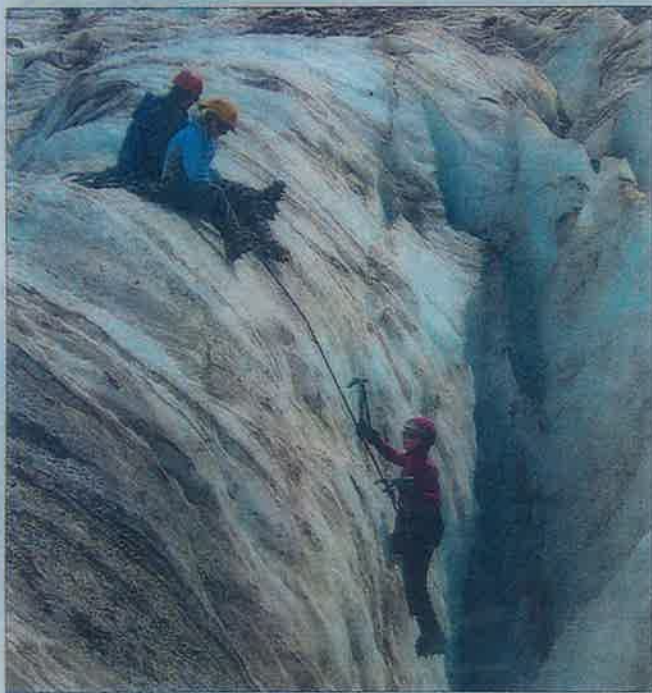


SOUNDLIFE
ADVENTURE

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Above photos by BRIEN SHEEDY/Whitman College

Photos by RICH VILLACRES/CWU

Washington's colleges offer plenty of options when it comes to outdoor recreation, from degrees in recreation to trips across the Northwest.

BY CRAIG HILL
The News Tribune

Let's get something straight right from the start.

If you use these rankings to choose your college, your priorities are screwed up – and you're going to have a blast in school.

You can spend only so much time in the library during college before you need to escape for an outdoors adventure.

Some schools, like Gonzaga, only recently figured this out. The Spokane Jesuit school started an outdoors program in 2000 complete with rafting trips for freshman orientation.

Others, like Whitman College in Walla Walla, have had outdoors programs since the '70s.

At schools like Western Washington, there are certain assumptions about the student body. "You are liberal

politically and you are into the outdoors," said Ben Sokolow, a Western student who helps run the school equipment shop. "There is an outdoor mystique here."

Over the past decade, most Washington colleges have made significant efforts to quench students' thirst for adventure with climbing walls, rental shops, guide services and club activities.

But what school is best?

The News Tribune took a look at what 16 colleges offer to outdoors nuts. And we ranked them based on outdoors classes, clubs, geography and facilities.

When we finished, Whitman College was on top. This small liberal arts school with a student body of 1,500 (56 percent women) will set you back \$40,000 per year. But if you are into the outdoors,

you're going to get your money's worth.

Here's the skinny on Whitman and everybody else so you can pick the best Outdoor U. for you

OUTDOOR U

1 WHITMAN COLLEGE

WHERE: Walla Walla.
CLUBS: Cycling, hiking, ultimate Frisbee.

COOL CLASS: SSRA 115 – Telemark Skiing. SSRA 119 – Mountain Biking. SSRA – Glacier Mountaineering.

ON CAMPUS: Whitman boasts the Northwest's only NCAA ski team. The Division III school competes at the Division I level – the equivalent of PLU joining the Pacific-10 Conference. The school's rental shop is loaded with more gear than most large schools. The Missionaries have indoor and outdoor climbing walls, offer outdoor seminars and host a showing of films from the Banff Film Festival.

NEAR CAMPUS: The cycling club holds a fundraising run through local wineries. Whitman is close to ski areas in Bluewonder near Dayton, Columbia County, and Spout Springs, Ore.

OUTDOOR PROGRAM: The Outdoor Program, run by recent Everest summiter Brien Sheedy, takes 25 percent of freshmen on orientation adventures such as nine-day canoe trips. Trips like kayaking and ice climbing are offered most weekends. Water and avalanche rescue are among the clinics offered.

ADVENTURE ALUM: Ingrid Backstrom, one of the world's most famous free skiers, has appeared in the last two Warren Miller films.

2 WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

WHERE: Bellingham.
CLUBS: The Cannonball (diving) Club, capture the flag, hiking, skiing and snowboarding, wakeboarding, cycling, marathon, longboarding, scuba

and triathlon.
COOL CLASS: PE 172 – Sailboat racing. PE 159 – Advanced Skiing. PE 175 – Windsurfing.

ON CAMPUS: WWU hosts a bike race and triathlon, and Sehome Hill offers several walks.

NEAR CAMPUS: Students can make easy day trips to epic ski destinations such as Whistler Blackcomb and Mount Baker. Paddle sports are even closer in Bellingham Bay. And no university is closer to the San Juan Islands.

OUTDOOR PROGRAM: The Outdoor Center leads numerous trips, the most popular being a climb of Mount Baker. The center has a bike shop that will fix anything for \$2. The only catch: You have to help. Lakewood, the school's waterfront facility on Lake Whatcom, has sailboats, kayaks, canoes and rowboats.

ADVENTURE ALUM: In 2003 Skye Thompson set a record running the Wonderland Trail – a 93-mile loop around Mount Rainier – in 25 hours, 45 minutes.

3 EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

WHERE: Cheney.
CLUBS: Cycling, skeet and trap shooting.
COOL CLASS: RCLS 305 – Winter Camping. RCLS 315 – Winter Survival. RCLS – Whitewater

Kayaking.
ON CAMPUS: The school's outdoor-recreation degree is luring many students to EWU. EWU has a climbing wall and just started construction of a student activities center.

NEAR CAMPUS: The Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge; most of the roads leading to town are excellent for cycling. Skiing and mountain biking are close by in Spokane County, the Idaho panhandle, Montana and British Columbia.

OUTDOOR PROGRAM: Epic Adventures is considered by many to be the gold standard for student outdoor organizations in Washington. The organization will lead 13 trips in three states in October. Epic not only rents gear but also has a student gear swap Web site. Epic hosts a ski and snowboard movie festival.

ADVENTURE ALUM: Luke Clausen won this year's Bassmaster Classic.

4 THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE

WHERE: Olympia.
CLUBS: Crew.
COOL CLASS: The Arts of the Sailor.

ON CAMPUS: Most of the 1,000-acre campus is undeveloped forest. There is 330 feet of waterfront that, contrary to urban legend, is not open to nudists. The school has a bike shop and climbing wall.

NEAR CAMPUS: In 2003 Outdoor Magazine named Olympia one of the nation's top outdoor college towns. From Evergreen you have easy access to Puget Sound, Olympic National Forest and Olympic National Park. You're 90 minutes from the Pacific Ocean and a short ride to the mountain bike trails of Capitol State Forest.

OUTDOOR PROGRAM: The Outdoor Program rents gear and offers hiking and kayaking trips. The program teaches such skills orienteering as part of freshman orientation.

ADVENTURE ALUM: Michael Richards is a recreational mountain biker whose bike hung on the set of "Seinfeld," where he played Cosmo Kramer.

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