



Itinerary Overview

Sawatch Range Alpine Backpacking – 15 Days – Ages 14-16



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 newfound community better, 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. In the mountains, you will learn the basics and finer points of living in the backcountry, as well as working in a team to achieve your goals. You will scale peaks high above tree line and stop often to admire awe-inspiring vistas. You will learn the basics of wilderness travel —how to pack appropriately, cook in the backcountry, set up tarps, tie knots, 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.

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.

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.



This course requires no previous experience with hiking or backpacking. However, even if you're an experienced outdoorsperson there is still a lot that can be gained from the instruction and teamwork involved in an Outward Bound course.



Course Activities

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.

Solo – Depending on your course length and environmental factors, your solo may range from a few hours to an overnight experience. 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 have time to journal, rest, reflect, and look ahead to future goals. Your solo site will be close enough to the Instructors 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. Many students are initially nervous about solo, but later recall solo as one of the highlights of their entire course.

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.

Service – Service is an integral part of Outward Bound values and 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 support of your expedition mates. We hope you'll bring this ethic home and exhibit leadership in your local communities!

High Ropes Challenge Course

– Our premier wilderness basecamp features a high ropes course in the canopy of the forest. Here you'll swing through the trees and test your balance forty feet above the ground...attached to a safety tether of course!



Challenge Event – There are no “set in stone” final challenges, as each course has to fit to the conditions of its participants, but it may take the form of a run or team challenge. This event is your 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 can still go given the challenges you have already accomplished.

Reflection and Celebration – At the end of your course, after you've persevered through challenge, grown close as a group, and put a lot of miles on your boots, you'll celebrate all you've done. You'll also reflect on returning home. How have you grown? What new strength will you bring with you? What challenges await you back home? We're excited for you to find out!



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 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." Great Sand Dunes National Park sits at the southern toe of the Sawatch range. 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