



## COURSE DESCRIPTION

### SOUTHWEST RAFTING & ALPINE BACKPACKING – 16 DAYS

**In General** – Congratulations! You're in for an experience of a lifetime! This course takes you from whitewater at the depths of a canyon deeper than the Grand Canyon to lofty alpine summits more than 12,000' high! 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), responsibility, and community. Amongst the mountains and rivers of the Southwest, you will ascend high summits, climb rock walls, learn to navigate with a map and compass, walk among wildflowers in aspen groves, captain a raft, and sleep beneath the star-studded night skies of the Utah wilderness.



Your instructors are highly-qualified backpackers, 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 true potential as a leader and an individual.

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 and rainy 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

### **Whitewater Rafting in Desolation/Gray Canyons 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 19<sup>th</sup> century ranches await explorers. You will travel this section of river in rafts as the 60+ rapids continue to grow in size. At its greatest depth, 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.



**La Sal Mountains, Utah** – The La Sal Mountains rise dramatically out of the desert, towering 9000' 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.



## 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 powerful paddle strokes, and captaining 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.

**Alpine Backpacking** - 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 early start to allow ample time to ascend and descend the summit or pass before afternoon rain and 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/Rappelling** – In the mountains, or on the river, you may spend a day experiencing the thrill and grace of rock climbing or the control and exhilaration of rappelling. This is a great opportunity to challenge your fears and push yourself to places you never thought possible. Rock climbing/rappelling instruction is for all levels and includes basic climbing techniques, helmet and harness use, climbing commands and belaying.



**Service** – 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 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 16 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

## SAMPLE ITINERARY

The following is an example of what your 16-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
- Days 2-8** Launch on River, Whitewater Rafting, Possible Climbing/Rappelling, Hiking
- Days 8-15** Alpine Backpacking, Peak Attempts, Hiking, Resupply, Service
- Day 16** Final Challenge Event and Course End