

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

Naval Academy Sea Kayaking Expedition

Features of this Course:

- Course Length: 25 days
- Group Size: 12 students / 3 instructors
- Paddling Route: ~150 – 200 miles
- Multiple days of rain possible
- Tidewater glaciers
- Travel in both single and double sea kayaks
- Possibility of fishing (purchase of permit required)
- Abundant wildlife viewing
- Opportunity for day hikes
- Possibility of independent student travel

The Expedition

Prince William Sound—the classroom for this expedition—offers a spectacular and varied natural history. It is a place for observation, exploration and discovery. The variety of the landscape is compelling. For nearly a month, you will paddle a sea kayak beneath towering glaciers and past wooded coves. The sea teems with life—whales, porpoises, sea otters, seals and sea lions. Sea birds wheel in the sky overhead while tidal pools with starfish, anemones and other small creatures dot the shorelines.

Teamwork and leadership are the core curricula. 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 colleges and private schools to corporations to NASA astronauts. You'll learn how to live and work closely with your course mates while you travel through the mountains. 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.

NOLS instructors provide structured briefing, debriefing, feedback, technical expertise, risk management, evaluation, classes, and participant leadership and followership opportunities. 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 will receive ongoing verbal coaching and input from instructors, as well as written evaluations at the end of the course.

Once you have mastered basic wilderness skills, you will move into advanced curricula such as hazard analysis and mitigation, seamanship and coastal travel techniques, and individual and team leadership. This course offers extensive opportunities for student leadership, including independent student expeditions.

During your course you will live with two or three other students in a “cook” group. These small groups help disperse your impact on the land and enable you to refine the art of backcountry cooking and living. You will receive ample coaching from your instructors while you learn these new skills. Before you know it, you will be savoring homemade pizza and cinnamon rolls—gourmet delicacies that you will make from scratch on a single-burner stove.

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 promote self-sufficiency in remote backcountry areas. Our teaching progression for accomplishing this is carefully planned and executed. Initially travel groups 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 decisions. When you have demonstrated the necessary competency, 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 with indirect supervision from 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 four to six students each). With instructor oversight, each group then selects a leader and carefully plans and executes a multi-day independent student-led expedition. This builds on the skills you have 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. Each student expedition group will carry an emergency locator beacon that when activated in the event of a serious emergency will initiate a response from local search and rescue agencies. The 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 is 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 the 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

The weather on Prince William Sound can change from day to day. Overcast and cool days are the norm for summer, as is rain. You can expect it to rain or drizzle for at least half of the course. Storms can prohibit paddling and ground the course at a beach for a few days. There are times when you will be wet, cold, and tired, but you will learn to manage these situations, and maybe even smile as you do. Sunny, warm summer days are a welcome break.

Identifying and managing the hazards of wind and waves, rocky shore-lines, fog, currents, open crossings, animals, cold water, and long stretches of exposed coastline will be a constant theme in our instruction. The consistent practice of risk management and assumptions of responsibility for yourself and other group members will help make your expedition in this coastal environment healthy and enjoyable.

Just as you need to be physically fit you also need to be mentally ready to take on the challenges and to have a blast.

NASK 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

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 hazards in a cold water 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
- Accurately evaluate weather and sea conditions
- Display sound judgment and an awareness of group and self limits

Wilderness Skills

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

- Live comfortably in a maritime environment; learn to camp, cook, and dress for a variety of conditions
- Travel competently using map and compass skills, coastal navigation, hazard evaluation, route-finding techniques, and bear camping techniques
- Accurately assess skills, strengths and endurance in self and others and conservatively apply those limits to given situations

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

Sea Kayaking Skills

The necessary seamanship and kayak skills for safe travel by sea kayak are taught throughout the course. Students are expected to successfully perform the following:

- Safe launchings and landings in various conditions
- Basic paddling strokes: forward, reverse, sweep, draw, low and high braces
- Basic self and assisted rescues in calm and rough conditions
- Understand interaction of coastal hazards: wind, waves, weather, currents, tides and geography of the coastline
- Safe group travel and use of safety equipment; paddle signals
- Coastal navigation skills

