



*"Cancer taught me about death. **FIRST DESCENTS** taught me how to live. Most valuable week of my life. I hope many others will be able to attend and benefit as I did." – Truffles*

Participant Recruitment Document

Overview of First Descents

- First Descents provides free outdoor adventure therapy for young adults, ages 18-39, with cancer.
- First Descents programs are all about having fun, getting outside, and pushing your limits through kayaking, rock climbing and other outdoor activities. Our camps are structured and designed with you in mind. There's no need to have kayaking or climbing experience. We know your body has been through a lot - we don't have any requirements for fitness. We encourage you to challenge yourself, but won't push you past your capabilities.
- All you need to bring is what you'd typically pack for a trip. First Descents has all the gear and necessary equipment to keep you safe, warm and relatively dry. We'll provide everything you need and teach you the skills, you just show up!
- Your week at camp will be full of activity but you'll have plenty of time to relax too. When we're not on the river or climbing, we hang out, hike, play volleyball, listen to music, etc.
- This is your week and we're here to support your experience. FD believes in an organic and individualized approach to healing through adventure and downtime.

There is no catch, you've done the hard part, the rest is on us! Just apply and we'll take it from there.

Overview of Programs

Kayaking:

- A 7 day immersive (no pun intended) course into the world of whitewater kayaking. You will start on a pond and by the end of the week you'll be kayaking class 2 and 3 whitewater.
- There is a down day in the middle of the week to try out other river crafts, or alternative activities.
- Other less challenging crafts are available (inflatable kayaks, 2 man kayaks with an instructor in the back and rafts) if you feel like you have met your goals for the week and want something a bit more relaxing.

Rock Climbing & Mountaineering:

- These are 6 day classes. The first 2 days are spent learning safety and technique. The 2nd half of the program is dedicated to applying those skills to summit a multi pitch ascent and abseil. There is the option for a down day or weather day in between. Depending on location and terrain, the week will focus on several different avenues of mountaineering and rock climbing - single pitch sport climbs, high quality boulder problems, technical hikes & summits, and multi pitch climbs.

Participant Testimonials

- *"Chemo is never easy, depression comes with the territory, isolation is inevitable and FD is especially great because it empowers individuals to get out and really live. That's beautiful. I learned to continue to live, to love and to trust. While that week specifically was pivotal, for me, The FD experience is still happening because of the friends I made." – 007, Double O*
- *"The experience was life-changing. I walked away renewed, a better version of my old self, with a new family. I learned to ask for help without fear of being judged." – Stiletto*
- *"First Descents is the most powerful organization I have seen. I attended First Descents and was blown away, not only by the staff and experience, but by the inspiring atmosphere that the campers help create. It provided an escape from treatment, motivating and EMPOWERING cancer survivors to beat their disease and take control of their lives." – Polish*

- *"Cancer took away my self-confidence. First Descents gave it back. They don't tell you to take it easy or baby you the way everyone else around you has. They want you to jump in and take control of yourself again." – Amber*
- *"I took a little piece from each camper that to this day continues to inspire me. Most importantly, I learned to love myself again. I have since completed a half-marathon, learned how to snow ski, continued my travels, and returned to the "social scene". My wonderful medical team in Miami may have cured me physically, but First Descents mended my battered heart and soul." – Gee Cee*

FAQS:

• **Am I eligible?**

- If you're between the ages of 18 and 39ish (yes, ish) and have been diagnosed with any form of cancer then, yes, you're eligible.

• **How much does it cost?**

- First Descents programs are free to all participants who are accepted. We ask that participants who are able pay just their travel expenses, however we do provide a limited number of travel scholarships for those who demonstrate financial need. We make every effort to not let monetary obstacles prevent people from participating in our programs. All first-time participants OR second-year participants still undergoing chemotherapy/radiation treatments are eligible for scholarships.

• **Am I healthy enough?**

- Questions about health, stages of treatment, specific needs and physical challenges are addressed on an individual basis. A competent medical professional who is knowledgeable about FD's programs will review each application to ensure that you'll be able to benefit from the FD experience. The FD staff can also answer questions about the physical demands of the programs.

• **Do I need to have kayaking and/or climbing experience?**

- Absolutely not! We'll teach you everything you need to know. The majority of First Descents participants are new to the sports.

• **Do I need to bring kayaking or climbing equipment?**

- First Descents provides all the equipment you'll need to keep you safe, warm and relatively dry!

• **I am out of shape. Will I be able to participate at camp?**

- Yes, of course. Your body has been through a lot and we understand that. We'll work individually with you to ensure you're comfortable with the level of activity and exertion. We encourage you to challenge yourself, and we'll push you to do so, but not past your capabilities.

• **Is there medical support at the camp?**

- Yes. There will be emergency medical support onsite at every program. Prior to attending, our medical review team will assess each application carefully, and communicate any concerns to each applicant's primary care physician.

• **What if I am currently on treatment?**

- As long as our medical review team and your physician feel that it is safe for you to attend and participate, we're all for it! We have participants in all stages of treatment and recovery, including recent amputees, those with special medical needs, etc. We are prepared to adapt to your specific needs.

How To Apply:

- Visit our website www.firstdescents.org, and click on "Join Us at Camp"
- Complete the online Participant Application.
- After we receive your application, we'll send you a link to the Physical Exam Form. Have your primary care physician complete the form as soon as possible to complete your application. Without the Physical Exam form, our review team cannot move forward with your acceptance!
- Wait to hear from us! You will hear from a member of the FD team within a week of applying.

2010 Camp Schedule:

- **Moab, UT** (Climbing): April 18 - 23, 2010 (Applications open January 15, 2010)
- **White Salmon, WA** (Kayaking): June 16 - 22, 2010 (Applications open January 15, 2010)
- **White Salmon, WA** (Kayaking): June 24 - 30, 2010 (Applications open January 15, 2010)

- **Kalispell, MT** (Kayaking): July 4 - 10, 2010 (Applications open January 15, 2010)
- **Kalispell, MT** (Kayaking): July 11 - 17, 2010 (Applications open January 15, 2010)
- **Kalispell, MT** (Kayaking): July 18 - 24, 2010 (Applications open January 15, 2010)
- **Vail, CO** (Kayaking): July 18 - 24, 2010 (Applications open February 15, 2010)
- **Vail, CO** (Kayaking): July 25 - 31, 2010 (Applications open February 15, 2010)
- **Vail, CO** (Kayaking): August 8 - 14, 2010 (Applications open February 15, 2010)
- **Vail, CO** (Kayaking): August 15 - 21, 2010 (Applications open February 15, 2010)
- **Vail, CO** (Kayaking): August 29 - September 4, 2010 (Applications open February 15, 2010)
- **Estes Park, CO** (Climbing): August 29 - September 3, 2010 (Applications open March 15, 2010)
- **Estes Park, CO** (Climbing): September 12 - 17, 2010 (Applications open March 15, 2010)
- **Estes Park, CO** (Climbing): September 19 - 24, 2010 (Applications open March 15, 2010)
- **Estes Park, CO** (Climbing): September 26 - October 1, 2010 (Applications open March 15, 2010)

Contact Information:

- Please email Whitney Lange, our Director of Programs with any questions. whitney@firstdescents.org