



## Itinerary Overview

### Pathfinder Colorado Rockies Alpine Backpacking – 30 Days – Ages 18-25



### Course Description

Welcome, you're in for an experience of a lifetime! Imagine hiking through rolling forests, sharing alpine meadows with mountain goats and climbing windswept peaks. Imagine scaling vertical rock cliffs deep in the Rocky Mountains and settling down for the night under a thick blanket of shimmering stars. Each day you will be getting to know your expedition team, learning about the area and yourself, laughing with your crew mates, and exploring North America's most famous mountain range. You don't need to have previous backpacking or climbing experience to fully embrace this extraordinary expedition, which combines beautiful environments and exciting activities with an emphasis on individual growth and community. In the mountains, you will learn the basics and finer points of living in the backcountry, as well as working in a team to achieve your goals. You will scale peaks high above tree line and stop often to admire awe-inspiring vistas.

The Pathfinder course is specifically designed for young adults searching for a direction in life. This course offers a purposeful wilderness adventure approach to develop three primary outcomes:

- **INCREASE SELF KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS**
- **IMPROVE GOAL-SETTING AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES**
- **DEVELOP PERSEVERANCE AND SELF-EFFICACY**

Your Instructors are highly qualified and dedicated outdoor educators. They will serve as teachers, trainers, and mentors as you learn the skills required for wilderness travel. Through daily discussions, they will also help you and your group to discover the larger meaning in these activities. You will discover new things about yourself: how you deal with uncertainty, stress and challenge; how you can better work with others; and your potential as a leader.

Wilderness travel is demanding. This course may be the hardest thing you have ever done. You should be aware of what you're getting into and be excited about tackling new challenges. It can literally take every waking moment to get from point A to point B. From steep mountain hiking with a heavy pack to waking up well before the sun rises, traveling in the wilderness can be hard. Past students agree that arriving physically fit and mentally prepared to take on challenges will enhance your experience and ability to do well on your course, which ultimately allows you to take full advantage of your expedition



## Course Area



Get ready for **Rocky Mountain high country**, where rolling forests, steep rocky slopes and miles of remote, alpine meadows create an adventure wonderland. Over 50 peaks push above 14,000' in Colorado, and countless craggy, peaks and ridges weave between valleys as far as the eye can see. If the timing is right, colorful wildflowers will brighten green alpine tundra snow-melt stream banks. You might share camp with elk, deer, moose and myriad other wildlife. You may even stumble upon relics of Colorado's rich human history: from artifacts of the region's indigenous peoples, to historic mining structures and equipment. All of Colorado's course areas share much in common, but below are some of the unique features of each:

**Maroon Bells Area** – The Maroon Bells area lies in the heart of one of the Rockies craggiest subranges: the Elk Mountains. This area features iconic 14,000-foot peaks such as Snowmass Mountain, Capitol Peak, Castle Peak, and, of course, the namesake Maroon Bells. The region is particularly rich with wildlife and wildflowers, and features incredible geology: purple layers of sedimentary rock surround jutting buttresses and dramatic cirques of alpine granite. Mountaineers know the area for terrific steep snow climbing.





## Course Activities

**Alpine Backpacking** – Alpine backpacking means moving through high mountain terrain mostly above tree line. The emphasis of this course is to teach you smart and efficient backpacking and alpine travel techniques. You can expect to travel on and off trail over wooded and alpine terrain that can be rough, demanding, steep and exposed and may at times require the use of ropes and ice axes to traverse a slope or ascend a pass.

**Rock Climbing** – You will spend at least 2 days exploring and learning the techniques and grace of rock climbing. The rock climbing instruction is for all levels and includes basic climbing techniques, helmet and harness use, climbing commands, tie-ins and climbing knots, belay techniques, basic top rope systems, and rappelling.

**Peak Attempt** – Your expedition will include at least one peak attempt. Peak attempts are major enterprises and typically require early morning starts and take all day to complete. Weather, or other factors including group dynamics and physical ability, may preclude even an attempt to ascend a peak

**Resupply** – Every 7 days or so your group will resupply their food, fuel and other gear. This keeps pack weights reasonable, and provides a chance to get some fresh socks or other necessities.

**Wilderness First Aid Course** – You will spend two days in a classroom at our high mountain basecamp, learning about wilderness medicine. You will have the opportunity to gain a Wilderness First Aid (WFA) certification during this course, which is considered a standard for many entry level jobs in the Outdoor Industry.

**Solo** – Solo provides an important break from the rigors of both the expedition and the distractions from everyday life. This is a truly once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. With sufficient food and equipment, you'll spend 1-3 days alone at your campsite to journal, rest, reflect on the past and look ahead to future goals. Your solo site will be close enough to the sites of the Instructors in case of an emergency, but far enough removed to assure your solitude. You will not travel during this time and your Instructors will check on you occasionally, but you will be alone. Many students are initially nervous about solo, but later recall solo as one of the highlights of their entire course.

**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. Whenever possible, we coordinate service projects with land managers (US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, State Parks and local land trusts, etc.) and select social service agencies (nursing homes, hospitals, etc.). You also practice daily service and compassion to your crew mates, whether that's making hot drinks on a cold morning, or helping someone on with their pack.

**Final Expedition** – The Colorado Outward Bound School believes that an appropriate amount of independence is a powerful educational tool. In order to deliver that benefit, our instructors purposefully and gradually transfer leadership responsibilities to the students. This progression culminates with our "Final Expedition." Near the end of course, if you and your group have demonstrated the necessary leadership, problem solving and wilderness living skills, you may be given the opportunity to travel without your Instructors immediately present. This "Final Expedition" will range from three to five days depending on staff assessment of student abilities and terrain type. Many of our students love the independence of this phase of course, as the group learns to work together, problem solve, and accomplish a goal independently, while utilizing all the skills they have acquired. Instructors periodically check in with the group to ensure student wellbeing and coordinate travel plans. When you emerge from this final phase of course you will understand a truth: For the rest of your life you and your team will understand that there is more in you than you ever thought possible.

**High Ropes Challenge Course** – Our premier wilderness basecamp features a high ropes course in the canopy of the forest. Here you'll swing through the trees and test your balance forty feet above the ground...attached to a safety





tether of course!

**Challenge Event** – There are no set-in-stone course end challenge events, as each challenge will be tailored to the current conditions and participants. The challenge event may take the form of a run or team challenge. This event is your opportunity to finish course successfully and with style, by embodying all the lessons you have learned during your Outward Bound course. You may be surprised by how far you can still go given the challenges you have already accomplished.

**Guided Reflection and Transference** – At Outward Bound we believe there is no learning without reflection. Throughout course, you will be prompted to reflect on what you're experiencing on course, and what it means in the greater context of your life. Sometimes this is a journaling exercise, sometimes a group sharing experience, and sometimes a moment of solitude to think for yourself. You spend focused time towards course end exploring how your new knowledge, skills and attributes can apply to your life after course.





## Sample Itinerary

The following is an example of what your itinerary may look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, your group's skills and abilities, and your Instructors' preferences.

### Pathfinder

**Day 1** – Course Start

**Day 2-6** – Training Expedition/Backpacking

*Curriculum includes:*

- Self-awareness
- Awareness of others
- Basic navigation
- Basic first aid
- Backcountry living
- Basic leadership
- Basic team decision making
- Outward Bound history and philosophy

**Day 7-8** – Service Projects and High Ropes Course

**Day 9-17** – Main Expedition – Peak Climb and Solo

*Curriculum includes:*

- Advanced navigation
- Advanced decision making
- Summit strategies
- Time management
- Peer leadership
- Conflict resolution
- Introspection and Reflection

**Day 18-19** – Wilderness First Aid Course

**Day 20-28** – Final Expedition as a group

**Day 29** – Challenge Event, Course End Celebration

**Day 30** – Departure home