

### Overview

The North Cascades Alpine Backpacking and Canoeing course is an extraordinary expedition that combines beautiful environments and challenging activities with an intensive curriculum emphasizing leadership, character development, and an ethic of service. This course is designed for young teenagers seeking a life-changing, challenging adventure. In addition to learning technical skills in canoeing and alpine backpacking, you will learn methods of communication, conflict resolution, and decision-making. You will journey by canoe and by foot deep into the heart of Washington's stunning North Cascades mountains. You and your crew will learn who you are and what you are capable of by facing and overcoming challenges.

You don't need to have previous sea kayaking or mountain experience. We will teach you skills for wilderness travel—how to pack appropriately, paddle kayaks, set up tarps, backpack, climb, and navigate. The course also includes an emphasis on leadership, character development, and an ethic of service.

From getting up early, packing your bags and cooking breakfast to paddling a kayak or hiking up a mountain, traveling in the wilderness is demanding. It can take every waking moment to get from point A to point B. Past students and instructors agree that arriving physically fit will enhance your experience and ability to do well on the course and ultimately allow you to take full advantage of the expedition.

### Course Areas

**ROSS LAKE, WASHINGTON** – Accessible only by boat or trail, this glacier-fed lake borders the dramatic Pickets Mountain Range of the North Cascades. Ross Lake is 25 miles long, and extends across the border into Canada. It is nestled in the North Cascades National Park and the Pasayten Wilderness Area. Nearby Jack and Hozomeen Mountains rise 9,066 and 8,066 feet respectively, soaring up out of the



lake and crowning it with jagged ridge-tops. This part of the park is known for the stunning blue-green shade of the water and for the sheer cliff faces and deep glacially carved valleys. The area was made famous by the Beat Generation writer, Jack Kerouac whose writings were inspired by his work as a fire spotter at the Desolation Peak Lookout, on the east side of Ross Lake. Throughout your days on the lake, you may encounter any one of hundreds of natural wonders, including waterfalls flowing into the lake from the glaciers above, eagles soaring overhead in search of trout, and miraculously clear blue waters.

**THE NORTH CASCADES, WASHINGTON** – The North Cascades are called the “American Alps” for their rugged beauty and glaciated peaks. They remain some of the wildest and most untrammeled wilderness in the United States. Our course areas host the greatest concentration of glaciers in the “Lower 48” and are full of high mountain meadows peppered with wild flowers as well as some of the most scenic alpine climbing and backpacking routes in the United States. Our courses operate in the Pasayten

Wilderness and North Cascades National Park on the east side of the North Cascades and receive significantly less rainfall than the western coast of Washington. Temperatures typically range from freezing to 80 degrees Fahrenheit. This part of our course area is on the eastern side of the Cascades, and thus tends to be moderately dry. Early-season courses (May and June) may spend time camping on snow, while mid-summer courses tend to have more moderate temperatures.

### Course Activities

Some courses will begin with the canoeing section, while others will begin with backpacking.

**CANOEING SECTION** – During the canoeing section of the course, students will trade their backpacks for canoes and travel along Ross Lake. Students will learn the essentials of canoeing including boat packing, basic paddle strokes, rescues, and navigation. Campsites are sometimes on very small islands in the middle of the lake.



**ALPINE BACKPACKING** – Students will work together to explore the high mountain landscape of the North Cascades that surround Ross Lake. Students will learn the essentials of backcountry mountain travel necessary to carry them into remote meadows and high mountain vistas, including navigation with map and compass, Leave No Trace® camp craft, and backcountry cooking. Depending on the group and the conditions, students may attempt to summit one of the many rugged alpine peaks.

**PEAK ATTEMPT** – If weather, terrain, and student abilities permit, your course will include a peak attempt. Peak attempts are day-long ventures often entailing pre-dawn starts and require a high degree of personal and group tenacity. The peaks we attempt are challenging and beautiful, and often require scrambling skills, taught by our expert, experienced instructors. On backpacking courses we do not climb peaks that require technical gear or ropes.

**SOLO** – Service to others and environmental stewardship are core values of Outward Bound and are integrated into each course. Groups follow Leave No Trace ethics as service to the environment and engage in acts of service while leading and supporting fellow students. Designated service projects are coordinated with land managers like the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service to collaborate on land restoration projects. Additionally, students may have the opportunity to work alongside select social service agencies like nursing homes, hospitals, and organic farms. Students develop a value of service, seeing the impact of their actions firsthand, and transfer this desire to serve their communities back home.



**FINAL EXPEDITION** – Outward Bound believes that an appropriate amount of independence is a powerful educational tool. To deliver that benefit, Outward Bound purposefully and gradually transfers certain leadership responsibilities to the students, culminating with our “Final Expedition.” Near the end of course, your group may be given the opportunity to travel without your instructor’s direct guidance. Many of our students feel this phase of the course is the most rewarding, as the group learns to work together, problem solve, and accomplish a goal independently, while utilizing all the skills they have acquired during the expedition. Instructors maintain overall risk-management by using check-ins, careful route planning and accurate assessment of group abilities.

**SERVICE** – Service to others and environmental stewardship are cores value of Outward Bound and are integrated into each course. Groups follow Leave No Trace ethics as service to the environment and engage in acts of service while leading and supporting fellow students. Designated service projects are coordinated with land managers like the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service to collaborate on land restoration projects. Additionally, students may have the opportunity to work alongside select social service agencies like nursing homes, hospitals, and organic farms. Students develop a value of service, seeing the impact of their actions firsthand, and transfer this desire to serve their communities back home.

## OUTCOMES

This course provides an opportunity for students to learn and practice the ideas of leadership, character development, and service that are integral to Outward Bound. Students will develop and apply these skills in an expedition setting so that they can continue to grow once they return home. As a team, each group will work together to complete difficult tasks necessary for backcountry travel and expedition living. Instructors will work to challenge each student to try new things and step outside their comfort zones, as well as provide feedback that can be acted upon before course end.

**FINAL CHALLENGE EVENT** – We typically end our courses with a Final Challenge Event—an individual final physical push. This might take the form of a run or a triathlon-style challenge.

## Sample Itinerary

The following is an example of what your itinerary may look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, student skills and abilities, and instructor preferences. The itinerary may be reversed depending on whether your group starts with canoeing or backing.

Day 1	Course Start
Day 2-3	Basic backpacking, camp craft, and team building skills
Day 4	Backcountry navigation
Day 5	Peak attempt
Day 6	Hike to Ross Lake
Day 7	Switchover from backpacking to Canoeing
Day 8-11	Canoeing skills and travel
Day 12	Solo
Day 13	Final expedition
Day 14	Final challenge event & service project
Day 15	Transport home

## REFLECTIONS BY NWOBS MOUNTAINEERING ALUM:

*"Not only did this course challenge me physically, but it advanced my thinking about life and myself greatly."*

- Daniel Ackerly