

Course Overview

This unique Outward Bound expedition will challenge and refresh you through 7 days exploring the San Juan Islands. Over the first few days of the expedition, you and your patrol will learn foundational sea kayaking skills which will then be put into practice paddling in and around the 400 islands and outcrops which make up the San Juan Islands. These frigid waters are teeming with wildlife including seals, sea lions, and eagles. Your patrol will be challenged with paddling through the inland waterways, moving your camp from island to island and navigating the changing currents of the Salish Sea.



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 sea kayaking experience. We will teach you skills for wilderness travel—how to pack appropriately, paddle kayaks, set up tarps, cook, and navigate on the sea. 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

SAN JUAN ISLANDS, WASHINGTON – Nestled between Vancouver Island and the North Cascades, the San Juan Islands are a unique coastal cruising ground with large expanses of sparkling water and mountain scenery. During your journey you will encounter coastlines with a combination of sandy and rocky beaches, shallow and deep harbors, placid and reef-studded bays. Knotty, twisted Madrona trees grow along much of the shorelines while evergreen fir and pine forests cover large inland areas. Sightings of harbor seals, porpoise and eagles are common as well as the rare glimpse of an Orca whale. The islands get less average rainfall than the surrounding area due to the rain-shadow effect of the Olympic Mountains. Summertime high temperatures are around 70 degrees Fahrenheit while lows could be in the 40s.

Course Activities

SEA KAYAKING – Participants will paddle from island to island and get acquainted with the fascinating natural and cultural history of the Pacific Northwest coast. Instructors will teach students the technical skills, teamwork, and communication skills necessary to travel as a group in a working waterway. Students may also have the opportunity to do a service project with a local land agency, hike to an island vista, or just comb the beach.

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.

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.

OUTCOMES – Most adults find it hard to get away. Adult lives are so busy, often filled with pressures and expectations, that it's difficult to find time to do things for oneself. Our one-week courses are the perfect opportunity to unplug, get a fresh perspective, step out of routines, challenge oneself in new ways, and discover new strengths. No previous experience is necessary—all wilderness skills are taught from the beginning. Students will only need to be physically fit and motivated to live, learn and work in a team. The expedition may only last a week but the power of the experience will last a lifetime. The expedition encourages students to: Remain engaged and present, giving every challenge their best effort, even when the goal seems beyond their reach; Form a team and focus on the team effort; Share responsibilities, communicate and lead; and Find reserves of tenacity and compassion.

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.

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| Day 1 | Course start |
| Day 2 | Intro to sea kayak skills such as wet exits, rescue, and basic paddling |
| Day 3-6 | Explore the San Juan Islands by sea kayak |
| Day 7 | Transport home |