

Course Overview

The Oregon Outdoor Educator course is a comprehensive expedition program combining the beautiful and challenging environments of the Oregon wilderness with intensive educational curriculum and activities. Students spend 50 days expanding their mastery of wilderness techniques across multiple environments, honing the skills needed to work in the field of outdoor and adventure education. Designed specifically for individuals interested in instructor, guide, or outdoor teaching positions, this course offers in-depth learning in mountaineering, snow camping, rock climbing, whitewater rafting, and first aid. The course also explores group dynamics, experiential education theory and methods, and wilderness activity management. In a supportive community of like-minded adventurers, you are provided with the opportunity to act as both a student and an educator, drawing from your experience to reinforce the wilderness educational concepts you explore. Previous course participants work in all facets of our industry — as guides, instructors, and classroom teachers — and express that this course delivers the invaluable experience, relevant skills and knowledge needed to help students become better educators.

Outcomes

Outdoor Educator Course students 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 gain a strong foundation to begin or continue working as an outdoor educator. Like all Outward Bound courses, students are 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

SMITH ROCK STATE PARK, OREGON – Smith Rock State Park is a world-renowned climbing destination that attracts climbers of every ability level. It is widely considered to be one of the top sport climbing areas in the country. Smith Rock is a uniquely beautiful area that commonly graces postcards and calendars. The Crooked River lazily winds its way through the canyon, cutting a path through the cliffs and spires. To the west, the snow-capped volcanoes of the Cascade Range rise on the horizon, above the flat checkerboard of irrigated plains. 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. The river flows north from the Oregon Cascades to the Columbia



River and then on to the Pacific Ocean. The Lower Deschutes is a popular river for both whitewater rafting and fly fishing. The river is spring-fed, which results in an unusually constant water flow and cold water. Excellent geologic evidence is present all around this area. This course will travel the entire 96-mile stretch of the Lower Deschutes. The rapids on the Deschutes are rated to Class IV, mostly Class II-III, and are excellent for learning paddle skills and teamwork. 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. These glaciated peaks run north and south and create perfect mountaineering objectives for you and your team. The Central Cascade range is home to the Three Sisters, Broken Top, Mt. Washington, three Fingered Jack, and Mt. Jefferson. Four 10,000 foot glaciated volcanoes are present in this course area, with a total of nine major volcanoes. You'll find a unique blend of dry eastside and moist west side weather conditions which allow diverse types of vegetation to flourish, when they are not covered by the Cascades deep snowpack. The area has a complex geologic history that continues today. You can find active glaciers methodically carving away the mountain and the dramatic traces of avalanches that altered the landscape. It is these features of the volcanoes that create a challenging playground from which you and your team will learn the more technical aspects of mountaineering and snow camping. Depending upon the peak, your summit attempt may necessitate glacier and roped-team travel. Snow travel will be mandatory the entire portion of this section of the course.

ODIN FALLS BASE CAMP, REDMOND, OREGON – This facility is our office and support site for all wilderness courses conducted in Oregon. The 48-acre property is located on the Deschutes River in the high desert, north of Bend. From the base camp, Smith Rock State Park is visible to the east and the Central Cascades rise in the distance to the west. Students may spend time at this location in order to utilize the lodge classroom setting for the Wilderness First Responder (WFR) portion of the course. Students will stay in our campground or a rustic bunkhouse on the property.

Course Activities

ROCK CLIMBING – Students receive individual instruction and test their skills against vertical cracks, steep faces and boulders. Camping is in a front country site at Smith Rock State Park among the multicolored cliffs and spires or in a backcountry location near the Central Cascades. Students learn about basic climbing equipment, rope management, wearing harnesses, tying knots, belaying and rappelling techniques, top rope site assessment and management, facilitating the climbing experience, and movement on rock.



RAFTING SECTION – Students travel on the river in four to six person paddle rafts, learning to “captain” (maneuver) their paddle raft team through Class II to IV rapids. After lessons in basic river travel and safety, students learn to read currents, anticipate obstacles, scout rapids, and negotiate technical portions of the river. Students learn river hydrology, swimming in currents, paddle techniques, and expeditionary travel. On the rafting expedition, there may be the chance for short day hikes!



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 snow camping. During this section of the course, students start by learning snow travel skills including off-trail travel, map and compass navigation, and campsite selection. Learn basic mountaineering skills like route finding, snow and glacier travel, ice axe use, and rope team travel. Please note that peak attempts are dependent upon variables such as weather and group

dynamic.

WILDERNESS FIRST RESPONDER

TRAINING – Nine days of this course will be spent fulfilling the seventy two hours of classroom and hands on learning required to obtain the Wilderness First Responder (WFR) certification. During this portion of the trip, students learn advanced backcountry first aid and evacuation techniques. Each day, time is devoted to lectures and exams as well as practical hands-on sessions and rescue simulations. Evenings are reserved for study and assignments. Full participation is required. Upon successfully completing and passing the course, students receive WFR, Anaphylaxis, and Basic Life Support-CPR certification cards from Wilderness Medical Training Center. These are the industry-standard medical certifications required for professionals working in the outdoors.



SOLO – In order for profound learning to take place, students need time to reflect 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 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 length of course, 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 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.

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICUM – Toward the end of the course students 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, allowing the use of many of the skills that have been learned 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 receive direct, constructive feedback from Outward Bound staff about their performance.

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 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.



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.

50 Day Course

- Day 1** Course Start, welcome and introductions, course overview
- Day 2-6** Wilderness First Responder
- Day 7-16** Whitewater Rafting Section
- Day 17-25** Rock Climbing Section
- Day 26-37** Mountaineering Section
- Day 38-43** Final Expedition & Personal Challenge Event
- Day 44-48** Practicum
- Day 49** Course End Celebration
- Day 50** Travel Home

55 Day Course

- Day 1** Course Start, welcome and introductions, course overview
- Day 2-9** Wilderness First Responder
- Day 10** Prep for River
- Day 11-19** River Section
- Day 20-28** Rock Section
- Day 29** Mountaineering prep
- Day 30-41** Mountaineering Section
- Day 42-43** Prep for Finals
- Day 44-48** Group Finals

Day 49-51 Prep for Practicum
Day 52-53 Practicum
Day 54-55 Course wrap up

REFLECTIONS FROM A NW OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL OUTDOOR EDUCATOR COURSE GRADUATE:

“My passion for outdoor education and recreation led to my enrollment in a 50-day Outward Bound Instructor Development course. This extraordinary expedition in the Pacific Northwest combined challenging environments with an intensive educational curriculum advancing my educational, technical and medical skills. Upon reflection, my favorite part was the education practicum because the opportunities to teach the skills I learned as a student and see my campers comprehend and practice those skills. This fully immersive course I am incredibly thankful for because it has furthered my passion to teach in the outdoors and taught me to pursue what I love.” – Eric Dorata, 2015