



Course Overview

Joshua Tree Backpacking & Rock Climbing – 7 days

Fantastically jumbled rock formations and plants reminiscent of Doctor Seuss' fantastical creations rise out of this magical topography comprising Joshua Tree, one of California's most surreal desert landscapes. Much of the 800,000 acres of park is designated as wilderness.

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.

Backpacking and Pack Weight

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 plan to carry between 40-50 pounds.

Miles Traveled Daily

Traveling through desert terrain is exhilarating and often physically exhausting. Travel days are long and require 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.

Weather

The Mojave Desert's sunny weather is generally dry and rainfall is usually sparse, though unpredictable and sometimes persistent rainfall does occur. Temperatures are most comfortable in the spring and fall, with 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 5,000 feet above sea level so it's important to stay hydrated and plan ahead for temperature changes.

Instruction and Skills

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

The Instructors will help shape the outcomes of the course and coach students towards mastery of skill, additionally drawing the parallels between the rigors of course and life back home.

Course Start

There is 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 sort what clothing and gear you need to bring and what can be left behind. Depending on your specific itinerary, you may hike a few miles on Day 1 so that you can spend more nights in the backcountry.

Rock Climbing & Backpacking

As this course is designed for beginning and intermediate rock climbers, you'll develop the skills necessary to be effective top rope climbers. This course is primarily a "front-country" course, utilizing rock sites and campgrounds easily accessed from the road. Staying at a "basecamp" like this will allow for more time to immerse yourself in the course curriculum. The course will incorporate a backcountry base camping section at the beginning, where each day the group will venture out to a different rock climbing location for the day's activities. Each day presents a different focus; lessons are short with ample time for experiential learning. Students will be coached in refining their movement as they climb. The latter part of the course involves moving through the desert landscape as team towards the end of your experience.

Solo

Not all courses of this length have a solo, if there is one on your course, the purpose is for reflection and to take a break from course rigors. With sufficient food and equipment, you'll spend time alone at a 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. 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.

Sample Itinerary - The following is an example of what a 7-day course itinerary may look like. *Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, student skills and abilities, and instructor preferences.*

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| Day 1 | Course Start; Introductory lessons to "camp craft" |
| Day 2 | Lessons on top-roping and belaying |
| Day 3 | Climbing and other related lessons |
| Day 4 | Rappelling & begin backpacking section |
| Day 5 | Hike, navigate, solo |
| Day 6 | Hike to final camp, clean and de-issue gear, graduation |
| Day 7 | Say goodbyes, depart for airport |