



Itinerary Overview

Colorado Rockies Mountaineering & Rock Climbing – 22 Days – Ages 16-18

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 group, learning about the area and yourself, laughing with your expedition 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.

Your Instructors are highly qualified mountaineers and dedicated 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.



The expedition will consist of significant wilderness backpacking, at least one or two peak attempts, 3-5 days of rock climbing in the backcountry. Expect to carry a backpack weighing 30-60 pounds, dependent on your weight and fitness. You can expect to travel on and off trail over wooded and alpine terrain that can be rough, demanding, steep and exposed. This may require the use of ropes and ice axes to traverse a slope or ascend a pass. Throughout the course, you will sleep under a tarp, cook your own food, and take responsibility for the well-being of yourself and your crewmates.

Each day your Instructors will add new skills, new freedom and new responsibility to your team. Breaks throughout the day for lunch, snack or just to rest provide unparalleled views and allow you time to take pictures of majestic wildlands. Time on the trail is a great way to make friends. Stories and laughter lighten the load when things get tough, and you'll likely be surprised at how fast you get to know your fellow course mates.

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 Activities

Mountaineering Expedition - Mountaineering courses focus on preparing for and executing technical peak attempts requiring harnesses, ropes, and ice axes. Your instructors will train you to use all equipment necessary for technical mountaineering. Additionally, you will learn Leave No Trace skills and ethics, backcountry route finding, leadership, and teamwork. You will also learn about the area's natural history and environment as you go, including flora, fauna, geology, astronomy, and ecology.

The expedition will consist of significant backpacking, approximately one to two days of rock climbing, one or two peak attempts, wilderness travel and initiatives. Expect to carry a backpack weighing approximately 40-50 pounds, dependent on your weight and fitness. During this course, 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 4–5 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.



Solo – A one- to three-night 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. We hope you'll bring this ethic home and exhibit leadership in your local communities!

Resupply –Your group will be periodically resupplied with food, fuel and gear. This keeps pack weights reasonable, and allows you to get some fresh gear and clothing.



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.

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 course length, student age, 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.



Course Area



Gore Range, Rocky Mountains, Colorado – Jagged and snow-covered for much of the year, the Gore Mountains are steep and remote. Located near Vail, Colorado, the range contains technically demanding peaks and incredibly high passes. They were named after a wealthy Irish nobleman, Sir St. George Gore. His party hunted in and around the area from 1855 through 1857. Climbers know the Gore as one of Colorado’s finest alpine climbing areas. Because the range hosts no 14,000’ peaks, it’s free of the crowds that the high summits attract.



Sample Itinerary

The following is an example of what a 22-day itinerary may look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, your group's skills and abilities, and your Instructors' preferences.

Day 1 - Course Start

- Inspect and issue gear
- Meet Instructors and peers

Day 2-8 - Backpacking and Rock Climbing

Curriculum includes:

- Basic map and compass navigation
- Time management
- Basic first aid
- Rock climbing techniques
- Group decision making
- Summit strategies
- Basic campcraft
- Backcountry living
- Peer leadership
- Outward Bound philosophy



Day 9-17 - Mountaineering and Rock Climbing

Curriculum includes:

- Advanced top rope rock climbing skills
- Belaying
- Rappelling
- Fixed line techniques
- Technical peak attempts
- Reflection (2 or 3-day solo)
- Advanced navigation
- Advanced group communication
- Advanced decision making
- Advanced peer leadership
- Conflict resolution

Day 18-21 - Final Expedition

- Independent Group Travel
- Independent group communication, decision making, peer leadership

Day 21 - Challenge Event and Course End

- Culminating Challenge (Group or individual)

Day 22 - Transportation home