



NOLS ALUMNI TRIP
SEA KAYAKING IN THE BAHAMAS
NOVEMBER 16 – 21, 2011

Features of this Trip

- 6 days and 5 nights in the field
- Remote beach camping
- Coastal paddling
- NOLS core curriculum
- Paddle, rescue, and navigation skills
- Group Size: 12 participants, 3 instructors

Cost: \$1600

Minimum Age: 18

Trip Description

On this alumni trip, you will explore several of the magnificent islands that form the outer islands of the Bahamas known as the Exumas. The trip starts and ends in George Town (airport code GGT). A typical paddling day involves rising with the sun and checking the sea and weather conditions to decide if travel is safe. There will be lots of impromptu teaching and review of NOLS-style travel, as well as options for more formal classes. Most paddling will travel along the coasts but there will also be open-water crossings between islands. Daily mileage may vary greatly depending on wind conditions. Afternoons are free to work on kayak skills or snorkel in the Exumas' clear waters. After six days of paddling, the group returns to George Town.

Environment

The coastline of the Bahamas is pristine, remote, and often uninhabited; the sea is rich with marine life and coral reefs. Many of the area's plant and animal species are unique and highly specialized.

November is the end of the hurricane season, but it is possible that wind and rain will be factors on the trip. The weather is generally pleasant and beautiful, with cool evenings and warm to hot days. Watching the weather, judging sea conditions, and learning about the capabilities of the group and equipment are what safe coastal kayaking is all about. There may be some days when we decide against paddling because of the weather—tides and currents may influence our travel as well.

Curriculum

We'll review many of the basic NOLS outdoor living skills and techniques (cooking, sanitation, stove use, camping, etc.). We'll teach basic sea kayak strokes, self-rescue and travel skills in addition to the practical use of these new or rusty skills. Once underway, participants will paddle along the coast and cross through open-waters.

Alumni trips are more relaxed than a typical NOLS course; however, it is not a vacation or a guided trip. Trips are self-reliant through remote wilderness areas where evacuation to modern medical facilities can take several days. Throughout

the trip, you will live outdoors, help prepare group meals, and care for yourself. The expedition format emphasizes hands-on learning and application of new skills in a variety of situations.

Planned Trip Progression

There will be a pre-trip orientation meeting at 6:30 p.m. on November 15 at the Palm Bay Beach Club. The trip’s program begins when you meet the group and instructors on November 16 at 8 a.m. at the Palm Bay Beach Club in George Town. We’ll shuttle to the kayaks, check and issue equipment. The group will then load the kayaks and drive 50 minutes to Barraterre to review essential safety, wet exits and reentry skills, kayak packing, paddle stroke basics, pod travel, and signals. We will paddle a short distance to Coconut Beach and set up camp, sleeping under the stars that night.

For the next several days we will paddle in single and tandem kayaks to selected sites, unload our gear onto the beach, and camp. We will cook our meals on small, propane camp stoves and sleep on the sand or cobble shore. We will carry open shelters and tents in case the weather turns sour, but expect to see an amazing blanket of stars at night. We will arise early in the morning, check the weather and either pack up and move or spend a day onshore exploring. The classes on this trip will range from paddle strokes, self-rescue and navigation, to local ecology and outdoor ethics.

On day six we will return to Barraterre, clean up, and drive to George Town to have dinner that evening as a group. You are responsible for arranging your own lodging that last night (we recommend the Palm Bay Beach Club)

Planned Itinerary

| | |
|----------------|---|
| November 15 | Arrive in George Town no later than this evening. Participants are responsible for their own lodging. There is a pre-trip orientation at the Palm Bay Beach Club at 6:30 p.m. |
| November 16 | Breakfast provided by NOLS at the hotel. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Palm Bay Beach Club. Shuttle to Barraterre to begin trip. |
| November 16-21 | Paddle in the Bahamas. |
| November 21 | Return to Barraterre, clean up and deissue gear. Travel to George Town for final, no-host group dinner. Participants are responsible for their own lodging. |
| November 22 | Schedule flights, or other travel no earlier than this morning. |

Trip Logistics

The trip officially begins at 8:00 a.m. on November 16, 2011 at the Palm Bay Beach Club in George Town. We suggest participants arrive in George Town on November 15 for the 6:30 p.m. pre-trip orientation at the hotel.

Hotel: Palm Bay Beach Club
Great Exuma, Bahamas
Local Tel: 242.336.2787
www.palmbaybeachclub.com

We recommend lodging at the Palm Bay Beach Club on the nights of November 15 and 21. Mention that you are part of the “NOLS group” when you make your reservations to receive a discount.

If you have any questions about traveling to and from the Bahamas, hotel accommodations, or other concerns, call the NOLS Alumni Department (800) 332-4280.

Arrival

George Town is the largest city on the Great Exuma Island in the Bahamas. People arrive at the George Town Airport (airport code GGT) and cab to the Palm Beach Club for lodging. There will be drivers there waiting and fees are standardized at around \$30 for the first person and a few more dollars for each additional rider.

Many flights come straight into George Town from Miami, Ft Lauderdale or Charlotte. The George Town terminal is small and the customs process low-key. Visas are not needed for U.S. citizens. We suggest flying straight into GGT to avoid the hassles and possible glitches of travel through Nassau, although pricing may be slightly higher. If you chose to route through Nassau, please allow yourself plenty of leeway for delays.

If you are going through Nassau, you will receive your luggage as you would expect and then pass through a typically easy check through customs— indicate that you’re heading out on a vacation paddling trip. Walk down a long corridor to the Bahamasair counter and get in the line marked for George Town. Once inside the George Town departure lounge there are bathrooms and a small snack bar. Local folks, as you'd expect, are very nice and helpful.

Departure

On the last day of the trip, November 21, we will arrive back in George Town around midday. The group will have the opportunity to have dinner together at a restaurant of your choosing, but you will be responsible for the cost of dinner. **You are responsible for your accommodations on the night of November 21.**

Bad weather could delay the ending of your trip. This is uncommon, but we will always choose safety over punctuality. We will try to the best of our ability to help you make connections. NOLS will inform your family if your trip is late.

IF YOU ARE DELAYED ON ARRIVAL DAY

Please allow adequate travel time and confirm your flight reservations before departure. Flights are often overbooked so seat confirmation is critical. If you are not able to make the pick-up at the Palm Bay Beach Club at 8:00 a.m. on November 16, please let our office in Lander know by phoning (800) 332-4280.

If you miss the 8:00 a.m. pickup at the Palm Bay Beach Club, please call our outfitter, Dallas Knowles (242-524-8246) – he will be able to connect you with the group.

Travel Insurance

We recommend making travel plans as soon as possible to avoid complications. It may also be beneficial to purchase tickets that are refundable or changeable. Travel insurance is worth exploring in case unforeseen events cause a change in your plans or in case NOLS has to cancel an alumni trip for any reason. Check with your personal insurance carrier to discuss options or contact Travel Guard at www.travelguard.com or (800) 826-4919. The “Protect Assist” program is perhaps best for budget conscious travelers.

STORAGE OF PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Luggage and personal belongings will be stored in a locked shed on the outfitter's property and passports and other valuables can either be taken on the trip (not needed) or collected and put in a pouch to be stored in our outfitter's house. There have been no problems with stored gear, but NOLS assumes no responsibility for lost or damaged luggage or other stored items.

Phone Services

Once your trip begins, there is no opportunity to make phone calls until the trip returns to Barraterre, our launch and landing site.

Please make your personal calls before you are picked up in George Town. There are many public phones, usually operating with pre-paid cards, which can be bought in many stores. Most American calling cards can be used but you should check with your company for access codes you might need for calling from outside the U.S. Ba Telco, the Bahamas cell provider, has some good coverage and you can check with your cell phone service about international dialing plans and costs. Computers are available in the hotel lobby for guests.

Miscellaneous Expenses

Bring enough cash to cover all expenses while traveling to and from George Town. These potential expenses include phone calls, lodging costs in George Town before and after the trip, cab rides to meeting locations, any meals not indicated, and any costs associated with evacuations. U.S. dollars are welcomed at a one-to-one exchange rate.

Your tuition includes meals starting with breakfast on November 16 through lunch on November 21. All group gear, safety equipment, instruction, and

transportation to and from the Palm Bay beach Resort and the water are included in the trip price.

You are responsible for travel to and from George Town and for lodging and meals before and after the trip. There are many hotels in George Town, so you may arrange accommodations someplace other than the Palm Bay beach resort. The Palm Bay is more than adequate and we have negotiated a significant discount for our group. It is not the cheapest nor is it the most luxurious of George Town's hotels, so you can make your own choice. If you stay elsewhere you are responsible to transporting yourself to the Palm Bay Resort for the 8 a.m. start on November 16.

Money Exchange: U.S. Dollars work fine.

Passport

You **must** have a valid passport for the duration of your stay. If you already have a passport, please check the expiration date. If you do not have a passport you should apply for one immediately via the US State Department website for an application: http://travel.state.gov/passport_services.html. We recommend that you leave a photocopy of the information page of your passport with someone in the U.S. This will facilitate replacing the passport should you lose it.

Travel and Health Information

International travel poses special health considerations. NOLS strongly advises that all students traveling to international courses carefully consider what vaccinations or inoculations are required, recommended or suggested for their specific travel itinerary:

- Consider what country or countries you are traveling to, from and during your course.
- Read the NOLS trip description for information on where the course will be traveling within the country. Most NOLS trips do not follow the usual tourist itineraries.
- Consult with a physician, travel medicine specialist or other health care professional.

Regulations and recommendations can change. NOLS suggests specific inoculations based on information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, through consultation with health officials in the region and through our experience in the specific country. The final decision for what inoculations you receive is your responsibility. There are many sources of information and some of the information is contradictory. In addition to consulting with your health care provider the following organizations provide useful information.

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control either via the CDC International Travelers Hotline (404) 332-4559 or their web site at <<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>>.
- International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IMAT) 417

Center St., Lewiston, NY 14092, (716) 754-4883.

- Shorelands Travel Health Online <<http://www.tripprep.com>>

Your inoculations receive should be recorded in the official document, *International Certificate of Vaccination*, available from the U.S. Public Health Service or from your doctor. This is also a good place to record your prescriptions, eyeglass needs, medical problems such as allergies, and any other information of a medical nature. Please record your blood type in this booklet.

There are no inoculations specifically required for entering the Bahamas. We recommend that you are up-to-date on all vaccinations normally recommended in the U.S. Please be sure that your tetanus booster shot is current. We recommend that you consult your physician regarding any specific medical questions that you may have about traveling in the Bahamas.

Registration and Payment

Call the NOLS alumni office at (800) 332-4280. A non-refundable deposit of \$200 will reserve your space on the trip. Your enrollment will be complete upon receipt of your final payment and your completed application forms (Application, Medical Form, Proof of Insurance Form, and Release and Assumption of Risk Waiver); these are due no later than October 16, 2011.

The price of the trip includes all meals starting with breakfast on November 16, through lunch on November 21, all group equipment, instruction and shuttles from George Town to Barratterre and back to George Town.

Accommodations the night before the trip and the last night of the trip, meals not indicated, any personal equipment that is rented or purchased and any costs incurred by evacuations are the responsibility of trip participants.

The NOLS alumni office is located at the NOLS Headquarters, 284 Lincoln St, in Lander, WY 82520. We can be reached at (800) 332-4280. Our email is alumni@nols.edu. Please contact Willy Cunningham (Alumni Projects Coordinator) directly at willy_cunningham@nols.edu