



Course Overview

The North Cascades Mountaineering courses are expeditions 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.

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. 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. On 22-day courses summit attempts will frequently involve roped climbing on snow and/or rock, utilizing technical mountaineering skills.

FINAL EXPEDITION – Outward Bound believes that an appropriate amount of independence is a powerful educational tool. To deliver that benefit, Outward Bound instructors will purposefully and gradually transfer certain leadership responsibilities to the students, culminating with the “Final Expedition.” Near the end of course, you 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.

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.

SOLO – In order for profound learning to take place, students need time to reflect on their experience, and Solo is that opportunity. The Solo experience provides an important break from the rigors of the expedition and gives students the opportunity to reflect on their Outward Bound experience. With sufficient food and equipment, students will set up camp at sites of their own, using the wilderness skills learned during the first portions of the course. The amount of time students spend on Solo is based on length of course, weather, student condition, age, and Instructor preference. Solo campsites are chosen to offer as much solitude as possible (yet be within emergency whistle-signaling distance of other group members). 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. Instructors check on each participant at regular intervals, as safety is always the top priority.



SERVICE – Service to others and to the environment is a core value of Outward Bound and is integrated into each course. Groups follow Leave No Trace ethics as part of their service to the environment and



engage in acts of service while leading and supporting fellow participants. 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. Seeing the impact of their actions firsthand, students develop an ingrained appreciation of service, 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. 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 are examples of what your itinerary might look like. 22-day courses allow for increased skill mastery and a more autonomous final expedition. The third week of course is often when the group truly “gels” or comes together. Many students report that the final week is among the most impactful aspects of the course, as it allows time to truly put into practice what the group has been learning. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, student skills and abilities and instructor preferences.

14 Day Itinerary

Day 1	Course start
Day 2-4	Backpacking and team building
Day 5	Rock climbing
Day 6	Resupply
Day 7-9	Backpacking, peak attempt, rock climbing
Day 10-11	Solo
Day 12	Final expedition
Day 13	Final challenge event & service project
Day 14	Course end and transportation home

21 Day Itinerary

Day 1	Course start
Day 2-6	Backpacking & team building
Day 7	Rock climbing
Day 8-9	High alpine travel and peak attempt
Day 10	Resupply
Day 11	Rock climbing and Rappel
Day 12-13	Peak attempt
Day 14-15	Solo
Day 16-19	Final expedition



Day 20 Final challenge event & service project
Day 21 Course end and transportation home

REFLECTIONS FROM 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