



Itinerary Overview

Sawatch Range Alpine Backpacking – 15 Days – Ages 16-18



Course Description

Welcome, you're in for an experience of a lifetime! Imagine hiking through rolling forests, sharing alpine meadows with mountain goats and climbing windswept peaks. Imagine scaling vertical rock cliffs deep in the Rocky Mountains and settling down for the night under a thick blanket of shimmering stars. Each day you will be getting to know your expedition group, learning about the area and yourself, laughing with your expedition mates, and exploring North America's most famous mountain range. You don't need to have previous backpacking or climbing experience to fully embrace this extraordinary expedition, which combines beautiful environments and exciting activities with an emphasis on individual growth and community.

Your Instructors are highly qualified mountaineers 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 in these activities. You will discover new things about yourself: how you deal with uncertainty, stress and challenge; how you can better work with others; and your potential as a leader.

The expedition will consist of significant wilderness backpacking, at least one or two peak attempts, 2-4 days of rock climbing in the backcountry. Expect to carry a backpack weighing 30-60 pounds, dependent on your weight and fitness. You can expect to travel on and off trail over wooded and alpine terrain that can be rough, demanding, steep and exposed. This may require the use of ropes and ice axes to traverse a slope or ascend a pass. Throughout the course, you will sleep under a tarp, cook your own food, and take responsibility for the well-being of yourself and your crewmates.

Each day your Instructors will add new skills, new freedom and new responsibility to your team. Breaks throughout the day for lunch, snack or just to rest provide unparalleled views and allow you time to take pictures of majestic wildlands. Time on the trail is a great way to make friends. Stories and laughter lighten the load when things get tough, and you'll likely be surprised at how fast you get to know your fellow course mates.

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 new challenges. It can literally take every waking moment to get from point A to point B. From steep mountain hiking with a heavy pack to waking up well before the sun rises, 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, which ultimately allows you to take full advantage of your expedition.



Course Activities

Camping – You will start off by learning camping skills, and adapting to the high altitude. You will learn the basics of wilderness travel—how to pack appropriately, cook in the backcountry, set up tarps, tie climbers’ knots and handle ropes, and navigate using a map and compass. Throughout the course, you will sleep under a tarp, cook your own food, and take responsibility for the well-being of yourself and your crewmates.

Alpine Backpacking – Alpine backpacking means moving through high mountain terrain mostly above tree line. 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, especially during early summer, require the use of ice axes to traverse a slope or ascend a pass.



Peak Attempt – Your expedition will include a peak attempt if possible. 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 a peak ascent.

Resupply – Your group will be periodically resupplied with food, fuel and gear. This keeps pack weights reasonable, and allows you to get some fresh gear and clothing.

Solo – A one- to three-night 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 1-3 days 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 the Instructors in case of an 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 alone. Many students are initially nervous about solo, but later recall solo as one of the highlights of their entire course.

Service – 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 explore service to your community through teamwork and compassionate support of your expedition mates. The 22-day course will likely feature a formal community service project near the course area. We hope you’ll bring this ethic home and exhibit leadership in your local communities!

Final Expedition - The Colorado Outward Bound School believes that an appropriate amount of independence is a powerful educational tool. In order to deliver that benefit, our instructors purposefully and gradually transfer leadership



responsibilities to the students. This progression culminates with our “Final Expedition.” Near the end of course, if you and your group have demonstrated the necessary leadership, problem solving and wilderness living skills, you may be given the opportunity to travel without your Instructors immediately present. This “Final Expedition” will range from three to five days, depending on course length, student age, staff assessment of student abilities and terrain type. Many of our students love the independence of this phase of course, as the group learns to work together, problem solve, and accomplish a goal independently, while utilizing all the skills they have acquired. Instructors periodically check in with the group to ensure student wellbeing and coordinate travel plans.

Challenge Event – There are no set-in-stone course end challenge events, as each challenge will be tailored to the current conditions and participants. The challenge event may take the form of a run or team challenge. This event is your opportunity to finish course 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 can still go given the challenges you have already accomplished.





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 each:

All of Colorado's course areas share much in common, but the **Sawatch** sub-range of the Colorado Rockies is home to Colorado's two highest peaks: Mt Elbert (14,439') and Mount Massive (14,429'). The range is known for expansive, rolling alpine terrain and encompasses the headwaters of the Arkansas River. The source of the name is somewhat disputed: some sources cite the Ute word "sawup," which means "sand dunes." Others source it to Ute words meaning "green place" or "blue water."



Sample Itinerary

The following is an example of what your itinerary may look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, your group's skills and abilities, and your instructors' preferences.



15-Day Alpine Backpacking

Day 1 - Course Start and High Ropes Course

Day 2-3 - Curriculum includes:

- Basic leadership
- Basic team decision making
- Basic camp craft and cooking
- Outward Bound philosophy and history

Day 4-13 - Backpacking, Solo and Peak Attempt

Curriculum includes:

- Basic map and compass navigation
- Basic first aid
- Backcountry living
- Group off-trail travel
- Peer leadership
- Time management
- Conflict management
- Self-Awareness

Day 14 - Challenge Event and Course End

Day 15 - Transportation home