

NOLS/Archer Arrow Week Expedition Frequently Asked Questions

Where will my course take place?

The 11th grade NOLS/Archer Arrow Week Expedition begins at NOLS Southwest in Tucson, Arizona. Students will prepare for the course at the NOLS facility and be transported, by NOLS staff, to the mountains to begin their expedition. You can find more about your course at www.nols.edu/nolspro/custom_courses/archer.shtml. Check back for updates!

How will I get to Tucson?

Archer students will travel by charter bus arranged by the Archer School for Girls. All inquiries regarding pre- and post-course travel logistics should be directed to Stephanie Ferri, Fitness & Wellness Teacher at Archer School. (sferri@archer.org)

Where will I stay upon arriving in Tucson?

The Archer School has arranged hotel rooms in Tucson for all students the night prior to their course start date, September 17, 2011. The following morning (September 18), students will be picked up by NOLS employees and transported to NOLS Southwest. Dependent on specific group assignment, the girls will either depart for the backcountry that afternoon or sleep at the NOLS facility and depart the next morning. All students will be tent camping the first night of their course.

Where will my luggage be stored while I am backpacking?

NOLS Southwest has storage closets where personal items can be stored. These closets remain locked while you are in the field. Storage space is limited; please keep that in mind when thinking about luggage that will not go into the backcountry with you. You should only need two changes of clothes and shower items for your time pre- and post-course.

Any electronics or other valuables you have brought can be stored in a locked safe at NOLS Southwest. Cell phones, iPods, and portable computers cannot be brought into the backcountry on NOLS courses.

What will we use for shelter while camping?

Once your course begins, you will be sleeping in groups of three to four in floorless shelters. These shelters are typically four-sided tents supported by a single pole. Students are encouraged to bring or rent ground cloths to protect their sleeping pads and sleeping bags. On the first day of your course, your instructors will teach you how to set up your sleeping shelter.

The NOLS health form mentions the potential for an optional fast during my course. What does this mean?

The NOLS health form that your doctor will fill out is the general health form that is used for all of our courses, ranging from one week in length to a full academic year. The NOLS/Archer Arrow Week course does not include the opportunity for students to participate in an optional fast.

What is the food like?

After over four decades of experience and more than a million meals prepared in the wilderness, NOLS has mastered the art of backcountry cooking. The NOLS system of bulk rationing and planning ensures that you will pack light and still have enough fuel and nutrition for the physical demands of a NOLS course.

You will be divided into “cook groups” of three to four and learn how to cook your own meals while in the field. Each group will have their own backcountry kitchen consisting of a backpacking stove, cookware, spices, and rations as well as a [NOLS Backcountry Cookery](#) with suggestions for recipes.

NOLS rations include a variety of pastas, grains, beans, cheese, dried fruits and vegetables, nuts, and many other snack foods in addition to a selection of spices. You will decide what meals you and your cook group want to make and your



instructors will coach you through how to combine and cook the rations. Some popular meals include pizza/calzones, burritos, pancakes, and cinnamon rolls.

Can NOLS support a gluten allergy, lactose allergy, other food allergy, vegetarian, vegan or kosher diet?

In most cases, NOLS is able to accommodate any diet you are following due to specific food allergies and restrictions. There is space on your NOLS medical form to list dietary restrictions and allergies. It will be important for you to let our office know so NOLS can be prepared for you when you arrive for your course. It is possible to eat kosher on your NOLS course, however you will be responsible for carrying your own cookware to make this happen.

What will we do for water?

Finding water can be a challenge when traveling in a desert environment. You will be collecting water from rivers, streams, and small basins as you find them. You will learn how to conserve water if it becomes scarce. Drinking water will be treated through either boiling or using Aqua Mira (a chlorine dioxide based treatment), which NOLS provides.

What will the weather be like?

In late September in Arizona, you can expect hot days with cool nights and a chance of thunderstorms if there is a late monsoon season. On hotter days your group may decide to travel in the mornings and evenings to take advantage of the cooler portions of the day.

How can I physically prepare for my course?

The more pre-course preparation you do, the more you will learn and the more fun you will have on your course. While you do not need to be a superstar athlete to excel on a NOLS course, you should be in good cardiovascular condition. We recommend that as a minimum you participate in a cardiovascular workout at least three times a week for one hour per session. This could be running, biking, cross-country skiing, basketball, etc.

What happens if there is an injury/illness on the course?

If you are ill or injured while on the course, your NOLS instructors will determine if your illness or injury can be treated in the field. Each NOLS instructor is trained as a [Wilderness First Responder](#) with CPR and carries a first aid and drug kit to manage medical situations to the level of their training.

While our goal is to have students complete the course, we understand that a situation may occur where a student may need to leave the field. In this case, instructors will call NOLS Southwest to arrange an evacuation, contact families, and transport the student to a medical facility. Archer will have a faculty member based in Tucson during the course to care for any students that may need to return to the NOLS facility.

What if I am taking a medication?

NOLS must be informed about any prescription drugs you are taking and you must be able to reliably take the medications as prescribed. Please list all your current medications on your health form. If you are given new prescriptions after you have submitted your health form, please call the NOLS Professional Training office and also inform your instructors on the first day of your course. Failure to inform NOLS of changes to your medical condition could result in expulsion with no refund as such information is crucial in an emergency situation.

Your instructors will carry a drug kit. You should only bring the prescription drugs that are specific to your needs.

I am concerned about feminine hygiene. What is NOLS' approach to managing this in the backcountry?

Before their course many women feel some anxiety about hygiene in the backcountry. However, most women find it is much simpler to handle than they thought. All NOLS instructors, male and female, are trained to handle hygiene issues in a professional and sensitive manner. NOLS' "Health Information For Women On NOLS Courses" document is available on the NOLS/Archer Arrow Week webpage. Additionally, instructors will discuss with students how to manage backcountry hygiene before the course starts.



What training do NOLS instructors receive?

NOLS instructors are among the most highly trained group of wilderness educators in the world. Carefully screened applicants take the NOLS 35-day instructor course, considered to be the gold standard in the field of outdoor education. The top graduates then apprentice a course and, if they are successful, become certified NOLS instructors.

NOLS instructors come from highly diverse backgrounds, education, and experience but they all have a common expertise when it comes to first aid. The minimum first aid requirement to work as an instructor is a Wilderness First Responder (a 72-plus-hour course) or equivalent and bi-yearly CPR certification. Many instructors are certified as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). Additionally, the majority of our instructors are graduates of the Hartford Insurance Company's defensive driving course.

What equipment will I need?

A list of required and optional equipment is available on the NOLS/Archer Arrow Week webpage. Certain items are available for rent or for purchase from NOLS Southwest. Other items must be brought with you. There will not be any time after arriving in Tucson for students to go to the store, so "must bring" items on the list *must* be brought from home.

You will be billed for any personal gear that has been rented or purchased from NOLS after your course ends. The bill will be mailed to your home address approximately 2-4 weeks post-course. Additional charges will be added for any equipment that is lost or damaged. Please note that prices on the equipment list are subject to change without notice.

Will I be able to bring my cell phone, GPS tracker, or iPod?

A NOLS course is a unique opportunity to leave society and its trappings behind for a short period of your life. NOLS does not permit students to use personal electronic entertainment devices, personal cell or satellite phones, or other communication devices, including satellite/GPS trackers, while in the field.

You will be able to use these items while you are traveling to Tucson and in-town at NOLS Southwest during discretionary times. These items will be stored in a secure location and returned to you after your course. If there is an emergency from the field, your instructors will be able to contact NOLS via a satellite phone, and NOLS will in turn contact parents and emergency contacts. If there is an emergency from home and a parent needs to reach his/her daughter immediately, arrangements can be made through NOLS to attempt to contact the course as soon as possible.

How many people will be on my course?

Each course will have 12-15 Archer girls, one Archer faculty member, and three NOLS instructors.

What will a typical hiking day look like?

Though each day of your course will look slightly different, the following schedule will give you a better idea of what each day of your course will look like:

Sunrise: rise, pack gear, cook, and eat breakfast

9:00 am – 3:00 pm: team meeting and briefing, hike to next destination, leadership discussion topics/curriculum

3:00 pm: afternoon activity (curriculum/scouting), set camps

6:00 pm: cook dinner

7:30 pm: evening curriculum discussions and daily debrief

9:30 pm: bed



What will I learn on my expedition?

While on your expedition you will develop leadership and teamwork skills through a theoretical component and actual leadership experiences. You will also learn the outdoor skills necessary to lead your peers, manage risks, and apply Leave No Trace™ techniques.

There will be significant technical and environmental challenges on every NOLS/Archer Arrow Week Expedition. NOLS instructors will play evolving roles as your knowledge, experience, and abilities increase during these self-contained expeditions. You will take on increasing levels of personal and team responsibility for the technical and interpersonal—what we at NOLS call expedition behavior (or EB)—aspects of the course. NOLS instructors will provide structured briefing, debriefing, feedback, technical expertise, risk management, evaluation, classes, and participant leadership and followership opportunities.

What will the last day of the course look like?

On the last day of your course, September 23, you and your course mates will be picked up by a NOLS driver and brought back to NOLS Southwest in Tucson. You will return any rented equipment, clean your group gear (tents, pots/pans, stoves, etc), shower, and debrief your course with a NOLS employee. A NOLS bus will transport you back to your hotel that evening, where you will spend the night, departing for Los Angeles the following morning.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

The use of any type of illegal drugs, alcohol, or tobacco is strictly forbidden during your course – this includes during the time in-town and for the duration of your course. The alcohol policy applies to all students. **Students in violation of the drug and alcohol policy will be expelled from their course. No second chances are given.**

Can I wear my contact lenses on my NOLS course? Yes, you are welcome to wear your contact lens on your course. We also recommend that individuals bring along a pair of prescription glasses as a backup. Prescription sunglasses are also a nice item to have.

What is NOLS approach to risk management?

The health and the well being of our students and staff are of the highest priority at NOLS. However, it is important to recognize that there is, and always will be, a certain degree of risk in the very nature of a NOLS course. Our students and staff travel deep into the wilderness on extended expeditions, where they may be hours or even days from advanced medical care. We feel that the risks are manageable and that no organization is better equipped to manage them than NOLS.

Our fulltime Risk Management Director is the lead editor and author of the Manual of Accreditation Standards. As an organization, we are the lead sponsor and founder of the annual Wilderness Risk Management Conference (WMRC); we also serve on the Board of Directors for both the Wilderness Risk Management Committee and Wilderness Medical Society. Additionally, as the home of the Wilderness Medicine Institute of NOLS (WMI), we are the world's leading provider of wilderness medicine training and certification.

Our leadership in the outdoor field is so widely recognized that we provide risk management training and consulting to organizations worldwide.

