



Itinerary Overview

Colorado Rockies Alpine Backpacking for Veterans



Course Overview

Outward Bound Veterans expeditions build on camaraderie and the challenge of the natural world as a pathway to healing. These expeditions encourage participants to connect with existing strengths and bond with fellow veterans in a safe, positive, mission-driven environment. As they harness the power of wartime experiences like carrying heavy packs, moving fatigued muscles and sleeping outside, these courses help build the self-confidence and sense of purpose veterans need to continue serving as leaders in their families, communities and the nation.

This six-day adventure is a great way to unplug, get some perspective on home life, and take advantage of our nation's amazing wild lands. We also hope you'll have a ton of fun hiking, camping and connecting with other veterans.

Past participants agree: showing up physically fit and mentally prepared for any challenge will help you make the most of this course. The challenges may be physical, environmental, or even social.

You don't need any prior experience with backpacking, hiking or camping. You'll learn everything you need to know on course. And if you bring a lot of outdoor experience, all the better! You can practice your outdoor skills and maybe still learn a thing or two from our experienced instructors, and your patrol mates.



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.

Course Activities

Backcountry Expedition – All of your food and gear along with a portion of the group camping equipment will be carried in the backpack on your back. In this section, you will navigate with map and compass, learn to assess and adapt to varying terrain and weather conditions. You will navigate and learn or refresh skills in simple first aid and backcountry self-care.

Peak Climb - Depending on weather and terrain conditions, you may attempt to climb a high peak. This will demand efficient team work, an early start (to avoid lightning storms), and physical stamina as you navigate slopes of loose rock and push through the burn of high altitude exercise.

Outward Bound History and Philosophy

The term "Outward Bound" is a nautical one: it refers to a ship that is leaving the safety of the harbor for the hazards – and opportunities – of the open sea. That idea captures Outward Bound's educational philosophy perfectly: by getting out of our comfort zone with intentionally chosen challenges, we become stronger people.

Outward Bound's collaborative relationship with soldiers and veterans is as old as the school itself. Outward Bound originated in Wales in 1941 as a training program for British Merchant Marines who struggled against both the rigors of the sea, as well as the hazards of German naval aggression during World War II. At the time, founder Kurt Hahn said the school trains both for the sea, and through the sea. The same could be said for the mountains of Colorado: on your expedition, you will learn the ins and outs of backcountry mountain travel, and we also hope you'll make the course a training ground for the biggest adventure of all: life.



Sample Itinerary

Following is an example of what your course's 6-day itinerary might look like. Your actual course plan will vary depending on weather and terrain conditions.

Day 1 - Course arrival and preparation. You will arrive at course start by bus or van. Your day will be spent acclimatizing, getting to know your patrol mates, organizing and packing your gear and learning specific skills for backcountry camping and travel.

Day 2 - Skills training and hiking. You continue to acclimatize as you go learn backcountry lessons and then hike into the wilderness with your teammates and instructors. You will learn or refresh your skills in navigation, on and off trail travel, campsite identification and setup, water treatment, backcountry cooking and sleeping warm.

Day 3-4 - Your instructors will continue to turn more and more of the daily operations over to you and your team. You may hike from point to point setting up a camp each day, or you may hike in for a day and then establish a basecamp.

Day 5 - Peak attempt - Weather depending, you and your teammates will attempt to summit a peak or reach a high point on the map. The challenge and hard work to get there is worth it, because standing amid the grandeur of the Rocky Mountain wilderness is something few people get to experience. Following this high point, you may spend time alone in a special spot in the wilderness, where you rest, recharge and reflect.

Day 6 - Travel, de-issue, celebrate. This day goes quickly. You'll break down camp, hike back out of the field and return your gear. Following some paperwork and then a tasty course-end meal with your fellow veterans and instructors, you will have opportunity to honor your time together during a closing ceremony. Then, it's back on the bus to Denver.





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