Course Description
Rock Climbing
For 16 & 17 Year Olds

Features Of This Course:

- Extensive rock climbing curriculum
- 5 - 6 hiking days; 14 - 15 climbing/base camping days
- Includes basic rescue skills
- Potential to multi-pitch and lead climb
- Introduction to wilderness living and travel
- Grizzly bear habitat
- Average group size: 12-15 students
- 3-4 instructors
- Average pack weight: 50-65 pounds
- Course length: 21 days

The Expedition

If you are interested in learning to rock climb or in improving your climbing skills in a dramatic wilderness setting famous for climbing, this is the course for you. Surrounded by steep rock walls, towering peaks, and perennial snow, you'll spend 20 days camping and climbing in the Wind River Range. A rugged, glacier-carved mountain range, the Wind Rivers offer a wide variety of rock climbs that challenge both beginners and experts alike. This is a special version of our backcountry rock climbing course that is specifically designed for young adults, so you can enjoy a climbing adventure surrounded by your peers.

You'll begin your course by hiking through the forested foothills into the mountains. During this time, as you get used to your pack, the elevation, and new skills, we'll introduce you to basic wilderness living and traveling skills—cooking, camping, stove use, practices for hiking and camping in grizzly bear habitat, *Leave No Trace* techniques, and map reading.

Once in the mountains and close to good rock, you'll establish camps from which you'll base your climbing activities for five to six days at a time. Then you'll step into the vertical world. You'll learn about knots, rope handling, belaying, protection placement, anchor building, and rappelling. You'll spend hours on the rock learning to dance up face climbs or jam your way up cracks. There will be climbs that you'll find easy, and ones that you'll believe are impossible. Climbing is a perfect way to push your limits, develop your composure, build strength, and have fun.

After you've spent time top-roping, you'll be introduced to more advanced climbing. Topics include vertical-cliff rescue, fixed-line ascension, aid climbing, lead climbing, and multi-pitching. You may also get to follow an instructor up "multi-pitch" climbs that are several hundred feet long and take most — or all — of the day to complete. If you demonstrate proficiency with all necessary techniques, you may get an opportunity to lead climb.

During your course, you'll live with two or three other students in a "cook group." These small groups help 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'll also travel in small groups, usually of four to six. Typically, these groups will include an instructor, but later in your course — once you learn the intricacies of map reading, route finding, and hazard evaluation, students may travel on their own. NOLS courses are designed for you to learn through experience. Your instructors are there to train, supervise, and provide feedback and advice. Ultimately, however, what you learn depends on what you practice.

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.

You should expect ongoing verbal coaching and feedback throughout the expedition, with written performance summaries 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, in town, before and after their course.

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 quite violent. Courses may experience snow and rain, as well as sunny blue skies.

Travel in the mountains can be tough. You may bushwhack off-trail through thick forests or scramble around refrigerator-sized boulders. There may be times when you will wish you were somewhere else, but the hard work is worth it!

Camping may involve dealing with swarms of mosquitoes or hanging your food 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.

To learn rock climbing, you will climb and rappel on or above sheer granite cliffs where loose rock and steep terrain require precise movement. You must master rope and protection systems to minimize the danger of falling. Unforeseen changes in weather can be especially hazardous if you are in the middle of a climb where the possibility of retreat is limited. Weather can preclude climbing all together. Rain or snow may drive us to our tents or out fishing instead of climbing. Flexibility is key to any trip in the mountains.

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. We will protect all food and attractants from bears by hanging them or using portable electric fences. To minimize risk, group size in bear country is generally four persons and you will always camp and travel in a group. Other bear avoidance tactics include meticulously maintaining cleanliness at the cooking sites and making loud calls while hiking to warn bears of our presence, 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 assuming responsibility for yourself and your colleagues will help make your expedition in these wild and beautiful 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 outcomes:

Risk Management and Judgment
Each student is expected to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the hazards in a technical climbing and mountain setting, e.g., rockfall, weather, river crossings, recognition of technical terrain, etc.
- Consistently perform appropriate techniques to reduce or avoid hazards
- Demonstrate the ability to develop an emergency plan for a group in the outdoors
- Demonstrate basic self-rescue and cliff evacuation techniques
- Make sound judgments regarding personal and group climbing and travel abilities; know own 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
- Contribute to a supportive atmosphere; respond positively to individual and group needs
- Consistently display effective teamwork; participate in the planning and execution of multi-pitch climbs
- Show initiative in leadership/teaching roles with peers; set positive example, share knowledge
- Take responsibility for learning; set and attain personal goals

Outdoor Skills
At NOLS, our students learn to live and travel in the wilderness within a framework of personal well being and care for 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; minimize impact at base camp and climbing sites
- Travel efficiently in mountainous terrain using map and compass skills
- Utilize off-trail navigation and route-finding techniques to minimize hazards
- Understand and execute techniques for hiking and camping in bear habitat

Climbing Technique & Movement
Students are exposed to a wide variety of climbing techniques, coaching and practice. Most students see their skills improve dramatically. Each student is expected to:

- Use varied and appropriate climbing techniques for crack, face, friction, etc.
- Display balance, precise footwork, adequate strength
- Demonstrate the ability to remain composed and relaxed on exposed terrain during difficult moves

Technical Skills
Accomplishment of some of these objectives is particularly weather dependent:

- Correctly tie fundamental climbing knots and display efficient rope handling techniques
- Consistently display effective belaying techniques using appropriate methods for varied circumstances
- Competently set up, and use, a variety of rappel methods, e.g., carabiner brake and belay device
- Effectively and responsibly follow multi-pitch climbs; comprehend techniques and systems
- Efficiently place and remove artificial protection
- Display the ability to construct natural anchors and artificial anchors
- Demonstrate an understanding of lead climbing theory and, if appropriate, practice techniques

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 *Leave No Trace* living and traveling skills; be able to extrapolate knowledge to new environments
- Show an understanding, appreciation, and respect for the natural world; know characteristic flora and fauna
- Discuss the history of pertinent environmental concerns/ issues and offer potential solutions
- Demonstrate a knowledge of public land management and discuss the means involved in issues of interest

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