

Course Overview

The Oregon Rafting, Mountaineering & Rock Climbing course offers students an opportunity to challenge themselves physically and mentally while exploring amazing wilderness areas. The first days of your trip will be spent building critical skills in teamwork and outdoor skills. At the world famous Smith Rock State Park, you will learn climbing techniques, as well as the basic gear, knots, and rope systems that keep you safe amidst the towering geologic formations. Along the wild and scenic Deschutes River, your team will learn paddling methods, river hydrology, raft captaining, and self-rescue techniques. The mountain expedition will bring you through diverse mountain habitats among the volcanoes of the Central Cascade Range, putting to use your teamwork and camp craft skills while learning to navigate using a map and compass. The course also includes an emphasis on leadership, character development, and an ethic of service. Whether navigating through rapids, paddling into headwinds, or carrying a heavy pack, 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, as well as provide feedback that students implement on course and when they return to their communities.

Course Area

SMITH ROCK STATE PARK, OREGON – Smith Rock State Park is a world-renowned climbing destination that attracts climbers of every ability level. The Crooked River winds its way through the canyon, and to the west, the snow-capped volcanoes of the Cascade Range rise on the horizon. One of the most striking features is a prominent spire, Monkey Face. Given the dry and temperate climate, rock climbing is feasible most of the year.



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.



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. The Central Cascade Range is home to the Three Sisters, Broken Top, Mt. Washington, Three Fingered Jack, and Mt. Jefferson. Active glaciers, traces of avalanches, and the volcanoes themselves are the perfect setting for learning the more technical aspects of mountaineering and backpacking. Depending upon the peak, your summit attempt may necessitate glacier and roped-team travel.

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.



ROCK CLIMBING – Students will receive individual instruction and test their skills against the vertical cracks, steep faces and boulders of Smith Rock State Park. Among the skills students will learn are: basic climbing equipment, rope management, wearing harnesses, tying knots, belaying and rappelling techniques, and movement on rock.

MOUNTAINEERING – Mountaineering courses move through high mountain terrain and focus on preparation for a peak attempt that may require the use of ropes, technical equipment, and possibly rock climbing or snow travel. Students will start by learning backpacking skills, map and compass navigation, and campsite selection, and progress to basic mountaineering skills. The instructor-to-student ratio is never more than 1:5 during this section, allowing for personal coaching on the physical techniques of mountaineering, as well as tailoring the curriculum to the interests and aptitudes of individual course participants.



PEAK ATTEMPT – Peak attempts are day-long enterprises often entailing pre-dawn starts. Your course will include at least one peak attempt and is highly dependent upon the weather, the student’s physical preparedness, and group performance on course. Successful peak climbs require patience, efficiency, communication, teamwork, and commitment to skill mastery to reach the summit. Depending on the time of year, the peak attempt may involve roped climbing on snow and/or rock, utilizing technical mountaineering skills.

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. 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 Challenge Event—an individual final physical push. This typically takes the form of an endurance run or 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, Welcome, gear check, Course Overview
Day 2-7	River Section
Day 8	Cross Over to Rock Section, Service Project
Day 9-16	Rock Climbing
Day 17-21	Mountain Section, Main Expedition
Day 22	Resupply
Day 23-28	Solo, Final Expedition (peak attempt)
Day 29	Personal Challenge Event, De-Issue gear, Graduation and Celebration
Day 30	Course End, Transportation Home