



# OUTWARD BOUND CALIFORNIA

## Pinnacle Scholar Handbook

*Outward Bound's Mission Is To Change Lives Through Challenge and Discovery.*

### **About Outward Bound**

Outward Bound is a non-profit educational organization that serves people of all ages and backgrounds through active learning expeditions that inspire character development, self-discovery and service. Outward Bound delivers programs using remote outdoor settings as a way for participants across the country to experience adventure and challenge in a way that helps students realize they can do more than they thought possible.

### **Outward Bound California Pinnacle Program**

The Pinnacle Scholarship at Outward Bound California was founded in 1992. The program is guided by a single principle: that every person should be given the opportunity to experience adventure and challenge, develop character and compassion, and learn social and environmental responsibility, regardless of financial status.

It is Outward Bound California's vision to open access to safe, transformational outdoor experiences and green spaces to students from economically vulnerable communities, communities of color and other non-dominant identities. Thanks to the generosity of many individuals, corporations and foundations, Outward Bound is able to offer scholarships that help make this principle a reality.



### **What is your role as a student?**

Outward Bound courses teach compassion, integrity, excellence, and work towards equity and inclusion in all aspects of a course. It's the students' job to show up ready to learn through experience! On your backpacking expedition, you will confront challenges and adventure and will learn from both successes and failures. Immersed in a supportive environment and surrounded by a caring, positive, and diverse group, you will have an opportunity to discover yourself.

## What You Can Expect on Your Course

### **The Curriculum**

While Outward Bound courses vary greatly in terms of course type, length, itinerary and location, there is a standard format. Courses move through a series of challenging phases as instructors gradually hand over more and more responsibility to the student group. Most activities take place in a remote outdoor environment, in the company of two instructors and up to twelve peers. The curriculum includes a variety of exciting activities that keep the students involved and engaged. Instructors are careful to adapt activities to the needs of the students at any given time.



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## **Phase One – “Training”**

Instructors provide hands-on training and lessons. Students learn the basics such as camp craft, first aid, map reading, and other essential skills they need in order to live comfortably in an outdoor environment. In addition, students learn and practice the social skills needed to develop their group into a solid and supportive community founded on mutual respect, compassion, and open communication.

## **Phase Two – “Main”**

As the course progresses, instructors take a step back and allow students to take on increasing responsibilities that enable them to exercise their newly acquired wilderness abilities, as well as their skills in communication, decision making, and stress management. The ultimate goal of the second phase is for students to realize they are capable of a higher level of success than they thought possible. To accomplish this goal, the groups enter greater challenges. Most courses have a “solo” during this phase.

## **Phase Three – “Final”**

At this point instructors transfer responsibility of the expedition to the students. This increase in responsibility builds on the skills students have learned on course and provides opportunities for accomplishment and independence. Working as a team, with little or no direct intervention from instructors, the student group navigates the route, coordinates the daily schedule, and makes decisions. In some cases, depending on age, skill, course length, and other factors, instructors may not be present, instead using pre-arranged check-ins to monitor group progress. Not all courses will achieve this level of independence and some may not have a final expedition.

### ***Solo...***

*Solo is a time when students are separated from one another and the instructors in order to have solitude from the group. Instructors are never more than a brief walk away from student solo sites and they will check in on students to provide water refills, administer any medication needed, and ultimately check on the general well-being of students. Solo may last in duration from a few hours to a full 3 days depending on age and course length.*

*The purpose of the solo is to reflect on course and any learnings that came up, and also to have a break from the rigors of course. Students are not navigating during this time.*

### **Outward Bound Is Not:**

- A survival course – students will not learn to fish, hunt or forage for food in the wilderness.
- A summer camp – students will not sleep in cabins.
- A boot camp – students will not do any type of paramilitary activities.
- A program where students are forced against their will to stay – students must choose to participate in a manner that is safe and respectful of the environment, themselves, and others.



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## Pinnacle Scholarship Student Checklist

### Before Your Outward Bound Course:

- ❑ **Read this entire packet completely and carefully.**
- ❑ **Talk to your parents or guardians.** Make sure they are supportive of your big adventure! If they have questions, please have them reach out to your mentor.
- ❑ **Understand the Ground Rules.** Participation on an Outward Bound course must be voluntary, and we ask all students to come prepared with their best effort, try new activities, work as a part of a group and follow instructions. Applicants should be personally invested in the course and fully engaged from the day they submit the application to the day they complete the course.
- ❑ **Read our [COVID-19 Practices](#).** These protocols are designed to minimize the risk of transmission, and will be updated as the pandemic evolves.
- ❑ **Complete and submit the Pinnacle Scholarship Application.** The scholarship application process involves completion of online applications from both you and your mentor. Your application requires signatures from both you and your parent/guardian. A complete application includes:
  - ❑ **Pinnacle Application** - Please complete the full online application and indicate which Pinnacle course you are applying for. Course descriptions can be found on [the Pinnacle page of our website](#).
  - ❑ **Partner Nomination Form** – The person that nominated you should complete their online nomination form. It will automatically submit to OBCA. Please check in with them to ensure this form is returned.
- ❑ **Check your email and phone messages and respond promptly to questions or requests.** Outward Bound sends paperwork and important documents electronically. *Please make sure to check your email throughout the application process and prior to course start.* If you do not have access to the internet, let us know.
- ❑ **Acceptance into the Pinnacle Program:** Outward Bound California will contact you via phone or email following the review of your scholarship application to notify you of our decision.
- ❑ **Look for your Outward Bound Welcome Email** – Once you have been awarded a scholarship our Student Services team will send you additional application materials to complete, as well as other important course information - it's your responsibility to read it and complete all materials by the deadlines.
- ❑ **Submit the Secondary Application materials to Outward Bound by your due date.** Make sure ALL pieces of this application are complete by your due date! If deadlines are not kept this may result in a forfeiture of your spot on course. The application includes:
  - ❑ **Online Medical Record**
  - ❑ **Online Liability Release Waiver**
  - ❑ **Any additional forms sent to you by Outward Bound**



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- **Medical Assessment:** Upon receipt of all medical paperwork, Outward Bound California will review your materials. Our Student Services team reviews each applicant's medical history to ensure that we can safely accommodate needs on our program.
- **Check-In:** A Course Advisor may call you or your parent/guardian to ask questions about your physical or mental health. If desired, you can also request a call to ask questions about the course experience. You will receive a Medical Clearance email to notify you when you have been cleared to attend the course.
- **Get Mentally and Physically Prepared.** Read our [Attending Outward Bound Page](#) and [Physical Prep Guide](#) for information and come up with a training plan. Discuss this plan with the adult who nominated you for the scholarship. This step is imperative to your success on course!
- **Coordinate travel.** *After medical clearance*, ask the person who nominated you for this scholarship about travel plans. There is a travel stipend for participants, up to \$300. Please save receipts, and after course submit to [mrichter@obca.org](mailto:mrichter@obca.org) for reimbursement.
- **Break in your boots.** *After medical clearance*, Outward Bound will provide you with hiking boots. The boots are yours to keep after you complete your course. From the moment that you get your boots, please wear them as much as possible in order to break them in.
- **Talk to our program staff.** As we get closer to the course start, a member of the Outward Bound program team will give you a call to talk about your course. This may or may not be your instructor, but these folks are often in the field with students and this call is a great time to ask specific questions as well as address any worries or concerns you may have.
- **Organize Packing List Items.** You will be loaned some clothing items to use for course, you'll receive those once you arrive on the first day. [Your Packing List can be found on the Pinnacle website](#). You will need to bring everything else on your packing list with you to the course start.
- **Ask questions and return emails and phone calls.** We are here to support you, and we work hard to ensure you are prepared for course. As such, it *is VERY important that you reply to all phone and email communication from Outward Bound*. Part of your scholarship agreement is keeping in touch - returning phone calls and emails is a big indicator of your motivation to attend.

## After Your Outward Bound Course:

- **Complete your Post Course Survey:** Shortly after course, your advisor will send you a post course survey, which can be completed online.
- **Keep in touch and stay involved!** We love to hear how you are doing and we want to let you know about opportunities for you!

Frequently asked questions follow on next page...



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## Frequently Asked Questions about Outward Bound

### **Can I do it?**

Yes! You do not need to have any experience in the wilderness to complete an Outward Bound course. You do not need to be an athlete, but you definitely need to be physically active before you arrive! Come prepared to meet new people, try new things, have fun and challenge yourself. You will make mistakes, but you will learn from them, both individually and as a group.

### **Where will I sleep?**

On your course you will sleep on the ground in a sleeping bag either under a tarp or under the stars (if you prefer). Our staff do not sleep in the same shelters as students. Staff will design sleeping arrangements that best support each student's emotional and physical safety. Sometimes that will mean separating students into groups according to their stated gender identity, but the composition of the group and/or the nature of the course environment may require another arrangement.

### **What will I eat?**

The menu is largely vegetarian, with lots of grains, pasta, rice and beans, and vegetables. There will also be protein in the form of fish and meats like canned tuna and chicken or nuts. If possible, we suggest you prepare for this dietary change by minimizing soft drinks, caffeine and junk food. Drink plenty of water! If you have food allergies, intolerances or religious dietary needs please indicate them during the medical screening process as many can be accommodated on course with advance notice.

### **Will I be able to take a shower?**

A shower as you know it isn't available on course, although you won't have to be dirty all of the time. It is possible to stay relatively clean while in the field, as long as you are willing to get in the water when the opportunity presents itself. Your instructors will demonstrate bathing options and explain more about hygiene upon your arrival.

### **Do I need to bring any camping gear?**

Please review your packing list for specifics. OBCA will supply you with backpacks, sleeping bags, tarps/shelters, cooking equipment, food, and most of the gear you'll need, including hiking boots.

You are responsible for bringing clothing and other personal items (such as t-shirts, underwear and toiletries). All the equipment issued to you by Outward Bound must be returned and is expected to be returned undamaged and in full and undamaged.

### **What about cell phones and tablets?**

You are welcome to travel to and from your course with your electronics so that you can call your family during transport. Once you arrive, staff will collect all electronics and store them in a secure location as you will not be allowed to bring them on course. You will get these items back on the final day.

### **Can I bring a camera?**

Yes! Please bring your camera if you want to record the events of your course. That said, be aware that since our courses take place in a wilderness setting, you run the risk of losing or damaging your camera. You might want to consider purchasing a waterproof bag or box for your camera, batteries and memory cards. A zip lock bag works well too. Cell phones and tablets are not accepted as a camera option.





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## **Can I receive mail or be contacted while on course?**

On courses longer than ten days, you can receive mail. The mail will be delivered to you at the middle and/or the end of the course. You may be able to send letters out during re-supply if your course has one. The mailing address can be found online. Please notify family and friends that you will be unable to communicate with them during your course and that Outward Bound should be called only in the event of an emergency, such as serious illness or death in the family. Should such a situation occur, Outward Bound will notify your instructors.

## **What about the solo...do I have to do it?**

The concept of the solo makes most people a little nervous. But really, once it's time for the solo, you'll be ready to have some time to yourself and you'll have plenty of sleep to catch up on. There is also the opportunity to reflect on your time spent in the wilderness, write in your journal, and relax. You can talk to your instructors about any anxieties you have and can create a support plan with them.

## **What if I want to go home?**

The Outward Bound Scholarship Program and the organization that nominated you expect you to complete the course. We know the course may be difficult and sometimes uncomfortable, but one of the goals of an Outward Bound course is to teach you how to overcome difficult challenges in life without quitting. Many students experience moments of homesickness and doubt. Look to your team, instructors, and yourself for the support you need to complete the course.



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## A Note to Parents/Guardians

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Congratulations! Your child has been nominated for an **Outward Bound Pinnacle Scholarship**.

Outward Bound is a wilderness-based, experiential education program that provides life-changing experiences to both youth and adults. Our mission is “To change lives through challenge and discovery.” Outward Bound has over fifty years of experience in outdoor education and we have over 650,000 alumni in the United States alone. Outward Bound also has branches in over 30 countries worldwide.

Outward Bound programs are designed to be physically, emotionally and mentally challenging. At times, your child may experience feelings of hesitation or homesickness. It is partly through experiencing and overcoming challenges that students can really learn about themselves and others, as well as grow beyond their perceived limitations.

As a parent or guardian of a Scholarship Candidate, your encouragement in the months leading up to the course can be the key to your child’s success while on course.

Your support in this process can begin now, by participating in the following:

- Please read through all paperwork carefully.
- Help your child complete the Pinnacle Application, Medical Forms, and Liability Waiver.
- Encourage and support your child’s physical training program and healthy diet.
- Talk to your child about the experience they are about to have.
- Send encouraging mail to your child when they are on course.

We look forward to working with you to help you and your child make the most out of this opportunity. Please do not hesitate to call or email your Course Advisor if you have any questions!

Warm regards,

The Outward Bound California Team



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## Una Carta Para Los Padres/Guardianes

Estimados Padres/Guardiánes,

¡Felicitaciones! Su estudiante ha sido nominado **para** una beca de Outward Bound.

Outward Bound es un programa educativo y divertido. Está diseñado para desafiar físicamente, emocionalmente y mentalmente. Habrá tiempos en los cuales su estudiante experimentará sentimientos de duda y/o nostalgia. Es por medio de la experimentación y la superación de los desafíos que los estudiantes pueden aprender verdaderamente sobre ellos mismos y los demás, de esta forma también crecerá su percepción de sus propias limitaciones.

Como padre/guardián de un estudiante que participará en **este** programa, su estímulo y apoyo en los siguientes meses antes de participar en el curso, pueden ser la llave al éxito que el estudiante necesitará mientras este en el curso.

Su apoyo a este proceso puede empezar ahora, con su participación en las siguientes actividades:

- Favor de leer por completo toda la información.
- Ayude a su estudiante a completar el Pinnacle formulario de aplicación, formas médicas y exención de responsabilidad
- Devolver la “Encuesta para el Padre/Guardian.”
- Alentar y apoyar al estudiante con un programa de entrenamiento físico.
- Hable con su estudiante sobre la experiencia que va a tener.
- Enviar correo/cartas a su estudiante cuando este en el curso.

**Esperamos con placer de poder trabajar en ayudarle a usted y su estudiante a aprovechar lo máximo de esta oportunidad.** ¡Por favor no dude en llamarnos si tiene alguna pregunta!

Sinceramente,

The Outward Bound California Team