



## NOLS-Operation Purple Teen Leadership Expedition Salmon Rafting Program Description

### Features Of This Course

- Field Days: 9
- Hands-on leadership development in expeditionary setting
- Possible Fly Fishing
- Salmon River: 80+ miles
- Rapids to Class III
- Group Size: 12 Students/ 3 - 4 Instructors

### The Expedition

Idaho is known for its rugged wilderness and raging whitewater. The Salmon Rafting course allows you to experience both through an amazing 9-day backcountry adventure on the Main Salmon River in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. The Salmon is famous for being one of the longest free flowing rivers (425 miles) in the Lower 48. It flows through the heart of the largest wilderness area (2.3 million acres). Other highlights include beautiful sandy beaches, which we will call camp, and a riverside natural hot spring.

This course starts with the basics. Essential outdoor skills like camping, cooking and stove use, map reading, and *Leave No Trace* techniques will be taught. As we go downstream, you will learn how to guide the paddle rafts and row the oar rigs. You will learn how to recognize river hazards and obstacles and how to avoid them, as well as find the good lines through the rapids. There will also be time spent learning and practicing river rescue techniques. After rigging boats in the morning, we'll head downstream for another day of learning on our flowing river classroom, making stops at historic homesteads and mines. You will learn what it takes to run a river trip even down to the finer points of cooking brownies in a Dutch oven.

Group dynamics and leadership will be the core focus of the course curriculum. You will learn how to live and work closely with your course mates while you travel through the wilderness. Bringing a tolerance for adversity and uncertainty, respect for other members, and a willingness to work hard will be critical to success. 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 should expect ongoing verbal coaching and feedback throughout the course, with written performance summaries at the end.

The Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Area is home to abundant wildlife including gray wolves, black bears, and big horn sheep. Osprey and golden eagles soar over large Ponderosa Pines and Douglas Firs. The opportunity to give back to this spectacular wilderness may exist in the form of a noxious weed project with the Forest Service. Western rivers are popular, and we will talk about the use, management policies, water politics, and wilderness ethics specific to the river environment. Other topics range from fire ecology taught in recent burn areas to discussions about dwindling Chinook salmon populations.

### 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.

### Weather and Other Challenges

Weather in the intermountain west is unpredictable. 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. You can expect cold-water temperatures even in the middle of summer. The hazards you face



will include large, crashing waves; shallow, rock-strewn rapids; re-circulating holes; fallen trees that can trap a person underwater; strong currents that can pin you against a rock; hypothermia; and sun exposure.

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

Idaho, Montana and Wyoming are states with bears—black and grizzly. On all courses, travel and camping practices will emphasize bear risk management and awareness.

While the course is in the backcountry, you will be far from telephones and transportation. Identifying and managing the hazards of moving water, falling and rolling rocks, weather, animals, and steep terrain will be a constant theme in our instruction. The consistent practice of risk management techniques and assumption of responsibility for yourself and other group members is critical to success. Such things will also make your expedition healthy and enjoyable.

### **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.

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

### **Salmon Rafting Course Objectives**

Each course is unique, due to variables such as route, group dynamics, fitness levels and environmental conditions. Working with these variables, it is our intent to accomplish the following outcomes.

### **Risk Management and Judgment**

NOLS teaches wilderness users to practice responsible habits that promote the health and well being of self and others. Objectives include the ability to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of river features and hazards of the whitewater environment, e.g., hydraulics, strainers, shallow water, hypothermia, submerged rocks, etc.; "read" Class III whitewater
- Consistently perform appropriate techniques to reduce or avoid hazards
- Show an awareness of cold water and river-related injuries and their prevention
- Demonstrate an understanding of river risk management/rescue techniques; prepare for such situations
- Demonstrate the ability to develop an emergency plan for a group in the outdoors
- Display sound judgment and an awareness of group and self-limits
- Paddle safely/effectively/responsibly as a member of a group on the river

### **Leadership and Expedition Behavior**

Students are exposed to the theory and practice of outdoor leadership, teamwork and expedition behavior. At NOLS, expedition behavior involves commitment to the group, a positive attitude and cooperation to achieve goals. Objectives include the ability 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
- Effectively communicate and problem-solve on interpersonal and group levels
- Show initiative in leadership/teaching roles with peers
- Employ leadership styles appropriate to the situation; support others in the leadership role
- Work effectively as a team member; initiate participation in group tasks and camp work
- Take responsibility for learning; set and attain personal goals

### **Outdoor Skills**

At NOLS, our students learn to live and travel in the wilderness within a framework of personal well being and care of the environment. Objectives include the ability to:



- Dress appropriately for a variety of conditions; be punctual and organized
- Cook nutritious meals using a camp stove or fire; participate fully and effectively in the group kitchen
- Demonstrate appropriate campsite selection and shelter set-up
- Travel efficiently in mountainous terrain using map and/or compass skills
- Utilize off-trail navigation and route-finding techniques to mitigate hazards
- Experience basic spin and fly fishing techniques

### **Environmental Studies**

At NOLS, environmental studies encompasses natural sciences, ecological principles, environmental ethics, Leave No Trace camping, land management and cultural issues. Each student is expected to:

- Show an understanding, appreciation, and respect for the natural world; know characteristic flora and fauna of the area; understand significant ecological principles
- Develop a sense of place and relationship to the land, a recognition of the inherent value in wilderness and a sense of responsibility to protect the environment
- Consistently perform sound Leave No Trace living and travel skills; be able to extrapolate knowledge to new environments
- Demonstrate a knowledge of public land management and river conservation issues; discuss means to be involved in issues of interest
- Demonstrate awareness and understanding of current and historic local cultures

### **River Rafting Skills**

Objectives include the ability to:

- Understand the design, use, outfitting and care of rafts and related equipment
- Show competency with raft rigging techniques for paddle and oar rafts
- Demonstrate paddle rafting skills; guide in Class II water, crew in Class III water
- Demonstrate effective rowing technique in Class II water in oar raft
- Demonstrate basic rescue skills: self rescue, throw ropes, raft-flip recovery, and swimmer rescue

### **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 rafting.

#### **Day 2,3**

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

#### **Day 4 -8**

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 9**

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

### **Sample Rafting Day**

Sunrise: Rise, pack gear, cook & eat breakfast

9am - 4pm: Team meeting & briefing, paddle to next destination, leadership discussion topics/curriculum.

4pm - Set camps & debriefs

6pm- Cook dinner, eat

7:30 -9pm - Evening curriculum discussions

9pm – Hit the sack!

