

### Course Overview

The Northwest Outdoor Educator course is a comprehensive expedition program that combines the beauty and challenging environments of the Washington wilderness with intensive educational curriculum and activities. Designed specifically for all individuals interested in pursuing outdoor instructor, guide, or outdoor teaching positions, this course offers 55 days of in-depth learning in mountaineering, sea kayaking, and first aid while simultaneously exploring group dynamics, experiential education theory and methods, and wilderness activity management. Within a supportive community of like-minded adventurers, you are provided with opportunities to act as both a student and an educator, drawing from your experience to reinforce the wilderness educational concepts being explored. Previous course participants are working in all facets of our industry — as guides, instructors, and classroom teachers — and have, along with course instructors, expressed that this course delivers invaluable experience, relevant skills and knowledge needed to help students become better educators.

### Outcomes

Outdoor Educator Course students will receive in-depth training in technical, interpersonal, and educational skills that apply to being an outdoor educator. With a progression of teaching and leadership skills where instructors and peers provide feedback in an organized setting, students will gain a strong foundation to begin or continue working as an outdoor educator. Much like other courses, students will be challenged to try new things, step outside their comfort zones, and do things they never before thought they could do. As a team, each group will work together to complete difficult tasks necessary for backcountry travel, expedition living, and outdoor leadership.



### Outdoor Educator Courses Vs. Semester Leadership Courses

Northwest Outward Bound School offers two distinct types of long-format (50 days +) courses: Semester courses and Outdoor Educator courses. Outdoor Educator courses are specifically designed for participants who want to explore a career in outdoor education, whereas semester courses are designed for participants looking for a long Outward Bound course that maximizes the depth of the Outward Bound experience. While both course types teach numerous technical and human skills, the Outdoor Educator course adds a rich layer of educational skills. Outdoor Educator course participants spend significant time learning experiential education theory and are required to utilize their educational learning in a formal educational practicum where they design and implement a multi-day outdoor education experience for local students. Outdoor Educator courses also include a 9-day Wilderness First Responder (WFR) certification course. If you have any questions, or are having difficulty choosing between a semester and instructor course, please call your course advisor.

## Course Areas

**SAN JUAN ISLANDS, WASHINGTON** – Nestled between Vancouver Island and the North Cascades, the San Juan Islands are a unique coastal cruising ground with large expanses of sparkling water and mountain scenery. During their journey, students will encounter coastlines with a combination of sandy and rocky beaches, shallow and deep harbors, placid and reef-studded bays. Knotty, twisted Madrona trees grow along much of the shorelines while evergreen fir and pine forests cover large inland areas. 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

The North Cascades are called the “American Alps” for their rugged beauty and glaciated peaks; they remain some of the wildest and least traveled wilderness in the United States. The North Cascades host the greatest concentration of glaciers in the “Lower 48” and are full of high mountain meadows peppered with wild flowers. The mountain sections of our programs operate in the Sawtooth, Pasayten, and Glacier Peak Wilderness areas, as well as North Cascades National Park. All lie on the east side of the North Cascades and receive significantly less rainfall than the western coast of Washington. Temperatures typically range from freezing to 80 degrees Fahrenheit.



## Course Activities

**SEA KAYAKING SECTION (10-14 DAYS)** – The course starts with almost two weeks of sea kayaking in the San Juan Islands, exploring Washington’s renowned inner coastal waters. Students traverse the waterways in single and double kayaks, seeking out island beach campsites to sleep under the stars, and getting acquainted with the fascinating natural and cultural history of the Pacific Northwest coast. Becoming a competent sea kayaker involves learning how to read a chart, perform



self and assisted rescues, paddle efficiently, and assess sea conditions appropriate to each student and the group’s abilities. Students gain skills in reading currents and tides, kayak rescue techniques, marine navigation and assessing the weather. Team building and learning about marine environments will be emphasized during this section. Check out our instructors teaching students how to perform a wet exit on the first day of their course in this [awesome video](#).

**MOUNTAINEERING/ROCK CLIMBING SECTION (12-16 DAYS)** – The rock and mountain section focuses on mountaineering skills, including institutional top-rope climbing management. Students learn skills such as knot tying, climbing and belaying technique, anchor building, and climbing

site management. Each day presents a different focus, with ample time for experiential learning. The instructor-to-student ratio is never more than 1:5, which allows for personal coaching on the physical techniques of climbing and mountaineering, and also enables instructors to cater curriculum to the specific interests and aptitudes of individual course participants. During the mountaineering section, instructors focus curriculum on educational philosophy and group dynamics.

**WILDERNESS FIRST RESPONDER SECTION (WFR) (9 DAYS)** – Nine days of the course will be spent completing 80 hours of advanced backcountry first aid and evacuation techniques. Mornings are devoted to lectures and exams with afternoons devoted to practical hands-on sessions and rescue simulations. Expect many rescue simulations with made-up victims and stage blood that will be recorded for enhanced learning. Evenings are reserved for study and assignments. Successful completion of this section involves full participation in the field simulations and written exams that make up the assessment process. Students receive WFR, CPR and epinephrine administration certification cards from Wilderness Medicine Training Center upon successful completion of the course. These are the industry-standard medical certifications that are required for professionals in the outdoor industry.

**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.



**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 develop an appreciation of service and transfer this desire to serve their communities back home.

**FINAL EXPEDITION (3-8 DAYS)** – 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.

**EDUCATIONAL PRACTICUM SECTION (2-4 DAYS)** – Toward the end of the course students will have the opportunity to practice the educational skills used to lead groups in a wilderness environment by facilitating a 3-day outdoor education overnight program for local students. The program may include hiking, rock climbing, rappelling, initiatives, games and a service project. Many students consider this the highlight of the course, because it allows for the use of many of the skills that have been learned in the previous six weeks. Two days of intensive training and practice led by the Outward Bound staff prepares students to fill the instructional role with confidence and competence. Afterwards students will receive direct, constructive feedback from Outward Bound staff about their performance.



**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 your itinerary may look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, student skills and abilities, and instructor preferences.

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| <b>Day 1</b>     | Course Start and transport to the San Juan Islands |
| <b>Day 2-16</b>  | Sea Kayak Section                                  |
| <b>Day 17-26</b> | Wilderness First Responder                         |
| <b>Day 27-41</b> | Mountain Section and Solo                          |
| <b>Day 42-47</b> | Final Expedition                                   |
| <b>Day 47-50</b> | Practicum Prep                                     |
| <b>Day 50-53</b> | Practicum  |
| <b>Day 54</b>    | Personal Challenge Event & Service Project         |
| <b>Day 55</b>    | Course End   |