

Course Description

NOLS/Orvis Wilderness Fly Fishing

Features Of This Course:

- Hiking route: ~ 60 miles
- 20 days of backpacking and backcountry fishing
- 3 day Orvis freshwater seminar
- 5 day drift boat section with an Orvis Endorsed Guide on the upper Green River
- Travel near or above tree line
- On and off-trail hiking
- Elevations of 5,000' – 13,000'
- Grizzly bear habitat
- Fasting option
- Average group size: 12 students
- Minimum age: 16
- Average age: 19
- Average pack weight: 60 pounds

The Expedition

This is the ultimate fly-fishing experience! If you are looking for a course that provides all the skills you need to travel in the mountains, fish the backcountry, and row a drift boat, this is the one for you. You will start in town with a three day Orvis fresh-water fly fishing school. After this, you will head into the Wind River Range for a 20-day backcountry expedition. The Wind River Range is a world-class destination for fly-fishing. You will learn to fish the high-country for Rainbow, Brook and Cutthroat Trout. You may even have the opportunity to catch a Golden Trout. In addition, you will learn how to camp, travel, and lead your peers in a remote wilderness setting. The final five days of this course will be spent learning how to wade-fish and row a drift boat on one of the best trout rivers in the west.

Your course will begin with a three-day intensive Orvis freshwater seminar at the NOLS Three Peaks Ranch in Boulder, WY. Certified Orvis Instructors will teach you the basics of casting, reading the water, and how to “match the hatch.” This seminar will be a combination of classroom and hands on learning. You will learn the Orvis Progressive Method to Fly Casting including the basic casting stroke, shooting line, false casting, the double haul, and the role cast. Your cast will be video taped, allowing you and your instructor to diagnose and correct casting problems. In addition, there will be lessons on nymph and dry fly fishing techniques, and an introduction to fly tying.

The Wind River Range is the classroom for the wilderness portion of this course. It is a rugged, glacier-carved range renowned for its sheer granite walls and famous for fishing and climbing. For 20 days, you will backpack and fish in these mountains surrounded by towering peaks, glistening alpine lakes, and perennial snow. You'll work hard traveling over rocky, steep terrain, crossing rivers, and keeping yourself and others warm and well fed in a mountain storm. You'll also learn how to identify plants and wildlife, climb peaks to take in the spectacular vistas of this mountain wilderness, and progress through an extensive backcountry fly fishing curriculum. You will learn the ins and outs of fishing for trout in remote high-country lakes and streams.

Your course will begin with the basics: cooking, camping, stove use, map reading, and *Leave No Trace* techniques. Eventually, the curriculum will move on to more advanced instruction on topics that include: first aid, trout fishing, risk management and identifying plants and animals.

The fishing curriculum during the first week in the backcountry will focus on honing casting skills, working on dry fly and nymphing techniques, reading water and entomology. Each student will practice casting, with instruction. An emphasis will be placed on shooting line, false casting, and accuracy. As the course progresses, you will move on to more advanced topics, and work individually with your instructors to accomplish your goals. Keep in mind that the fishing curriculum takes place within the context of a NOLS Wilderness expedition, so the weather and your ability to care for yourself and others, execute basic camp chores effectively, and be a good member of an expedition will influence the depth, quantity and time available for fishing and fishing instruction.



You'll be living with two or three other students in a "cook group" during the course. These small groups disperse our impact on the land and enable you to master the art of backcountry cooking and living. You'll get lots of coaching from your instructors while you learn these new skills. Before you know it, you'll be savoring homemade pizza and cinnamon rolls—gourmet delicacies that you made from scratch on a single-burner stove.

You will also travel in small groups, usually of four to six. Initially, these groups will include an instructor. However, once students have learned map reading, route finding, and hazard evaluation, they often travel in groups without instructors. NOLS courses are designed for learning to take place through experience. Your instructors are there to train, supervise, and provide feedback and advice, but ultimately, what you learn depends on what you practice.

NOLS takes great pride in providing quality experiential education on all courses. Expeditions, unlike traditional classrooms, are influenced by weather, terrain, and the characteristics of the individuals involved. Accordingly, NOLS courses are not fully scripted and this quality is the key ingredient in experiential education. Given the variables that affect all NOLS courses, the depth of topic coverage will vary from course to course. Weather and environmental factors can greatly influence activities on the course and may even limit the amount of fishing possible.

You will often hike three out of every four days. You'll travel in small hiking groups so you have more opportunities to lead, make decisions, and map read as you move through beautiful wilderness. The day begins early when you start your stove, cook breakfast, organize and pack your pack, and enjoy breakfast. You're usually hiking by mid-morning. Lunch on the trail might be bread you baked the day before, or a trail mix of nuts and dried fruits. You may stop for a short class on natural history, or to learn how to cross a river, travel through boulders or snow, or move over a high pass. When you arrive at your new camp location, you'll first spend time choosing a Leave No Trace site, organizing camp, then preparing and enjoying dinner. Depending on the travel day, there will be time in the mornings and evenings to explore a variety of fishing options.

The difficulty of a hiking day is hard to predict. Long miles on trail may be physically easier than high mountain passes or a day hiking through boulders and fallen timber in a wilderness without trails. Your pack may be lighter than usual as you approach a food re-supply day, or you may be carrying extra gear to lighten the load of a course mate who is not feeling well. The wilderness has a knack of finding challenges for all.

You may have layover days to fish, rest, enjoy a special location, or have classes. On these layover days, after breakfast and after organizing camps, there may be a class or an excursion to go fishing or climb a peak. Lunch may be something cooked—layover days are great times to bake for the next day's travel. The evening plan may hold a class, a discussion, or an organizational meeting.

Expedition behavior and leadership are an integral part of our curriculum. You'll learn how to live and work closely with your course mates while you travel through the mountains. Bring a tolerance for adversity and uncertainty, respect for other members, and a willingness to work hard. As your group gains leadership skills and experience working together, you can expect your instructors to give you more responsibility for leading yourself and your peers. This is the core of the backcountry component of your expedition.

The course will end on the upper Green River, just north of Pinedale, WY. Your NOLS instructors and certified Orvis guides will give you five days of personal instruction in the drift boat handling, rowing techniques and big water fishing. During this time you will be learning all the skills to be successful fishing big water in the west. This is not a fully guided float trip, in the traditional sense. You will take the backcountry camping and cooking skills learned in the mountains, and put them to use camping along the river each night. The guides will provide expert advice and teaching on drift boat handling, boat etiquette, release techniques, reading water, getting a good drift, and more. You will get the opportunity to take what you have learned from the guides and put it into practice by rowing the boat for your fellow students and instructors.

You should expect ongoing verbal coaching and input throughout the expedition, with written performance evaluations at course end.

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.



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.

Fasting is an optional part of the curriculum. If the instructors think fasting is appropriate for the conditions and student abilities the students may choose to do so. Rations will be carried to allow students to eat in the event of an emergency.

Weather and Other Challenges

Mountain weather is capricious. On any given day, temperatures may range from below freezing to sweltering. Afternoon thunderstorms are common and can be violent. You may experience snow, hail, and rain, as well as long stretches of sunny, blue skies.

Travel in the mountains can be tough. Early season courses, even into July, may spend most of their time camping on snow and using snowshoes to travel. Other times, you'll bushwhack through thick forests or scramble around boulders the size of refrigerators. Rivers are icy from snowmelt and can be difficult or impossible to cross. You'll traverse steep slopes of snow, loose rock, or grass, and grunt up high-mountain passes. There will be times when you will wish you were somewhere else, but the hard work is worth it! There's nothing quite like taking your pack off at the top of a pass, feeling the wind dry the sweat off your back, and looking down at miles of new country opening up before you. It's exhilarating!

Camping may involve dealing with swarms of mosquitoes and hanging your food or using portable electric fences to keep it away from bears or other animals. You'll be miles from the amenities of civilization. Telephones, ambulances, and hospitals may be several days away.

Bear avoidance techniques while camping and traveling will be integrated into this course. Note that precautions against bear encounters may decrease the opportunities for solitude and privacy on this course. To minimize risk, group size in bear country is generally four persons and you will always camp and travel in a group. This is a challenging aspect of living in grizzly bear country. Other bear avoidance tactics include meticulously maintaining cleanliness at the cooking sites, making loud calls to warn bears of your presence when moving through areas where visibility is poor, and hiking with bear spray.

Identifying and managing mountain hazards — falling rock, weather, animals, moving water, and steep terrain will be a constant theme in our instruction. Managing risks and being responsible for yourself and your colleagues will help make your expedition in these wild mountains 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.

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:

Risk Management and Judgment

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



- Demonstrate knowledge of the hazards in a mountain and river environment, e.g., rockfall, weather, water hazards, etc.
- Consistently perform appropriate techniques to reduce or avoid hazards
- Demonstrate the first aid skills necessary to support a patient until help arrives
- Demonstrate the ability to develop a contingency plan for a group in the outdoors
- Display sound judgment and an awareness of group and self-limits

Leadership and Expedition Behavior

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

- Actively participate in the decision-making process
- Take responsibility for the health and well being of self and others
- Demonstrate sound expedition behavior, including commitment to group decisions and a positive attitude
- Effectively communicate and problem-solve on interpersonal and group levels
- Show initiative in leadership/teaching roles with peers
- Employ leadership styles appropriate to the situation; support others in the leadership role
- Work effectively as a team member
- Take responsibility for learning; set and attain personal goals
- Assist in planning and participate in a student-led hiking days

Fly Fishing Skills

Students are exposed to a variety of fly fishing skills and techniques. Each student is expected to:

- Show knowledge of technical information on line, rods and reels
- Demonstrate competency in knots used in fishing
- Display appropriate fishing techniques including: dry fly and nymphing techniques; appropriate use of weights and strike indicators; and stream and still water techniques
- Exhibit a basic understanding of entomology as it relates to trout fishing and how to choose an appropriate fly
- Practice appropriate drift boat rowing and fishing skills

Outdoor Skills

At NOLS, our students learn to live and travel in the wilderness within a framework of personal well being and care of the environment. Each student is expected to:

- Dress appropriately for a variety of conditions; be punctual and organized
- Cook nutritious meals using a camp stove or fire
- Demonstrate appropriate campsite selection and shelter set-up
- Travel efficiently in mountainous terrain using map and/or compass skills
- Utilize off-trail navigation and route-finding techniques to mitigate hazards
- Understand and execute techniques for hiking and camping in bear habitat

Environmental Studies

Students develop an awareness of how to apply *Leave No Trace* ideas to their lives beyond the course. Each student is expected to:

- Consistently perform sound *Leave No Trace* living and travel skills and be able to apply this knowledge to new environments
- Show an understanding, appreciation, and respect for the natural world; identify characteristic flora and fauna of the area
- Discuss the history of pertinent environmental problems and offer potential solutions
- Demonstrate a knowledge of public land management and discuss the means to be involved in issues of interest

As a result of this course, we expect our students to be competent and responsible wilderness travelers, anglers and leaders.

