

Course Description

Patagonia Sea Kayaking

Features Of This Course:

- Paddling Route: 30-40 miles
- Field Days: 12
- Travel in single and double sea kayaks
- Development of paddle stroke techniques
- Basic rescue techniques
- Wildlife viewing opportunities
- Cultural opportunities
- Opportunity for day hikes
- Potential for multiple wet and or windy days during the course
- Minimum Age: 23
- Maximum Group Size: 12 Participants / 3 Instructors

The Expedition

On this particular course, you'll experience a variety of spectacular environments first hand - from remote, picturesque valleys with views of glaciated peaks to the wet and verdant coast. You'll also have opportunities to meet the people who inhabit the rugged land of Patagonia.

Your expedition will begin at the NOLS Campo (our working farm), just outside Coyhaique, where you will organize the gear and the rations necessary for your expedition. From there we will embark on a stunning drive on the famous Carretera Austral (the Southern Highway). This mostly unpaved road cuts through the stunning landscape of the Aysen region of Chile.

The days in the field will be spent paddling and exploring the surrounding area as the famous Patagonia winds permit; an area characterized by lush temperate rainforest, abundant waterfalls, sweeping granite walls and glimpses in the distance of the glaciers that carved this spectacular landscape. Home to Andean condors, albatross, the world's southernmost parrot, otters and southern sea lions, wildlife abounds in the region for those with a sharp eye. You may encounter subsistence fisherman making a living by trapping crab or diving for shellfish, or people living close to the land on remote coastal farms.

In addition to important kayaking skills such as effective strokes and braces, boat control and navigation, you'll also learn the Leave No Trace skills necessary for coastal camping, and have the opportunity to practice your leadership and communication skills as you work as a team to accomplish the goals of the expedition. You'll gain an understanding of, and respect for, the dynamic wind and sea conditions of the area. You'll also discuss and observe the wonderful natural and cultural history of this unique part of the world. On top of it all, you'll finish this course with a basic foundation of sea kayaking skills, and have fun exploring a place that few people have ever seen from the cockpit of a kayak.

This expedition is by no means a vacation or a guided tour, it is an educational experience. Throughout the course the instructors will 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. Don't be surprised to find yourself sitting in a class learning about local geology, tides, rain forest botany, or sea mammals. Discussions on leadership style and expedition behavior are sure to be included. 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 special element to the course. During the expedition, you'll live with two or three other participants in a "cook" group. These small groups help you disperse the 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 also allow students to go on short hikes away from camp unaccompanied depending on the terrain. Before the course starts and afterwards students often have independent unsupervised time in town.



Weather and Other Challenges

The weather in coastal Patagonia can change from day to day, even from hour to hour. Overcast and cool days are the norm for summer, as are wind and rain. You can expect it to rain or drizzle for at least half of the course. Though rain alone won't prevent us from paddling, strong winds can prohibit travel and ground the course at a beach for days at a time. The true expeditionary aspect of this course comes into play on days when you want to travel but can't, due to conditions outside of your control. We plan for this and expect it, and will turn our focus landward at these times with day hikes and classes, as well as free time to simply explore on your own. There are times when you'll be wet, cold and tired, but you'll 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 your instruction. 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. For this reason, students are not permitted to take personal music players (iPods, MP3 players, CD players, etc.), cell phones, or satellite phones on NOLS courses. Instructors will be carrying sufficient communication equipment (usually a satellite phone and a ground-to-air or marine band radio) to handle any emergencies that may arise.

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
- Display an awareness of weather and sea conditions appropriate for responsible travel
- Use experience and judgment to implement sound decisions and follow them through to completion

Leadership and Teamwork

- Expedition Behavior: Demonstrate teamwork, respect for others and commitment to group decisions.
- Vision and Action: Demonstrate the ability to plan and implement course activities.
- Communication: Effectively communicate on interpersonal and group levels.
- Judgment and Decision-Making: Demonstrate good judgment and decision-making skills.
- Self-Awareness: Understand personal tendencies, strengths and weakness as a leader.
- Tolerance for Adversity and Uncertainty: Maintain a positive attitude and tolerance for adverse and uncertain conditions.
- Competence: Learn the wilderness living and travel skills of this course.

Outdoor Living Skills

At NOLS our participants learn to live and travel in remote areas within a framework of personal well-being 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 Ethics

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 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 learning:

- Basic-paddling strokes, including forward, reverse, sweeps, draws, low and high braces
- Basic self and assisted re-entries
- Coastal navigation and hazard evaluation, including knowledge of tides, currents and weather
- Responsible group travel and use of risk management strategies
- Proper packing and kayak gear selection
- Responsible launchings and landings in various conditions

