

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, with high and low ropes courses. You will then head to central Oregon for six days of rafting on the wild and scenic Deschutes River, using your teamwork and outdoor skills, and learning 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. The course also includes a community service component.



This course, led by LGBTQ Outward Bound instructors, creates an open and affirming space for sharing experiences and building community while exploring the great outdoors. Students should expect a traditional Outward Bound course structure where students learn technical skills and take responsibility for daily activities, while also building self-esteem and relationships with other LGBTQ youth. Outward Bound is partnering on this course with OUT There Adventures (OTA), 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 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.

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 Area

DESCHUTES RIVER, OREGON – The Deschutes River is part of the national Wild & Scenic Rivers System, flowing north from the Oregon Cascades to the Columbia River and then on to the Pacific Ocean. Courses generally travel anywhere from fifty to one hundred miles along the Lower Deschutes. The rapids on the Deschutes are rated to class IV, mostly class II-III. The group camps each night along the banks of the river.

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 a rich history, 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 and team-building.

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 to III rapids. After lessons in basic river travel and safety, students will learn to read currents, anticipate obstacles, and scout rapids. Students will also learn river hydrology, swimming in currents, and paddle techniques. There may also be an opportunity for short day hikes.



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.

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.

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.

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| 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 | Service Day in Portland |
| Day 4 | Travel to the river. River intro and basic paddling skills. |
| Day 5-8 | River travel. Scouting rapids, student captaining and camping skills. Students may also have an opportunity for a day hike and a solo experience. |
| Day 9 | De-issue the river gear, course end celebration |
| Day 10 | Travel Home |