



Course Description

North Cascades Alpine Backpacking & Rock Climbing

Course Overview

The North Cascades Alpine Backpacking & Rock Climbing course is a two-week expedition into some of Washington State's most remote and beautiful alpine environments. Your course will begin the moment you are picked up at the meeting location, and will continue through your trip into the North Cascades of Washington, where the real discoveries take place. Your course will include travel through incredible geography carved out by the glaciers, rivers and weather in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, high on the east slope of the Cascades.



You don't need to have previous backpacking or rock climbing experience. We will teach you skills for wilderness travel including how to pack appropriately, set up tarps, and navigate using map and compass. 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 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 Area

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 stunning wilderness in the United States. The North Cascades host the greatest concentration of glaciers in the “Lower 48” and are full of high mountain meadows peppered with wild flowers. Our course area hosts some of the most famous backpacking routes in the Pacific Northwest. Our backpacking programs operate in the Pasayten Wilderness, Sawtooth Wilderness, and North Cascades National Park on the east side of the Cascades which receives significantly less rainfall than the western coast of Washington. Temperatures typically range from freezing to 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Our course area is on the eastern side of the Cascades, and thus tends to be drier; however, rain and thunderstorms are not unusual.

Course Activities

BACKPACKING – Students will work together to explore the high mountain landscape of the North Cascades with a focus on wilderness skills such as navigation, natural history, and backcountry living. Students will learn the essentials of backcountry travel necessary to carry them into remote meadows and high mountain vistas, including navigation with map and compass, Leave No Trace® ethics, first aid and



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backcountry cooking. Depending on the group and the conditions, an attempt to summit one of the many rugged alpine peaks in the course area can be made.



ROCK CLIMBING – During your expedition you will learn the basics of climbing technique, belaying, rappelling, and knots. Rock climbing is physically, mentally, and sometimes emotionally demanding. For many students, rock climbing is the high point of the course. For others, it's a major mental challenge to face. Courses generally include 1-2 days of rock climbing, depending upon individual course itineraries and student groups.

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 – In order for profound learning to take place, there must be time to reflect on the experience. The Solo Experience provides this opportunity to reflect, rest and practice the campcraft skills you have been learning throughout the course. Solo length is based on length of course, weather, student condition, age and instructor preference. You will not travel during this time and your instructors will check on you occasionally, but you will be mostly alone for the duration of your solo. Instructors will choose your solo site to offer as much solitude as possible, within a safe distance for emergency contact with them, and you will be provided with sufficient water, food, and equipment. Most students spend their Solo time journaling, drawing, reflecting, thinking and resting as they process lessons of the course to focus on their goals for the future.

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. Instructors maintain overall risk-management by using check-ins, careful route planning and accurate assessment of group abilities. 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.

SERVICE – 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 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.

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. 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. As a team, each group will work together to complete difficult tasks necessary for backcountry travel and expedition living.

Sample Itinerary

The following is an example of what your 14-day itinerary may look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, student skills and abilities, and instructor preferences.

Day 1	Course Start
Day 2-6	Hiking, team building, backpacking and camp craft skills
Day 7	Resupply
Day 8	Peak attempt
Day 9-10	Solo
Day 11	Final Expedition
Day 12-13	Rock climbing, Final Challenge Event & Service Project
Day 14	Course End and transportation home

Reflections from a NW Outward Bound Alpine Backpacking Alumnus:

“The sights I saw were like nothing I’ve seen before, never have I thought I would see the sunrise hundreds of feet in the air. There were some difficulties or rather challenges like having less privacy, being physically exhausted, and being homesick. But the experiences helped me grow as a person.” - Luis Garcia, 2014