



## COURSE DESCRIPTION

### SOUTHWEST RAFTING & KAYAKING - 16 DAYS

**In General** - Welcome, you're in for an experience of a lifetime! Imagine paddling through towering canyon walls, passing by bighorn sheep, taking a quick dip in the refreshing waters, and at the end of the day pulling over to a beach to cook a big dinner and lie under a blanket of shimmering stars. Each day you will be getting to know your newfound community better, learning about the area and yourself, laughing with your expedition mates, and exploring some of America's most scenic river stretches. You don't need to have previous rafting or kayaking experience to fully embrace this extraordinary expedition which combines beautiful environments and exciting activities with an emphasis on individual growth and community. On the river, you will learn the basics and the fine points of managing a paddle raft through some of the best whitewater in the West, as well as camping in Southern Utah's wilderness. You will paddle a raft and kayak, descend through deep canyons filled with both calm and wild water, and often stop to explore many awe-inspiring views.



Your instructors are highly-qualified 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 meaning 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 dry bags and cook breakfast, to paddling a raft for miles in 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

**Whitewater Rafting and Sit-on-top Kayaking 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. At its greatest depth, Desolation Canyon plunges to carve a gorge deeper than the Grand Canyon.



**-AND-**

**Whitewater Rafting through Canyonlands National Park in Cataract Canyon** – 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.

In one of the most rugged and beautiful canyons in the West, the river meanders between monumental sandstone formations as it delivers you into the heart of Canyonlands National Park. This is an area rich in artifacts and ruins from ancient Native Americans who left signs of their once flourishing culture throughout Southern Utah. You may make a number of stops to see remnants of their occupation of this area over one thousand years ago. You will put all of your practice navigating rivers to the test 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.



## COURSE ACTIVITIES



**Rafting & Kayaking** - 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 addition to rafts, you will also be going downriver in sit-on-top kayaks. Sit-on-top kayaks combine stability with maneuverability. You will take your experience predicting whitewater and hydrology from the rafts and apply it to a smaller, yet more responsive watercraft. In a kayak you move, predict, and react with every movement of the water and are met with exhilaration as you charge through crashing waves and negotiate the river's obstacles. You will learn the new skills specific to kayaking: eddy turns, bracing, surfing, and self-rescue. You will travel close together and support one another through rapids and share the stories of each rapid with an ear-to-ear grin on your face. With these boats, everything depends on you: your effort, your planning, and your decisions. Each day brings a new level of confidence and greater sense of accomplishment as the 60+ rapids continue to grow in size.

During this initial phase of your course, your instructors will also introduce you to the most important elements of the river life: environmental stewardship, outdoor cooking, first aid, natural history and geology of the river canyons, the night sky, and of course, paddling and captaining skills.



**Day Hiking** – As you travel down the river, you will stop along the way to stretch your legs, explore side trails, canyons, and historic or geologic points of interest. These hikes will take you through rough terrain to incredible, remote places that are only accessible by river travelers. The hikes are always well worth the effort to see both ancient and turn of the century artifacts as well as stunning natural beauty.

**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.

**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 are acted out on a daily basis through acts of compassion, formal service projects, and by leaving campsites cleaner than we find them by practicing Leave No Trace® ethics throughout course. The formal service projects 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, etc.) to restore or improve our wild and wonderful public lands.

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



**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.

## **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.

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| <b>Day 1</b>    | Course Start   |
| <b>Day 2-9</b>  | Rafting & Kayaking Desolation & Gray Canyons, Transfer     |
| <b>Day 9-15</b> | Whitewater Rafting Cataract Canyon, Solo, Service          |
| <b>Day 16</b>   | Final Challenge Event, Course End, and transportation home |

