



## **ATTENDING COLORADO OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL**

You are beginning a great adventure! Your course will be an amazing experience - an opportunity to learn and grow in new and positive directions that will last a lifetime. That being said, attending Colorado Outward Bound, like any big experience, requires planning and preparation.

This document is intended to give you a clear idea of what life will be like while out on course.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This document contains very important information that could affect your course experience. **Please read it thoroughly.**

### **INTRODUCTION TO LIFE ON COURSE**

#### **COBS vs. Summer Camp**

Our courses are very different than a traditional summer camp. Students will not be sleeping in cabins or eating meals prepared for them in dining halls. Rather, you will be camping out in tents or tarps, cooking food on camp stoves, and generally living in a wilderness setting.

Our courses are much more physically and mentally demanding than a typical camp. A COBS course requires that you take personal responsibility for your wellbeing and the wellbeing of your group. You are also expected to participate in group chores, and push through physically and mentally challenging days.

#### **Risk**

There is an inherent risk to the activities and environments we operate in. Our intent is not to avoid activities involving risk but to manage the inherent risk in those activities and to use it as a platform for learning. Risk is fundamental to developing character, leadership and compassion on a deeper level than is accomplished in more comfortable environments.

#### **Embracing the Unknown**

We try our best to help you understand what course will be like. However, there will be plenty of unknowns. You can't know what the other students on course will be like, what the weather will do, or what the challenges of wilderness living are like until you're in the experience. In fact, embracing this unknown is an important part of the learning opportunity on course. Adapting to unforeseen challenges is essential to the Outward Bound experience. Please be ready mentally to not have all the information, and to be surprised on a daily basis.

#### **Supervision**

All COBS students are supervised to ensure their physical and emotional safety based on age, length of course, and demonstrations of proficiency and reliability. However, due to the nature of wilderness living, there will be occasions on your course when you are not directly supervised by your instructors. For example, some students progress to a stage of independent travel in which their instructors are nearby, but not directly in the group. You will also have privacy for going to the bathroom, sleeping, and during your solo experience. It is our expectation that students will cooperate with their instructors, and follow all directions with or without direct supervision.



## **Instructors**

Requirements to be an instructor include being 21+ years old, with a wilderness first responder certificate. Each course patrol will have a minimum of 2 instructors allowing us to keep our student-instructor ratio at or below 6:1. Our field instructors work in small teams, comprised of an Assistant Instructor, Lead Instructor and Course Director. All of our instructors have significant personal experience in wilderness travel. Promotion to Lead Instructor and Course Director level depends upon course experience, personal experience and successful assessments in Risk Management, Technical Education and Interpersonal Skill Trainings.

Instructors are required to attend COBS trainings annually and are strongly encouraged to hold industry accredited certifications.

## **Early Departures Due to Low Motivation**

Occasionally, students arrive on course and encounter challenges that create a desire to leave. We will help students work through doubt/anxiety and actively try to solve any issues that arise, so that they may successfully complete their course. However, a student who is not willing to fully participate and follow instructions compromises the safety and quality of a course. If a student is determined to leave or continues to fail to follow instructions we will not make them stay.

**Please see cancelation policies document for details on the finances of leaving course early.**

## **Wilderness Travel**

Colorado Outward Bound School courses are demanding. In fact, graduating students often say that their course is the hardest thing they have ever done. Travel may be on trails, off trail, through forests, snow, tundra, and across rivers. While rafting, there may be long stretches of flat water where you will need to paddle long and hard, sometimes into a strong headwind. We rarely take rest days, even due to inclement weather, so be prepared to push on even when the wind is blowing and the rain is heavy.

## **Typical Day**

A typical day usually means getting up early, packing up camp, mapping the route, sitting for a lesson or two, and then hitting the trail or river. You will travel all day—taking breaks to rest, snack, or enjoy a view. You will generally be covering lots of territory. Once you reach camp, group members will divide and conquer to cook meals and set up camp. After dinner you may meet to address the next day's plans and to discuss leadership and teamwork methods before crawling into your sleeping bag for a well-deserved rest.

## **Camp Chores**

Because this is not a guided trip, all group members will pitch in to do camp chores, including cooking, washing, setting up tarps, taking care of crew mates as needed, and generally being ready and willing to pitch in on whatever needs to be done. You'll find that as the expedition progresses, your mastery of these skills will enable you to operate more efficiently and effectively around camp.

## **Group Dynamics**

Living and working with a small group is an opportunity to make lifelong friends and create memories that will last a lifetime. It is also a source of friction and challenge. You may feel frustrated with your teammates as you and your group attempt to meet your goals and make decisions. Investing in working out differences in your group, sharing insights from your challenges



and laughing together are all part of why students walk away from their course with a deeper understanding of life, living, themselves, and each other. Your instructors will support you in working through these frictions.

## **Sleeping**

Depending on the season and climate, you will be sleeping in tents or tarps with sleeping bags and sleeping pads. Our instructors do not typically sleep in the same shelters as students unless it is warranted by the terrain, weather, or group needs. On courses for ages 18 and up, students can design their own sleeping arrangements as long as they demonstrate sufficient maturity and emotional safety.

On courses for students under age 18, COBS staff seek to arrange sleeping groups to ensure the emotional and physical safety of all students. Typically this means the group is separated by stated gender identity, but other arrangements are possible depending on individual and group needs.

## **Hygiene**

Showering and washing hair are not an option while on course. Your instructors will explain the details of backcountry hygiene when you arrive. Every course environment has different techniques and environmentally appropriate practices for going to the bathroom. You will learn how to dispose of human waste in latrines, cat holes, or other wilderness-area specific methods. Groups carry soap and/or hand sanitizer for hand washing. There are usually no opportunities to wash clothing.

## **Food**

Our meals generally consist of grains, pasta, nuts, beans, cereals, and other light, dehydrated foods. A typical breakfast might be granola or oatmeal; lunch could include tortillas and cheese or peanut butter and jam on crackers; dinner might be macaroni and cheese or beans and rice. There is not a lot of meat or fresh produce on course. *Please let your Course Advisor know if you have dietary restrictions.*

## **Inclusive Group Culture**

We strive to create inclusive group cultures on our courses, in which every individual can be safe, supported, and healthy. That means we will not tolerate racism, sexism, homophobia, or discrimination based on any other identity trait. We understand that these issues are complex, and we commit to addressing them with dialogue and restorative practices. Repeated or egregious offenses will be grounds for dismissal from course.

In order to promote inclusion, we also ask students to refrain from exclusive relationships. That could be a romantic relationship, a clique, or a friendship that is not open to other students.

## **PREPARATION FOR COURSE**

Most people find that COBS presents them with challenges (physical, mental and even social) that they are not sure they can accomplish. Both physical and mental preparation will help you have more fun while out on course and give you greater chance for success.



## **Mental Preparation**

*Be Open to New Experiences* -- Your course is likely to be very different than anything you've ever done. You are likely to have teammates you would never choose to hang out with. Be ready to meet new people, to embrace a new way of life, and to follow the guidance of your Instructors.

*Come Prepared to Work Hard* -- Physically, mentally, and socially. The challenge is a different balance for each person, but no graduate will tell you that what they went through was easy in every way.

*Lose Specific Expectations* -- What Outward Bound is and what you experience will be unique, amazing, and challenging. Everyone finds something different than their expectations. If you have family/friend who have taken a course with us before, know that you will have a very different experience than they had.

## **Physical Preparation**

We suggest at least 30 minutes of cardio exercise 4-5 days a week. The best thing you can do is mimic the activity you will be doing on course, whether that's hiking with a heavy pack or rowing a raft on the river. You do not need to be an accomplished athlete to succeed on course, but training will help you get the most out of it.

A few days before course...

- Drink more water than usual, ½ to 1 gallon a day, for 3 days before start.
- Minimize fatty foods, alcohol, and nicotine before course. They can contribute to dehydration.

## **PACKING AND TRAVEL INFORMATION**

You don't need to bring camping gear like sleeping bags or backpacks. You will only need to bring personal clothing, a few toiletries and footwear. **Each course has a specific clothing list provided by your course advisor.**

## **Electronics**

You are encouraged to bring a camera, but due to the nature of our courses, you may run the risk of losing or damaging it. You will not be able to use your phone as a camera. Bring a waterproof bag or box for your camera, batteries and memory cards. A zip lock bag works well. Disposable cameras are a good option too.

You are more than welcome to travel to and from your course with i-Pods, MP3 players, cell phones, personal computers, GPS devices, etc. Once you arrive we will ask you to leave these things in your luggage as **electronics (other than cameras) are not allowed on course.** We also ask students not to bring emergency response technology, as COBS provides that to each group and we have specific emergency response plans in place.

## **Money**

You may need money while traveling to and from course- typically around \$40 for meals/snacks. Please be sure to eat on your travel day. Once we pick you up it may be a few hours before arriving at base or camp and preparing a meal. If students lose or damage gear on course, they may have to pay a fee for replacement/repair.



## **Travel to Course Start**

Please carry or wear irreplaceable gear on the plane like your boots, socks, long underwear, prescription medications and contacts/glasses. When you arrive on the course, you will pack your trail gear into a pack provided by COBS. Items that are not needed/allowed on course including your suitcase will be locked in a secure location at our base camp.

## **Unaccompanied Minor Provision**

Some students between the ages of 12-15 travel with the Unaccompanied Minor Provision service. Some airlines require it, some don't allow it and most have an extra charge for it (some as high as \$300). This provision requires an Outward Bound representative to pick up your child from their gate rather than at baggage claim. If you choose the provision, federal law doesn't allow the minor to leave the gate until a representative is there. Due to the high number of students traveling to our courses, your child may have to wait at the gate while the representative is meeting other students. We are unable to approve flights for Unaccompanied Minors that arrive before 10:00 AM or depart after 3:00 PM. Please contact your course advisor if you plan to purchase Unaccompanied Minor Provision.

## **What if I have a travel delay getting to my course start?**

If a travel delay occurs every effort will be made to get the delayed student on the course. Please call **720-381-6589** as soon as possible so that we can make adjustments to get you to course.

## **REACHING STUDENTS ON COURSE**

If there is an emergency (e.g. death in the family) and it is necessary to contact a student on course, please call your Course Advisor. As students cover many miles in the mountainous backcountry, it is not often possible to reach people in the field immediately, but we will make every reasonable effort to communicate important issues as soon as possible.

## **Mail**

Courses that are two weeks or longer can usually send mail during a resupply and at the end of course. We are unable to deliver mail to courses shorter than 30 days.

*Please note: We cannot guarantee that mail will be delivered depending on timing and location of course.*

We are not able to provide regular updates on our students. **No news is good news.** You will be contacted if something unusual occurs. Isolation from outside influences is one factor of why are courses are so special. We believe in preserving that isolation as much as possible.

**Thank you for choosing Colorado Outward Bound School. If you have any questions about the content in this document please contact your course advisor.**