

Course Description

Prince William Sound Alaska Sea Kayaking

- 23 and Over -

Features Of This Course:

- Paddling route: 75 to 100 miles
- Possibility of many rainy days
- Tidewater glaciers
- Travel in both single and double kayaks
- Fishing
- Abundant wildlife
- Opportunities for day hikes
- 12 days in the field
- Minimum age: 23
- Average group size: 12 participants / 3 instructors

The Expedition

Prince William Sound—the classroom for this expedition—offers a spectacular and varied natural history. It is a place for observation, exploration and discovery. The variety of the landscape is compelling. For 12 days, you'll paddle a sea kayak beneath towering glaciers and past wooded coves. The sea teems with life—whales, porpoises, sea otters, seals and sea lions. Sea birds wheel in the sky overhead while tidal pools with starfish, anemones and other small creatures dot the shorelines. This expedition is by no means a vacation or a guided tour. It is a course, throughout which the instructors hold both formal and informal classes on a wide range of subjects that will enable you to travel in an ocean environment long after your course ends.

These skills begin with the basics—camping, cooking, map reading, stove use, Leave No Trace techniques, and sanitation, which are the foundation for wilderness travel. You'll move into the sea kayaking curriculum beginning with paddle strokes, tides and ocean currents, weather, marine hazards, rescue techniques and wet exiting. There may be opportunities to learn the basics of kayak rolling, but this will be at the discretion of your instructors.

Don't forget that this is a course where you will learn from your course mates and instructors alike. Do not be surprised to find yourself sitting in a class learning about local geology, tides, rain forest ecology, or sea mammals. Discussions on leadership style and expedition behavior are sure to be included. A course in Prince William Sound offers a wealth of subject matter. If students are interested, these topics can be explored at length during your course. The interests, strengths and composition of your group will also add a unique element to the course.

During your course you will live with two or three other participants in a “cook” group. These small groups help you disperse your impact on the land and enable you to refine the art of backcountry cooking and living.

Student Independence

On all NOLS courses students will be independent (unaccompanied by instructors) at various times. This will include time in and around camp such as while cooking or performing camp chores. Instructors may allow students to travel away from camp. Students often have independent unsupervised time, usually in town, before and after their course.

Independent Student Group Travel

An emphasis of this course is the development of skills that permit you to be self-sufficient in remote backcountry areas. Our teaching progression for accomplishing this is carefully planned and executed. Initially travel groups, usually of four to six students, will include an instructor who will teach travel skills and leadership. Gradually, as you gain proficiency, the instructor will allow you to take on more responsibility and make more of the decisions. If you demonstrate the necessary competencies in risk management, outdoor skills and teamwork to the instructors, you may travel in student-led groups without instructors for a day at a time as you move from camp to camp. We call this daily independent student travel and it is an effective educational tool. It allows you to practice travel skills and leadership and gives you responsibility for the outcome while still having indirect supervision by instructors and the benefit of the NOLS support systems.



Weather and Other Challenges

The weather on Prince William Sound can change from day to day. Overcast and cool days are the norm for summer, as is lots of rain. You can expect it to rain or drizzle for at least half of the course. Storms can prohibit paddling and ground the course at a beach for a few days. There are times when you will be wet, cold and tired, but you will learn to manage these situations, and maybe even smile as you do. Sunny, warm summer days are a welcome break.

Identifying and managing ocean hazards will be a constant theme in our instruction. You'll be miles from the amenities of civilization. Telephones, ambulances, and hospitals may be several days away. Managing risks and assuming responsibility for yourself and your colleagues will help make your expedition in this wild and beautiful place healthy and fun.

Personal Electronics

A key element to a NOLS education is time spent in wilderness. The benefits of this include being closer to nature, time away from society and civilization, and being in an environment where natural forces predominate and students have the opportunity to develop good judgment and practice self-reliance. NOLS does not permit students to use personal cell or satellite phones or other communication devices including personal tracking devices (e.g. SPOT), while in the field. Additionally, students are not permitted to take personal music players (iPods, MP3 players, CD players, etc). Instructors will be carrying sufficient communication equipment (usually a satellite phone) to handle any emergencies that may arise.

Fitness Recommendations

Almost continual daylight provides for long, busy days; your fitness goals should focus on being able to sustain a moderate level of exertion for hours on end rather than "quick sprint" fitness.

Focus on a well-rounded routine that emphasizes stamina, endurance, flexibility and strength. Finally, don't ignore the need for balance; this will serve you well in the kayak and on slippery shorelines where the ability to quickly find your center of balance as you move from one step to the next will enable you to dance, rather than stumble your way through. For more information, please see the Physical Conditioning page of your enrollment packet.

Course Objectives

Each course is unique due to variables such as route, group dynamics, fitness levels, and environmental conditions. Working with these variables, it is our intent to accomplish the following outcomes:

Risk Management, Judgment and Decision-making

NOLS teaches wilderness users to practice responsible actions that promote the health and well being of self, others and the environment. Objectives include the ability to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the dangers in a cold water environment
- Describe and consistently perform specific techniques to negotiate or avoid hazards
- Learn and apply the basic first aid skills appropriate to this environment
- Display an awareness of weather and sea conditions appropriate for safe travel
- Use experience and judgment to implement sound decisions and follow them through to completion

Leadership

At NOLS, we define leadership as "timely, appropriate actions that guide and support your group to set and achieve realistic goals. Great leaders create an environment that inspires individuals and groups to achieve their full potential." On this course, the emphasis will be on gaining competence as a foundation for leading in the backcountry. We expect each student's leadership ability to grow by accomplishing the following:

- Gain an understanding of the four types of leadership: self-leadership, active followership, designated leadership and peer leadership.
- Demonstrate a willingness to grow in each of NOLS' seven leadership skills:
 1. Gain outdoor skills competence and thus be a better leader in the outdoors.
 2. Demonstrate positive expedition behavior, by serving the goals of the group.
 3. Tolerate adversity and uncertainty with a positive attitude.
 4. Actively cultivate your self-awareness as an outdoors person and a leader.
 5. Work to understand the leader's vision and when appropriate develop your vision as a leader. Follow through with appropriate action to help the group achieve its potential.



- 6. Improve your judgment and decision-making skills, learning the pros and cons of various decision-making styles on the continuum between directive and consensus.
- 7. Practice effective communication skills from active listening to public speaking.
- Gain understanding of your own signature style of leadership.

Outdoor Skills

At NOLS our participants learn to live and travel in remote areas within a framework of personal health and care of the environment and the equipment. Objectives include the ability to:

- Live comfortably in a maritime environment; learn how to dress for a variety of conditions, camp and cook with a minimum of impact
- Responsibly explore the shore and coastal forest by foot
- Practice the principles of coastal seamanship as it relates to sea kayaking
- Demonstrate a respect for and care of all personal and expedition equipment

Environmental Studies

An integral part of every NOLS Sea Kayaking Course is to raise participants' awareness of their effect on self, others and the environment. Objectives include the ability to:

- Consistently practice minimum impact living and travel skills by following Leave No Trace principles
- Facilitate the transference of wilderness ethics and practices into daily personal and professional life
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge and respect for local cultures
- Use basic observation and interpretive skills to demonstrate an understanding, appreciation and respect for the natural world above and below the water

Sea Kayaking Skills

The necessary skills for responsible travel by sea kayak are taught throughout the course. The teaching progression is dependent on participants' abilities and the weather conditions experienced on each particular course. Objectives include the ability to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the following:
 - Competent launchings and landings in various conditions
 - Paddle Signals
 - Basic-paddling strokes: forward, reverse, sweep, draw, low and high braces
 - Basic self and assisted rescues
 - Coastal hazards: wind, waves, weather, currents, tides and geography of the coastline
 - Responsible group travel and use of safety equipment
 - Coastal navigation

Transfer of College Credit

NOLS cannot guarantee that credits from courses are transferable. Transfer of credits is at the discretion of the receiving school and depends on the comparability of curricula and accreditation.

