

Course Description

Archer/NOLS Arrow Week Expedition

Features Of This Course:

- Backpacking in the Canyons of Southern Utah
- Length: six days/five nights in the canyons, plus travel to/from Los Angeles
- Curriculum includes wilderness ethics, leadership skills, and teambuilding
- Average pack weight: 30-40 lbs.
- Group size: eight-eleven students /one-two Archer chaperone /two-three NOLS instructors

The Expedition

The NOLS Arrow Week Expedition is full of fun and challenging adventures based in experiential education. On this course, you will backpack through the red rock canyons of the Colorado Plateau in southern Utah developing backcountry skills and leadership, deepening relationships with your classmates, pushing yourself, and having fun.

Your course will begin with your arrival at the Green River State Park in Green River, Utah. This is where you will meet your NOLS instructors and be divided into the hiking groups with whom you will be spending the remainder of the week. The first night of your course will be spent sleeping in floorless shelters at the state park. Before departing for the canyons the next day, your NOLS instructors will give you an orientation, go through your equipment to help determine what you need and don't need, and teach you how to pack. After lunch, you will give your well wishes to the other groups and load onto the busses bound for the canyons!

While in the canyons, you will set out on a learning adventure as the course will cover the fundamentals of wilderness travel skills and how to live comfortably in the backcountry. You will travel on a daily basis; some days packing up and moving camp and others spent day hiking and exploring a side canyon or an ancient cliff dwelling. Map reading and route finding can be tricky in this convoluted country. At times you will travel across the mesa tops with spectacular views in all directions while at others, you'll wind your way through the labyrinthine depths of deeply carved waterways. You will also be challenged by the difficulty of minimizing your impact in an area where the soil is fragile and the water, which you may take for granted in Los Angeles, can be hard to find.

In addition to learning to live and travel in the desert environment, you will inherently be exposed to the area's natural history, geology, and culture. This area is characterized by rugged terrain and delicate beauty, with red sandstone and green junipers adding color to the arid landscape. Relics of the Anasazi culture may still be seen in the form of ruins, petroglyphs, and potsherds. Using resources brought along, you may have an opportunity to identify plants and wildlife along the trail and search for constellations while sleeping out under the stars.

You'll be living with three to four other students in a "cook group" throughout the course. 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 new skills. Before you know it, you'll be savoring homemade pizza or cinnamon rolls—gourmet delicacies that you made from scratch on a single-burner stove.

Group dynamics and leadership are important components of your course. You'll learn how to live and work closely with your course/class mates while you travel through the canyons. Bringing tolerance for adversity and uncertainty, respect for other members, and willingness to work hard will be critical to the success of the expedition. As your group gains skills and experience working together, you will be given more and more responsibility for leading yourself and your peers; and you may also be given opportunities to be a leader of the day for the group and play a role in planning the day's activities.

On the final day of the course, the busses will pick you up at the trailhead and transport you back to Green River. Here you will de-issue and clean the group's equipment, debrief your experience, set up camp for the night, and have the opportunity to share stories with your other classmates. That evening your class will all dine and camp together. You will depart the following morning for Los Angeles.



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, performing camp chores, or going to the bathroom. There will be no independent student group travel planned on this course.

Weather and Other Challenges

Spring weather in the intermountain west is capricious. On any given day, temperatures may range from freezing to sweltering. During your course, you could experience it all. You'll learn to live comfortably outside in rainstorms, wind, and the heat of the sun. There may be times when you will be cold, wet, hot or tired, but you will learn to manage these situations and maybe even smile while you do.

Life in the wilderness can be tough. You may be off-trail bushwhacking through thick vegetation or battling wind gusts. You'll traverse slopes of loose rock or grass and grunt up steep canyons. There will be times when you'll 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 long climb, feeling the wind dry the sweat off your back and looking at miles of new country opening up before you. It's exhilarating!

Notice of these potential hazards and challenges is not meant to intimidate you, but they are the reality of living and traveling in the wilderness. Identifying and managing hazards—which could be falling rock, stormy weather, animals, moving water or steep terrain—will be a constant theme in our instruction. Throughout your course, you'll be miles from the amenities of civilization. Telephones, ambulances, and hospitals may be several days away. Managing risks and assuming responsibility for yourself and your course mates will help make your expedition in these wild places 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.

General Course Objectives

Each course is unique due to variables such as route, group dynamics, and environmental conditions. The general goal of this course is to learn to introduce you to backcountry living and travel. While we recognize and work with these educational variables during the course, by the end of this course we expect each student to:

Risk Management, Judgment and Decision Making

- Demonstrate basic knowledge of the hazards in the environment encountered and perform techniques to reduce or avoid hazards
- Display sound judgment and decision making skills based on knowledge of equipment, the wilderness environment, other expedition members, and one's own limits

Leadership and Teamwork

- Effectively communicate ideas and concerns on individual and group levels
- Accurately identify strengths, skills, and areas for growth in developing leadership
- Take responsibility for learning; set and attain personal goals
- Work effectively as a member of a team; display a positive attitude despite hardship
- Initiate resolution of interpersonal conflicts
- Play an active role in defining group goals and expectations
- Demonstrate initiative in group activities and tasks
- Support others in their development and growth



Outdoor Skills

- Live proficiently and dress effectively for a variety of conditions
- Demonstrate environmentally sensitive and efficient campsite selection and tent set-up skills
- Prepare nutritious cooked meals using a camp stove
- Have a rudimentary knowledge of topographic maps and compass
- Take responsibility for the care and organization of personal and group equipment
- Exhibit good personal hygiene; be punctual and organized
- Display fundamental knowledge and skills in hiking

Environmental Studies

- Consistently demonstrate sound minimum impact living and travel skills on personal and group levels; be able to extrapolate knowledge to varied settings
- Show an understanding, appreciation and respect for the natural world
- Make plans for the transference of wilderness ethics and practices into daily life

