



## Course Description

**COBS Backpacking, Rock Climbing, & Rafting Outdoor Educator Semester – 55 days**



Congratulations, you are in for the experience of a lifetime! The Colorado Outward Bound School Backpacking, Rock Climbing, & Rafting Outdoor Educator Semester is a 55-day exploration of the canyons and rock spires of some of the most beautiful and geologically stunning landscapes in the entire world. Located in the beautiful states of Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah, the Backpacking, Rock Climbing & Rafting Outdoor Educator Semester is 55 days of discovery. 55 days of leadership and adventure. 55 days of challenge and compassion. 55 days of awe-inspiring beauty. 55 days of turning raw potential into reality. 55 days quickly becomes a lifetime of Personal Strength, Leadership, and Friendship.

This course is designed for individuals seeking to build skills and enter the Outdoor Education field. You will gain direct experience in what it is like to operate in an institutional setting. Throughout course, you will focus on four main topics: Risk Management, Interpersonal Skills, Technical Skills, and Education Skills (the same criteria Outward Bound staff are measured against). You will leave course with personalized, specific, and detailed Outward Bound evaluations in the above four categories which will not only help drive your professional development but could set your resume apart and help you get a job in the Outdoor Education industry (maybe even with us!).

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 push out of your comfort zone to reach the top of a climb, learning how to communicate effectively, learning to backpack while summoning the strength to lead, learning to charge 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 55 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



# COLORADO OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL

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, climbers, boaters 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 walking for miles in difficult terrain, 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 Area

Get ready for **Rocky Mountain high country**, where rolling forests, steep rocky slopes and miles of remote, alpine meadows create an adventure wonderland. Over 50 peaks push above 14,000' in Colorado, and countless craggy, peaks and ridges weave between valleys as far as the eye can see. If the timing is right, colorful wildflowers will brighten green alpine tundra snow-melt stream banks. You might share camp with elk, deer, moose and myriad other wildlife. You may even stumble upon relics of Colorado's rich human history: from artifacts of the region's indigenous peoples, to historic mining structures and equipment. All of Colorado's course areas share much in common, but below are some of the unique features of yours:



Your course will begin at **Vedauwoo** (Vee-Duh-Voo) a popular climbing destination in southern Wyoming. Defying gravity up to 500 feet in the air, these ancient rock formations were created by ice, wind, and water. At an altitude of 8,200 feet, the views from the top of these formations are breathtaking. Overlooking dense pine directly below and endless plains under the wide-open Wyoming skies. The Native Americans named this area Vedauwoo which means "Land of the Earthborn Spirits". You'll see why they believed it was a spiritual place when

tons of rock seem to balance on inches of space.

**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 19<sup>th</sup> century ranches await explorers. You will 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.

**Alpine Backpacking** – Alpine backpacking means moving through high mountain terrain mostly above tree line. The emphasis of this course is to teach you smart and efficient backpacking and alpine travel techniques. 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.

**Peak Attempt** – Your expedition will include at least one peak attempt. Peak attempts are major enterprises and typically require early morning starts and take all day to complete. Weather, or other factors including group dynamics and physical ability, may preclude even an attempt to ascend a peak.



**Rock Climbing** – You will spend at least 10 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. The instructors will also teach more advanced movement on rock as well as strive for getting students to a place where they can mock lead or lead climb.

**Wilderness First Aid Course** – You will spend two days in Leadville, Colorado learning about the fascinating world of 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.

“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 55-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 2-11** - Rock Camp in Vedauwoo Wyoming

**Day 13-23** - Alpine Backpacking in the Rawahs

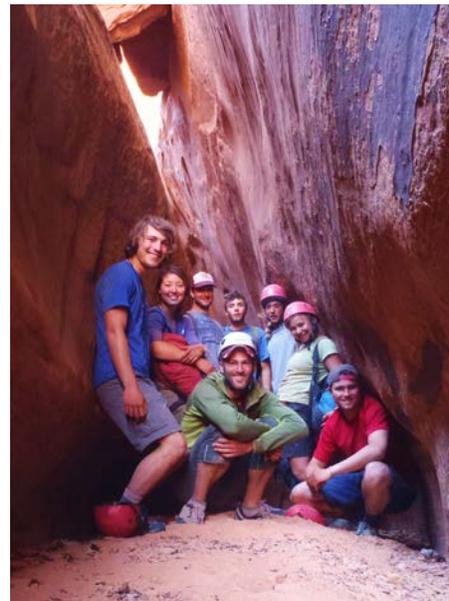
**Day 24-27** - Service and Wilderness First Aid Class

**Day 28-36** - Whitewater Rafting down Desolation Canyon in Utah

**Day 37-40** - Service

**Day 41-53** - Alpine Backpacking Review & Finals Experience

**Day 54-55** - Course Debrief, 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 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. 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: Risk Management, Interpersonal Skills, Technical Skills, and Education Skills. Each category is covered in detail and you are given ample opportunity to practice newly developed skills in real situations.

**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.