



Course Overview

The North Cascades Alpine Backpacking courses are one- to three-week long expeditions into the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, one of Washington State's most remote and beautiful alpine environments. Students will learn wilderness skills such as setting up tarps, cooking, backpacking, and navigating using a map and compass. The course includes a focus on cultivating skills around leadership, character development, service to others and interpersonal development. From getting up early and cooking breakfast to hiking up and over mountain passes, wilderness travel is demanding. You do not need to have any previous experience but arriving physically prepared 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 individualized feedback to students that can be implemented on course, as well as afterwards upon return home to their communities.

Course Area

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

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.





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. 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 Itineraries

The following are examples of what 7, 15 and 21-day itineraries might look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, student skills and abilities and instructor preferences.

7-Day Course

Day 1	Course start
Day 2	Intro to backpacking, camp craft, and team building skills
Day 3-4	Travel and peak attempt
Day 5	Solo
Day 6	Finals expedition, final challenge event
Day 7	Course end and transportation home

15-Day Course

Day 1	Course start
Day 2-6	Backpacking, camp craft, and team building skills
Day 7	Resupply
Day 8-10	Travel and Peak attempt
Day 11-12	Solo
Day 13	Final expedition
Day 14	Final challenge event & service project
Day 15	Course end and transportation home

21-Day Course

Day 1	Course start
Day 2-6	Backpacking, camp craft, and team building skills
Day 10	Resupply
Day 11-13	Travel and peak attempt
Day 14-15	Solo
Day 16-17	Travel and advanced navigation skills
Day 18-19	Finals expedition
Day 21	Final Challenge event and service project
Day 22	Course end and transportation home