

Equipment List

Alaska Backpacking

Welcome to NOLS! We look forward to having you with us this summer in Alaska.

This list will help you decide what to bring with you to Alaska. The NOLS Alaska outfitting department can provide you with all the equipment on this list other than those items designated “must bring” or “bring if you want.” **We recommend that you only bring gear that you already own. The actual gear needed for your course may vary slightly, depending on instructor judgment, course location, season and recent weather.**

On the first day of your course, you will meet with one of your instructors and inspect each item you have brought. If the item meets our standards and is suitable for the course’s curriculum goals, season and prevailing weather conditions, you can use it on your course. If an item is not approved, you may leave it with your baggage at our base in Palmer.

We recommend renting gear from NOLS rather than purchasing expensive gear specifically for your course. While you do not have to rent gear from us, there are several reasons why we suggest it. Our rental gear is high quality, chosen and maintained specifically for the use it receives on our courses. The rental prices are reasonable given the wear the equipment receives. Also, if you plan to eventually purchase gear, you will have a better understanding of your future needs and preferences after the course. Finally, even if your equipment is appropriate, it will receive lots of hard use. Students are often surprised at the amount of wear put on their personal gear during a course. If you still wish to buy gear before your course, please read our equipment descriptions carefully and contact us if you have any questions. NOLS Alaska strives to find appropriate lightweight gear for our courses. You should strongly consider weight when purchasing gear for your course. Every ounce counts toward the total weight of your pack.

This equipment list is designed to give you information on the items you’ll need for your expedition, as well as the functions your gear will serve. Please see also the boot fitting instructions in your enrollment packet.

In addition to your course tuition, you have been billed an equipment deposit, which will be applied to the charges you incur for rental, cleaning, purchase of personal items and any loss or damage to our gear. Total charges will vary depending upon the amount of equipment that you rent or purchase from us. Please note that rental prices in the table below cover the entire course. Please use the table below to estimate your equipment charges. If your bill is less than the deposit, the difference will be refunded to you by mail. If your bill exceeds the deposit you can either pay NOLS Alaska with check, cash, traveler’s check, or MC/Visa, or NOLS can mail a final bill to your home address. Please note that **ALL PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.**

If you have any questions, or if you would like more information regarding any of the items in the equipment list, please contact our staff in Palmer at 907-745-4047; or alaska@nols.edu; or visit our web site at <http://www.nols.edu>

The availability of each item is indicated as follows:

Rental –the item can be **rented** from NOLS.

Purchase Only – the item can be **purchased** from NOLS.

Must Bring – the item is **not available** from NOLS, but is required.

Bring If You Want – the item is **not available** from NOLS and is optional for your course.



Upper Body Clothing

You need at least three (3) insulating layers, a wind-proof layer, a rain layer and a t-shirt. Make sure your layers fit comfortably over each other. One layer must be a fleece or insulated jacket such as a Mountain Hardwear Compressor jacket. If you get cold easily, we suggest that you count on taking four insulating layers.

Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Base Layer (Long Underwear Top)	Purchase Only	\$25-\$75	1	Mid- or expedition-weight synthetic is best. Mid-weight only constitutes half a layer while expedition-weight counts as a whole layer. (Examples: Mountain Hardwear Extend, Patagonia Capilene.)	
Thin Fleece or Heavy Long Underwear	Purchase Only	\$45-\$100	1	This can be any secondary fleece layer of 100 to 200-weight. An expedition-weight long underwear top may be substituted.	
Fleece or Insulated Vest	\$18	\$45-\$150	1	You may want a vest to supplement the upper layers. Insulation should be some type of polyester such as Light Loft, Polarguard 3D, and Thinsulate. We rent fleece vests as an extra layer.	
Fleece Jacket	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1	300-weight fleece jacket that fits over your other layers. Wind stopper or other tech fleeces are fine but not necessary.	
Insulated Jacket	\$25	\$110-\$200	1	An insulated jacket such as the Mountain Hardwear Compressor or the Patagonia Puffball, is a good third layer. This jacket should fit over your other layers.	
Synthetic or Cotton T-shirt	Purchase Only	\$30-\$35	1	To wear on warm days. We strongly recommend lightweight polyester, polypro, or Coolmax top because it will dry much more quickly than a cotton T-shirt. We have these for sale with the NOLS AK logo.	
Wind Shirt	\$18	\$50-\$150	1	Nylon wind shell, preferably with a hood (not waterproof) and roomy enough to fit comfortably over all upper body layers. Gore-tex is acceptable.	
Rain Parka	\$25	\$99- \$200	1	We rent three-layer Gore XCR parkas as a rain parka with a hood. It should be roomy enough to fit comfortably over all upper-body layers. Coated nylon or waterproof/ breathable parkas are acceptable. <i>Ponchos are NOT acceptable.</i>	



Lower Body Clothing

You will need two lower-body insulating layers that should fit comfortably over each other and underneath your wind or rain pants. These should be a medium weight base layer (long underwear) bottoms and either an expedition weight polypro bottom, fleece or insulated pants.

Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Base Layer (Long Underwear) Bottoms	Purchase Only	\$25- \$50	1 pair	These must be mid-weight polyester (e.g. Capilene, Extend by Mountain Hardwear). <i>Cotton and Duofold are unacceptable.</i>	
Fleece or Insulated Pants	\$18	\$65-\$100	1 pair	We rent Polarfleece pants with an ankle zip or insulated Mountain Hardwear Chugach pants. Expedition weight long underwear bottoms are also acceptable.	
Rain Pants	\$20	\$50-\$100	1 pair	We rent Gore XCR rain pants. Gore-Tex pants may double as wind/rain pants.	
Wind Pants	\$18	\$55-\$100	1 pair	Nylon shell pants. These should fit comfortably over all lower-body layers. Side-zippers allow the pants to be put on over boots. Breathable fabrics such as Gore-Tex are acceptable, but lightweight "running pants" are NOT durable enough. We recommend renting NOLS wind pants. They are the most popular piece of equipment NOLS has designed. Many students purchase their wind pants at the end of their course.	
Nylon Shorts	Purchase Only	\$25-\$45	1 pair	Light athletic shorts are fine. These do not serve as an insulating layer.	

Miscellaneous Clothing

Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Sun hat or baseball cap	Purchase Only	\$18-\$25	1	Should be wide-brimmed to protect from sun.	
Fleece or Wool hat	\$6	\$30	1	Any fleece hat that will fully cover your ears. A wool ski hat is fine.	
Mosquito Headnet	\$4	\$12	1	You can rent this if bugs will be a problem on your course.	
Fleece or Wool Gloves	Purchase Only	\$15-\$25	1 pair	Fleece, Ragg wool, Dachstein, and army surplus are adequate. Heavy polypropylene gloves are also acceptable.	



Footwear					
Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Leather Boots	Must Bring	Must Bring	1 pair	It is difficult to have the best of all worlds with boots in Alaska, due to possible wet conditions and varied terrain. Conventional leather boots can be used on a wilderness course. Whether you plan to buy boots before your course, or already own a pair, be sure to read the boot selection and fitting guide. Remember , boots should fit comfortably with 2 pairs of heavy wool socks, regardless of what the salesperson will tell you. A light liner sock may be worn next to the skin, but should not be substituted for heavy wool socks.	
Socks	Purchase Only	\$9- \$15	4-6 pairs	Must be 75 to 100% wool, merino wool, heavy ragg type, or thick polypropylene (<i>No wool/cotton blends</i>).	
Camp Shoes	Purchase Only	\$32	1 pair	Sneakers, running shoes or Crocs in good condition and with closed toes to wear around camp.	
Gaiters	Purchase Only	\$40 - \$60	1 pair	Must be knee-high and durable. We sell Mountain Hardwear gaiters. Any gaiters with a double closure (both zippers and snaps) or 2" Velcro are also suitable. Outdoor Research and Black Diamond, are other good brands.	

Sleeping Gear					
Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Sleeping Bag	\$40	\$180	1	We use only synthetic-filled bags (Polarguard 3D, Light Loft, Polarguard HV) with a temperature rating of 20 degrees F or lower. The potentially large amount of moisture makes it impossible to keep a down bag dry and therefore we do not recommend their use in Alaska.	
Sleeping Pad	\$5	\$75-\$100	1 or 2	Should be closed-cell foam and 3/8" thick. Used for padding and insulation between sleeping bag and ground. We rent closed-cell foam pads, however we highly recommend and sell self-inflating sleeping pads. Therma-A-Rest and Insulmat are great brands.	
Sleeping Bag Compression Stuff Sack	\$8	\$28-\$35	1	The type of sleeping bag stuff sack needed depends upon the type of pack you are using. For internal frame packs, a compression stuff sack lined with plastic trash compactor bags is used. Lowe and Granite Gear are fine options. We use a compression stuff sack to make the sleeping bag easier to pack.	



Packs & Bags

Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Internal Frame Pack	\$80	\$300-500	1	We use Deuter and Osprey internal frame packs. Other proven brands include: Arc'teryx, Lowe, Dana Design, North Face and Gregory. If you bring a pack, it will be examined by your instructors to determine suitability for your course and route. It must have a volume of at least 5,000 to 7,000 cubic inches (80-115 liters).	
Small Stuff Sacks	\$1-\$4	\$3-\$10	1-2	Used to organize items in your pack.	
Lightweight Zip Duffel	\$5	\$15-\$20	1	Optional item. Large size is approximately 12" x 24" and small is about 9" x 18." Used to organize gear.	
Waterproof Bag Liners	Purchase Only	\$.50	2-3	Plastic trash compactor bags are sturdy and work well. Can be found in any grocery store.	

Miscellaneous Items

Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Bandana	Purchase Only	\$5.50	1-2	Optional. For multiple uses.	
Sun Glasses	Purchase Only	\$50-\$60	1 pair	Any good quality sunglasses with 100% UV protection will work fine. Glacier glasses with side shields also work great. If you wear prescription lenses and have limited vision without them, bring your own prescription sunglasses or look for a quality pair of clip-on polarized shades at a specialty fishing store. Lenses should be dark and block 100 percent Ultra Violet. Glass lenses will get scratched less than plastic. We sell Optic Nerve. Julbo, Bolle, Oakley, Native Eyewear, Smith, and Bausch & Lomb are other good brands. A hard case is also recommended.	
Eating Gear	Purchase Only	\$5-\$10	NA	A Tupperware (1 to 2 pint) type bowl with a lid, lexan plastic spoon, and an insulated mug. Mug volumes of 12 oz. to 20 oz. are recommended with 20 oz mugs preferred by many.	
Water Bottle	Purchase Only	\$8-\$20	1-2	Wide-mouth quart- or liter-size. A lightweight Camelbak or similar bladder system also works well as a second water container.	
Lip Balm	Purchase Only	\$2.50	1	Stick or cream with sun protection.	
Extreme Sunscreen	Purchase Only	\$5-\$7	1 tube or bottle	A tube or bottle of 2-3 oz. should be plenty. A sun protection factor of 30 or greater is necessary. A physical sun block such as clown white or zinc oxide is strongly recommended for people who burn easily.	



Miscellaneous Items (Continued)					
Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Insect Repellent	Purchase Only	\$6	1	A small bottle.	
Notebook and Pen/Pencil	Purchase Only	\$3-\$10	1 of each	A steno notebook is fine. Avoid heavy notebooks.	
Toilet Articles	Must Bring	Must Bring	NA	Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb/ brush, skin lotion, prescription meds, tampons. Sample sizes of 2 oz. are preferable. Odorous items can be bear attractants and should be avoided. No deodorant or excessive items.	
Watch	Must Bring	Must Bring	1	Please bring a waterproof watch with alarm even if you do not normally wear one.	
Prescription Glasses and Contact Lenses	Must Bring	Must Bring	NA	If you wear prescription glasses or lenses, you should bring a spare set.	
Bic Lighter	Purchase Only	\$1	1-2	Used to light stoves.	

Optional Items					
Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Camera/Film	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1	Digital cameras are great! See camera notes below for some things to consider.	
Book	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1	A small book for pleasure reading.	
Thermos	Purchase Only	\$22-\$24	1	One- to two-quart, stainless steel (not glass lined!) thermos is great for a quick hot drink during a travel day.	
Vitamins	Bring if You Want	Bring if You Want	NA	Some folks prefer to supplement their diet with a multi-vitamin.	
Knife	Bring if You Want	Bring if You Want	1	A small pocketknife.	
Eyeglass Retainer	Purchase Only	\$6	1	A “chum” or “croakie” is indispensable for keeping a hold of those sunglasses.	
Headlamp or Flashlight	Bring if You Want	Bring if You Want	1	Good idea for August courses, unnecessary for June or July. Remember, Alaska is the Land of the Midnight Sun! Should be lightweight.	
Trekking Poles	\$5	\$50-\$100	1-2	Single or double telescoping poles are best. We sell adjustable trekking poles and rent heavy-duty ski poles. <i>Walking sticks or lightweight track skiing poles are NOT acceptable.</i>	
Underwear	Purchase Only	\$3-\$10	2-3 pair	For men, polyester briefs or boxer shorts. We recommend women bring cotton underwear or silk or nylon underwear with a cotton crotch. Jogging bras made out of supplex/lycra or polypropylene wick moisture away from your skin and are highly recommended. Only 1 bra is needed.	

Optional Items (Continued)					
Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Fly Fishing Gear	Bring if You Want	Bring if You Want	1 set	If you want to bring your own gear, you're welcome to. Note, however, that fishing opportunities are very limited and route dependent.	
Compass	Bring if You Want	Bring if You Want	1	We issue one compass per tent group. However, if students bring their own more map reading practice is possible for everyone.	
Crazy Creek or similar camp chair	Purchase Only	\$20-\$50	1	Many former students recommend these for meetings and class time.	
Golf Umbrella	Purchase Only	\$20-\$30	1	There will be many rainy days on your course. An umbrella is handy for walking between camps, cooking in the kitchen, and may repel insects that dislike hovering under it.	
Neck warmer	\$6	\$8-\$15	1	Fleece neck warmers are warm and very comfortable.	

Shared Group Equipment—NOLS will supply

Expedition members share both the use of and the responsibility for the group gear that NOLS issues. NOLS charges only for group equipment lost or damaged. Keep in mind that NOLS evaluates gear from a number of perspectives beyond those that an individual user might consider. Performance, durability and simplicity are all contributing factors towards our gear selection.

Tents	Compass	Shovels
Stoves (MSR, white gas)	Maps	Fishing Gear
Fuel Bottles & Funnel	Cooking Gear/Spice Kits	Repair Kits
	Reference Books	

First Aid: Our instructors carry adequate first aid kits. There is no need to bring you own.

Camera Notes

Here are a few features to consider if buying a digital camera for your trip:

- Durability.** The fewer movable parts the better. Waterproof, or at least water resistant, is important. **Size.** Small and light is great, but make sure the buttons are easy to push with gloves or cold fingers,
- Power.** Lithium AA batteries are great: they last about 5 times longer than regular AA batteries. Many cameras use specialized (expensive) rechargeable Li-ion batteries. If your camera uses these, make sure to bring 1-2 fully charged spare batteries. Minimize use of the LCD display; it uses a lot of power.
- Memory cards** have really come down in price, so bring plenty. Just remember it is a lot of work sorting through lots of bad pictures. A trick of professional photographers is to only show their best pictures, and throw away the bad.
- Optical zoom** gives better quality than digital zoom.
- Megapixels.** More isn't necessarily better. Quality of the pixels and optics make a big difference. 4-6 megapixel is plenty for most purposes. Go to a local store and ask if you can take the same picture with a couple of different cameras, and then compare them. Buy the one you like best from the store that helped you.

Boot Selection Guide

NOLS has been outfitting people with boots for many years and our priorities have remained the same: We want you to have boots that provide adequate protection for your feet, that are durable enough to withstand a month of rugged wear, and that provide reasonable comfort. Many boots available on the market do not meet these criteria, and a boot that is good for your personal use may not be a good boot for your NOLS course.

By our standards, a boot should have the following:

- A sole that provides good traction, like Vibram® or other lugged sole.
- ½ to ¾ length shank or **full poly mid-sole** stiffener within the sole to provide foot support and protection.
- Preferably a full-grain, one-piece leather upper—**Boots that are constructed from a combination of nylon and leather sewn together are not durable enough and are unacceptable.**
- Good ankle support for rugged off-trail hiking with a heavy pack.
- Enough room to fit 2 pairs of socks and still allow your foot to move. Boots that are too small are a common cause of blisters!

The following lists are not exhaustive, but should help define what boots are acceptable for your course. The boots on this list are older styles as well as some current models. **PLEASE SEE YOUR ENROLLMENT PACKET FOR INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO PROPERLY FIT BOOTS.**

EXAMPLES OF ACCEPTABLE BOOTS*

Asolo, Power Matic 400 GV, TPS 535, Revenge GTX
Lowa, Tahoe GTX, Tibet GTX, Banff, Khumbu MID GTX
Garmont, Dakota, Expedition, Montana
La Sportiva, Latok Trk, Thunder II GTX, Cascade GTX
Montrail, Blue Ridge, Torre, Traverse, Helium GTX
Raichle, Mt Peak, Mt Trail
Scarpa Delta M3, Barun GTX, Kailash GTX
Technica, Galaad NB, Galaad SD GTX
Vasque Zephyr II, Luna, Wasatch GTX
Sundowner Summit GTX

*Please note that boot manufacturers often rename their product line. Visit the manufacturer's website or contact us if you have questions.

