Mountaineers Pricing Guidance

Pricing for 2022

In general, we want to price our courses somewhere between 40%-60% of the average for-profit prices in the region. Why? As a non-profit, community organization, we believe it's part of our mission to offer affordable courses to help as many people get outside safely and skillfully as possible. Our mission also extends beyond affordable courses to include conservation, advocacy, communications, community outreach, and investment in our volunteers. With 14,000 members, our communities look to us as leaders in important issues - from state and national legislation to helping our land managers reach the public with important messages. With this in mind, we need to keep our courses affordable relative to for-profit prices, and we need to charge fees that value the courses and our community, and that help to fund our mission.

It is also important that our fees are generally consistent across the organization to keep things fair and equitable for our members. Recommended daily fees are adjusted for weighted average household income of the participants of each branch.

Based on comparative pricing (see below for methodology), a recommended daily fee is established for Mountaineers courses in each activity type.

To calculate your course's fee:
1. Determine the recommended daily fee and multiply it by the number of days your course takes place. **This becomes your baseline course fee.**
   a. In-person instruction <5 hours = 0.5
      i. Note that we are using "days and half-days" as common denominators - we are not counting hours. This is because hours vary according to conditions, and even evening sessions may vary year-to-year. Counting hours is a level of granularity that is impractical. So, if a session is 2 hours or 4 ½ hours, it counts as a ½ day.
   b. In-person instruction 5+ hours = 1
2. Add a percentage of the fee if the fee includes access to a paywall-gated **eLearning component**
   a. About an hour of eLearning for the student: add 10%
   b. 1-10 hours of eLearning for the student: add 20%
   c. 11+ hours of eLearning for the student: add 30%
3. If you are including lodging, permits, or other "inclusions", add that cost. (use your best judgment. Small items less than $20 could go either way)
4. If you are including the majority of gear (to loan) or food, add 10%

Methodology

For-Profit vs. Non-Profit Value Proposition

For-profit (professional, often guide-led) outdoor programs and non-profit (often volunteer-led, club-based) outdoor programs have inherently different value propositions, which makes them challenging to compare. For-profit programs often offer highly trained, standardized professional curriculum and include gear for students to use during the course. However, these programs rarely support students once they've graduated a course, and students are left to find their own community to pursue the sport with. Club-based programs like The Mountaineers offer high ratios of instructors to students, and serve as a launch pad for a lifetime of community mentorship in the pursuit of the sport. However, club-based programs often don't include gear, and seldom include professionally-trained instructors.

While there is great variety in all programs and student goals, for the purposes of comparative pricing, we are considering the value of all-inclusive professional instruction and the value of mentorship in a lifelong community to be different but conceptually equivalent value propositions.

Assumptions

Therefore, our comparisons assume the following:
- Professional, for-profit, or guide-led courses
  - Include equipment and food
  - Do not provide the opportunity to join future facilitated outings with mentors for free
- Club-based, non-profit, or volunteer-led courses
  - Do not include equipment or food (may include basic group equipment)
  - Provide free opportunities to join future facilitated outings with mentors at no charge

eLearning

Some courses have stand-alone eLearning components that students have access to as reference in perpetuity. Note that this is not referring to videos or recorded zoom meetings, but stand-alone eLearning that would have a fee if sold on its own. Outdoor courses in an eLearning format have a wide variety of pricing structures, but in general they tend to be priced at a premium.

For comparison, we'll use the following approach:
- About an hour of eLearning for the student: 10% increased value/price
- 1-10 hours of eLearning for the student: 20% increased value/price
- 11+ hours of eLearning for the student: 30% increased value/price

Courses

- In-person instruction <5 hours = 0.5
  - Note that we are using "days and half-days" as common denominators - we are not counting hours. This is because hours vary according to conditions, and even evening sessions may vary year-to-year. Counting hours is a level of granularity that is impractical. So, if a session is 2 hours or 4 ½ hours, it counts as a ½ day.
- In-person instruction 5+ hours = 1
- "Optional" activities that are designed for students = 0.5
  - This includes practice sessions, mentor group outings - anything that is exclusive for students (meaning that it is designed for current students and only accessible as a benefit of being in the course)
  - Calculate the average number of "optional" spots available per student

Clinics

Clinics tend to be 1-2 day instructional events that give focused attention to a particular skill or subset of skills. Some clinics are highly specialized and should be priced at a premium. Others are intermediate skill-level clinics. We recommend one of two approaches:

1. Price according to the pricing guidance (including pricing at a premium for clinics that are highly specialized)

   -OR-

2. Agree on a pricing rubric with the summit group, so that all branches are pricing their clinics at the same rate

Comparative Pricing Guidance

When evaluating existing courses, both for-profit and non-profit, we first ask if the assumptions above are true for the course we are evaluating.

If those assumptions are true, we take the following steps:

1. Subtract a percentage of the fee if the fee includes access to a paywall-gated **eLearning component**
   a. About an hour of eLearning for the student: subtract 10%
   b. 1-10 hours of eLearning for the student: subtract 20%
   c. 11+ hours of eLearning for the student: subtract 30%
2. Subtract the cost of housing if **housing** is included in the student fee
3. Divide the total adjusted course fee by the total number of days (our common denominator) based on the guidance above. This becomes the total student cost per day for taking the course.

There are a small number of courses that fall outside of our assumptions. If this is the case, we do the following.

For non-profit courses:
1. Add $150 to the course fee if students do NOT have free ongoing access to **opportunities to practice** after the course (usually in the form of trips) - this decreases the value of the course for the student.
2. Subtract 10% from the course fee if the majority of **gear & food is included in the course fee**- this increases the value of the course for the student.
3. Subtract a percentage of the fee if the fee includes access to a paywall-gated **eLearning component** - this increases the value of the course for the student.
   a. About an hour of eLearning for the student: subtract 10%
   b. 1-10 hours of eLearning for the student: subtract 20%
   c. 11+ hours of eLearning for the student: subtract 30%
4. Subtract the cost of housing if **housing** is included in the student fee - this increases the value of the course for the student.
5. Divide the total adjusted course fee by the total number of days (our common denominator) based on the guidance above. This becomes the total student cost per day for taking the course.

For for-profit courses:
1. Subtract $150 from the course fee if students also have free ongoing access to **opportunities to practice** after the course (usually in the form of trips or meetups) - this increases the value of the course for the student. We treat this as a built-in cost in the course fees.
2. Add 10% to the course fee if the majority of **gear & food is NOT provided** - this becomes additional cost to the student.
3. Subtract a percentage of the fee if the fee includes access to a paywall-gated **eLearning component** - this increases the value of the course for the student.
   a. About an hour of eLearning for the student: subtract 10%
   b. 1-10 hours of eLearning for the student: subtract 20%
   c. 11+ hours of eLearning for the student: subtract 30%
4. Subtract the cost of housing if **housing** is included in the student fee - this increases the value of the course for the student.
5. Divide the total adjusted course fee by the total number of days (our common denominator) based on the guidance above. This becomes the total student cost per day for taking the course.