



# Itinerary Overview

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## Joshua Tree Backpacking for Veterans

**Joshua Tree National Park** – Joshua Tree is an internationally known climbing and hiking destination set against the backdrop of one of California’s most surreal desert landscapes. The park is a massive 800,000 acres, much of which is designated as “wilderness.” The federal government protected this unique region by designating it a National Monument in 1936 and then as a National Park in 1994.

Two distinctly different deserts, the Sonoran and the Mojave, merge at a transition zone where one can see different species indicative of each desert ecosystem. The park is home to an impressive array of species including the namesake Joshua trees (which aren’t trees at all but giant Yucca plants!), jumping cholla, cat-claw acacia, fifty-year-old desert tortoises, red-tailed hawks, jackrabbits, and coyotes. Canyons, small mountains, and broad valleys are the canvas that nature has used to create this intricate and subtle landscape. Fantastically jumbled rock formations and plants reminiscent of Doctor Seuss’ fantastical creations rise out of this magical topography.

### Miles Traveled Daily

As a general guideline, expect to travel approximately 3-8 miles a day. Crews may cover 10+ miles per day as terrain and fitness allow. Traveling through desert terrain is exhilarating and often physically exhausting. Travel days are generally very long and require endurance.

### Physical Fitness

Participants must come prepared for a physically, mentally and emotionally-demanding yet equally rewarding experience. One of the best ways to enhance your experience and set yourself up for success is to arrive physically fit.

### Pack Weight

The backpacks hold all group gear like food, tarps, kitchen equipment and first aid supplies. With proper planning and packing you will carry 30- 40% of your body weight. Pack weight will vary based on physical size and ability, but plan to carry between 40-50 pounds.

### Backpacking, Instruction and Skills

Previous backpacking experience is not necessary. We will teach you the skills for wilderness travel both interpersonal and technical skills. Technical skills include: 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 leadership skills include group travel dynamics, risk management, weather and hazard assessment, communication skills and learning how to work as a team.

The Instructors will help shape the outcomes of the course and coach students towards mastery of skill, additionally allowing ample time to draw parallels between the rigors of course and life back home. This is your expedition and you will take a hands on approach to the day to day experience.

### Overview

**Course Start** – You will have a 1-2 hour drive from the airport to your course start location. You will spend the first day getting to know the other members of your team and preparing to hit the trail. A “Duffle Shuffle,” facilitated by your instructors, will help you to sort what clothing and gear you need to bring and what can be left behind. You will be taught “camp craft” skills such as how to sleep warm in your sleeping bag and how to cook your group meals with camping stoves. All group members will pitch in to do camp chores including cooking, washing dishes, and setting up tarps. Often, students will head into the field to begin backpacking on Day 1.



**Solo** – The solo experience provides an important break from the rigors of the expedition. With sufficient food and equipment you’ll spend time alone to rest, reflect and practice the camp craft skills you have been learning on course. We choose your solo site to offer as much solitude as possible, but within earshot of other group members for safety reasons. You will not travel during this time and your instructors will check on you periodically, but you will be mostly alone for the duration of your solo. Solo may last from a few hours to a full day. This activity may be abbreviated or eliminated at instructor’s discretion.

**Peak Attempt** – Most courses will attempt at least one summit. Peak attempts are day-long events often requiring pre-dawn starts. Terrain covered on our backpacking courses generally do not require roped travel or use of technical equipment.

**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 participants culminating with a “Final Expedition.” Near the end of course, if your group has demonstrated the necessary leadership, team problem-solving and wilderness 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 week. Outcomes are: working together, problem-solving and experiencing one final experience on course together as a team.

**Final Days** - In preparation for your travel back home, the last morning of your course will be spent de-issuing and cleaning any remaining Outward Bound clothing and gear followed by a special meal and graduation ceremony. You will have the opportunity to have a simple back country shower before returning home. Groups will leave for the airport mid-morning.

## Sample Itinerary

The following is an example of what a 6-day course itinerary may look like. Your actual course plan will vary according to weather, student skills and abilities, and instructor preferences.

Day 1	Duffle shuffle, divide group gear and food, lessons in packing a backpack, begin backpacking
Day 2	Introductory lessons to camp craft, continue backpacking
Day 3	Backpacking, peak attempt
Day 4	Backpacking
Day 5	Final Challenge, graduation, clean and de-issue gear,
Day 6	Depart for airport