



Itinerary Overview

High Sierra Mountaineering & Rock Climbing

The Sierra Nevada Range extends 400 miles from north to south. It is filled with granite domes, jagged peaks, cool alpine lakes and lush meadows. Atop the domes one can view the jagged profiles of the LeConte Divide, the Ritter Range and the Great Western Divide, all containing mountain peaks and passes up to 14,000 feet in elevation. Referring to the beauty reflected in both moon and sunlight, John Muir called the peaks the “Range of Light.”

We currently use three main backpacking course areas: Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park, the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wilderness. Your specific course could take place in any one of these locations, depending on weather, permit availability and instructor preference.

Alpine Backpacking and Course Terrain

You will travel both on and off-trail. The trails, when present, are of high quality. The off-trail routes can be especially challenging as these routes travel through boulder and talus fields, over granite slabs, sometimes fording waist deep rivers where no footbridges are present. Though the landscape can be demanding, there are few places in the world that compare to the beauty where this backpacking leads.

Rock Camp

The rock climbing section will start off by establishing a base camp, which will maximize time spent rock climbing. During this section, your days will include a mix of teaching and climbing with students learning how to climb, belay and rappel safely. There may be opportunities to camp on top of granite domes, experience amazing free-hanging rappels or explore stunning river gorges. With practice and focus, you can become a safe, skilled rock climber. You will experience a wide variety of climbing styles, including crack-climbing, face climbs and bouldering.

Mountaineering

Mountaineering expeditions move through high mountain terrain, typically above tree line. The Sierras are not known for heavy snow in summer but if conditions indicate, you will carry and receive training in snow travel and the use of ice axes. The mountaineering section offers more extensive skills training and students develop higher competency so that more rugged and challenging terrain is explored. Instructors will prepare you for one or more technical peak attempts. See Peak Attempt Below.

Weather

The Sierra Nevada offers fairly stable and beautiful weather. Rain is rarely forecasted, but afternoon thunderstorms are always a possibility. June courses may encounter lingering snowfields and cold temperatures with overnight temperatures near freezing. Mosquitoes are at their worst during this time. Between the low humidity and higher elevations of the High Sierra, the sun always feels warm during the day and precaution should be taken to minimize UV damage. In July and August temperatures become more moderate with daytime highs in the 70s to 80s (Fahrenheit) and evening lows in the 40s to 50s.

Miles Traveled Daily

As a general guideline, expect to travel approximately 3-7 miles a day. Crews may cover 10+ miles per day as terrain and fitness allow.



Physical Fitness

Participants must come prepared for a physically, mentally and emotionally-demanding yet equally rewarding experience. Mountaineering courses are the most difficult, please be physically fit on arrival for this course.

Pack Weight

Packed backpacks typically weigh between 30-40% of your body weight. This varies person to person based on size, stature and physical ability.

Instruction and Skills

Previous backpacking experience is not necessary. We will teach you the skills for wilderness travel both soft and hard skills. Hard skills include: how to pack appropriately, load a backpack, set up tarps, camp craft, navigation, rock climbing how to sleep warm in your sleeping bag and how to cook your group meals over backcountry stoves. Soft skills include group travel, risk management, weather and hazard assessment, communication skills and learning how to work as a team.

Training, Main & Final

Fundamental in 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 students through an intentional progression. As the course advances, instructors will take on more of a 'coaching' role. This provides a safety net for students to work through their decision-making and risk management development. Read about the culminating Final Expedition below.

Overview

Course Start - There is a 2 to 3-hour drive from the airport to the course start location. You will spend the first day gearing up for the field and meeting the other members of your team. Group gear like food, tarps, kitchen equipment and first aid supplies will be divided up among group members. Depending on your specific itinerary, you may hike a few miles on Day 1. As this is not a guided trip, all group members will pitch in to do camp chores, including cooking, washing pots and setting up tarps.

Peak Attempt - Most groups will attempt to summit at least one peak. These peak attempts often requiring pre-dawn starts, waking as early as 4am. You will typically launch from a basecamp so you that you can leave some of your gear at camp. During your peak attempt(s) you will gain an understanding of terrain management, hazard assessment and weather consideration to make a safe peak attempt. Depending on the skill level of the group, the weather or other factors, your team may attempt a peak that requires ropes, technical equipment or rock climbing to ascend. For all the effort they require, successful peak attempts are often the most rewarding experiences of an Outward Bound course.

Solo - The solo experience provides an important break from the rigors of the expedition, and a chance to reflect on your course thus far. With sufficient food and equipment you'll spend time alone at an assigned campsite to rest, reflect, and practice the camp craft skills you have learned on course. Solo sites are chosen to have as much solitude as possible, within earshot of other group members for safety reasons. You will not travel during this time and your instructors will check on you periodically, but you will be mostly alone for the duration of your solo. Solo may last in duration from a few hours to a full 3-days depending on age and course length. Many students are initially nervous about solo but most are ready for 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 Expedition - Outward Bound believes that an appropriate amount of independence is a powerful educational tool. In order to deliver that benefit, our instructors gradually transfer leadership responsibilities to the students culminating with a "Final Expedition." Near the end of course, if you and your group have demonstrated the necessary leadership, team problem-solving and wilderness living skills, you may be given



the opportunity to travel without your instructors immediately present. Crews will receive a 2-way radio or satellite phone as a means to communicate with your instructors. This is your opportunity to demonstrate the skills you have acquired in the previous weeks. Final Expeditions can last for one to five days, depending on staff assessment of students' abilities and terrain. Outcomes are work together, problem solve, and accomplish a goal independently, while utilizing all the skills they have acquired.

Service – Service is an integral part of the Outward Bound curriculum. We encourage service to the environment in the form of leaving campsites cleaner than we find them and practicing Leave No Trace® ethics throughout the course. We coordinate service projects with land managers (US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, local land trusts, etc.) as well as with select social service agencies (nursing homes, hospitals, organic farms, etc.). Service projects can last a few hours up to a full day.

Personal Challenge Event – Outward Bound courses typically end with a Personal Challenge Event—a final, individual, physical effort. This might take the form of a run or a triathlon-style challenge. Expect to participate in a 3-8mile run.

Final Days - In preparation for your travel back home, the second-to-last afternoon of your course will be spent de-issuing and cleaning all Outward Bound gear followed by a special graduation ceremony. Simple backcountry showers will be offered. Departure from the trailhead will be between 6am and 8am.

Mail while on course

Your mail will be delivered to you at the end of your course or during a resupply (see packing list for info about resupply). Any undelivered mail received after the course will be forwarded to your home address. Mail to Midpines can take about a week to get there as it's in the mountains. Also, allow 2 days to process. Packages are subject to opening prior to delivery to the student.

USPS Mail (Small Packages and Letters)

Name & Course Number c/o Outward Bound
P.O. Box 150
Midpines, CA 95345

FedEx or UPS (Larger Packages)

Name & Course Number c/o Outward Bound
6617 Hwy 140
Midpines, CA 95345

Sample Itinerary

The following is an example of what your itinerary may look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to permitting, weather, student skills and abilities, and instructor planning/assessment.

14-Day Itinerary

- Day 1 Course Start
- Days 2 Intro to climbing, belaying and rappelling
- Day 3-5 Training Expedition (Intro lessons: backpacking, camp craft, navigation and rock climbing)
- Days 6 Backcountry re-supply and Service
- Days 7-10 Main Expedition (building on lessons, backpacking and peak attempt), Solo
- Days 11-12 Final Expedition (demonstrating skills, backpacking and peak attempt)
- Day 13 Personal Challenge Event, clean and de-issue gear, Graduation
- Day 14 Course End and transportation home