

Course Description

Snowboarding

Features Of This Course:

- 9 days in the backcountry, 4 days at NOLS Teton Valley, including two days at Grand Targhee Resort
- Excellent backcountry riding opportunities
- Travel on split-boards, often towing sleds, through forested mountain terrain
- Training in avalanche assessment
- Training in backcountry riding techniques
- Backcountry route 20 and miles in length, elevations of 8,000 to 12,000 feet
- Pack/sled loads may be 70 lbs.
- Average age: 21 Minimum age: 17
- Typical Male/Female ratio: 75/25
- Average group size: 12 Students and 3 Instructors

The Expedition

It is winter in the mountains. Cloaked in a blanket of snow, the world is transformed into a quiet, magical place where icicles decorate the trees, animal tracks tell a story and untracked powder snow beckons. Temperatures can plummet to 30° F below zero and three feet of snow can fall in one storm, but hard work and a positive attitude make winter one of the most rewarding times to travel in the backcountry. This course is designed to help you develop the skills to travel responsibly and enjoyably through the mountains in winter.

The first four days of a snowboard course are spent at NOLS Teton Valley near Driggs, Idaho. Here in the comfort of a heated facility, with home-cooked meals, and dormitory-style accommodations, we'll teach basic skills—everything from lighting stoves and lanterns, to pack packing, dressing for the field, and avalanche awareness.

On your first day we will review the equipment you brought, issue you the equipment you need, and bag food for the course. You will learn to assemble your split board, watch a cold injury slide show, and practice avalanche beacon searches. The next two days will be spent at Grand Targhee Ski Resort on the western side of the Teton Range. Clinics taught by the Targhee snowboard staff will focus on riding in the resort's world famous powder. It's a perfect place to learn how to ride split boards. The clinics, tailored to your ability level, take place in the morning, while the afternoon is spent riding with your new friends and NOLS instructors and videotaping for an evening feedback session.

On the fourth day, the course takes a split board tour to warm up for the backcountry. Activities include travel techniques, avalanche terrain observation, and an intro to snow camping techniques. A run in untracked powder gives a taste of what's to come.

On the morning of the fifth day, we'll head out into the field. Our route takes us either into the Snake River Range, the Big Holes or the Teton. These mountains are all known for dependable snow and excellent riding. Heavily timbered slopes are intermixed with open glades and broad bowls. These mountains are cool places to explore, and exhilarating areas to learn the intricacies of backcountry riding and winter travel.

For nine days, you'll camp, travel and play in the backcountry. Living in the winter is hard work and days are long, but you'll quickly learn you can be comfortable and happy outside in temperatures well below freezing. Your homes will be elaborate snow shelters—igloos, quinzhees or snow caves, which you'll find are remarkably warm and comfortable. Outside the wind can rage, snowfall, and the temperature drop; inside you'll be reading by candlelight oblivious to the blizzard beyond your snow walls.



Camp chores take up a big portion of your days. Melting snow for water, building kitchens and shelters, packing up piles of gear and clothes, and staying warm and dry are time-consuming activities. But you'll quickly become masters of efficiency and the time you free up can be spent learning about winter ecology, teaching classes, or riding. Learning about avalanche assessment, avoidance and rescue will also be an important part of your course and a fair amount of time will be spent on this. If weather and snow conditions permit, you may also climb a peak.

During the backcountry section, you'll be divided into groups of three or four people for cooking and camping. Together, you'll shovel and dig, melt snow for water, prepare meals, and enjoy the warmth and coziness of a well built home. Teamwork and cold injury prevention will be important to the entire group's comfort and morale while you are in the field.

Student Independence

On all NOLS courses students will be independent (that is 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. In town, students have some independent unstructured time, before and after their course starts.

Weather and Other Challenges

Given the altitude and latitude of these mountain ranges, bitter cold and blizzard conditions can occur at any time. You should expect highly variable weather that can change quickly from sunshine to snow, and sometimes even rain.

The demanding winter environment is extremely challenging. You will be living in cold (possibly sub-zero) temperatures and constant care must be exercised to minimize the possibility of hypothermia and frostbite. Travel requires moving with a pack and, at times, pulling one of the sleds that each tent group shares to help transport its gear and rations. In these mountains, avalanches occur and can bury unwary riders. Predicting the likelihood of an avalanche is a skill akin to predicting the weather; it requires experience and practice but is never 100 percent accurate.

While the course is in the backcountry, you will be far from telephones, and transportation.

Our instruction emphasizes recognizing and managing hazards. We'll focus on providing you with the tools to travel responsibly and enjoyably through the winter.

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.



Winter Snowboard Course Objectives

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

Leadership: Performs timely appropriate actions that guide & support the group to set & achieve realistic outcomes.

Communication: Communicates effectively on interpersonal and group levels.

- States personal opinions and expectations with clarity and timeliness.
- Actively listens; when necessary seeks clarification.
- Balances participating, listening, and observing in-group interactions.
- Gives timely, growth-oriented, specific, behavior descriptive feedback.

Self-Awareness: Understands personal tendencies, strengths and limitations as a leader and expedition member.

- Seeks feedback and learns from experience.
- Displays an awareness of their impact on others.
- Shows the self-confidence to take personal risks and state opinions.
- Displays an awareness of personal values and goals.

Tolerance for Adversity and Uncertainty: Maintains a positive attitude during adverse and uncertain conditions.

- Stays calm, focused and positive during hardship.
- Manages conflict appropriately.

Vision and Action: Helps plan and implement course activities.

- Demonstrates initiative and completes tasks.
- Takes responsibility for self-learning.

Expedition Behavior: Demonstrates teamwork, respect for others and commitment to group decisions.

- Supports leadership in all group members.
- Is punctual to meetings and activities.
- Balances group goals with personal goals.
- Helps others without routinely doing their work.
- Influences the group in a positive way, supports a positive learning environment.
- Displays a work ethic that contributes to group goals; does their share of group tasks.
- Treats everyone with dignity and respect.

Outdoor Skills: Lives comfortably in a winter environment.

- Dresses effectively; quickly adapts to conditions.
- Cooks nutritious meals using a camp stove.
- Consistently arrives prepared for day trips and meetings.
- Demonstrates effective group travel skills.
- Demonstrates the ability to select a good campsite, set-up a shelter and construct a kitchen.
- Demonstrates fundamental map reading and navigation skills.
- Safely constructs a viable snow shelter.
- Consistently practices bombproofing, organization and efficient camping skills.

Risk Management and Judgment: Demonstrates hazard awareness and good judgment & decision-making skills.

- Participates in the decision-making process.
- Recognizes, anticipates and assesses objective & subjective hazards.
- Appropriately minimizes and manages hazards in a winter environment, including prevention techniques for cold injuries.

Rescue and Avalanche Skills:

- Understands terrain, snow pack, weather and human factors and how they relate to avalanche hazard.
- Demonstrates safe travel technique in avalanche terrain.
- Competency with the use of transceivers; understands and demonstrates how to check range and function.
- Demonstrates the ability to quickly locate a shallowly buried transceiver.
- Participates in an avalanche rescue scenario.
- Completes curriculum and training and received a NOLS Recreational Level 1 Avalanche Certification.
- Completes curriculum and training and received a NOLS Avalanche Awareness Certification.

Environmental Studies: Shows an understanding of their surroundings & practices LNT skills.

- Demonstrates natural history observation and interpretation skills by noticing and studying tracks, flora, fauna and other natural wonders of the area.
- Demonstrates appreciation through enthusiasm and interest, learning and sharing with others.
- Demonstrates knowledge of ecological concepts pertinent to the surrounding environment.
- Understands winter plant and animal adaptations.
- Consistently performs sound Leave No Trace (LNT) living and travel skills.
- Understands the transference of wilderness ethics to daily life.

Snowboarding Skills:

- Travels competently and efficiently with a pack and sled while moving camp.
- Travels efficiently using climbing skins.
- Demonstrated ability to care for climbing skins.
- Demonstrates basic proficiency with splitboard travelling techniques in a variety of conditions.
- Demonstrates basic proficiency with backcountry riding techniques.

Based on the conditions experienced on this course, this student, at this time:

(Instructors will select one upon completion of the course)

- Should seek additional training before leading novices.
- Can lead peers of a similar skill level in similar conditions.
- Can assist leading novices under supervision of a more experienced leader.
- Can lead novices in similar conditions.

Suggested Reading

Two weeks is a short time to assimilate the depth of knowledge to be gained on a winter expedition. If you are keen to begin now, here are several of the texts we use on our courses. You can start preparing for your course next to a cozy fire or snuggled deep under the covers! If you only have time (desire) to read a little, start with any of the first four on the list.

- *Allen and Mike's Really Cool Backcountry Ski Book*, Allen O'Bannon and Mike Clelland, Falcon, 1996
- *Snow Sense*, Jill Fredston and Doug Fesler, Alaska Mountain Safety Center, 1994
- *Winter World: The Ingenuity of Animal Survival*, Bernd Heinrich, Ecco, 2003
- *Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain*, Bruce Tremper, The Mountaineers, 2001

- *The Avalanche Handbook*, David McClung and Peter Schaerer, The Mountaineers, 1993
- *Avalanche Safety for Skiers and Climbers*, Tony Daffern, Cloudcap, Second Edition 1992
- *The Avalanche Book*, Betsy Armstrong and Knox Williams, Fulcrum Publishing, 1992
- *Winter: An Ecological Handbook*, James C. Halfpenny and Roy Douglas Ozanne, Johnson Books, 1989
- *Field Guide to Tracking Animals in the Snow*, Louise R Forrest, Stackpole Books, 1988