

Course Description

Semester in Australia

Features Of This Course

- NOLS core curriculum
- Sea Kayaking in Dampier Archipelago
- Exploring tropical Marine environments
- Fishing and snorkeling opportunities
- Backpacking in the Australian outback
- Unique Australian flora and fauna
- Cross-cultural experience with Australian Aboriginals
- Wilderness First Aid, hosted by WMI of NOLS
- Course length of 68 days
- 21 days kayaking, 30-35 days hiking
- Minimum age: 18
- Average Group Size: 12 students / 2 Instructors
- Average Age: 20

The Expedition

Welcome to the NOLS Summer Semester in Australia, an exciting semester offering in a remarkable country. You will be joining us on this exploratory course spending over two months in the outdoors, camping out, exploring the land “Down Under,” developing skills, meeting people, pushing yourself and having fun. The NOLS Semester in Australia is a true wilderness expedition to one of the most remote areas of Australia.

The 68-day semester is divided into four sections, usually in the following order: 3 days completing your Wilderness First Aid certification, hosted by Wilderness Medicine Institute of NOLS, 22 days sea kayaking in the Dampier Archipelago, 35 days backpacking in the Australian outback; 5 to 7 days with the local Aboriginal people. This will give you the opportunity to experience and learn first hand more about their culture and lifestyles. Our Aboriginal guides will accompany you for these days. You will travel by either 4x4 car, bus, passenger truck, light plane or boat to each section, with travel times being between 6 hours to 15 hours. Come prepared for an adventure and a unique opportunity to learn and see parts of the world, few people have ever visited.

Your course starts in Broome with two to three days of course preparations. You will spend this time organizing your gear, pulling rations, becoming orientated to your expedition and traveling to the “bush”. Once you are in the ‘bush’ you’ll learn the basics of outdoor living and travel: staying comfortable and healthy in a tropical environment, shelter and stove use, cooking, selecting Leave No Trace campsites, route finding, and navigation. Throughout the course you'll be taught risk management, leadership and environmental studies. Formal classes, experiential classes, activities and practice are all means to these ends.

You'll have classes and learn through experimentation. You will also be expected to teach classes to help develop your own teaching styles and presentation skills. You'll learn that the backcountry demands good judgment to minimize risk. Learning first aid skills and hazard assessment are constant themes in our instruction. You'll learn about teamwork and leadership. You'll be given opportunities to lead your peers, and you will gain valuable insights into what it takes to make an effective leader, follower and communicator. You'll learn to become proficient at Leave No Trace traveling and camping techniques, group management and traveling and navigating with map and compass. Cooking and baking with stoves, and outdoor hygiene and sanitation methods will also be addressed. You'll learn about the Australian outback environment and culture. Flora and fauna identification, astronomy and weather awareness, environmental and cultural issues, and marine biology, are all part of the experience. By the end of your course you will have gained an appreciation for wilderness expeditioning that few others will ever have.



Wilderness First Aid (WFA)

- Duration: 3 Days
- Recognized qualification
- Hosted by Wilderness Medical Institute of NOLS

Fast and hands-on, this three-day course covers a wide range of wilderness medicine topics to prepare you for your own travel or work in the outdoors. This course will cover the following topics: Patient Assessment System, Initial assessment, Patient Exam, Vital Signs, Focused History, SOAP notes, Spinal management, Head injuries, Shock, Wound management, Athletic injuries, Fractures, Dislocations, Heat and cold injuries, Lightning, Altitude illnesses, Acute Abdomen, Anaphylaxis, Unresponsive patient care, first aid kits and CPR.

This course is pre-approved by such organizations as: the American Camping Association, the United States Forest Service and other government agencies. Upon successful course completion you will earn a WMI of NOLS wilderness medical certificate.

Sea Kayaking Section

- Trip Duration: 22 Days
- Sea Kayaking between Islands
- Paddle with marine creatures-dolphins, turtles. Maybe manta rays and dugongs
- Snorkeling and fishing opportunities
- Kayaking route approx. 120km (80 miles)

The sea kayaking section is held in the Dampier Archipelago, a group of 42 Islands in the Pilbara, a day's drive south of Broome. Traveling by sea kayak allows us to travel and explore the marine environment and coastline of a remarkable place steeped in history both Aboriginal and European. The islands boast the most prolific rock carving sites in the world, and waters that are home to many marine creatures including turtles, dolphins, manta rays, reef sharks, dugongs and whales. These ancient lands provide ideal opportunities for teaching a wide variety of expedition skills.

This section will begin with an introduction to the sea kayak and basic maneuvering, with additional classes on paddling techniques including bracing and Eskimo rolling. You'll also have classes on kayak navigation, tides and currents, marine weather and communications, and other aspects of kayak "seamanship". While not a remote wilderness, The Dampier Archipelago does offer excellent opportunities to learn and refine all-around sea kayak skills. It also gives us a number of opportunities to work on rolls and surfing techniques and learn and practice long channel crossings if sea conditions and the progression of the course permits.

Backpacking Section

- Trip Duration: 35 Days
- Travel along drainages & escarpments
- Off-trail hiking through cane grass
- Small Group Expedition possibilities
- Average Pack Weight: 40% body weight
- Hiking Route approx: 130km (85 miles)

The backpacking section is set in the King Leopold ranges in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Here you'll backpack through tight canyons, past secluded waterfalls, and over dry plateaus, exploring areas very few people have ever seen. Diverse bird, plant, mammal and reptile life make this an ideal place to study, interpret and enjoy some of nature's wonders. You'll see crocodiles, kangaroos, wallabies, geckos and birds, including cockatoos, kookaburras and honeyeaters. In this land of extremes, where days can be hot and nights cool, you'll be challenged by uneven terrain and rocky hills. You'll explore and navigate through woodlands of gum trees, cane grass and billabongs (water holes) one moment and hike to the top of an escarpment the next. You'll learn how to travel efficiently in this hot, dry environment, often hiking early in the morning to make the most of the cooler temperatures.



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. When you have demonstrated the necessary competency to the instructors, you may travel in student-led groups without instructors for a day at a time as you hike 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.

This course may culminate in a Student Expedition. After successful practice with daily independent student travel and if your instructors think your group is ready, the instructors will help you divide into student expedition groups (usually three to six students each). With instructor oversight, each group will then select a leader and carefully plan and execute a multi day independent student led expedition. This part of the course builds on the skills you've learned and practiced and allows you to travel without instructors for up to five days. Students are aware of where the instructors and the other student groups are planning to travel and camp. Each Student Expedition group will carry an emergency communication device that will allow students to initiate an emergency response in the event of a serious emergency. In most cases students will have a personal locator beacon, but in some situations they will have a satellite phone, cell phone, radio or possibly another type of device. The instructors with, a satellite phone or additional communication capability, may be up to 24 hours away from the students.

Our students often say the student expedition was the highlight of their course.

Cultural Section

- One of two cultural opportunities – Bardi or Jarlmadangah sections
- Learn Traditional Aboriginal skills
- Learn Aboriginal history
- Visit Aboriginal traditional lands
- Discuss contemporary Aboriginal lifestyles
- Trip Duration: 5 to 7 Days

Which Aboriginal section your semester participates on will be decided closer to the course start date, based on availability of our Aboriginal guides.

Option 1 - Bardi Cultural Section

After your backpacking section you'll travel by bus, four-wheel drive vehicle or small airplane to the Bardi Aboriginal Community at One Arm Point on the Indian Ocean. There you'll meet our Aboriginal guides who will accompany you by boat to Ewan (Sunday Island), or by vehicle on the Dampier peninsula. Though you will travel through and see the community, you will live and spend this section living with your instructors and Aboriginal guides in a secluded setting on the peninsula.

During the following days you'll live and hike on these Aboriginal lands. Your Aboriginal guides will show you many of their traditional ways of living in this area, including various methods of fishing, food gathering, and boomerang and spear making. It is quite possible that you'll participate in a corroboree (a ceremony of storytelling through song and dance).

We'll also take advantage of living in this coastal environment to learn about the marine biology of the area. Tides and currents, wind and waves, marine ecology, reef exploration, coral formation and ecosystems, and fish and marine life identification are among a few of the classes and activities that we'll conduct.

Finally we'll complete our expedition by driving over 200 kilometers of rough, sandy roads in bus or four-wheel drive vehicles back to our base in Broome. Here we'll complete the end of semester formalities before dropping you off at the end of your course in Broome. (For the details of the last few days please see the Travel & Logistics pages).

Option 2 - Jarlmadangah Cultural Section

This is a new experimental Aboriginal section. After your backpacking section you'll travel by bus or four-wheel drive vehicle to the Aboriginal community of Jarlmadangah Burru. Here you will spend a day in this remote aboriginal community learning contemporary Aboriginal lifestyles. This section takes place in and around the area of Mount Anderson, which is a small



mountain range at the edge of the mighty Fitzroy River and the start of the desert country.

For the remainder of the section you will travel with our Jarlmadangah guides on foot with either vehicle or more likely camel support. This will allow us to explore traditional areas without carrying heavy packs and participate more in discussions with our Aboriginal guides. We may also get the opportunity to catch and eat traditional Aboriginal foods.

We'll complete our expedition by driving a few hours back to Broome. Here we'll complete the end of semester formalities before dropping you off at the end of your course in Broome. (For the details of the last few days please see the Travel & Logistics pages).

General Information for your Semester

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 starts or between sections of semesters.

Typical Day

A typical day on the Australia semester starts early (ie. 7am) to take advantage of the cooler mornings. On most days you will start the day with packing up camp and moving to your next campsite. Traveling by sea kayak as a full course, or hiking in smaller groups of 4 to 6, this could take a few hours to all day depending on group goals and terrain. When you arrive at your predetermined meeting point you will review the days travel, debrief student leaders, then set up camp. You will generally meet later for classes/discussions and other activities, choose new leaders and plan for the following days activities. You will then cook dinner with your cook group and possibly meet again after dinner. On the Cultural section there will be less camp moving days and more time spent doing activities and classes. Personal leadership and active involvement in optional activities and talking with our Bardi or Jarlmadangah guides will fill out your day. Most days will be full, spent breaking and setting up camp, cooking, traveling and having classes, but with guidance from your instructors you'll be shown ways to make personal time so you can reflect on your experience.

Solos

On this course you may have an opportunity to do a "solo" when you spend one to two days and nights alone. There is no hiking during the solo. Many people find this experience a good way to reflect on the course and immerse oneself in the environment.

Fasting

Fasting is an optional part of the curriculum for solo (if applicable) on this course. If the instructors think fasting is appropriate for the conditions and student abilities the students may chose to fast during solo. Rations will be available to allow students to eat in the event of an emergency.

Weather and Other Challenges

Located between 16 and 21 degrees south of the equator, this area lies just within the tropics and has the requisite tropical weather and heat. As this is 'dry season', you may not see a cloud for weeks, but it has rained on us at this time of year. At night it can get cool inland, getting down to less than 5°C (40°F), and during the day temperatures can get hotter than 30°C (90°F). Dehydration, sunburn, heatstroke and other related heat injuries will always be a major concern especially on the sea. Learning to live and work in this environment with a minimum of risk, and with a smile, is a foundation of outdoor leadership.

Paddling days can be long and committing, especially when crossing between islands. You may be exposed to strong winds and cold spray (other days will probably be gorgeous). If the winds are too strong, we will stay on shore and focus on land based activities. It is possible that we may be 'winded in ' for a few days.

Hiking in the ranges can be tough. Often, you'll be off-trail hiking over rugged and rocky uneven terrain, and through sharp spinifex grass. You'll work hard and you might ache after hours of carrying your pack. Throughout your course, you'll be miles from the amenities of civilization. Telephones, ambulances, and hospitals may be several days away. This degree of remoteness



will influence personal risk taking attitudes on the course; deliberate thought is necessary before every action. Tropical environments present a wide variety of unique challenges, ranging from hot conditions to strong storms to friendly bush-flies and mosquitoes.

Throughout the course we are in areas that are habitat for a variety of venomous snakes. These pose a very real danger but it is one that can be managed with appropriate camping and traveling practices. Living with snakes is largely a matter of common sense and understanding the animals' habits in order to minimize the possibility of an encounter. Other rare, but potential hazards include two mosquito borne viruses, Ross River Virus and Australian Encephalitis. With the use of mosquito repellent, long clothing, mesh tents, and other avoidance techniques, you will be able to keep your exposure to mosquitoes to a minimum.

Marine sections (Sea kayak, and Bardi Cultural sections) have additional hazards including a variety of Marine venomous creatures. You will be taught how to avoid and/or treat encounters with these. Additionally the cultural section is in areas that experience 6 to 10 meter tidal flows and have dispersed Mangrove forests that are habitat to Salt water Crocodiles.

You may come to the course without much knowledge of hazard evaluation, but you'll soon receive the information you need. Staying healthy and well doesn't require depth of knowledge it takes consistent habits and awareness. Living in the wilderness, while learning about it and managing the inherent risks and hazards is a constant theme of your semester.

Behavior on the Expedition

Each person's values, beliefs and actions affect those of the rest of the group. Balancing these is an important part of "expedition behavior". We want you to have a positive learning environment. Therefore we expect all students to respect the values and beliefs of other members of the expedition. The best expedition members have positive attitudes, apply new skills and ideas at the first opportunity, and come motivated to work hard with people they have never met before. They care about others, put the welfare of the group before their own, and understand that an expedition succeeds when all its members complete each day successfully. "Expedition Behavior" is not only an integral part of your semester experience, but also something you'll be able to adapt to your life well after your NOLS course has ended. NOLS will not tolerate harassment or the use of drugs and alcohol on any course. If you feel your values or beliefs are not being respected by NOLS staff or students it is essential that you speak up, so the issues are addressed.

This is a true wilderness expedition in an area that has seen few visitors. Many variables exist that could alter our route or schedule. Examples of these include, but are not limited too, the following: High winds while sea kayaking; lack of water on planned hiking routes; bush fires, heavy rain and wind from tropical storms; tides, rough weather and seas. These factors may prevent plane, boat or vehicle travel from reaching a course, which could potentially delay a food re-supply or the end date of a course. For this reason we will need to maintain the flexibility that allows us to make appropriate and educational decisions to changing conditions.

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.

College Credit

A student can earn up to 16 credit hours through the University of Utah for successfully completing this Semester. Please see college credit paperwork enclosed in your enrollment packet. Although there will be many "classes" during your semester, credit is granted for the experiential nature of learning, not for formalized class work.

More than a collection of skills, a NOLS semester is a challenging adventure shared with friends. You'll get the most out of your experience and be able to give the most to others if you arrive committed to being a positive, responsible member of the expedition.

If you have questions, please feel free to call the NOLS Admission office at 800-710-NOLS. You should also view the photo's



and videos of NOLS Australia at the following web addresses:

http://www.nols.edu/videos/australia_videos.shtml

<http://www.nols.edu/courses/locations/australia/>

As a result of this course we expect each student to become an independent wilderness traveler and leader. You should leave with the skills and habits to oversee the health and ethics of your peers and potential clients.

Course Objectives

Each course is unique due to variables such as route, group dynamics, fitness levels, environmental conditions, and logistics. Working within this context, it is our intent to accomplish the following objectives:

Risk Management

NOLS teaches wilderness visitors to practice responsible habits that promote the health and well being of self and others. Each student is expected to:

- Consistently demonstrate an awareness of personal limits, with particular consideration for the remoteness of the expedition.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the hazards encountered by the expedition, including, but not limited to, strong currents, channels, breaking waves, loose rock, cliff edges, sun exposure and harmful animals.
- Consistently perform specific techniques to reduce or avoid hazards.
- Describe an emergency plan for a remote expedition.
- Demonstrate the ability to perform basic emergency procedures to support a patient until help arrives.
- Use experience and judgment to implement sound decisions, and follow them through to completion.

Leadership Curriculum

Students are exposed to the theory and practice of outdoor leadership, teamwork, and expedition behavior. At NOLS, expedition behavior involves commitment to the group, acceptance of others, and cooperation to achieve goals. Each student is expected to:

Expedition Behavior

- Demonstrate sound expedition behavior.

Vision and Action

- Be able to craft a travel plan for a multi-day small group expedition.

Communication

- Effectively communicate on interpersonal and group levels.

Competence

- Master the wilderness living and travel skills of this course.

Judgment and Decision Making

- Demonstrate good judgment and decision-making skills.

Self-Awareness

- Understand personal tendencies, strengths and weaknesses as a leader.

Tolerance for Adversity

- Demonstrate a positive attitude and tolerance for adversity and uncertainty.

Outdoor and Backpacking Skills

NOLS students learn to live and travel in the wilderness within a framework of personal well being and care of the environment. By the end of the course each student is expected to:

- Consistently practice Leave No Trace camping and traveling skills.
- Be punctual and organized.
- Do their share of camp chores.
- Cook nutritious meals and exhibit good hygiene.
- Learn to travel and navigate competently using map and compass.
- Dress appropriately for the conditions.
- Participate in the logistical preparation and cleanup necessary for an extended expedition.



Sea Kayaking Skills

NOLS students learn sea kayak skills to effectively camp and travel in a marine environment. Each student is expected to:

- Demonstrate effective basic paddle strokes including forward, reverse, sweeps, ruddering, stopping, draws.
- Demonstrate effective braces and rolling.
- Demonstrate self and assisted rescues; and towing procedures.
- Demonstrate efficiently kayak packing.
- Demonstrate effective launches and landings.

Environmental and Cultural Awareness

An integral part of every NOLS course is to raise students' awareness of their impact on the natural world. Additionally, this expedition offers an opportunity to experience Australian natural heritage and culture through classes, discussions, written exercises and activities. We expect each student to:

- Demonstrate an understanding and respect for the course environment.
- Show an active interest in learning about Kimberley ecosystems, and local flora and fauna.
- Display a basic knowledge of Australian culture and history.
- Discuss the history, facts, and potential solutions to pertinent environmental issues.
- Reflect upon the transference of wilderness ethics and practices into daily personal and professional life.

