

Overview

The Northwest Sea Kayaking & Mountaineering course is an expedition through two of Washington's most beautiful and diverse ecosystems: the San Juan Islands and the North Cascade Mountains. You don't need to have previous sea kayaking or mountain experience. We will teach you skills for wilderness travel—how to pack appropriately, paddle kayaks, set up tarps, backpack, climb, and navigate. The course also includes an emphasis on leadership, character development, and an ethic of service. From getting up early to hiking up a mountain, wilderness travel is demanding. You do not need to have any previous experience but arriving physically fit and excited for the opportunity for personal development will enhance your experience and allow you to take full advantage of the expedition.



Outcomes

Outward Bound promotes character development, leadership, and service in the most engaging classroom possible ... the wilderness. In real time, students experience the effects of their decisions on themselves and the other members of their group as they work to complete difficult tasks necessary for wilderness travel. Instructors challenge students to try new things and step outside their comfort zones. They also provide feedback that students implement on course and when they return to their communities.

Course Areas

SAN JUAN ISLANDS, WASHINGTON – Nestled between Vancouver Island and the North Cascades, the San Juan Islands are a unique coastal cruising ground of sparkling water and mountain scenery. You will encounter sandy and rocky beaches, shallow and deep harbors, placid and reef-studded bays. 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.

THE NORTH CASCADES, WASHINGTON – Known as the “American Alps,” the North Cascades offer glaciated mountains, alpine lakes and high alpine meadows for endless exploration. The North Cascades host the greatest concentration of glaciers outside of Alaska, and are full of high mountain meadows peppered with wild flowers. The Outward Bound course area hosts some of the most stunning alpine climbing and backpacking routes in the United States. Temperatures range from freezing to 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Early-season courses (May, June) may spend time camping on snow, while mid-summer courses tend to have more moderate temperatures.



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. Check out our instructors teaching students how to perform a wet exit on the first day of their course in this [awesome video](#).

MOUNTAINEERING – Mountaineering courses move through high mountain terrain and focus on preparation for a peak attempt. Successful peak climbs require patience, efficiency, and teamwork to reach the summit, and may involve roped climbing on snow and/or rock. Students will start by learning backpacking skills, map and compass navigation, and Leave No Trace® ethics, and progress to basic mountaineering skills. The instructor-to-student ratio is never more than 1:5 during this section, allowing for personal coaching from our expert climbing and mountaineering instructors on the physical techniques of mountaineering, as well as tailoring the curriculum to the interests and aptitudes of individual course participants.



ROCK CLIMBING – For 22-day courses there is generally at least one day of rock climbing. Climbing instruction starts at the beginner level and includes basic climbing techniques, helmet and harness use, climbing commands, and belaying. Additional climbing days will offer more advanced instruction including improving your climbing technique, knots, bouldering, and anchor placement.

SOLO – In order for profound learning to take place, students spend time reflecting 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 course length, 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 a top priority.

FINAL EXPEDITION – Outward Bound believes that an appropriate amount of independence is a powerful educational tool. During the travel sections of this course, Outward Bound instructors purposefully and gradually transfer certain leadership responsibilities to the students culminating with our “Final Expedition.” Near the end of course—if the group has demonstrated the necessary leadership, team problem solving and wilderness living skills—students may have the opportunity to travel without instructors immediately present. Many of our students feel this phase of the course is



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.

SERVICE – Service to others and to our environment is a core value of Outward Bound and is integrated into each course. Groups follow Leave No Trace ethics as they 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. Students see the impact of their actions firsthand, and may develop a desire to continue service in their home communities.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE – 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.

Sample Itinerary

The following is an example of what a 18 and 22-day itinerary may look like. The 14-day course will be a condensed version of this itinerary, with fewer technical skills. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, student skills and abilities, and instructor preference.

18 Day Course

Day 1	Course Start
Day 2	Intro to sea kayak skills such as wet exits, rescues, and basic paddling
Day 3-6	Explore the islands by kayak; continued kayak and camp craft skills
Day 6	Switchover
Day 7-10	Mountain skills, travel, rock climbing, and peak attempt
Day 11–12	Solo
Day 13–16	Final expedition
Day 17	Personal Challenge Event and service
Day 18	Course end and transportation home

22 Day Course

Day 1	Course Start
Day 2	Intro to sea kayak skills such as wet exits, rescues, and basic paddling
Day 3-10	Explore the islands by kayak; continued kayak and camp craft skills
Day 11	Switchover
Day 12–13	Backpacking and navigation skills
Day 14	Rock climbing
Day 15	Peak attempt
Day 16-17	Solo
Day 18-20	Final expedition & possible peak attempt
Day 21	Personal challenge event & service
Day 22	Course end and transportation home



REFLECTIONS BY NWOBS MOUNTAINEERING ALUMNUS:

“Through my adventure in the sea and my expedition in the mountains; I got more than just an amazing place to be. I got six new family members. I got a new way to live. I got a new set of skills for leading. I learned new ways to relate myself with others and communicate. I learned more about who I am.”

- S. Fleming, 20