



COURSE DESCRIPTION

SOUTHWEST ALPINE BACKPACKING & RIVER EXPEDITION 24 DAYS

In General – Congratulations! This is one of the marquee courses that Outward Bound offers. There is no other course of this length that combines so many different elements and environments. This course allows you to travel from the depths of a graceful canyon-enshrouded river, through canyon country to the summit of a 12,500' peak. You don't need to have previous backpacking or rafting experience to enjoy this extraordinary expedition which combines beautiful, challenging environments and activities with an emphasis on leadership, personal strength (not just physical), and community. In the rivers, canyons, and mountains of beautiful Southern Utah, you will learn the basics and the fine points of expedition travel. You will ascend high summits, climb, learn to navigate with a map and compass, explore canyon depths, and captain a raft.



Your instructors are highly-qualified mountaineers, canyoneers, river runners, 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 lessons to be found in these activities. You will discover much about yourself: how you adapt to change and deal with stress or challenge, how you 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 excited about tackling the challenges. 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 paddling a raft for miles on flat water under windy conditions or through turbulent rapids, 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, ultimately allowing you to take full advantage of your expedition.

The Colorado Outward Bound School (COBS) is indeed a school, though it will likely look radically different from schools you have attended in the past. Our "classrooms" are beautifully inspiring and rather than memorization for tests, our curriculum focuses on skills for the wilderness and most importantly for our students' everyday lives when they return home. Through challenge and adventure in a supportive environment your instructors will use teachable moments, experiential learning, and time for reflection to create progressions of skills and responsibilities. Many traditional schools may teach to specific mathematical or linguistic hard skills, but in addition to teaching whitewater rafting, backpacking, climbing, and canyoneering, COBS aims to develop the character of each student; building resilient, optimistic, compassionate, and resourceful leaders. We explore, role model, highlight the merits of, and encourage examples of our values:

- Tenacity in Pursuit
- Readiness for Sensible Self Denial
- Indefatigable Spirit
- Enterprising Curiosity
- Compassion



COURSE AREAS

La Sal Mountains, Utah – The La Sal Mountains rise dramatically out of the desert, towering 9,000’ above the surrounding canyonlands and the sporting mecca of Moab. This range was originally named when the Spanish came through in the early 1500s and they mistook the snow for salt. The La Sals are known for their groves of aspen, rich amount of wildlife, high summits, and incredible views overlooking Canyonlands and



Arches National Park and the Four Corners area. Hidden lakes dot the landscape. Peaks in the La Sals range from ten thousand to just under thirteen thousand feet and include the highest mountains in Southern Utah.



Canyon Country, Utah – The most spectacular aspects of the Utah landscape are the hidden treasures found within its vast canyon networks, formed by millennia of wind and water erosion. The canyonlands of Southern Utah are still as stunning, mysterious, and wild as they were for the Ancestral Puebloans and Fremont Indians who roamed these lands over 800 years ago. The sandstone canyons are a geological playground and are composed of a spell-binding labyrinth of alcoves, fins, pinnacles, buttes, towering walls, ledges, cliff dwellings, and arches just waiting to be explored.



San Juan River, Utah – The San Juan River in southern Utah, a major tributary of the Colorado River, flows 83 miles through the deeply incised sandstone slick rock country of the Colorado Plateau in many tight bends. The San Juan is world renowned for archaeological sites of ancient Indians featuring both petroglyphs and spacious cliff dwellings accessible on side hikes from the river. The San Juan River is also well known for its exquisite natural scenery, as you’ll soon find out once you are deep within the towering canyon walls

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Desolation/Gray Canyon on the Green River, Utah – When legendary outlaw Butch Cassidy and his Wild Bunch gang needed to

escape from the eyes of pursuing posses, they would head to the vast and beautiful wilderness of Desolation Canyon.

Midway through its journey through Utah, the Green River flows through Desolation Canyon, a truly wild location where spectacular rock formations, impressive ancient rock art, and abandoned 19th century ranches await explorers. You might travel this section of river in both sit-on-top kayaks as well as

rafts as the 60+ rapids continue to grow in size. At its greatest depths, Desolation Canyon plunges to carve a gorge deeper than the Grand Canyon. The towering rock walls of Desolation give way to the earthy bluffs of





Gray Canyon, creating a sudden contrast of scenery for the last 25-miles of the canyon. Desolation and Gray Canyons offer a perfect blend of fun and challenging rapids with off river hikes to jaw-dropping destinations.

COURSE ACTIVITIES

Each course is as unique as the individuals who form the group. Your course itinerary may vary depending on weather and the skill level of your group.

Rafting – While on the river, each day is spent learning to recognize and navigate various obstacles and hazards in the river, and how to anticipate the forces of the current from far enough upstream. You and your companions will work to become a team, coordinating your spacing, and paddle strokes. You will have an opportunity to be the captain of your crew and put to use what you've learned as you maneuver your raft through Class II – III rapids. Interspersed between the rapids are flat-water sections where there is a current,



but no whitewater. At times, you will take advantage of this calm water to hone your skills and enjoy the view. Time in a raft is ideal for getting to know each other and forming boat pride, laughing your way downriver as you relax into the simplicity of river life.

In places, the canyon rims rise thousands of feet above, enclosing you in a remote world of rushing water, delicate ecosystems, and unbelievable beauty. During your course, your instructors will introduce you to the most important elements of the river life: reading whitewater currents, paddling, whitewater captaining, geology of the canyon, environmental stewardship, outdoor cooking, first aid, natural history of the river canyons, and of course, those beautiful star-studded night skies.

Mountain Backpacking Section - In the mountains, you will shoulder your backpack filled with all the items



necessary for mountain travel and camping. With your crew, you will climb over high passes, attempt to reach summits, descend into lush, vegetated valleys with alpine streams, and work your way over rugged, rocky terrain, learning to rely on and help each other. The days can be long and difficult, and often require an “alpine start” to allow ample time to ascend and descend the summit or pass before afternoon thunderstorms appear. In this section, you will generally travel four to six miles each day, carrying all of your food and equipment in backpacks, as you learn and practice the basics of mountain navigation.

The altitude and exertion present a challenge, but the magnificent views, sense of accomplishment, and increase in fitness are a few of many of your rewards.

Peak Attempt – You will attempt to summit at least one peak. Peak attempts are day-long enterprises and often entail pre-dawn starts. The peak attempts may start from a camp site that you return to that night so you can leave some of your gear behind at camp for the day. Or, it may be that the peak attempt will be part of a travel day in which you are climbing over a pass from one valley to another and summiting with your backpack. From the summit, you will be able to look out over the La Sal mountain range as well as the vast, surrounding Canyonlands region that you have been traversing.





Rock Climbing – During the mountain section, you may spend one day experiencing the thrill and grace of rock climbing. This is a great opportunity to challenge your fears and push yourself to places you never thought possible. Rock climbing instruction is for all levels and includes basic climbing techniques, helmet and harness use, climbing commands and belaying.

Service Day – 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 also coordinate a formal service project day that takes this service ethic beyond your course and into the greater community. This service project is either community-based – helping people who live in the area – or environmentally-based; working with land managers (US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, local land trusts, etc.) to restore or improve our wild and wonderful public lands.

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 time 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 others that you can get help quickly in case of 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 primarily alone for the duration of your solo. Many students are initially nervous about solo, but many later recall solo as one of the highlights of their entire course. This activity may be abbreviated or eliminated depending on weather or other factors.

Final Challenge Event – Outward Bound believes that an appropriate amount of independence is a powerful educational tool. In order to deliver that benefit, Outward Bound purposefully and gradually transfers certain leadership responsibilities to the students culminating with our “Final Challenge Event”. Near the end of course, if you and your group have demonstrated the necessary leadership, team problem solving, and wilderness living skills, you may participate in such an event. There are no “set in stone” final challenges, as each challenge throughout course has been tailor fitted to the current conditions and participants, but it may take the form of a run or team challenge amongst many options. This event is your personal challenge to finish 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 have come in 24 days and how far you can go.

“There is much to be said for a philosophy which aims at living a full life while the opportunity offers. There are few treasures of more lasting worth than the experience of a way of life that is in itself wholly satisfying. Such, after all, are the only possessions of which no fate, no cosmic catastrophe can deprive us: nothing can alter the fact if for one moment in eternity we have really lived”. - Eric Shipton



SAMPLE ITINERARY

The following are examples of what your 24-day itinerary **may** look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, student skills and abilities, and instructor preferences.

Day 1	Course start
Day 2-9	Rafting on the San Juan River or Desolation Canyon, Rock Climbing, Day hikes to Ruins and Rock Art
Day 10-14	Transfer to Canyon Backpacking, Service Project
Day 15-23	Backpacking in the Mountains, Day hikes, Peak Attempt, Solo
Day 24	Final Challenge Event and Course End