



Course Overview

Yosemite Alpine Backpacking

On this expedition, you'll backpack through towering trees in Yosemite, swim in alpine lakes and sleep under countless stars. If you are looking to develop your leadership, learn outdoor skills, and challenge yourself, this is a great course to step into backcountry travel.

Yosemite National Park, located in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range, is famous for breathtaking views of waterfalls, massive granite domes, and peaceful alpine meadows. These regions are the **ancestral lands** of the Northern Paiute, Western Mono/Monache, Me-Wuk (Central Sierra Miwok), and Me-Wuk (Southern Sierra Miwok) nations. While this course steers clear of the crowded Yosemite Valley, dramatic alpine scenery can be seen in the horizon like peaks rising from the valley to elevations above 12,000 feet.

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. 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

Students must come prepared for a physically, mentally and emotionally demanding yet equally rewarding experience. Alumni often report that the more time they spent preparing for course, the more successful their course experience was. One of the best ways to enhance your experience and set yourself up for success is to arrive physically fit. Reference our physical prep guide for ideas!

Pack Weight

Packed backpacks weigh between 40 and 60 pounds, ideally this is 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 backcountry travel, both interpersonal and technical skills. For more details please read [Attending Outward Bound](#).

Technical skills: 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 skills: 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.

Youth Courses

For younger travelers, Outward Bound may be your first time away from home. Others may be veteran travelers. We plan our Youth courses to set you up for success no matter where you are on the spectrum of backcountry experience. The mental, social, and physical challenges you will encounter are very real and meeting them is a genuine accomplishment. Instructors will create a highly structured environment with clear expectations and a daily routine like chore rotations or Leader of the Day.

Overview

Course Start – There is a 2 to 3-hour drive from the airport to the course start location on windy mountain roads, typically on a bus. If you are prone to motion sickness, make sure you plan for this accordingly! 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 require pre-dawn starts, waking as early as 4am. You will typically launch from a basecamp so that you can leave some of your gear at camp. 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. You'll spend time alone at a location your instructors designate with water, some snacks and gear to make sure you are comfortable. You will not be camping or sleeping by yourself. 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 though you will mostly be alone for the duration of your solo. On this course, the solo will not be overnight and could range from 2 to 8 hours. 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 as instructors assess the weather, terrain, or other factors that could affect the outcomes of solo.



OUTWARD BOUND CALIFORNIA

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 backcountry living skills, you may be given a final challenge. This is your opportunity to demonstrate the skills you have acquired in the previous weeks. Final Expeditions can last for a few hours to one day, depending on staff assessment of students’ abilities and terrain. Outcomes are to 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.) 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 2-5 mile 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.

Note – On the first and last day of course there will be other Outward Bound groups at the same starting and ending locations as your crew. Typically, several crews will meet simultaneously at the airport to transport to the course start location. With the exception of course start/end travel and activities, you will be contained within your course-specific crew.

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.

8-Day Itinerary

Day 1	Course start, duffel shuffle: gear selection and packing backpack
Days 2-3	Training expedition (introductory lessons to backpacking, camp craft, navigation)
Days 4-5	Main expedition, Solo
Day 6	Final expedition: focus on team leadership
Day 7	Personal challenge event, clean and de-issue gear, graduation ceremony
Day 8	Course end and transportation to the airport