



## Itinerary Overview

### **Joshua Tree Backpacking – 7 days**

**In General** – Outward Bound courses are designed to be challenging- physically, mentally, and emotionally. From getting up early to pack your bags and cook breakfast, to hiking with a loaded backpack for hours, to climbing peaks that rise over 5,000 feet, traveling in the wilderness is difficult.

Outward Bound philosophy maintains that by facing the challenges presented to you, you will emerge physically and mentally stronger with an increased mastery of expedition skills as well as a better understanding of your own capabilities. We think that the payoff is well worth the work, but you should be aware of what you're getting into and excited about tackling the challenges.

Past students and instructors agree that arriving physically fit will enhance your experience and ability to do well on the course and ultimately allow you to take full advantage of the expedition. You don't need to have previous rock climbing or backpacking experience. We will teach you skills for wilderness travel—how to pack appropriately, load a backpack, set up tarps, and navigate using a map and compass.

### **Course Area**

**Joshua Tree National Park** – Joshua Tree is an internationally known climbing and hiking destination set against the backdrop of one of California's most surreal desert landscapes. The park is a massive 800,000 acres, much of which is designated as "wilderness." The federal government protected this unique region by designating it a National Monument in 1936 and then as a National Park in 1994.

Two distinctly different deserts, the Sonoran and the Mojave, merge at a transition zone where one can see different species indicative of each desert ecosystem. The park is home to an impressive array of species including the namesake Joshua trees (which aren't trees at all but giant Yucca plants!), jumping cholla, cat-claw acacia, fifty-year-old desert tortoises, red-tailed hawks, jackrabbits, and coyotes. Canyons, small mountains, and broad valleys are the canvas that nature has used to create this intricate and subtle landscape. Fantastically jumbled rock formations and plants reminiscent of Doctor Seuss' fantastical creations rise out of this magical topography.

The Mojave Desert's sunny weather is conducive to maximum time on the trail. Weather in the park is generally dry and rainfall is usually sparse, but unpredictable and sometimes persistent torrents do occur. Temperatures are most comfortable in the spring and fall, with an average highs of 70-85°F during the day and average lows of 40-50°F at night. Winter brings cooler days, around 50-60°F during the day with nights below freezing. This is a desert environment and temperature changes of 40 degrees within 24 hours are not uncommon. Parts of the park are over 4,000 feet above sea level so it's important to stay hydrated and plan ahead for



temperature changes. We rarely take layover days due to inclement weather, so be prepared to push on even when it seems nasty outside.

## Overview

**Day 1** – You will have a 1-2 hour drive from the airport to your course start location. You will spend the first day getting to know the other members of your team and preparing to hit the trail. A “Duffle Shuffle,” facilitated by your instructors, will help you to sort what clothing and gear you need to bring and what can be left behind. You will be taught “camp craft” skills such as how to sleep warm in your sleeping bag and how to cook your group meals over camping stoves. As this is not a guided trip, all group members will pitch in to do camp chores, including cooking, washing dishes, and setting up tarps. Depending on your specific itinerary, you may hike a few miles on Day 1 so that you can spend more nights in the backcountry.

**Backpacking** – Before you head out into the field group gear like food, tarps, kitchen equipment, and first aid supplies will be divided up. With proper planning and packing you will carry 30- 40% of your body weight. Pack weight will vary from person to person based on physical size and ability but you plan to carry between 40-50 pounds.

Traveling through desert terrain is exhilarating and often physically exhausting. Travel days are generally very long and require great stamina and endurance. As a general guideline, expect to travel approximately 3-8 miles a day. Outward Bound groups may hike 10+ miles per day as terrain and fitness allow. Route plans will vary depending on weather and activities planned for that particular day.

Once you reach your campsite you will cook and eat with other group members. This is a great time to get to know each other and share life stories. Each evening there will be group discussions to review the day, offer time for reflection, and plan for the next day.

**Peak Attempt** – Most courses will attempt at least one summit. Peak attempts are day-long events often requiring pre-dawn starts. Terrain covered and peaks attempted on our backpacking courses generally do not require roped travel or use of technical equipment.

**Solo** – The solo provides an important break from the rigors of the expedition. With sufficient food and equipment, you’ll spend time alone at an assigned campsite to rest and reflect. We choose your solo site to offer as much solitude as possible, but within earshot of your instructors. You will not travel during this time. While your instructors will check on you periodically, you will be mostly alone for the duration of your solo. Solo may last in duration from a few hours to a full 24-hour day. Many students are initially nervous about solo, but most are ready for a rest and a break from the group when the time for solo arrives. This activity may be abbreviated or eliminated if instructors determine the weather, terrain, or other factors could make a solo unsafe.



**Final Days** – In preparation for your travel back home, several hours towards the end of your course will be spent de-issuing and cleaning all Outward Bound gear followed by a special meal and graduation ceremony. Simple backcountry showers will be offered.

**Training, Main, & Final** – Fundamental to Outward Bound’s educational outcomes is the concept of “Training,” “Main,” and “Final.” Our hope is to transfer leadership and decision-making skills over to our students through a carefully crafted and intentional progression. Instructors will start off the course by training and teaching students everything they need to know about wilderness travel, risk management, and how to effectively work together as a team. As the course progresses, instructors will step back and take on more of a ‘coaching’ role. The intent is to provide a safety net for students to work through their decision-making and risk management development. Upon students demonstrating proficiency in all course elements, instructors may craft an appropriate level of challenge into a culminating Final Challenge. Here instructors will step back to give the group autonomy and ownership of their course.

**Sample Itinerary** – The following is an example of what a course itinerary may look like. *Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, student skills and abilities, and instructor preferences.*

#### 7-Day Itinerary

Day 1	Course Start, introductory lessons in packing a backpack, begin hiking
Day 2	Introductory lessons in “camp craft”, continue backpacking
Day 3	Backpacking, peak attempt
Day 4	Backpacking, begin solo
Day 5	Solo
Day 6	Final Challenge, Graduation
Day 7	Clean Gear, De-issue, depart for airport