



NOLS-Operation Purple Teen Leadership Expedition Hiking Program Description

Features of this course

- 9 nights in the field, pre-course and last nights at NOLS branch facilities
- Hands-on leadership development in expeditionary setting
- Combination of on and off-trail hiking
- Forest and alpine travel
- Elevations of 7,000' - 11,000'
- Activity opportunities may include: peak ascents, fishing
- Group size: 12 Students / 3 Instructors
- Average pack weight: 45-55 lbs.

The Expedition

The mountains of Wyoming provide a wonderful setting for learning wilderness skills. They are still home to moose, elk, deer, black bear, sheep, goat and fox. This 10-day course is designed to teach essential leadership skills in a hands-on expeditionary learning environment. Students will also develop basic camp and travel skills as a foundation to competent leadership in the mountains. You'll travel on alpine ridges, through flower-filled mountain meadows, and in thick forests of aspen and fir. You'll work hard hiking over rocky, steep terrain with all your gear on your back - often following a trail, sometimes forging your own. But you'll play hard as well. Whether you climb your first peak, catch your first fish, or bake your first round of cinnamon rolls, this course is designed to maximize hands-on learning and doing in the backcountry.

Leadership skills and positive group dynamics are the core of the curriculum. You'll learn how to live and work closely with your course mates while you travel through the mountains. The ability to overcome adversity, work hard and maintain respect for others will be critical to your success. As your group gains leadership skills and experience working together, you can expect your instructors to give you more responsibility for leading yourselves and your peers.

You don't have to be an experienced backpacker to do this course. You'll have plenty of time to get used to a pack, the elevation, and all the new skills you'll be learning. We'll start with the basics—the essentials of backcountry living like camping, cooking, sanitation, stove use, map reading and *Leave No Trace* techniques. Later we'll move into more advanced topics: compass use, basic mountaineering.

You'll be living with two or three other students in a "cook" group during the course. These small groups help you disperse your 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.

NOLS Instructors provide structured briefing, debriefing, feedback, technical expertise, risk management, evaluation, classes and participant leadership and followership opportunities. You should expect ongoing verbal coaching and feedback throughout the course, with written performance summaries at the end.

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, sleeping 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.

Weather and Other Challenges

Mountain weather is capricious. On any given day, temperatures may range from below freezing to sweltering. Afternoon thunderstorms are common and can be quite violent. Courses may experience snow and rain, or long stretches of sun and blue skies.

Travel in the mountains can be tough. Often you'll be off-trail bushwhacking through thick forests or hiking on trail muddy from snowmelt. Rivers are icy and can be hard or impossible to cross. You may traverse steep slopes of snow, loose rock or grass, and grunt up high-mountain passes. There will be times when you will 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 pass, feeling the wind dry the sweat off your back, and looking down at miles of new country opening up before you. It's exhilarating!

Camping may involve dealing with swarms of mosquitoes or hanging your food to keep it away from bears or other animals. You'll be miles from the amenities of civilization. Telephones, ambulances, and hospitals may be several days away.

Wyoming is a state with bears—black and grizzly. On all courses, travel and camping practices will emphasize bear risk management and awareness. Depending on your specific locale, your course may be in territory that demands rigorous practices on a daily basis. Some examples are making noise while traveling, never leaving food in tents and always traveling in a group of four or more.

While the course is in the backcountry, you will be far from telephones and transportation. NOLS does not permit students to use personal cell or satellite phones or other communication devices, including satellite/GPS trackers while in the field. Identifying and managing mountain hazards—falling rock, weather, animals, moving water and steep terrain—will be a constant theme in our instruction. Managing risks and assuming responsibility for yourself and your peers will help make your expedition in these wild and beautiful mountains 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. 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.

Student Outcome Objectives

Leadership and Expedition Behavior

At NOLS, expedition behavior involves commitment to the group, a positive attitude, and cooperation to achieve goals. Each student is expected to:

- Actively participate in the decision-making process
- Take responsibility for the health and well being of self and others
- Demonstrate sound expedition behavior, including commitment to group decisions and a positive attitude
- Employ leadership styles appropriate to the situation; support others in the leadership role
- Work effectively as a team member
- Take responsibility for learning; set and attain personal goals
- Practice various types of leadership styles with their peers



Environmental Studies

Participants will explore ethics and develop skills that value and protect the environment such as:

- Leave No Trace™ minimum impact camping skills
- Exploration of local ecosystem's, flora and fauna, geology, and history

Risk Management and Wilderness Skills

Participants will develop sound judgment and travel skills as they:

- Describe and recognize hazards in the mountain environment
- Consistently perform appropriate techniques to reduce or avoid hazards
- Cook nutritious meals with fellow members of the expedition
- Understand the aspects of self-care within the context of a group
- Navigate and lead others through mountainous terrain
- Learn about objective and subjective hazards decision-making
- Dress appropriately for a variety of conditions; be punctual and organized

Sample Expedition Agenda

(Arrive at airport the day before the course starts).

Day 1

Outfitting and rations, personal equipment check, pack packing, load vehicles, travel to trailhead, begin backpacking.

Day 2,3

Instructors role model and teach hiking/mountain travel curriculum, mountain camping, Leave No Trace techniques, briefing, debriefing, next day planning. Team meeting: goals, roles, expectations, and team culture.

Day 4 -9

Leadership and decision-making transitions to participants, who serve as student "Leaders of the Day." Instructors provide participant leadership opportunities, leadership theory and team-building activities.

Day 10

Hike to trailhead; shower; complete individual performance evaluations; debrief course outcomes. Evening final banquet. (Fly home the following morning).

Sample Backpacking Day

Sunrise: rise, pack gear, cook & eat breakfast

9am - 3pm: team meeting & briefing, hike to next destination, leadership discussion topics/curriculum.

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

6pm- cook dinner, eat

7:30 -9pm - evening curriculum discussions and daily debrief

9pm – Bed Time

As a result of the course, we expect our students to be safe, competent, responsible wilderness travelers and leaders.

