

C O U R S E D E S C R I P T I O N

Naval Academy Pacific Northwest Leadership Expedition

Features Of This Course:

- Hiking route: ~ 100 to 160 miles
- Elevations up to 7,000 feet
- Combination of on and off trail hiking
- Travel both above and below treeline
- Peak ascents
- Rugged off-trail travel/ bushwhacking
- Some opportunities for snow travel
- Group size: 10 students/ 2 instructors

The Expedition

This expedition will travel through the Cascades or Olympic mountains in the Pacific Northwest. These challenging and rugged ranges spawned the term “technical hiking” at NOLS. Both areas offer excellent opportunities to observe wildlife such as deer, black bear, and mountain goat.

Teamwork and leadership are the core curriculum. At NOLS, leadership means timely and appropriate actions that guide a group to set and achieve realistic goals. NOLS teaches situational leadership that demands different decision-making styles depending on group skill, task urgency and outcome predictability. NOLS Professional Training customizes this time-tested curriculum to a wide variety of audiences from college and private schools, to corporations and NASA astronauts. You’ll learn how to live and work closely with your course mates while you travel through the mountains. Having tolerance for adversity and uncertainty, a willingness to work hard, and respect for your comrades will be critical to the success of the expedition as a whole.

Once you have mastered basic wilderness skills, you’ll move into advanced curriculum such as hazard analysis and mitigation; off-trail travel techniques; and individual and team leadership. This course offers extensive opportunities for student leadership, including opportunities for independent student expeditions.

You’ll be living with two or three other students in a “cook” group during the course. These small groups disperse the impacts 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. Initially, these groups will include an instructor, but later, once you gain more experience with map-reading, route-finding, and hazard evaluation, student groups often 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, but ultimately the responsibility to learn lies with you.

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.

This course may culminate in a Student Expedition. After successful practice with daily independent student travel and if your instructors think your group is ready, the instructors will help you divide into student expedition groups (usually three to six students each.) With instructor oversight, each group will then select a leader and carefully plan and execute a multi-day independent student-led expedition. This part of the course builds on the skills you've learned and practiced and allows you to travel without instructors for up to four days. Students are aware of where the instructors and the other student groups are planning to travel and camp. However, instructors with emergency communication capability may be up to 24 hours away from the students. Our students often say the student expedition was the highlight of their course.

Fasting may be an optional part of the curriculum for the student expedition on this course. If the instructors think fasting is appropriate for the conditions and student abilities, students may choose to fast during the student expedition. Rations will be carried to allow students to eat in the event of an emergency.

Weather and Other Challenges

Mountain weather is fickle. On any given day, temperatures may range from below freezing to T-shirt conditions. Courses may experience snow, rain, or long stretches of sun and blue skies. Whether the Pacific Ocean is experiencing an El Niño or La Niña condition can be cause for large swings in weather patterns in the Pacific Northwest.

Travel in the mountains can be tough. Often you'll be off-trail bushwhacking through thick forests or scrambling across boulder fields. You will traverse steep slopes of snow, loose rock or grass, and grunt up high mountain passes, at times gaining 4,000 - 5,000 feet in a day. The heavy packs and steep terrain can be hard on your knees and feet if you are not used to this type of travel. You'll be miles from the amenities of civilization. Telephones, ambulances, and hospitals may be several days away.

Identifying and managing mountain hazards—falling rock, weather, animals, moving water and steep terrain (risks that could result in injury or death)—will be a constant theme in our instruction. Camping may involve dealing with swarms of mosquitoes or hanging your food to keep it away from bears or other animals. Managing risks and assuming responsibility for yourself and your colleagues will help make your expedition in these wild and beautiful mountains healthy and fun.



NAPL Course Objectives

Each course is unique due to variables such as route, group dynamics, fitness levels and environmental conditions. Students will practice and gain competence in the following areas:

Leadership and Teamwork

Students are exposed to the theory and practice of outdoor leadership, teamwork, and expedition behavior. NOLS teaches a situational leadership that demands different decision-making styles depending on group skill, task urgency and outcome predictability. At NOLS, expedition behavior involves commitment to the group, acceptance of others, and cooperation to achieve goals. Each student is expected to:

- Function effectively in all four leadership roles: self-leadership, active followership, designated leadership and peer leadership
- Practice and develop competence in NOLS' seven leadership skills:
 1. Continually increase technical competence in all skill areas
 2. Display strong expedition behavior by working effectively as a member of a team and serving group goals with a positive attitude
 3. Maintain flexibility, commitment and positive attitude in the face of adversity and uncertainty
 4. Accurately identify personal strengths and areas for growth
 5. Work to understand the leader's vision and when appropriate develop your vision as a leader; follow through with appropriate action to help the group achieve its potential
 6. Employ leadership styles and decision-making strategies appropriate to the situation
 7. Effectively communicate ideas and concerns on an individual and group level
- Take responsibility for learning through setting and attaining personal goals
- Respond to problem situations using decision-making and planning skills
- Provide effective oral and written feedback
- Take responsibility for the health and safety of self and others
- Assist in planning and participate in a student-led, multi-day Student Expedition

Risk Management

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

- Demonstrate knowledge of the hazards in a mountain environment
- Consistently perform specific techniques taught on the course to reduce or avoid hazards
- Describe an emergency plan for a group in the outdoors
- Demonstrate the ability to perform basic first aid to support a patient until help arrives
- Use experience and judgment to implement sound decisions and follow them through to completion
- Display sound judgment and an awareness of group and self limits

Wilderness Skills

NOLS students learn to live and travel in the wilderness within a framework of personal safety and care for the environment. Each student is expected to:

- Travel competently in mountain terrain using map and compass skills, off-trail navigation, hazard evaluation, route-finding techniques, bear camping and river-crossing techniques
- Live comfortably in a mountain environment, learn to camp, cook, and dress for a variety of conditions
- Accurately assess skills, strengths and endurance in self and others and conservatively apply those limits to given situations
- Demonstrate appropriate travel techniques on rock, snow, and mixed terrain
- Demonstrate the ability to remain composed and thoughtful in difficult and exposed terrain
- Correctly tie fundamental climbing knots and display efficient rope handling techniques; effectively use the ice ax for snow travel and self-arrest
- Employ sound bear camping and travel techniques



Environmental Studies

An integral part of every NOLS course is to raise students' awareness of their impact on the natural world. Each student is expected to:

- Consistently perform minimum-impact living and travel skills by following Leave No Trace principles
- Display basic natural history observational and interpretive skills and use them to demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the course environment
- Discuss the history and potential solutions relevant to pertinent environmental issues
- Demonstrate basic knowledge of and respect for local cultures

