



## Course Overview

### High Sierra Pathfinder - 30 Days

**The Sierra Nevada Range** extends 400 miles from north to south. It is filled with granite domes, jagged peaks, cool alpine lakes and lush meadows. Atop the domes one can view the jagged profiles of the LeConte Divide, the Ritter Range and the Great Western Divide, all containing mountain peaks and passes up to 14,000 feet in elevation. These regions are the **ancestral lands** of the Northern Paiute, Western Mono/Monache, Me-Wuk (Central Sierra Miwok), Eastern Mono/Monache, and Tübatulabal nations.

#### **Pathfinder Courses**

Pathfinder courses are geared towards students looking for direction and purpose in life. Outward Bound facilitates this by developing strong leadership skills within those who are willing to take on the challenges they face. Instructors focus on the development of your personal leadership style, strengths, and life purpose. Leadership and service are the two key elements of your Pathfinder experience that will ultimately leave you walking away with a newfound appreciation for the next phase in your life. There is also a strong emphasis on the transference of life skills and goals from the Outward Bound course to your life back home. To help facilitate this transfer of skills, Outward Bound staff will support students in creating a transition plan. This may include an opportunity to have a phone call with your instructors and a mentor of your choosing to help build a support network as you transition back home to follow through with the goals you set on course, and/or may take the form of creating a written plan for students to take home with them.

#### **Alpine Backpacking and Course Terrain**

You will travel both on and off-trail. The trails, when present, are usually of high quality. The off-trail routes can be especially challenging as these routes travel through boulder and talus fields, over granite slabs, sometimes fording waist deep rivers where no footbridges are present. Though the landscape can be demanding, there are few places in the world that compare to the beauty where this backpacking leads.

#### **Rock Climbing**

The rock climbing section will start off by establishing a base camp for introductory rock climbing skills: how to climb, belay and rappel. Further climbing opportunities may occur at some of the Sierra's remote backcountry locations including opportunities to camp on top of granite domes, experience amazing free-hanging rappels or explore stunning river gorges. With practice and focus, you will learn skills that will help you be a supportive climbing partner after your course.

#### **Miles Traveled Daily**

As a general guideline, expect to travel approximately 3-15 miles a day as terrain and fitness allow.

#### **Physical Fitness**

Students must come prepared for a physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding yet equally rewarding experience. Please use our physical prep guide and arrive in good shape for this course. Alumni often report that the more time they spent preparing for course, both physically and mentally, the more successful their course experience was.



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## **Pack Weight**

The need to carry ropes and rock equipment for the backcountry rock climbing sites will add additional weight to packs. Packed backpacks typically weigh between 35-45% of your body weight, and you can expect to carry between 40-55 pounds. This varies person to person based on size, stature and physical ability.

## **Instruction and Skills**

Previous backpacking and rock climbing experience is not necessary. We will teach you the skills for backcountry travel, both interpersonal and technical skills. For more details please read [Attending Outward Bound](#).

Technical skills: how to pack appropriately, load a backpack, set up tarps, camp craft, navigation, how to sleep warm in your sleeping bag, and how to cook your group meals over backcountry stoves.

Interpersonal skills: group travel, risk management, weather and hazard assessment, communication skills, and learning how to work as a team.

## **Training, Main & Final**

Fundamental in Outward Bound's educational outcomes is the concept of "Training," "Main," and "Final." Our hope is to transfer leadership and decision-making skills over to students through an intentional progression. As the course advances, instructors will take on more of a 'coaching' role. This provides a safety net for students to work through their decision-making and risk management development. Read about the culminating Final Expedition below.

## **Overview**

### **Course Start**

There is a 2 to 3-hour drive from the airport to the course start location on windy mountain roads, typically on a bus. If you are prone to motion sickness, make sure you plan for this accordingly! You will spend the first day gearing up for the field and meeting the other members of your team. Group gear like food, tarps, kitchen equipment and first aid supplies will be divided up among group members. Depending on your specific itinerary, you may hike a few miles on Day 1. As this is not a guided trip, all group members will pitch in to do camp chores, including cooking, washing pots and setting up tarps.

### **Peak Attempt**

Most groups will attempt to summit at least one peak. These peak attempts often require pre-dawn starts, waking as early as 4am. You will typically launch from a basecamp so that you can leave some of your gear at camp. During your peak attempt(s) you will gain an understanding of terrain management, hazard assessment and weather consideration to make a successful peak attempt. For all the effort they require, successful peak attempts are often the most rewarding experiences of an Outward Bound course.



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## **Solo**

The solo experience provides an important break from the rigors of the expedition. With an adequate amount of food and sufficient equipment you'll spend time alone at an assigned campsite to rest and reflect. Instructors choose your solo site to offer as much solitude as possible, but within earshot of instructors for management considerations. You will not travel during this time and your instructors will check on you periodically. Many students are initially nervous about solo, but most are ready for a break from the group when the time arrives. This activity may be abbreviated or eliminated as instructors assess the weather, terrain, or other factors that could affect the outcomes of solo. For this program, a solo progression is structured into the course. For example, you may start with a solo lasting only a few hours and culminate with a full 3-day solo towards the end of your course. Many of our past students express that this was one of the most powerful elements of their course.

## **Final Expedition**

Outward Bound believes that an appropriate amount of independence is a powerful educational tool. In order to deliver that benefit, our instructors gradually transfer leadership responsibilities to the students culminating with a "Final Expedition." Near the end of course, if you and your group have demonstrated the necessary leadership, team problem-solving and backcountry living skills, you may be given the opportunity to travel without your instructors immediately present. This is your opportunity to demonstrate the skills you have acquired in the previous weeks. Final Expeditions can last for one to five days, depending on staff assessment of students' abilities and terrain. Outcomes are to work together, problem solve, and accomplish a goal independently, while utilizing all the skills acquired.

## **Service**

Throughout the expedition, students will have multiple opportunities to explore the relationship between self and environment. If possible, we partner with land managers such as National Forest agencies to work on extended service projects such as trail maintenance and lakeshore restoration initiatives. Not only is service intrinsically rewarding, it also provides valuable experience working with different organizations in the backcountry setting, bringing Leave No Trace principles closer to home.

## **Personal Challenge Event**

Outward Bound courses typically end with a Personal Challenge Event—a final, individual, physical effort. This often takes the form of a run or a triathlon-style challenge. Expect to participate in a 6-12 mile run.

## **Final Days**

In preparation for your travel back home, the second-to-last afternoon of your course will be spent de-issuing and cleaning all Outward Bound gear followed by a special graduation ceremony. Simple backcountry showers will be offered. Departure from the trailhead will be between 6 - 8am.

**NOTE: Outward Bound courses are physically and socially demanding. Students who are unmotivated or struggle with inappropriate behaviors on course may be expelled. Students who are expelled are not eligible for a refund. Please see our [Payment, Cancellations & Admissions Policies](#) for more details. You and your family should be prepared to make a commitment to being in a challenging, formal educational setting for the entire length of the course.**

*\*See next page for a sample itinerary!*



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## Sample Itinerary

The following is an example of what your itinerary may look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to permitting, weather, student skills and abilities, and instructor planning/assessment.

Day 1	Course Start
Days 2-8	Backpacking expedition (Introductory lessons to backpacking, camp craft, and navigation)
Day 9	1st Resupply, Service project, transition to Rock Section
Days 10-15	Rock Climbing Section (belaying, rappelling, anchor building, mock leading)
Day 16	2nd Resupply (Backcountry), Service
Days 17-22	Solo, Backpacking, Peak attempts
Day 23	3rd Resupply
Day 24-27	Final Expedition
Day 28	Personal Challenge Event, Service project
Day 29	De-issue gear, Graduation Ceremony, Mentor Phone Calls
Day 30	Course End and transportation to the airport