

## Questions Commonly Asked About the Wilderness Quest

**\*Briefly, what is a Wilderness Quest?** ...The Quest is a wilderness experience during which you have time to explore your relationship with nature and gain insights about the meaning of your personal life. Crossing a shallow river and leisurely backpacking a short distance into the Collegiate Peaks of Colorado provides the pristine mountain wilderness setting. A 3-night solo is part of the 7-day Quest. Just prior to solo, an optional summit attempt of a 13000' peak is offered for those looking for additional challenge. Those who would rather rest and renew are welcome to enjoy the sacred spaces near base camp. Group councils and teachings enhance the personal time.

Prior to the 7-day field experience personal preparation for yourself and with family and friends is invaluable. Consultations with me, readings and reflection, along with self-generated ritual and individualized outdoor activities enrich your Quest even before entering the wilderness.

On the final day soaking with the group in the "civilized" mineral hot springs after leaving the wilderness area, along with a meal together in town, allows the chance to gently reenter the life you left behind.

Follow up consultation with me is also included. At times, reentering the life you left behind can be more difficult than the leaving had been.

The size of the group questing is limited to 6 participants.

**\*Will the Wilderness Quest conflict with my religious beliefs?** ...I do not espouse any specific religion, path, or dogma. Your connection to the Divine is your personal preference. My function is to create a safe and supportive environment for your personal quest, and to present resources which you may choose to use in enacting your rite of passage. Some of the teachings you will encounter include reference to Native American traditions as is part of my heritage and training; however, this Quest is not considered a Native American stylized Vision Quest. Self-generated ritual and ceremony that has personal meaning for you is strongly encouraged.

**\*How safe is the Wilderness Quest program?** ...Although there is some risk involved in all wilderness trips, I take careful and extensive measure to ensure that everyone has a safe experience. In my 20+ year history of leading Quests, I have guided hundreds of people on these adventures, and have never had a serious accident or injury. In addition, my background as a professional mountaineering instructor and course director for the Outward Bound School here in Colorado for over 15 years, with an exemplary record for safety in the wilderness, also supports my ability to facilitate a safe Quest. I have a strong awareness of potential risks in this (very familiar to me) mountain setting. I am American Red Cross certified in first aid and CPR. Access to an emergency clinic and hospital is within two hours should evacuation from the field be necessary. We will follow "leave no trace ethics" as our standard for living in this wilderness, and respectfully befriend the wildlife and plants. Your medical history and current medical condition screening is required for participation. A "consent to provide first aid and liability release" form is also required (reference Preparation).

**\*What benefits have people gotten from Questing?** ...Insights into who they are and the direction they wish to go with their lives...self-confidence...renewed appreciation for family members and friends...preparation for doing something challenging...a new sense of what matters to them...the knowledge that they have done something different, something difficult, and done it well.

**\*What do most people think is the hardest part of the Wilderness Quest?** ...It depends on the individual. The most common answers to this question during the solo period include: loneliness, boredom, and for those who fast, lack of food. For those that choose to attempt the summit of the mountain, the challenge of off trail hiking on very steep terrain can also be difficult. For some who have never backpacked, carrying the 40 lb backpack-- although only a 1/2 mile--can be uncomfortable.

**\*Do I have to fast for three days?** ...No. Although fasting was a part of many traditional Vision Quests, this is a matter of individual preference. The benefits and drawbacks to fasting are thoroughly discussed during our consultations. Health considerations are paramount.

**\*What if I want to come back to base camp from my Solo early? Will I be seen as a failure?** ...No. The Quest is very much a personal experience. Success is determined by the individual participant him/herself.

**\*Do I have to be an experienced backpacker to participate?** ...No, not at all. I teach you the things you need to know; the hiking is fairly easy, less than a mile of gentle terrain to get to base camp. Crossing the shallow river to enter into our wilderness area is also done safely and requires no technical assistance.

**\*How far do people have to go from base camp to be alone on their Solo?** ...Aloneness is a feeling that cannot be measured by yards or miles. Some people go no more than a few hundred yards to find it; others range up to a mile from base camp.

**\*What is the ideal time for Questing?** ...Prior to, or during a time of transition—For example, when you are trying to decide what you want to do next; when you feel ready to explore becoming an adult; when you are about to make a career change; when you are relocating; when someone you love has left or died and for many other reasons that demand time and reflection in order to honor the various stages or life "chapters".

**\*Actually, my life is going pretty well right now. Does something have to be in transition in order for me to go?** ...Not at all. The Wilderness Quest is as much a celebration what we are as what we seek to become.

**For further information please contact me, Debra, at [earthritesnet@gmail.com](mailto:earthritesnet@gmail.com)**