



Course Overview

High Sierra Backpacking - Veterans

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. Yosemite is home to such namesakes as El Capitan, Glacier Point and Half Dome. Because of the beauty reflected in both moon and sunlight, conservationist John Muir referred to these areas as the “Range of Light.”

We currently use the backcountry of Yosemite National Park and the adjacent Ansel Adams Wilderness for our Veterans courses. Please note: In order to preserve solitude and reflection on these courses, courses will not include Yosemite Valley, but rather you’ll explore lesser travelled areas of the National Park and surrounding areas. Your specific course could take place in another location, depending on weather, environmental considerations, and permit availability.

Backpacking and Course Terrain

Traveling through mountain terrain is exhilarating and often physically exhausting. Travel days are generally very long and require great stamina and endurance. Expect to travel primarily on high quality trails through beautiful alpine lake areas, while occasionally venturing off-trail as permit regulations allow, to climb peaks and explore lesser known corners of the park. In early season, you may cross waist deep rivers where no footbridges are present.

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. One of the best ways to enhance your experience and set yourself up for success is to arrive physically fit.

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 but you can expect to carry 45-55 pounds.

Instruction and Skills

Previous backpacking 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. Ample time will be provided for reflection and processing.

The Instructors will help shape the outcomes of the course and coach students towards mastery of skill, additionally allowing ample time to draw parallels between the rigors of course and life back home. This is your expedition and you will take a hands-on approach to the day to day experience.

Overview



Course Start – There is a 2-3 hour drive from the airport to your 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, and the crew will begin backpacking on day 2. As this is not a guided trip, all group members will pitch in with camp chores including cooking, washing pots and setting up tarps.

Solo – The solo is a chance to reflect on your course thus far. With sufficient food and equipment you'll spend time alone at an assigned location to rest and reflect. Solo sites are chosen to have as much solitude as possible, within earshot of your instructors for management considerations. 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 on courses for adults may be integrated into the daily flow of course or may take place for a set amount of time. This activity may be abbreviated or eliminated as Instructors assess the weather, terrain, or other factors that could affect the outcomes of solo.

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 participants culminating with a "Final Expedition." Near the end of course, if your group has demonstrated the necessary leadership, team problem-solving and wilderness living skills, you may be given the opportunity to travel without your Instructors immediately present. This is your opportunity to demonstrate the skills you have acquired in the previous week. Outcomes are: working together, problem-solving and experiencing one final experience on course together as a team.

Final Days - In preparation for your travel back home, the last morning of your course will be spent de-issuing and cleaning any remaining Outward Bound clothing and gear followed by a special meal and graduation ceremony. You will have the opportunity to take a bucket shower before returning home. Groups will leave for the airport in the morning.

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 backcountry
Day 2	Backpacking, learn backcountry skills
Day 3	Backpacking
Day 4	Backpacking
Day 5	Peak attempt
Day 6	Hike to trailhead, clean and de-issue gear, Graduation and Banquet
Day 7	Depart for airport