

Overview

The Oregon Rafting and Service course for LGBTQ youth offers students an opportunity to connect with other members of the LGBTQ community on an 11-day expedition. The course begins in Portland, Oregon where students have an opportunity to connect as a team through low and high ropes course elements. This learning will serve as a foundation and carry over through the remainder of the journey. You will then head to central Oregon for six days of rafting on the Deschutes River.

You will launch on the wild and scenic Deschutes River at the edge of the Warm Springs reservation and will build on the teamwork and outdoor skills you started learning at the ropes course. While on the river, your team will learn paddling methods, river hydrology, raft captaining, and rescue techniques. You do not need to have any previous experience – our instructors are prepared to teach people of all experience levels.

From the river, we will transition back to the urban setting of Portland, Oregon to engage in the service section of this course. Some projects will focus on serving the Portland LGBTQ community. This course aligns with the Portland PRIDE festival and students will have the opportunity to experience or volunteer at the event.

This program is designed specifically for LGBTQ young adult population and led by LGBTQ Outward Bound instructors. In alignment with Outward Bound's mission of Inclusion and Diversity, the course will create an open and affirming space for sharing experiences and building community while exploring the great outdoors. During a time of development when LGBTQ youth may not have supportive or safe space, this course will build esteem and community, and create opportunity to make lifelong friendships.

Students should expect a traditional Outward Bound course structure where students learn technical skills and take responsibility for daily activities and the progress of the expedition as the week goes on. Students should also expect a progression of activities to initiate personal growth and conversation about shared experiences as LGBTQ youth. We will spend time having guided discussions surrounding LGBTQ topics, as well as individual reflection, amongst the affirming and healing powers of the wilderness.

Partnership with OUT There Adventures

Outward Bound is excited to partner with OUT There Adventures (OTA) for this course, a Seattle based non-profit committed to fostering positive identity development, individual empowerment and improved quality of life for queer young people through professionally facilitated experiential education activities. OTA staff will be present on course to support our students as well as to provide follow-up through an 11-month service-leadership program wherein students will take the knowledge and skills acquired on this course back to their respective communities.

Course Area

DESCHUTES RIVER, OREGON – The Deschutes River is part of the national Wild & Scenic Rivers System. The river flows north from the Oregon Cascades, feeds into the Columbia River, and ultimately on to the Pacific Ocean. The Lower Deschutes is a popular river for whitewater rafting since the river is spring-fed, which results in an unusually constant water flow and cold water. Excellent geologic evidence is present all around this area. Courses generally travel anywhere from fifty to one hundred miles along the Lower Deschutes. The rapids on the Deschutes are rated to Class III, and are excellent for learning paddle skills and teamwork. The group camps each night along the banks of the river. The Deschutes region has a colorful human history, and a railroad borders much of the length of the Lower Deschutes.

PORTLAND, OREGON – This course will begin and end in Oregon’s largest city, which sits on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers with Mount Hood on the horizon. Portland offers rich histories, diverse cultural traditions and foods, and an abundance of service opportunities. The City of Roses will be your classroom as you continue your expedition of discovery, team-building and skill development from the wilderness.

Course Activities

RAFTING – Students will travel on the river in four to six person paddle rafts, and learn to “captain” (maneuver) their paddle raft team through Class II and III rapids. After lessons in basic river travel and safety, students will progress into learning to read currents, anticipate obstacles, scout rapids, and negotiate technical portions of the river. Students will also learn river hydrology, swimming in currents, paddle techniques, and expeditionary travel. While on the rafting expedition, there may also be an opportunity for short day hikes.

SERVICE – Service to others and the environment is a core value of Outward Bound and is integrated into each course. Participants follow Leave No Trace ethics as service to the environment and do acts of service while leading and supporting fellow participants. 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. Within course, the solo is that opportunity. It is a chance to experience solitude in the wilderness without distraction while also taking a break from the physical rigors of course. Students are separated from their group for short periods of time throughout the course. These “mini-solos” are at solo sites chosen by instructors to provide as much solitude as possible. Participants have all necessary equipment, food and water. On this course, solos range from 30 minutes to no more than 24 hours.

FINAL CHALLENGE EVENT – We typically end our courses with a Final Challenge Event – an individual final physical push. This often takes the form of a trail run, but could take many different forms on this course.

OUTCOMES – Outward Bound courses vary in length from 4 to 85 days. On shorter courses, participants will receive an intro to leadership skills, an opportunity to develop their character, and the chance to provide service to others and the environment. This course was designed to serve the LGBTQ young adult population by offering a mentally and physically challenging experience that sends participants home with a shared sense of community and feelings of accomplishment. The structure of this course is similar to a classic Outward Bound course; however special focus and attention will be lent toward creating an affirming space for sharing experiences and building community: elements that are fundamental building blocks for healthy futures of LGBTQ young adults.

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, duffle shuffle, course overview
Day 2	Ropes course day - team building through low and high ropes elements.
Day 3	Travel to the river. River intro and basic paddling skills.
Day 4-7	River travel. Scouting rapids, student captaining and backcountry camping skills. Students may also have an opportunity for a day hike and a solo experience.
Day 8	De-issue the river gear and travel back to Portland.
Day 9	Service day in Portland.
Day 10	Portland Pride Parade, de-issue gear, course end celebration and graduation
Day 11	Travel Home