

Equipment List

Alaska Outdoor Educator - Backpacking & Sea Kayaking

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 and bulk when purchasing gear for your course. Every ounce counts toward the total weight of your pack. We will strive to keep our packs light for the backpacking section. You will have an opportunity to send in or send gear back, when we switch between backpacking and sea kayaking. We will store this equipment for you at our base in Palmer.

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 will want to have 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	1-2	Mid- or expedition-weight polypropylene or polyester 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-wt polar fleece. An expedition weight long underwear top can 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 encourage the lightweight polyester, polypro, or coolmax top because it can 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) that should be roomy enough to fit comfortably over all upper-body layers. Gore-Tex is acceptable.	



Rain Gear

Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Rain Hat	\$3	\$15-\$40	1	We rent sou'wester type rain hats.	
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 jackets and parkas are acceptable. <i>Ponchos are unacceptable.</i>	
Skanoak or Paddle Jacket With Hood	\$25	\$175	1	For the paddle section. We rent a waterproof/breathable pullover with hood. If you bring one it must be waterproof and have a hood. Gore-Tex or other waterproof/ breathable fabrics are acceptable.	
Rain Pants	\$20	\$50-\$100	1 pair	We rent Gore XCR rain pants. Gore-Tex pants may double as wind/rain pants.	

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 medium weight base layer (long underwear) bottoms and either an expedition weight polyprop bottom, fleece or insulated pants. A second pair of medium weight base layer is nice for the kayaking section.

Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
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.	
Base Layer (Long Underwear) Bottoms	Purchase Only	\$25- \$45	1-2 pair	These must be midweight polypropylene, polyester (e.g. Capilene, Extend by Mountain Hardware). <i>Cotton and Duofold are unacceptable.</i>	
Fleece or Insulated Pants	\$18	\$65-\$100	1 pair	We rent polar fleece pants with an ankle zip or insulated Mountain Hardware Chugach pants. Expedition weight long underwear bottoms may also acceptable.	



Miscellaneous Clothing					
Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Personal Floatation Device	\$9	\$50-\$120	1	A Class III life jacket designed for kayaking. We recommend renting ours. If you bring your own, it must have a draw cord system at the waist.	
Gloves	Purchase Only	\$15-\$25	1	Ragg wool, fleece or polypropylene are fine. If your hands get cold easily bring a pair of mittens as well.	
Sun hat or baseball cap	Purchase Only	\$18-\$25	1	Should be wide-brimmed to protect from sun.	
Fleece or Wool hat	\$6	\$20	1	A fleece hood or balaclava (fleece hood) may be substituted.	
Mosquito Headnet	\$4	\$12	1	Make sure the mesh is not only mosquito-proof, but gnat- and black fly- proof also.	
Neoprene Poagies/Paddling Gloves	\$4	\$20-\$35	1 pair	One pair of either. We rent neoprene poagies.	

Footwear					
Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Insoles	Purchase Only	\$5	1 pair	Can be either pressed wool felt or closed cell foam.	
Socks	Purchase Only	\$9-\$15	4-6 pairs	Must be 75 to 100% wool, Merino wool, heavy ragg type, or thick polypropylene (no wool/cotton blends). A pair of neoprene socks (these are lightweight socks constructed out of neoprene that do not have a hard sole and can be found at most SCUBA diving shops) may be substituted for one pair of wool socks. We have a supply for sale.	
Camp Shoes	Purchase Only	\$32	1 pair	Sneakers, running shoes or Crocs in good condition and with closed toes to wear around camp. <i>Not hiking boots.</i>	
Rubber Boots	\$12	\$45-\$100	1 pair	We issue rubber knee boots for loading and unloading boats. This will be your primary footwear for sea kayaking. Since the boots take a real beating from the sharp rocks and barnacles along the beaches, we recommend you rent this item from us. If you own a pair of boots that you like, you can bring those. Buy them big enough so you can wear them comfortably with wool-socks.	



Footwear (Continued)

Sandals	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1 pair	Sturdy rubber-based sandals (e.g. Tevas or Chacos) are not acceptable as camp shoes but are a comfortable addition, especially when bathing or working on paddling skills. Students in the past have recommended sandals with a neoprene sock as an addition to camp shoes and rubber boots.
Leather Boots	Must Bring	Must Bring	1 pair	It is difficult to have the best of all worlds with boots in Alaska, due to 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 own a pair of hiking boots, be sure to read the boot selection 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 a substitute for heavy wool socks.
Gaiters	Purchase Only	\$40 - \$60	1 pair	Must be knee-high and durable. Any gaiters with a double closure (i.e. both zippers and snaps) or 2" velcro are also suitable. Outdoor Research, Black Diamond, and Mountain Hardwear are some brands to look for.

Sleeping Gear

Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Sleeping Bag	\$40	\$180	1	We use only synthetic-filled sleeping bags (Polarguard 3D, Light Loft, Polarguard HV). For this course your bag should have a temperature rating of at least 20 degrees. <i>Due to the extremely moist environment, down and feather bags are NOT ACCEPTABLE.</i>	
Sleeping Pad	\$5	\$10-\$75	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. Therm-A-Rest and Insulmat are great brands.	
Sleeping Bag Compression Stuff Sack	\$8	\$28-\$35	1	A compression stuff sack lined with plastic trash compactor bags works well to keep your sleeping bag dry.	

Packs & Bags

Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Lightweight Zip Duffel or Large Stuff Sack	\$5	\$15-\$20	1 oversize & 1 small	Nylon duffel bags: 1 large (~12"x24") and 1 small (~9"x18"). Used to keep clothing and personal gear organized.	
Large Equipment Bag	\$4	\$50	1	These nylon bags are made especially for NOLS paddling courses and you can rent this item from us. If you do have an X-Large light nylon travel bag, bring it along and your instructors will decide whether it will do or not (<i>no canvas</i>).	
Small Stuff Sacks	\$1-\$4	\$3-\$10	1-2	1-2 (your preference) to organize personal gear, like toiletries or eating utensils.	
Waterproof Bag Liners	Purchase Only	\$.50	5	Plastic trash compactor bags are sturdy and work well. These can be found in any grocery store.	
Internal Frame Pack	\$40	\$300-\$500	1	We use Deuter, GoLite, and Osprey internal frame packs. Other proven brands include: Arc'teryx, Lowe, Dana Design North Face and Gregory. If you bring an internal frame pack, it will be examined by your instructors to determine its suitability for your course and route. It must have a volume of at least 5,000 to 7,000 cubic inches (80-115 liters).	

Miscellaneous Items

Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Bandana	Purchase Only	\$5.50	1-2	These are often used as a small towel or washcloth. A small "Pack-towel" by Therm-A-Rest works well and dries fast. Terry-cloth is not acceptable.	
Sunglasses	Purchase Only	\$50-\$60	1 pair	Any good quality sunglasses with 100% UV protection will work fine. 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, Native Eyewear, Smith, Oakley, and Bausch & Lomb are good brands.	
Eyeglass Retainer	Purchase Only	\$6	1	A "chum" or "croakie" is indispensable for keeping a hold of those eyeglasses and sunglasses. You can purchase these at outdoor or eyeglass stores.	



Miscellaneous Items (Continued)					
Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
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	A wide-mouth quart or liter size.	
Lip Balm	Purchase Only	\$2.50	1 tube	Stick or cream with sun protection.	
Extreme Sunscreen	Purchase Only	\$5-\$7	1 tube or bottle	A tube or bottle of 2-3 oz. is 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.	
Insect Repellent	Purchase Only	\$6	1	A small bottle.	
Notebook and Pen/Pencil	Purchase Only	\$3-\$10	1 each	Steno-type notebook is fine. Avoid heavy notebooks. If you are an artist - bring your color markers or watercolors (small set).	
Toilet Articles	Must Bring	Must Bring	NA	Toothbrush, toothpaste, prescription meds, tampons (bring more than you usually use). For liquids, sample sizes of 2 oz. are preferable. Odorous items can be bear attractants and should be avoided. Female students have recommended a small box of scent free wet-towels, in the past.	
Watch	Must Bring	Must Bring	1	A cheap watch is best; one that is waterproof and has an alarm is preferable. Bring a watch even if you are not accustomed to wearing one.	
Prescription Glasses and Contact Lenses	Must Bring	Must Bring	NA	If you wear prescription glasses or lenses, you should bring a spare set.	
Disposable 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	You will need some type of waterproof container. An Army surplus ammo box, Otter Box, Pelican Box or a waterproof bag works well. Also, see Camera Notes below.	

Optional Items (Continued)

Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Thermos	Purchase Only	\$22-\$24	1	Many students and instructors recommend a thermos. A one-quart vacuum bottle is perfect. A warm cup of tea or cocoa can make a huge difference on cold, rainy days. Be sure it is stainless steel and not glass. Stanley, Aladdin, and Nissan are suitable. We sell 1/2 and 1 liter bottles with the NOLS AK logo.	
Binoculars	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1	Many instructors and past students strongly recommend that you bring a pair. Binoculars are used not only for observing wildlife but also for determining the water conditions. You will need a waterproof bag. These need not be too large or expensive. A 7X35 or 8X35 is a good choice.	
Underwear	Purchase Only	\$10-\$36	2-3 pairs	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 1-2 bras are needed.	
Vitamins	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	NA	Some folks prefer to supplement their diet with a multi-vitamin.	
Trekking Poles	\$5	\$50-\$100	1-2	One or two trekking poles. We sell adjustable trekking poles and rent heavy-duty ski poles. Walking sticks or lightweight track skiing poles are not acceptable.	
Book	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1	The sea kayaking courses carry a bag of mixed natural history, kayaking and environmental books for everyone to use.	
Headlamp or flashlight	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1	These are helpful in late July and August, especially if you enjoy reading in the evening.	
Compass	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1	We distribute one compass to each tent group. However, when students bring their own compasses, more map reading practice is possible for everyone.	
Instrument	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1	Bring your harmonica or any other small instrument that can withstand a damp environment.	
Crazy Creek or similar camp chair	Purchase Only	\$20-\$50	1	Past students recommend these for meetings and classes.	
Fly-fishing Gear	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1 set	If you have your own rod and tackle feel free to bring it for the backpacking section, though fishing opportunities are route-dependent.	

Optional Items (Continued)

Equipment	Rental Price	Purchase Price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Fishing Gear	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1 set	NOLS does provide each course with 2-3 spin/combo rods and tackle for the sea kayaking section. If you consider yourself an avid fisherman, bring your own gear. Fly-fishing equipment must be for salmon/sea fishing; an 8 wt. 8' to 9 1/2' rod with comparable reel and line is suggested. Red and white buck tail streamers on a #4 or #5 long shank seem to work best. All participants who want to fish must buy a State of Alaska Fishing license. Licenses are available at NOLS Alaska.	
Neck warmer	\$6	\$8-\$15	1	Fleece neck warmers are great and very comfortable. If you own one bring it.	
Swimsuit	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1	May be useful on sea kayak section.	
Umbrella	Purchase Only	\$20-\$30	1	There will be many rainy days on this course and an umbrella comes in handy when you just want to run over to another camp or take a walk along the beach. The umbrella can also be used to keep some bugs away from your face, as they tend not to fly under the umbrella.	
Coffee	Purchase Only	\$8-\$12	NA	A pound or two depending on the length of your course.	
Knife	Bring If You Want	Bring If You Want	1	A small pocketknife.	
Waterproof Dry Bags	\$20	\$16-\$25	1-2	We rent 30L bags and sell several size bags from 5- 25L. These bags can be useful for keeping gear dry and clean.	

Camera Notes

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

1. **Durability.** The fewer movable parts the better. Waterproof, or at least water resistant, is important.
2. **Size.** Small and light is great, but make sure the buttons are easy to push with gloves or cold fingers,
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **Optical zoom** gives better quality than digital zoom.
6. **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.



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

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

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* (WITH A PROPER FIT)

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.

