on their own property. Having run workshops throughout the world about straw bale construction and earthen plasters, we’ll get expert instruction on alternative methods of building, and live in earthen structures throughout their property. The Steen family offers a phenomenal and inspiring example of how intention, skill, and effort can lead us to live a life of beauty and abundance while staying aligned with principles of environmental sustainability.

Border and Immigration Studies in Tucson, Arizona*

Settling into a site near Nogales, we’ll spend a week exploring immigration in the context of human rights, government policy, race, culture, and identity, and systems of oppression. The group will engage with a local facilitator who promotes sharing of perspectives, challenges assumptions, and helps to develop strategic plans for actualizing change. Our time here will

be experiential and is intended to generate a deeper understanding of the difficulties and challenges people face on both sides of the border.

**Due to COVID-19, which has increased the risk to vulnerable populations, this portion of the program may be modified to avoid harm to marginalized communities.*

Grand Canyon National Park, Coconino County, Arizona

It's time for a road trip up to one of the seven natural wonders of the world! Covering a vast area of Northern Arizona, the Grand Canyon is one of the crown jewels of our national park system. The group will spend five days here, exploring the North and South Rims of this magnificent area, gazing at starry skies enhanced by higher elevation, and taking in the grandeur of this iconic setting.

Reflection Retreat, Cochise Stronghold, Arizona

It's nearing the end of our journey, and it's time to settle into a beautiful location designed specifically for reflection, introspection, and insight. You'll spend five days in a secluded retreat center, learning mindfulness practices, reflecting on our experiences, hiking in the canyons and mountains (literally right outside our doors), and discussing strategies for integrating our experiences into life back home. This will be a time to celebrate shared experiences and learning, look back on the joys and challenges of the journey, and to look forward to the next phase of our individual paths.

**Carpe Diem reserves the right to make changes to the program at any time, and indeed has the responsibility to do so in some instances; changes may be required to provide the best possible experience, protect the safety of participants, or respond to changes in weather or political conditions.*