



Itinerary Overview

High Sierra Alpine Backpacking – Veterans & Service Members

Wilderness travel is demanding. It can literally take every waking moment to get from point A to point B. From getting up early to pack your bags and cook breakfast, to hiking with a loaded backpack for a full day, to climbing peaks that rise well over 10,000 feet high, traveling in the wilderness is difficult.

Past participants and instructors agree that arriving physically prepared will enhance your experience and ability to do well on the course and ultimately allow you to take full advantage of the expedition. You do not need to have previous backpacking experience. We will teach you everything you need to know to travel comfortably—how to pack appropriately, set up tarps, and navigate using a map and compass. Veterans and Service Member courses are designed as introductory skill courses and may be reciprocal to training you received while in the service. Our objective is to balance challenge, respite and camaraderie.

Course Area

Sierra Nevada Mountain Range, California – This is the largest continuous mountain range in the contiguous U.S. It extends 400 miles from north to south – a greater length than the Swiss, Italian, and French Alps combined! It is filled with smooth granite domes, jagged peaks, cliffs, cool alpine lakes, and lush grassy 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! Because of the beauty reflected in both moon and sun light, conservationist John Muir referred to these peaks as the “Range of Light.”

During this course, you can expect to travel both on and off-trail, through forest as well as alpine terrain. The trails, where you can find them, are of high quality. The off-trail routes can be especially challenging as these routes traverse snowfields, scree slopes, boulder fields and alpine passes. The landscape can be rough, demanding, steep, and exposed - but for hiking and camping there are few places in the world that compare.

We currently use two main course areas for our Vet’s courses: the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wilderness. Your specific course may take place in either location, depending on weather, permit availability and instructor planning. Upon entering either of these areas, you might think you are in Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite National Park—but without the crowds!

Weather (Summer)

The Sierra Nevada offers fairly stable and beautiful summer weather. Rain is rarely forecasted, but afternoon thunderstorms are always a possibility. 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. June courses may encounter lingering snowfields and overnight temperatures near freezing. Mosquitoes can be at their worst in June and early July. As the season advances into late July and August, the mosquitoes will begin to die off and temperatures tend to become more moderate with daytime highs in the 70s to 80s (Fahrenheit) and evening lows in the 40s to 50s.



Weather (Fall)

Fall in the Sierras is one of California's best-kept secrets. The stable weather of the summer months continues well into September and provides warm sunny days for exploring the mountains. Nighttime can be cool and crisp as the first hint of winter creeps in. Expect daytime temperatures to be in the 60s and nights in the mid-30's. An extra margin of comfort with clothing layers is always recommended as the first snowflakes can start to fall at any point in the fall. If a quick winter storm passes through, expect it to last a few days before the warm rays return. As with summer, due to the very low humidity and high elevation, the effects of the sun are extreme. Proper sun protection is of utmost importance even as the angle of the sun begins to decrease.

General Overview

You will have a 2 to 3-hour drive from the airport to your course start location. You will spend the first day getting geared up for the field and getting to know the other members of your team. Group gear like climbing equipment, food, tarps, kitchen equipment and first aid supplies will be divided up amongst group members. With proper planning and packing your backpack should weigh between 30-40% of your body weight. Pack weight will vary from person to person based on your size, stature and physical ability. Expect to carry between 40-45 pounds. You will be taught essential backcountry skills such as how to stay warm and how to cook meals over backcountry stoves. 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.

Alpine Backpacking – Remote wilderness settings are a hallmark to alpine travel. Expect to travel both on and off-trail through meadows, talus fields and granite slabs. The amount of travel each day could range from 3-7 miles. Expect to hike with a full backpack for most of the course. Your course will incorporate either a day of rock climbing OR a peak attempt into the itinerary. These challenges are designed to impel you to take risks and draw upon inner resources in order to succeed while developing trust in one another. **Emotional safety is of equal importance to physical safety in these environments.**

Final Days - In preparation for your travel back home, the last evening of your course will be spent de-issuing and cleaning all Outward Bound gear followed by a special dinner. Simple showers will be offered. Groups will leave early on the morning of Day 6 in order to travel home.

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.

Day 1	Arrival, issue gear, hike in and camp in the back-country
Day 2	Backpacking, learn backcountry skills.
Day 3	Backpacking
Day 4	Peak attempt OR rock climbing.
Day 5	Hike to trailhead, clean and de-issue gear, Graduation and Banquet
Day 6	Depart for airport.



Travel Information:

Meeting Place: Fresno Yosemite International Airport (FAT) in Fresno, California
At the Baggage Claim area

Course Start

If you are arriving by flight, the latest flight should be in by 11AM on morning of course start. If you are driving or your flight is earlier, please meet at the baggage claim area at 10:45AM. An Outward Bound representative will be there by approximately 10:30 AM. They will ensure everyone has arrived and will be available to answer any last minute questions. Participants who have not been medically cleared and approved for course by the Student Services Department will not be allowed on the bus. Please be ready to go, having eaten and made any necessary phone calls by meeting time.

Course End

On the last day of the course all students will be returned to the Baggage Claim area of the Fresno Yosemite International Airport (FAT) by 10:00am. If family or friends are picking you up, please arrange to meet at the Fresno Airport Baggage Claim area. **Flights out of Fresno should be booked at or after 11:00 am.**

Who to Contact For Travel Delays

If a travel delay occurs, please call **(209) 742-6999** as soon as possible so that we can facilitate your pick up. The Student Services team is not in the office on weekends and messages left for them will be checked on the next business day.

Who to Contact In Case of an Emergency

If you have an emergency regarding a student on course, you may call the main office line: 415.933.6222 and press 6 to connect to the on call emergency phone.