



Course Description

Spring/Fall Southwest Leadership Semester – 50 days

In General – Congratulations, this is one of the marquee courses that Outward Bound offers. You are in for the experience of a lifetime! Located in Outward Bound's most remote course areas in the beautiful state of Utah, the Southwest Leadership Semester is 50 days of discovery. 50 days of leadership and adventure. 50 days of challenge and compassion. 50 days of awe-inspiring beauty. 50 days of turning raw potential into reality. 50 days quickly becomes a lifetime of Personal Strength, Leadership, and Friendship.

The Southwest Leadership Semester is a 50-day exploration of the canyons and whitewater rivers of one of the most beautiful and geologically stunning landscapes in the entire world. This course is designed for individuals seeking to find adventure, challenge, the next step, strength, and themselves.

Colorado Outward Bound School semester courses are designed to develop outdoor skills and to enhance your leadership and communication abilities for when you return home, not only for while you are in the wilderness. There is a balance of knowledge that is experienced and acquired; from learning how to descend narrow obstacle-filled slot canyons, to how to communicate effectively, learning to backpack while summoning the strength to lead, to charging ahead at some of the biggest whitewater in the West. Working for the best of your community, learning technical rope systems and whitewater experience, as well as increasing your knowledge and awareness of the world around you will all occur on course. Oh, and having loads of laughs while you're at it.

The 7-20 people (depending on course size) you spend 50 days with -- day and night, through hardship and exuberance, sunshine and foul weather, harmony and conflict, working together to overcome wilderness challenges — become like a small family and community. Many previous students have become best and lifelong friends. However, like any family or community, there are times when everyone gets along and times when they don't. Because of this it is important that you maintain a spirit of compromise throughout the course. Other members of the crew may have a slightly different set of goals, desires and objectives than your own. Through this you learn a great deal about yourself and from each other. Remember that in order to be an effective leader, you must know yourself and how you relate to all types of individuals. How you behave and cooperate during times of strife and stress on your course is a great test of your character and an opportunity to find out what's inside you.



Successful completion of your course demands mastery of skills, trust, fitness, confidence, tenacity, leadership, initiative, and especially compassion. The promotion of these qualities, and the discovery of what's within you, is the purpose of Outward Bound.



Your instructors are highly-qualified backpackers, 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 be 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

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.

-OR-

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 will travel the 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. Desolation and Gray Canyons offer a perfect blend of fun and challenging rapids with off river hikes to jaw dropping destinations.





Canyon Country, Utah (Robbers Roost, San Rafael Swell, Moqui Canyon) – 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 Puebloan 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.



Cataract Canyon of the Colorado River – You hear “ALL FORWARD!” shouted above the roar of the rapids by the captain of your raft (that could be you). Next thing you know, you’re digging your paddle blade in deep to meet some of the biggest and best whitewater of the West.

One of the most rugged and beautiful canyons in the West, Cataract Canyon takes you through the heart of Canyonlands National Park. You will learn how to guide a whitewater raft as you float past natural wonders and ancient ruins to the confluence of the Colorado and Green Rivers while preparing for what awaits downstream. The Colorado River roars through 29 exciting rapids that rate with those of the Grand Canyon in power and difficulty, including the famous Mile Long Rapids and “the Big Drops.” In the nearby canyons, fantastic rock shapes carved by the whimsical forces of nature await you as your group ventures off-river to jaw-dropping views.



Dark Canyon Wilderness Area - As you inch to the edge of the rim of Dark Canyon, you may be overwhelmed with the immense space. Canyons carve their way to depths of over one-thousand feet to capture your sense of awe and envelop you in wonder. As you find yourself at the bottom of the majestic canyon with your toes dug into warm sandy beaches, you will be surrounded by lush, green cottonwood trees and listening to the murmur of crystal clear spring-fed water tumbling over slickrock cascades into deep swimming holes. Dark Canyon is a truly wild place with many mysteries to be uncovered that has captivated the attentions of others for thousands of years. The landscape is filled with rock that has been eroded into an endless variety of mesas, towers, grottos, springs, and canyons.





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.

Whitewater 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 – IV rapids. Interspersed between the rapids are flat-water sections that can last for a full day 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.

Rock Climbing – During the rafting section, you may spend one day experiencing the thrill and grace of rock climbing and rappelling. Rock climbing instruction is for all levels and includes basic climbing techniques, helmet and harness use, climbing commands and belaying.



Canyoneering Section – Canyoneering involves exploration and travel in canyons that are often narrow, sinuous, and steep with many obstacles to negotiate. Traveling through them requires a combination of scrambling up, and down, climbing over boulders, possibly rappelling, lowering packs, and hiking with your pack on. This rugged, rocky terrain requires teamwork and delicate decision-making on the part of group members.



To meet the demands of the technical terrain you will encounter, instructors will begin by teaching the foundational skills necessary for efficient travel, such as basic movement over rock and spotting techniques. The instructors will then teach more advanced movement on rock, and roped techniques such as rappelling, knot-tying, self-rescue, and rope handling. These skills, along with the basics, are then ready to be put into use when the terrain becomes more challenging.



Canyon Backpacking Section – With your crew, you will journey through the intriguing and difficult-to-explore canyon country, taking in the infinite shapes of the arches, towers, buttes, amphitheaters, overhangs, and domes. While doing this, you will be carrying a 45 to 60 pound backpack which will have all you need to thrive in the wilderness. All the while, you continue learning how to use maps and compasses, how to cook meals for yourself and your crewmates, negotiate slick rock obstacles, possibly rappel, find water, and live comfortably in the immense canyons. The days can be long and hard, but the canyons reward you with their jaw-dropping beauty frequently.

Wilderness First Aid Course – You will spend three days in the Moab, UT area, 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.

Service Days – Service is an integral part of the Outward Bound curriculum. We encourage an ethic of service to our own close-knit community of expedition mates, our surrounding cities, and to the environment. These find action on a daily basis through acts of compassion, formal service projects, and by leaving campsites cleaner than we find them and practicing Leave No Trace® ethics throughout the course. The formal service project days take this service ethic beyond our 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 Expedition – 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 Expedition.” Near the end of the 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. Many of our students feel this phase of the course is the most rewarding, as the group works together; problem solves, and accomplishes a goal independently of staff, while utilizing the skills they have acquired throughout the course.



Final Challenge 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 50 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 is an example of what your 50-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 2-10	Rafting the San Juan River
Day 11-13	Wilderness First Aid Class
Day 14-25	Transfer to the Canyons: Technical Canyoneering, Slot Canyons, Day Hikes, Solo, Canyon Backpacking
Day 26-34	Whitewater Rafting in Cataract Canyon or Desolation Canyon, visiting Native American ruins, Day Hikes
Day 35-42	Canyon Backpacking- Dark Canyon Wilderness Area
Day 43-48	Canyon Backpacking- White Canyon, Possible Final Expedition
Day 49-50	Final Challenge Event, Course End ceremonies



Expedition Life

Group Living – Living and working with a small group is an opportunity to make lifelong friends and enjoy memories that will last a lifetime. It is also a source of friction and challenge. You may feel frustration or annoyance with your teammates at times as you and your group attempt to meet your goals and make decisions big and small. Students step off the bus with varying levels of motivation, fear, and doubt. Once the trip starts even the most eager students may become reluctant to take a certain risk or try their best. Investing in working



out differences in your group, sharing insights from your challenges and laughing your heads off over the most delicious dinner you've ever tasted (hunger is the best spice) are all part of why students walk away from their Outward Bound course with a deeper understanding of life, living, themselves, and each other.

Food – You and the other members of your group will learn to cook tasty and nutritious meals over portable gas stoves. Our meals are sometimes meat-free (meat is heavy and spoils quickly) and consist of grains, pasta, nuts, beans, cereals, and other light, dehydrated foods. The food may seem unfamiliar at first—we don't pack many processed foods or "junk food"—but you will find that it tastes good and gives you energy at the end of a long day. A typical breakfast might be granola or oatmeal; lunch would include tortillas, cheese, and summer sausage or peanut butter and jelly; dinner might be macaroni and cheese or bean, rice, and cheese burritos. We can accommodate some special food needs, but only if we know well in advance. If you have a particularly unusual diet, we may ask you to bring some of your own foods.

Camp – As this is not a guided trip, all group members will work together to do camp chores, including cooking, washing pots, setting up tarps, and cleaning boats. You'll find that as the expedition progresses, your mastery of these camp craft skills will enable you to operate more efficiently and effectively around camp and on the boat or trail.

Hygiene – A common misconception about the backcountry is that you have to be dirty all of the time. Not true—it is entirely possible to stay clean and semi-fresh smelling while in the field, as long as you are willing to take the time to get clean. Your instructors will demonstrate clean-up options and explain more about backcountry hygiene when you arrive.

Typical Day – A typical day involves rising with the sun, starting the day with stretching, making breakfast, packing up camp, and hitting the trail or the river. You will be busy all day. Once you stop for the day, group members will divide and conquer to get food cooked and camp set up. After dinner, you may meet to address the next day's plans, or to discuss leadership and teamwork methods, before crawling into your sleeping bag for a well-deserved rest.





The Curriculum

The curriculum of the Semester develops those qualities associated with effective outdoor leadership and technical skills essential for rigorous and safe wilderness adventure. While the technical skills are taught according to the particular demands and opportunities of each wilderness environment, the outdoor leadership skills are continually developed throughout the course. The skills essential for effective outdoor leadership are divided into five categories: Technical, Leadership, Communication, Environmental Stewardship/Natural History, and Teaching. Each category is covered in detail and you are given ample opportunity to practice newly developed skills in real situations.

Technical Skills - These are needed to safely travel in the wilderness and overcome the various challenges which differ between environments. However, some skills are needed in all areas. You learn these early and refine them throughout the course. They are:

Expedition Planning:

Emergency Preparedness
Ropes & Knots
Stove Use & Maintenance
Leave No Trace Campcraft
Campsite Selection
Shelter Construction
Cooking Methods
Sanitation & Hygiene
Nutrition & Ration Planning
Navigation, Map Reading,
Route Finding

Canyon Backpacking:

Packing Techniques/Gear
Complex Navigation
Off Trail Travel
Pack Raising/Lowering

First Aid:

Injury/Illness Prevention
First Aid Kit
Hypothermia/Hyperthermia
Insect/Snake Bites
Communicable Diseases
Fractures/Sprains & Strains
Blisters
Dehydration
Evacuation Criteria
Medical Conditions

Rock Climbing

Belay Techniques
Ropes and Knots
Safety Commands

Canyoneering Section:

Technical Canyoneering
Cultural and Natural History
Desert Safety
Rappelling
Anchor Selection/Construction
Flash Flood Awareness and
Prediction

Rafting Section:

Water Safety
Hydrology
Boat Commands
Boat Rigging
Whitewater Navigation
River Signals
Boat Captaining
Emergency Procedures

Leadership skills – These are taught as three distinct topics: Leadership Styles, Leadership Theories and Decision-Making Strategies.

- You will explore Leadership Styles by first learning about self-leadership -- developing confidence, positive self-image, discipline and responsibility in situations that challenge you directly. Then, you look at qualities of a group leader, various leadership types (authoritarian, democratic, bureaucratic, etc.) and gender/cultural differences as they apply to leadership.
- Leadership Theories are presented to familiarize you with the conceptual frameworks that have been successful and popular in recent years. These include situational leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership and follower-ship.
- Understanding Decision-Making Strategies is essential to any leader. Therefore, you learn the differences between and discuss appropriate use of consensus, committee, majority rule, minority rule and dictatorial decision-making.



Communication skills - These are taught as four topics: Self-expression, Listening Skills, Feedback Skills and Conflict Resolution.

- Self Expression involves learning how to identify thoughts and feelings, articulate them, and finally, recognize how trust is increased in the process.
- Listening Skills are necessary to gain a clearer understanding of various situations and your group members thoughts and perspectives. These skills are developed through group discussions regarding listening and through group processing of activities and situations.
- Feedback is a very delicate skill, perhaps the hardest one to learn, but when given adeptly can be a priceless gift to the recipient. Good feedback involves crediting good performance, giving constructive criticism, and moving beyond personal judgment and giving advice. Instructors will model effective feedback and provide structure to help you master the art of giving and receiving feedback for yourself.
- Conflict Resolution involves learning how to productively confront others when there are disagreements or misunderstandings. The instructors will lay the foundations for creating the supportive environment that will give you a practice arena to successfully face interpersonal and group conflict.

Environmental Stewardship and Natural History skills are developed to nurture, respect and promote a feeling of responsibility for whatever environment you're traveling in. Environmental Stewardship includes Leave No Trace® skills for camping, hiking, backcountry hygiene, avoiding disruption of plant and animal habitats and archaeological preservation.

Natural history is often a fascinating part of each wilderness environment. Instructors familiarize you with the flora and fauna, geology, weather systems and human history of the areas. At night you will be introduced to astronomy, constellations, and some of their associated myths.

Teaching skills are developed to prepare you as a leader who, when circumstances require, can teach others the skills you have mastered. Teaching is divided into four topics: Types of Learners, Qualities of a Teacher, Interaction, and Experiential Education.

Because students gather and process information in a variety of ways, you will learn how to identify Learner Types and structure presentations accordingly.

You will discuss qualities that make effective teachers and how instructors or leaders from your own life have modeled such qualities. You will work to incorporate these into your own personal delivery style.

Experiential Education is what Outward Bound is all about. You will learn how this model functions and experience first-hand learning by doing, reflecting on experience and transferring lessons learned to other areas of life.