



Itinerary Overview

Joshua Tree Backpacking & Rock Climbing – 7 days

In General – Outward Bound courses are designed to be challenging- physically, mentally, and emotionally. From pushing yourself physically on a sheer rock face, to persevering through extreme weather, to managing challenges that arise within your group, Outward Bound may be one of the hardest things you will ever do.

Outward Bound philosophy maintains that by facing the challenges presented to you, you will emerge physically and mentally stronger with an increased mastery of expedition skills as well as a better understanding of your own capabilities. We think that the payoff is well worth the work, but you should be aware of what you're getting into and excited about tackling the challenges.

Arriving physically fit will enhance your experience and ability to do well on the course and ultimately allow you to take full advantage of the expedition. You don't need to have previous rock climbing or backpacking experience. We will teach you skills you need to know—how to climb and belay safely as well as how to take care of yourself in the desert.

Course Area

Joshua Tree National Park – Joshua Tree is a well-known international climbing 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," with approximately 5,000 established climbing routes. 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, jack rabbits, 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.

The Mojave Desert's sunny weather is conducive to maximum time on the trail. Weather in the park is generally dry and rainfall is usually sparse, but unpredictable and sometimes persistent torrents do occur. Temperatures are most comfortable in the spring and fall, with an average highs of 70-85°F during the day and average lows of 40-50°F at night. Winter brings cooler days, around 50-60°F during the day with nights below freezing. This is a desert environment and temperature changes of 40 degrees within 24 hours are not uncommon. Parts of the park are over 4,000 feet above sea level so it's important to stay hydrated and plan ahead for temperature changes. We rarely take layover days due to inclement weather, so be prepared to push on even when it seems nasty outside.

Overview

General – While giving students an excellent introduction to the art of rock climbing, this course will also present opportunities for teamwork, personal growth, and fun. This course is primarily a "front-country" course, utilizing rock sites and campgrounds easily accessed from the road. Staying at a "basecamp" like this will allow for more time to immerse yourself in the course curriculum.



Day 1 – You will have a 1-2 hour from the airport to your course start location. You will spend the first day getting to know the other members of your team and setting up a basecamp. You will be taught “camp craft” skills such as how to sleep warm in your sleeping bag and how to cook your group meals over camping stoves. As this is not a guided trip, all group members will pitch in to do camp chores, including cooking, washing dishes, and setting up tarps.

Rock Climbing – This course is designed for beginning and intermediate rock climbers and will give participants the skills necessary to be effective top rope climbers. Each day presents a different focus; lessons are short with ample time for experiential learning. In addition to gaining knowledge in anchor building and protection placement, students will be coached in refining their movement as they climb.

Once you reach your campsite you will cook and eat with other group members. This is a great time to get to know each other and share life stories. Each evening there will be group discussions to review the day, offer time for reflection, and plan for the next day.

Final Day - In preparation for your travel back home, several hours towards the end of your course will be spent de-issuing and cleaning all Outward Bound gear. This is followed by a special meal and graduation ceremony before heading back to the airport to travel home.

Training, Main, & Final – Fundamental to 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 our students through a carefully crafted and intentional progression. Instructors will start off the course by training and teaching students everything they need to know about safe climbing, risk management, and how to effectively work together as a team. As the course progresses, instructors will step back and take on more of a ‘coaching’ role. The intent is to provide a safety net for students to work through their decision-making and risk management development. Upon students demonstrating proficiency in all course elements, students may be given the chance for greater independence.

Mail – As this is a short course, participants will not be able to receive or send mail while on course.

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

Day 1	Course Start; Introductory lessons to “camp craft”
Day 2	Lessons on top-roping and belaying
Day 3	Climbing, lesson in anchor-building
Day 4	Rappelling
Day 5	Mock leading
Day 6	Climb, skills assessment, graduation
Day 7	Clean gear and de-issue, Depart for airport