



COURSE DESCRIPTION

SOUTHWEST CANYON BACKPACKING FOR ADULTS – 7 DAYS

In General - Soon enough you will find yourself in canyons that echo the footsteps of prehistoric cultures and modern life will be stripped down to the essentials of travelling through a landscape of rock, sand, and sky. A spirit of adventure and a desire to explore the unknown places that exist around the next corner can substitute for previous backpacking experience in order to enjoy this extraordinary expedition which combines a beautiful, challenging environment with activities that place an emphasis on individual growth and community. We will teach you skills for wilderness travel—how to pack appropriately, hike, set up tarps, and navigate. Your course will begin the moment you are picked up in Grand Junction and will continue through your expedition into the wildlands of Utah, where the real magic takes place.



During your course, you will backpack in the canyons and out across the mesas, camp on vast expanses of desert slick rock, and stop along the way to explore amazing 800 year old ruins and interesting geology. Most importantly, you get to spend time in an incredible area of the desert southwest, sleep under the stars and feel the sunshine on your face, watching it wheel its way across the landscape to magical sunsets. It's common to be strongly affected by this amazing country where the sand gets between your toes and the scenery touches your heart.

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 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 hiking for hours with a pack on in inclement weather, 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 the course, ultimately allowing you to take full advantage of your expedition.



COURSE AREA

Cedar Mesa – Southeastern Utah – The canyon country of Southeastern Utah is one of the starkest, yet most sublime areas of wilderness left in the lower-48 states. Your course takes place in this area, just north of the San Juan River, on a large plateau called Cedar Mesa. The landscape is filled with sandstone that has been eroded into an endless variety of mesas, towers, grottos, hoodoos, arches, and canyons. The canyons abound with hidden wonders: clear springs seeping from the rock, gnarled junipers, delicate soils that host communities of life, the powerful silence, hues of varnish creating tapestries of the canyon walls, stunning sunsets, and much more.



Cedar Mesa is world renowned as being the home of one of the largest concentrations of Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings in the world. These people lived in this area for hundreds of years, eking out an existence in this austere environment. Their subsequent abandonment of this area is one of the great unsolved mysteries of the Southwest. Every pottery shard, cliff dwelling, and rock art panel you encounter on your course will entice you to contemplate in wonder the lifestyles and beliefs of this ancient culture.



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.

Canyon Backpacking – It is not necessary to have previous backpacking experience on this expedition. Once you set off, you will engage in canyon route finding, minimum-impact camping and traveling skills, outdoor cooking, basic first aid, map and compass use. Each day of the course is balanced with a good mix of backpacking, day hiking, exploration, time to sit and reflect, and the daily needs of the group such as cooking, packing up or unpacking, putting up shelters and getting water from nearby springs and potholes. You will learn to work together to ascend and descend steep routes through the canyons and to view stunning cultural history. If you have a serious fear of heights, this may not be the best activity for you as you may hike exposed routes. If you have any concerns, contact your course advisor. Throughout the course, you will see signs of the passage of Native Americans from long ago, from pottery shards, arrowheads, rock art, or ruins, and you will be able to learn and reflect upon life in these very canyons hundreds or thousands of years ago, as well as today.



Solo – A solo of up to 24 hours 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 Challenge Event – Your group may end the course with a Final Challenge Event—a physical or mental push. There are no “set in stone” final challenges, as each challenge throughout course has been tailor fit to the current conditions and participants, but it may take the form of a run or team-building challenge amongst many options. This event is your personal 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 have come and how far you can go.

SAMPLE ITINERARY

The following is an example of what your 7-day itinerary **may** look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, student skills and abilities, and instructor preferences.

Day 1

Day 2-6

Day 7

Course start

Backpacking, hiking with and without full packs

Solo, backpacking, hiking, final challenge event

Course end

