

*Searching for Denali's Dinosaurs:
Backcountry Citizen Science
Field Seminar Overview & Arrival Information
August 9 - 12, 2010*



Please read the entire information packet carefully. This important information will help you plan and prepare for your time with us. If you have any further questions after you have read this packet, please give us a call at (907) 683-1269. We are here to help.

Activities

Field Seminars are active learning experiences. Participants must be capable hikers, in good health, and equipped for sudden changes in weather. This course includes hiking up to five miles with a full-sized backpack weighing up to 45 pounds. Participants will backpack and camp in the backcountry of Denali. The initial hike to our base camp will include at least 1,500 feet of elevation gain over uneven terrain. During the subsequent days, we will venture from our campsites with day packs for short hikes to our study areas. We will be hiking off trail on uneven tundra and forest terrains and may encounter wet tundra /forest conditions and stream crossings. **Participants should be in good physical condition.**

Participants will help the National Park Service search for and catalog new evidence of dinosaurs and plant life of the late Cretaceous Period. The very first dinosaur track in Denali was discovered by a student while on a geology course in 2005, and more evidence is found each summer. As citizen scientists on this course, participants will take part in the exciting and sometimes challenging work of documenting and gathering geo-referencing data from each discovery. The evidence gathered will help us better understand the environment and climate of 65 million years ago as well as give us insight into the warming climate of today.

Our Specific Field Tasks: Our tasks as field seminar paleontologists is to identify trace fossils, plant materials, body fossil material, or any remarkable bio-material as might be preserved in the rocks of the Upper Cantwell Formation. Once in the target area(s), the procedures will generally involve locating outcrops of rock where bedding and structures can be identified as well as looking for fossil materials as described above. If such fossil features are found, we will document (using pre-printed forms or write-in-the-rain notebooks) the features, types of rock they are in, the stratigraphy in the general area, the structure or attitude, and make a qualitative assessment of the condition of the feature. In addition, GPS coordinates will be obtained for the site, and multi-context photos will be taken. Further location information may be established via maps or air-photos/imagery. A form-checklist and the associated detailed description of the requirements will be provided to each participant.

End of Course Tasks: Upon returning to the MSLC, written and digital field data will be compiled for each site and transferred accordingly to become part of the NPS data set. All text will be relayed in the form or checklist format, either as written field notes or in digital form if collected in that manner. All photos will be correlated and labeled as to site association and then downloaded to an NPS storage device. If time and facilities allow, we will input site locations on GIS or other map programs to review/confirm locations and precision.

Tentative Daily Schedule

Schedules may be modified somewhat according to weather conditions and to fit the needs of the participants and instructor.

Monday	6:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. 8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.	Check-in at MSLC Introduction, backcountry orientation & overview Drive to MSLC Field Camp
Tuesday	8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Prepare for & depart for our backcountry camp Set-up camp & begin surveying study location
Wednesday	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Surveying & data collection of study areas
Thursday	8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Surveying & data collection of study areas Return to MSLC & review data Finalize field summary & course conclusion

Weather

The entire course takes place outdoors and activities will continue rain or shine. Weather conditions are unpredictable year round in Denali and therefore you must be prepared for a wide range of conditions. Temperatures can vary from below freezing to over 80 degrees F. Mosquitoes and other biting insects can be numerous anytime during the summer. Be prepared with adequate warm clothing, a hooded rain jacket, and rain pants. **Please carefully review the Clothing & Equipment List provided.**

Directions, Parking Area and Meeting Location

The entrance to Denali National Park is located at Mile 237 of the George Parks Highway. Follow the Park Road for approximately 1 mile to a roundabout, and make the first right turn off the roundabout. The MSLC is the first building on the right. However, because you will be parking overnight, **we ask that you park in the park concessioner's employee lot.** To get to this lot, pass the MSLC and continue to the second right turn. You will see a sign that says 'Service Road Buses Only'. Drive towards the bus yard and park in the first large lot on the left. This is a very busy area, so please yield to any buses or pedestrians. To walk to the MSLC, go back down the drive toward the park road and look for the MSLC in the direction of the roundabout. Please leave your overnight bags in your vehicle. We will load all bags directly into the MSLC van in the parking lot after our initial meeting in the MSLC.

Arrival

Beginning a half-hour before course start time, MSLC staff will greet you at the Center for check-in; your course begins at 6:30pm. The first evening will not include dinner; however, a small dessert and drinks will be offered during the introduction.

Accommodations in Denali

Your group will stay one night at the MSLC Field Camp at the Teklanika River Campground at mile 29 of the Park Road. The field camp has tent cabins, one large Yurt, and a small storage space for group gear. Each tent cabin has two sets of bunk beds with foam mattresses and pillows. The subsequent two nights will be spent at un-established backcountry campsites in traditional camping tents. While camping in the backcountry, participants will be sleeping on the ground and must provide their own sleeping pads as well as sleeping bags. In either camp, there is no electricity, plumbing or heated area, i.e., **no hot water** and **no showers**.

Lodging accommodations before and following the course are your responsibility. We do not endorse any particular lodge, cabins, or campground, but we are happy to provide you with a list of local accommodations upon request.

Meals

At the field camp our simple yet hearty meals will be served family-style. At our backcountry camp we will cook and eat in smaller 'tent groups'. All meals are provided from breakfast on Tuesday to lunch on Thursday. We have a limited ability to accommodate specific dietary requirements; therefore, **please notify the MSLC several weeks before the course of any specific dietary needs or restrictions**.

Transportation in the Park

We will be traveling as a group in a 12 passenger van when we go into the park. Due to the Park's backcountry limits we limit the number of participants to six.

Your Denali Visit & Your Expectations

MSLC courses are designed to immerse participants in a particular subject area, and therefore course activities and destinations in the park will be devoted to the course content. **If you are interested in seeing more of the park, please allow for extra time before or after the course for further exploration via the shuttle bus system or on foot.** Please contact us for advice or visit www.nps.gov/dena for further information.

Cancellation Policy

Cancellations that occur 30 days in advance of the course start date will be refunded the course fee, less a processing fee of \$25 per space. For cancellations within 30 days of the course start date, the entire fee will be retained unless we can fill your space. Alaska Geographic memberships are non-refundable and non-transferable. If we have to cancel a course, your entire course fee will be refunded. To process a cancellation, please email us at courses@murieslc.org or call (907) 683-1269.

Refunds will be credited to the credit card used during the original transaction. Refunds may also be applied to course substitutions within the same summer season. Please contact us to process a substitution or refund.

Insurance and Liability

Participants should have their own health and accident insurance. Also please consider travel insurance in case you have to cancel your trip due to illness or injury. All participants will be asked to read and sign the enclosed Acknowledgment of Risk form and complete the Health and Emergency Contact form. Please bring these forms with you to the first day of the course. Please contact the MSLC if you have any questions or concerns.

Important Phone Numbers

For the entirety of the course we will not have access to phones or cell phone coverage. Emergency and non-emergency messages can be passed through the MSLC office phone number (907) 683-1269. The MSLC is open daily from 9:30a.m. – 5:00p.m. After-hours emergency calls can be directed to the Denali National Park & Preserve Law Enforcement Ranger Division at (907) 683-9555.

Professional Development Credit

Optional professional development credit is available for this course. By choosing this option at the time of registration, you are officially pre-registered and pre-paid with the University of Alaska – Anchorage. A registration form will be sent to you prior to the course. Please fill it out and bring it with you on the first day of the course.