



Course Overview

The Northwest Sea Kayaking & Alpine Backpacking course is an expedition through two of Washington's most beautiful and diverse ecosystems: the San Juan Islands and the North Cascade Mountains. Here you will have the opportunity to escape your usual routine, explore stunning wilderness areas, and enjoy yourself to the fullest. You don't need to have previous sea kayaking or mountain travel experience; your well-trained instructors will teach you the 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. Wilderness travel can be challenging, but with appropriate pre-course preparation - - using tools we provide - - adults of various ages and body types can be successful. Arriving as physically fit as possible 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. Adult courses offer a unique opportunity to disconnect from everyday life and reconnect with one's self and others.



Regardless of age or life stage, Outward Bound believes that everyone can benefit from opportunities to experience challenge, adventure, and to work within a supportive environment to gain a greater sense of self.

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](#).

BACKPACKING – Students will work together to explore the high mountain landscape of the North Cascades where they will learn the essentials of backcountry travel necessary to carry them into remote meadows and high mountain vistas. Activities include: leadership and communication skill seminars, navigation with map and compass, Leave No Trace ethics, first aid and backcountry cooking. Depending on the group and the conditions, an attempt to summit one of the many rugged alpine peaks in the course area can be made.



PEAK ATTEMPT – Depending on the group and the conditions, an attempt to summit one of the many rugged alpine peaks in the course area can be made. The peaks we attempt are often day-long ventures, they are challenging and beautiful, and often require scrambling skills, taught by our experienced instructors. On backpacking courses we do not climb peaks that require technical gear or ropes.

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. 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

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
Day 2	Intro to sea kayak skills such as wet exits, rescues, and basic paddling
Day 3-6	Explore the San Juan Islands by kayak; continued kayak and camp craft skills
Day 7	Switchover
Day 8–10	Backpacking and navigation skills
Day 11	Peak attempt
Day 12	Solo



Course Description

Northwest Sea Kayaking & Alpine Backpacking for Adults

- Day 13** Final expedition
- Day 14** Personal Challenge Event & Service
- Day 15** Course end and transportation home