

Overview

This backpacking course is designed to prepare and train you to tackle the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) and other long distance hiking trails on your own. It is also designed so that if you desire, after course you can continue North on the PCT all the way to Canada.

Learn ultra-light philosophies, navigation, resupply, budgeting, and logistical strategies that will prepare you for your future hike while traveling through some of Oregon's most stunning and varied landscapes. At various

points along the trail, learn more about trail maintenance, land stewardship and the PCT itself as you participate in a variety of service projects in coordination with the Pacific Crest Trail Association. Although there are plenty of opportunities for rest and reflection during the course, this is the challenge of a lifetime, with four weeks of skill development, backcountry living and physical and mental demands. Depending on the group fitness level, your crew could complete close to 300 miles of the PCT. This course is designed to accommodate all skill levels but is geared toward those who are interested in building skill sets for a section hike or thru-hike of any long distance hiking trail.



Thru-Hiking

Thru-hiking is a term used in reference to hikers who complete long distance trails from end-to-end in a single trip. The Pacific Crest Trail, Appalachian Trail and Continental Divide Trail were the first three long-distance trails in the United States. Successfully thru-hiking all three trails is known as the Triple Crown of Hiking. Thru-hiking the PCT is a four to six-month commitment that requires thorough preparation and dedication. The Pacific Crest Trail Association estimates that it takes most hikers between six and eight months to plan their trip beforehand. One of the goals of this course is to give those who are interested in taking on this challenge (whether section-hiking or thru-hiking) the skills and confidence they need to safely succeed.

YOUR INSTRUCTORS

Expect to be mentored by accomplished and experienced Outward Bound Instructors who have thru-hiked the Pacific Crest Trail. We will cater to your learning style and meet you at your level physically and technically. Our goal is to give you the knowledge and confidence you need to be successful on your future hike and every instructor is personally committed to your development, enjoyment, and success.

EXPECT TO . . .

- **Build core skills:** Learn and practice technical backpacking, wilderness, and leadership skills. Then exercise them individually as your progression builds and you experience segments of independent travel. Form a crew that supports and encourages one another, and in the thick of challenges, discover there is more in you than you know.



- Practice Outward Bound values: Learn to incorporate Outward Bound values into everyday life by pushing your own limits and seeking challenge as an opportunity for personal growth. Although you will experience some town visits and rest near popular resorts, expect to stay within alignment of Outward Bound's no drug, alcohol, or tobacco policy.
- Demonstrate mastery: As the course progresses, take on more leadership and decision-making responsibilities. Work to apply new skills after being closely guided and mentored by your instructors.
- What you'll learn: Unlike classic Outward Bound courses, we will embrace the rise in technological developments that have assisted in navigation and map data by using popular smartphone applications and other important resources you will use on your future hike. Expect to have three group preparation days at the Outward Bound base camp where we will build resupply boxes, go over popular logistical strategies, and deliver a variety of workshops surrounding gear, diet, safety, hygiene, self-care, pace, hiker etiquette, and community building. Return home a stronger, more resilient individual who is ready to take on your own trail. Discover increased self-confidence, improved leadership, and a desire to make a difference.
- Keep Walking: After hiking over 300 miles of the PCT in Oregon and ending at Cascades Locks (the Oregon/Washington border) you will have the opportunity to continue your adventure north through Washington. Buy the gear you have come to love and understand at wholesale and/or reduced prices to set yourself up for success for a smooth transition into your independent journey.

Course Area

CENTRAL CASCADES, OREGON – Volcanoes dot the spine of the Cascade Mountains, rising over 10,000 feet above the forests, lakes, and rivers of the surrounding region. These glaciated peaks run North and South and create the crest along which you travel. The Central Cascade range is home to the Three Sisters, Broken Top, Mt. Washington, three Fingered Jack and Mt. Jefferson. Four 10,000 foot glaciated volcanoes are present in this course area, with a total of nine major volcanoes. One can find a unique blend of dry east side and moist west side weather conditions, which allow diverse types of vegetation to flourish. The area has a complex geologic history that continues today. Active glaciers methodically carve away the mountains and the dramatic traces of avalanches that altered the landscape can be found throughout.



THE PACIFIC CREST TRAIL – The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) is a 2,660-mile national scenic trail that runs from Mexico to Canada through California, Oregon and Washington. The PCT traverses 24 national forests, 37 wilderness areas and 7 national parks. The PCT passes through 6 out of 7 of North America's eco-zones and offers one of the longest most rugged and challenging hikes in the world. The trail's southern terminus is on the U.S. border with Mexico and its northern terminus is on the U.S.– Canada border on the edge of Manning Park in British Columbia. Long-distance backpacking and the Pacific Crest Trail itself are notably rising in popularity, quickly becoming an icon for those seeking a challenging and transformative adventure of a lifetime.

Course Activities

BACKPACKING – We will focus on moving lightly and efficiently along the PCT. Students learn skills such as using lightweight backpacking gear, navigation, camp-craft, Leave No Trace and hiker etiquette, diet and trail safety. Each day presents a different focus, with ample time for experiential learning. The instructor-to-student ratio is never more than 1:5 during this course, allowing for personal coaching along the trail, as well as catering the curriculum to the specific interests and aptitudes of individual course participants. During three days of preparation at the Outward Bound base camp you will get to work with guest speakers who have each logged thousands of individual trail miles.

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 Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) to collaborate on land restoration projects. Additionally, students may have the opportunity to work alongside select social service agencies like nursing homes and hospitals. Students develop a value of service, seeing the impact of their actions firsthand, and transfer this desire to serve their communities back home.

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. In order 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—if you and your group have demonstrated the necessary leadership, team problem solving, and wilderness living skill—you may be given the opportunity to travel without immediate guidance from your instructors. During the final expedition, instructors maintain overall risk-management for the group with check-ins and advanced scouting. Many of our students feel this phase of the course was the most rewarding, as the group learns to work as a team, problem solve, and accomplish a goal independently, while utilizing all the skills they have acquired.

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. 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. On this PCT journey, students will also learn the philosophies of lightweight backpacking and long distance hiking. This course provides ample solitude for reflection and integration of skills learned.

Sample Itinerary

Please note that this is an example of activities that might occur on course, not a specific schedule or guarantee. All itineraries will vary depending on student groups, instructor teams, and environmental factors.

Day 1	Course Start, welcome and introductions. Course overview.
Day 2-5	At Northwest Outward Bound School’s Basecamp. Guest speakers on thru-hiking, packing for the trail, food prep, lessons in ultra-light backpacking.
Day 6	Backpacking: Travel to the trailhead in southern Oregon. Start hiking and learning basic navigation skills.
Day 7-10	Backpacking: Continued trail travel. Introduction to basic first aid and foot care. Honing skills with navigation, stoves and shelter set up.
Day 11	Resupply: Students return to base camp to shower and pack out another food ration.
Day 12	Backpacking: Continued trail travel with steadily increasing daily mileage.
Day 13	Snow school and layover day
Day 14-15	Solo
Day 16	Backpacking
Day 17	Resupply
Day 18	Backpacking



- Day 19-20 Service with the PCTA: a break from hiking to give back to the trail by helping the PCTA with some trail maintenance.
- Day 21 Backpacking
- Day 22 Resupply and planning the final section of trail. During the final section students will have more autonomy in their day with the support of their instructors.
- Day 23-25 Backpacking
- Day 26 Arrive at course end location
- Day 27 De-issue gear, celebrate course end, final challenge event
- Day 28 Course end and transportation home