



Environmental Traveling Companions (ETC)

Youth LEAD Field Instructor

Job Title: Youth LEAD Field Instructor
Reports to: Youth LEAD Program Manager
Classification: Seasonal - Summer Only

Organization & Program Description

Environmental Traveling Companions (ETC) is a volunteer-based nonprofit that provides the joy and challenge of outdoor adventures to people with all abilities and from all backgrounds since 1972. We inspire self-confidence, connection to nature, and community-based environmental stewardship through our accessible Sea Kayak Program, Rafting Program, and Youth LEAD Program.

The Youth LEAD Program (YLP) is one of ETC's three main programs. We provide impactful outdoor experiences for youth (ages 14-18) from historically marginalized cultural and economic backgrounds, focusing on technical outdoor skills, environmental education, socio-emotional growth, and leadership development. Our 14-to-21-day courses incorporate sea kayaking, whitewater rafting, and backpacking. Students learn about themselves, their community of peers, natural history, and environmental science through lessons, storytelling, community-building, and adventure in wilderness settings.

2026 Course Dates & Details

- All Field Instructors are required to attend a paid **5-day YLP Instructor Training** in the San Francisco Bay Area. (dates and details below)
- Before each course, Field Instructors are required to attend **3-4 preparation days** in our San Francisco office at Fort Mason Center, working alongside co-instructors and ETC staff to organize gear, meals, and plan lessons.
- After the course, Field Instructors are required to attend **one post-course debrief day** in our San Francisco office at Fort Mason Center.

Course	Dates	Activities & Locations
Field Instructor Training <i>(required for all)</i>	June 1 – June 5, 2026	June 1 & 2: Block Community Hub in Oakland • 9am - 5pm on June 2nd & June 3rd June 3-5: Camping at ETC River Camp in Lotus CA • All meals and transportation provided for this portion of training
14-Day Access to Adventure Course	Prep: June 9, 10, 12 Course: June 13 – June 26 Post: June 28th	Sea Kayaking to Angel Island and Whitewater Rafting on S. Fork of the American River at ETC River Camp
21-Day Sea to Source Course	Prep: June 16, 17, 18, 20 Course: June 21 – July 11 Post: July 13th	Sea Kayaking on Tomales Bay, Backpacking in the Sierra Nevadas and Whitewater Rafting on S. Fork of the American River at ETC River Camp
14-Day Sierra Exploration Course	Prep: July 2, 3, 5 Course: July 6 – July 19 Post: July 21st	Backpacking in the Sierra Nevada and Whitewater Rafting on S. Fork of the American River at ETC River Camp
14-Day Expedition Course	Prep: July 23, 24, 26 Course: July 27 – August 9 Post: August 11th	Sea Kayaking on Tomales Bay and Backpacking in the Sierra Nevadas

Positions

Each YLP Course has a team of one Lead Instructor, one Instructor, and one YLP Fellow Field Intern. This core Instructor Team is supported by 3-6 ETC Volunteers during the sea kayak and rafting portions of each Course (depending on the activities of the Course).

- The **Lead Instructor** position is for individuals with exceptional technical and interpersonal skills, advanced medical wilderness certification, and previous experience with ETC. Lead instructors will have the final say in risk management and decision making throughout the course period. Most Lead Instructors have worked a *minimum* of one Youth LEAD course or have extensive experience with another ETC program or programs alike. Lead instructors will provide direct mentorship to the fellow field intern as well as the co-instructor.
- The **Instructor** position is for individuals with experience and competence in the outdoor education and/or wilderness guiding fields, who hold a current wilderness medical certification. Instructors will work collaboratively with the Lead instructor in all course related decision making. Field instructors will also provide direct mentorship to the fellow field intern.
- The YLP Fellow Field Interns are youth who have participated in a YLP summer course and the YLP year round Fellowship Program. This role allows youth to practice their leadership skills towards the goal of becoming outdoor educators. (separate job posting)

Compensation

We are committed to equitable, transparent compensation and hiring practices. Compensation is determined based on a candidate's certifications, wilderness guiding and/or outdoor education, experience working with youth from historically marginalized communities, and prior involvement with Youth LEAD programs as an instructor, course participant, or youth fellow.

- All instructors will get paid our training rate of 160/day for 5 days of training
- Range for **Lead Instructors**: \$165 - \$180/day **for prep, course, and post days**
- Range for **Instructors**: \$145 - \$160/day **for prep, course, and post days**
 - **Early signing bonus**: \$100 per course if contract signed before February 28th, 2026
 - **Alumni bonus**: Instructors and Lead Instructors who are graduates of a Youth LEAD Course will receive an additional \$200
 - **Returner bonus**: previous YLP Instructors or Lead Instructors will receive an additional \$100 (cannot be combined with Alumni bonus)

Benefits

- Lunch stipend (\$10/day) for all Prep and Post days, and June 1 & 2 of training (all meals provided June 3-5 of Training)
- Stipends for travel and/or accommodation are available – [application here](#)
- Medical Certification scholarships are available (WFA, WFR and Mental Health First Aid) – [application here](#)
- YLP Instructors are invited and encouraged to join **ETC's Inclusion Training on May 15-17, 2026.**
 - All meals and camping provided for a weekend of community and professional development at gorgeous ETC River Camp in Lotus CA.
- Invitation to attend our community Sea Kayak paddle day for YLP alumni on 5/23/26.
- Spaces available for returning YLP Instructors at ETC Sea Kayak or River Guide School with scholarships available.
 - Sea Kayak guideschool (full scholarship)
 - April 2026: 4/10-12 & 4/25-26
 - Opportunity to become a paid Sea Kayak Trip Leader is dependent on experience and availability
 - River guide school (partial scholarship)
 - April/May 2026: 4/9-12 & 4/17-19, swift water training: 5/14-15
 - Opportunity to become a paid Trip Leader is dependent on experience and availability
 - Must be available to volunteer a minimum of 8 days during the season
- If interested, please email the Program Manager of the program you're interested in for more details: Sea Kayak: kayak@etctrips.org, River: riverprogram@etctrips.org

Responsibilities

- Attend mandatory paid field staff training (June 1-2, with overnight June 3-5).
- Work collaboratively and communicate compassionately with the core Instructor Team and 3-6 ETC Volunteer Sea Kayak/River Guides to safely instruct 10-12 high school students (ages 14-18) throughout the Course.
- Foster a meaningful, honest, and safe community that supports genuine learning in outdoor settings.
- Hold space for student strengths and growth areas, and offer consistent, positive guidance throughout all course activities.
- Teach technical and interpersonal skills that support participant safety, leadership development, group progression and overall personal growth.
- Learn and teach ETC environmental science and leadership lessons during field staff training to deliver engaging lessons and activities in the field.
- Prepare course components including: food packing, gear packing, lesson organization, and daily course flow (with support from ETC office staff).
- Demonstrate strong personal organization while living and traveling in campground and backcountry environments for 14–21 days, modeling these practices for participants.
- Responsibly operate a passenger van while transporting students during 3-5 transitional periods.
- Conduct at least one food purchase during the course, with the support from team members, students or YLP staff.
- Safely manage and supervise all activities according to ETC operating policies, protocols, and procedures.
- Responsibly care for all YLP gear and equipment, modeling proper practices for participants.
- Supervise and mentor high school aged YLP Fellow Field Intern who is a crucial member of the instructor team and part of ETC's Youth LEAD Fellowship Program.
- Participate actively in post-course evaluations and feedback sessions.

Qualifications

- Age 21+
- Current Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or higher; Wilderness First Responder (WFR) preferred
- Hiring is dependent on criminal background check and DMV driving check:
 - **Must have clean driving record**
 - **Must have 2+ years licensed driving experience**
- Ability to safely drive youth in a van for up to 6 hours with frequent stops
- Previous experience as a leader in a backcountry setting during extended expeditions
- Comfortable navigating on/off trail in alpine environments (for backpacking courses)
- Ability to cultivate a safe space to fit the needs of students from historically marginalized backgrounds through culturally relevant curriculum and discussion topics
 - For individuals identified with socially dominant groups (white, upper class, heterosexual, cis gender, etc), demonstrates a commitment to examining personal privilege and engaging in ongoing self-education about power dynamics relevant to this work
- Ability to communicate positively, show receptiveness to feedback, and excel in a collaborative, team-oriented environment
- Experience in leading outdoor activities and culturally relevant lessons that foster environmental curiosity, excitement, and healthy relationships
- Ability to practice patience, adaptability, and effective de-escalation skills in dynamic outdoor environments, especially when navigating challenges or heightened situations
- Ability to remain present, responsive, and focused with student participants for 14-21 consecutive days
- Open to different leadership styles and collaboration, celebrating individual uniqueness with the goal of creating inclusive and safe spaces

Additional Preferred Experience

- Experience as a sea kayak, backpack, and/or raft guide preferred
- Bilingual (English/Spanish)
- Certified in Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Class B Commercial Driver's License

Transportation and Lodging

While on a Course, all meals and camping accommodations are provided. Instructors must provide their own lodging and transportation to/from Instructor Training in Oakland on June 1 & 2, as well as the 3-4 preparation days before course and one post debrief day at the ETC office in Fort Mason Center, San Francisco. *If you need support with this, please submit a Travel and Lodging Stipend application (linked above).*

How to Apply

Thank you for your interest! Please send a resume and cover letter detailing your qualifications, related experience, and which course(s) you're interested/available to the YLP Program Manager, Yoseline Castillo, at ylp@etctrips.org. Stipend and/or scholarship applications must be sent to the YLP Program Manager for review.

Please email or call 415-474-7662 ext.16 with any questions.

Environmental Traveling Companions (ETC) is committed to creating equitable access to outdoor adventures for people of all backgrounds and abilities. We welcome applicants from communities historically underrepresented in outdoor recreation and **strongly encourage people of color and individuals identifying as LGBTQIA+** to apply. ETC is an Equal Opportunity Employer and considers all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, veteran status, or any other protected characteristic.

