Itinerary Overview

High Sierra Alpine Backpacking & Rock Climbing
Summer Search- 14 days

In General - 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 hours, to climbing peaks that rise well over 12,000 feet high, traveling in the wilderness is difficult.

Arriving physically fit will enhance your experience and ability to do well on the course and ultimately allow you to take full advantage of the expedition. You don’t need to have previous backpacking or rock climbing experience. We will teach you skills for wilderness travel—how to pack appropriately, load a backpack, set up tarps, belay, rock climb and navigate using a map and compass.

Your course will begin the moment you are picked up in Fresno and will continue through your trip into the Sierra Nevada, where the real magic takes place.

Course Area
Sierra Nevada 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, 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! Because of the beauty reflected in both moon and sun light, conservationist John Muir referred to these peaks as the “Range of Light.”

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 can be 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. As the season advances into 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.

During this course, you can expect to travel 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, camping and mountaineering there are few places in the world that compare.

We currently use three main course areas for our alpine backpacking and rock climbing courses: The Ansel Adams, John Muir Wilderness, and Sequoia-Kings National Park. Your specific course could take place in any one of these locations, depending on weather, permit availability and instructor preferences.
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 a carefully crafted and intentional progression. Instructors will start off the course by training and teaching students everything they need to know about wilderness travel, risk management, and how to effectively work together as a team. As the course progresses, instructors will step back and take on more of a ‘coaching’ role. The intent is to provide a safety net for students to work through their decision-making and risk management development. If students demonstrate proficiency in all course elements, instructors will craft an appropriate level of challenge into a Final Challenge. Here instructors will step back completely to give the group autonomy and ownership of their course.

For Youth Specific Courses (14-16 years old) – We know that younger teens represent a diverse group. For some students, Outward Bound is your first time away from home; others may be veteran travelers and outdoor adventurers. We plan our “Youth” courses to set you up for success no matter where you are on the spectrum of wilderness experience. The mental, social and physical challenges you will encounter are very real and meeting them is a genuine accomplishment. Depending on the course area and activity we often incorporate time at a “base camp” to acclimatize. Instructors will create a highly structured environment with clear expectations and a daily routine like chore rotations or Leader of the Day.

Overview

Day 1 – You will have a 2 to 3-hour drive from Fresno 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. You will be taught essential backcountry skills such as how to sleep warm in your sleeping bag and how to cook your group 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.

Rock Climbing - The group will spend 1-2 days rock climbing at the start of course. This provides an opportunity to acclimate the the course environment at a base camp before heading into the backcountry with a weighted pack. It also gives students a chance to learn basic rock climbing skills. This section of the course will include a mix of teaching and climbing with students learning how to climb, belay, and rappel safely.

Alpine Backpacking – After climbing you will put more miles on your hiking boots by moving into the backcountry of the Sierra Nevada. This location provides a rugged and intensive Outward Bound backpacking experience. The emphasis during this part of the course is to teach you smart and efficient backpacking and alpine travel techniques. You can expect to travel on and off-trail through forest as well as alpine terrain; expect travel at times be rough, demanding and exposed to heights. You will begin to make decisions concerning navigation, route finding, campsite selection, and meal selection. Expect to travel between 3-8 miles per day. Groups may hike more than 10 miles in a day, based on fitness level and itinerary.
Solo – The solo experience provides an important break from the rigors of the expedition. 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 been learning throughout the course. We choose your solo site to offer as much solitude as possible, but within earshot of other group members for safety reasons. You will not travel during this time, and while your instructors will check on you periodically, you will be mostly alone for the duration of your solo. 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. Many of our students have expressed that this was one of the most powerful elements of their course.

Peak Attempt – Most courses will attempt at least one summit. Peak attempts are day-long events, requiring pre-dawn starts. On these days you may wake up as early as 4am. Peak attempts on our Alpine Backpacking and Rock Climbing courses may require roped travel or the use of technical equipment. From high atop the mountains of the Sierra Nevada Range you will have the chance to reflect on the terrain you have traversed and where your future travel will lead. For all the effort they require, successful peak attempts are often the most rewarding experiences of an Outward Bound course.

Final Expedition – Outward Bound believes that an appropriate amount of independence is a powerful educational tool. In order to deliver that benefit our instructors purposefully and gradually transfer certain 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. You will receive a two-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 between one to five days, depending on staff assessment of students’ abilities. Many of our students feel this phase of the course is the most rewarding, as the group learns to work together, problem solve, and accomplish a goal independently, while utilizing their newly acquired skills.

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 3-8 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 meal and graduation ceremony. Simple backcountry showers will be offered. Departure from the trailhead will be between 6am and 8am.
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.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Course Start</td>
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<tr>
<td>Days 2-3</td>
<td>Rock section (rock climbing, rappelling and camp craft intro lessons)</td>
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<td>Day 4</td>
<td>Front Country Resupply and Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Days 5-11</td>
<td>Main Expedition (backpacking, solo, and peak attempt)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 12-13</td>
<td>Final Expedition (backpacking)</td>
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<td>Day 13</td>
<td>Personal Challenge Event, clean and de-issue gear, Graduation Ceremony</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 14</td>
<td>Course End and transportation home</td>
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Mail while on course - Your mail will be delivered to you at the end of your course or during a re-supply. Any undelivered mail received after the course will be forwarded to your home address. Please make sure mail has arrived at least 3 days prior to the course end date. Packages/letters may take up to a week to be delivered to our base camp so plan accordingly. Packages are subject to opening prior to delivery to the student.

Student Name & XMUE-741 or XMUE-742

c/o Outward Bound
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