

Course Overview

The North Cascades Mountaineering course for Women is a one week long expedition into 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.

This all-female identified course offers the opportunity to step out of your comfort zone, learn outdoor skills, and develop as a leader. A single gendered course allows time to build community, reflect, and find your voice as you overcome challenges in a supportive all-female group.

You don't need to have previous mountain experience. We will teach you skills for wilderness travel—how to pack appropriately, set up tarps, backpack, climb, and navigate.

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 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 untrammelled 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 scenic alpine climbing and backpacking routes in the United States. Our mountaineering programs operate primarily in the Sawtooth 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; however, rain and thunderstorms are not unusual. 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

MOUNTAINEERING – During the mountain section you will be transported to the North Cascades where you will hike into either the Sawtooth, Pasayten, or Glacier Peak Wilderness area. You will travel with backpacks, on and off trail, through rugged mountain terrain. The overall technical emphasis of this

section is to learn backpacking skills, Leave No Trace ethics, and develop your navigation and camp-craft skills. Leadership, communication, and responsibility will continue to be developed as you prepare for the “final expedition.” In addition to learning navigation, wilderness travel, and backpacking skills, students will be taught technical mountaineering and climbing skills during the mountain section.



PEAK ATTEMPT – Peak attempts are day-long enterprises often entailing pre-dawn starts. Your course will include at least one peak attempt depending upon the weather and the student’s physical preparedness. Successful peak climbs require patience, efficiency, and teamwork to reach the summit.

SOLO – The solo experience provides the 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 and age and instructor preference. Instructors will choose your solo site to offer as much solitude as possible, within a safe distance for emergency contact with them. 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. During solo you will be provided with sufficient water, food, and equipment.

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 the environment is a core value of Outward Bound and is 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. 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 itinerary might look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, student skills and abilities and instructor preferences.

Day 1	Course start
Day 2-3	Backpacking and team building
Day 4-5	Mountaineering skills and peak attempts
Day 6	Hike out of backcountry
Day 7	Course end and travel

REFLECTIONS OF A NW OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL MOUNTAINEERING ALUMNA:

“The physical difficulties I faced in climbing cols or passes, self-arresting, and navigating group tension have instilled in me a greater sense of purpose in overcoming obstacles and reconciling real passions.”

- Hannah Sloan