

# Wilderness Medicine Expedition

## Course Description

August 25 – September 2, 2019  
NOLS Rocky Mountain: Lander, Wyoming

### Overview

#### Course features

- Emphasis on wilderness medicine for the professional practitioner
- Course duration: 9 days
- Average group size: 12 students and 2–3 instructors | minimum age: 23
- Average pack weight: 45 pounds
- Hiking route: approximately 25–30 miles
- Elevations of 8,000–12,000 feet
- Opportunity to climb a peak in the southern Wind River Range
- On- and off-trail hiking; travel near or above tree-line
- Blue-ribbon fly fishing
- Continuing Medical Education and FAWM credit available

#### The expedition

The Wind River Range Backpacking Expedition offers an unparalleled opportunity for physicians, physician assistants, nurses, nurse practitioners, and EMTs who want to learn practical, hands-on wilderness medicine education in Wyoming's stunning Wind River Mountains. It is an ideal opportunity for those who want to experience the realities of wilderness medicine and decision-making on a true wilderness expedition.

The course begins with an evening orientation meeting and an opportunity to meet your fellow expedition members. The first full day will be spent in the classroom, covering foundational topics in wilderness medicine. The second day will be spent outfitting equipment and rations for a week of backpacking through the southern Wind River Range. In the field, you will be introduced to NOLS's comprehensive outdoor skills, leadership, and wilderness medicine curricula. In addition, you may have time to fish mountain streams, or climb a 12,000-foot peak. Core to the expedition are the themes of leadership and teamwork, both in a wilderness environment and in a clinical setting. Hands-on scenarios will challenge expedition members to apply their medical and team management skills, with after-action debriefs and growth-oriented feedback. After a week of travel, the expedition will finish back in Lander with an end-of-course banquet and celebration.

#### Syllabus

##### 8/24 Evening pre-course orientation

There will be an evening orientation meeting at 7 p.m. at NOLS's historic Noble Hotel (288 Main Street) in downtown Lander. *Please note that this orientation meeting is mandatory, and takes*

*place the evening **before** the official course start date.* You will spend this night in Lander at the Noble Hotel.

### **8/25 Wilderness Medicine for the Professional Practitioner**

You will spend the day engaged in wilderness medicine classes, skills practice, and scenarios. Your instructors will focus on wilderness patient assessment; shock; chest trauma; spine injuries and management, including litter packaging; head injuries; wilderness wound management; hypothermia, frostbite and local cold injuries; heat illness; and altitude illness. You will spend this night in Lander at the Noble Hotel.

### **8/26 Issue equipment at NOLS Rocky Mountain | drive to the trailhead | backpack to first camp**

After an early breakfast, you will finalize your personal equipment, and then pack your group's gear and rations necessary for a week-long wilderness expedition. You'll depart for the mountains after lunch, and hike three to four miles before establishing your first camp.

### **8/27–9/1 Wilderness expedition**

Your course will begin slowly to allow you to get used to the weight of your pack, the fit of your boots, and the elevation. Initially, your instructors will focus on basic camping and travel techniques: cooking and stove use, map reading, Leave No Trace techniques, and practices for hiking and camping in grizzly bear habitat. Later, when you're ready, the group will move into more advanced topics: fly fishing, compass use, expedition behavior, decision making, and leadership. In addition, expect to practice focused spine assessment, improvised splints, foot care and blister management, dislocation reduction techniques, and ankle taping, among other wilderness medicine skills.

You'll live with two or three other students in a "cook group" during the course. These small groups help disperse your impact on the land and enable you to master the art of backcountry living. You'll receive plenty of coaching from your instructors while you learn new skills. Before you know it, you'll be savoring homemade pizza and cinnamon rolls—gourmet delicacies that you made from scratch and cooked over a single-burner stove. Your cook group may be single-sex or co-ed.

You'll travel in small hiking groups so you have more opportunities to lead, make decisions, and practice navigation as you move through beautiful wilderness. Hiking days begin early when you start your stove, savor a warm breakfast, and then organize your pack. Some days a wilderness medicine class will follow breakfast. You're usually hiking by mid-morning. Lunch on the trail might be cheese, crackers, or a trail mix of nuts and dried fruits. When you arrive at your new camp, you'll first spend time choosing a low-impact site and pitching your tent, engaging in medical classes and practice, and then preparing a well-deserved dinner. If the miles were long, a short evening meeting wraps up the day. If the night is still young, there may be a group discussion, campfire, or constellation-viewing party. Weather

permitting, you may have the opportunity to fly fish, or to climb one of the range's peaks or high plateaus.

Group dynamics and leadership are integral parts of your course's curriculum. Through classes on communication and conflict resolution, your group will quickly become a community with its own norms and culture. Tolerance for adversity and uncertainty, respect for others, and a willingness to work hard are critical to your success. You will become fluent with the NOLS leadership model and should expect to apply its tenets to daily experiences. The emphasis of the leadership curriculum will be on experiential learning, though you'll also be exposed to formal classes. As your group demonstrates strong interpersonal skills, your instructors will give you greater responsibility for leading yourself and your peers.

Your course has an effective instructor-to-student ratio (1:6 or less) to provide coaching and supervision. You can expect ongoing verbal coaching and feedback throughout the course.

### **9/2 Travel back to Lander | de-issue equipment | banquet | course concludes**

After an afternoon shuttle back to Lander, you will de-issue course equipment, shower, and celebrate with a course-end banquet.

### **Weather and other challenges**

Summer weather in the Rockies is capricious. You'll learn to live comfortably outside in blizzards, rainstorms, and high winds. Cold and snowy conditions can occur any month of the year. When they do, it is your attitude and optimism that will serve you more than any expensive rain jacket.

Life in the wilderness can be tough. You may be bushwhacking off-trail through thick vegetation, scrambling over refrigerator-sized boulders, or battling sleet that threatens to "turtle" you. Rivers are icy from snowmelt and can be difficult or impossible to cross. As you traverse slopes of loose rock and grunt up steep passes, there will be times when you 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!

Your course will travel through grizzly and black bear habitat. NOLS, in collaboration with bear biologists, has developed specific practices to minimize the risk of a bear encounter, including carrying pepper spray, hanging food or protecting it in an electrified fence, and maintaining a meticulously clean campsite. Your instructors will teach these practices to you, and you'll follow them every day. These precautions may decrease opportunities for solitude and privacy on your course.

Identifying and managing hazards—such as falling rock, stormy weather, animals, moving water, and steep terrain—will be a constant theme on your course. You're often miles from the amenities of civilization, including medical care; telephones may be several days away. You are expected to demonstrate the highest regard for risk management in the field.

### **Pre-course self-study**

To help you prepare for your Wilderness Medicine Expedition, please read the articles in the required reading section. <https://www.nols.edu/portal/wmi/courses/13931/>

### **Certifications and continuing education credits**

Successful completion of the course provides a certificate of completion of a Wilderness Medicine for the Professional Practitioner ([WMPP](#)) course.

#### *FAWM credits*

Active members of the Wilderness Medicine Society (WMS) may earn up to 28 hours of credit towards a Fellowship of the Academy of Wilderness Medicine (FAWM). ([www.wms.org/fawm](http://www.wms.org/fawm))

#### *For physicians, physician assistants*

Through joint sponsorship with the Wilderness Medical Society, eligible medical professionals may earn 15 hours of category 1 CMEs for participation in a Wilderness Medicine Expedition. [1]

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[1] *This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the Essential Areas and policies of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) through the joint sponsorship of the Wilderness Medical Society and NOLS Wilderness Medicine. The Wilderness Medical Society is accredited by the ACCME to provide continuing medical education for physicians. The Wilderness Medical Society designates this educational activity for a maximum 15 hours of AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™. Each physician should only claim credit commensurate with the extent of his or her participation in the activity. NOLS Wilderness Medicine is a non-profit educational organization that is not, in any of its activities, sponsored by any proprietary entity.*

#### *For EMTs*

This course is pre-approved for 16 hours of EMT Continuing Education Hours (CEH) by the Commission on Accreditation for Prehospital Continuing Education ([www.capce.org](http://www.capce.org)) [2]

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[2] *CAPCE is an organization established to develop and implement policies to standardize the review and approval of EMS continuing education activities. Cosponsoring organizations of CAPCE are the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians, the American College of Emergency Physicians, the National Association of Emergency Medical Services Physicians, the National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Directors, the National Council of State Emergency Medical Services Training Coordinators, the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians, the National Association of EMS Educators and the American College of Osteopathic Emergency Physicians.*

### **Instructors**

Your instructors are senior faculty skilled in teaching both the NOLS core curriculum and wilderness medicine curriculum. These instructors have been selected for their background in wilderness leadership, urban and wilderness pre-hospital care, and ability to work with a range of audiences. Above all, they are excellent educators.

## Course objectives

NOLS takes great pride in providing quality experiential education on all its courses. Unlike a classroom, expeditions are influenced by weather, terrain, and the group's health, as well as its skills, experience, and ability. In short, we can't script our courses. Upon completion of the Wilderness Medicine Expedition, we expect students to be able to do the following in a wilderness setting:

- Perform a patient assessment; manage life threats and scene safety
- Manage head, spine, and musculoskeletal injury with minimal equipment
- Manage emergencies due to heat and cold
- Understand the utility and limits of advanced life support (ALS) in the wilderness
- Prepare a reasonable pack with essential medical and personal gear for 24 hours in the wilderness
- Organize, lead, and participate in a simulated wilderness litter evacuation
- Dress appropriately for inclement weather
- Cook nutritious meals using a camp stove and field rations
- Demonstrate campsite selection and shelter use skills
- Navigate mountain terrain with map, compass, and GPS
- Travel off-trail in mountainous terrain
- Consistently perform sound Leave No Trace camping skills
- Demonstrate the basic ability to manage risks, including rock fall, steep terrain, stream crossings, bear avoidance, lightning, and adverse weather
- Demonstrate sound expedition behavior, including teamwork, support of group decisions & have a positive attitude during adversity; show leadership with peers using styles appropriate to the situation; and demonstrate sound judgment and decision making

## Personal electronics

Integral to every NOLS course is the splendid isolation of wilderness. NOLS does not permit students to use cell phones, satellite phones, or other communication devices (including personal tracking devices, such as SPOT) while in the field. Additionally, students are not permitted to take personal music players (e.g. iPods) or to use smartphones or tablets (e.g. iPhones, iPads) as digital cameras. If you wish to take photos on your course—and we hope you will!—please bring a 35mm or dedicated digital camera. Instructors carry communication equipment, including personal locator beacons (PLBs) and satellite phones, to handle emergencies that may arise.

## Student independence

Both in town and in the field, you will be independent (unaccompanied by instructors) at various times. While in Lander, on the road, and in the field, you are expected to always adhere to NOLS's drug, alcohol, and tobacco policies, and to comport yourself in a respectful, responsible way.

## Fishing

Fly fishing can be an important part of the NOLS curriculum. You must possess a Wyoming fishing license, which you will have the option to purchase during your prep day in Lander, in order to fish on your course.

Please bring to Lander the last four digits of either your:

- Social Security number (for US citizens)
- Tax Identification Number (for US legal aliens)
- Passport number (for foreign visitors)

Wyoming Game and Fish requires this information to process your license. The cost of your license will depend on your age and how many days you hope to fish. (Non-resident adult, annual: \$104.50; non-resident adult, daily: \$14/day.) Your instructors will have details on fishing opportunities, and can help you decide between purchasing an annual or multi-daily license. The cost of a license is not included in your course tuition.

## Course Tuition

The course tuition is **\$2,375**. This includes lodging 8/24–9/3; transportation during the course; instruction and materials; 15 hours of category 1 CMEs or 16 hours of EMT CEUs, and up to 28 hours credit towards the Fellowship of the Academy of Wilderness Medicine; permit fees; meals, expedition rations and final course banquet; group camping gear (shelters, stoves, etc.). It does not include travel to Lander, or personal equipment purchase or rental.

A \$500 deposit is required to enroll in the course. Payment in full is welcomed. You can pay your balance by mailing in a check with the Course Statement and prerequisites, calling the office with Mastercard or Visa credit card information, or online through your [nols.edu account](https://nols.edu).

If you do not have an online course account with NOLS, you can create one. The deadline to submit payment for the balance of course fees is 45 days prior to the course start date. If you are registering after this deadline, please call the NOLS Wilderness Medicine Office at (866) 831-9001 so we may assist you.

## NOLS Wilderness Medicine Cancellation Policies

- If you cancel or leave a course for any reason:
  - Between 60 and 46 days prior to the course starting date, NOLS will retain 50% of total course tuition.
  - Less than 45 days prior to course start date and once the course has begun, there will be no refunds.
- Participants will be required to reimburse NOLS for the expenses incurred in evacuating them from the course.

- Although we rarely need to do so, we reserve the right to cancel a course or change a course duration, tuition or location. NOLS is not responsible for associated costs in these cases.

## Tuition Protection Program

NOLS offers a Tuition Protection Plan, provided by AON Affinity, for citizens of the USA and Canada who meet certain legal residence requirements at a cost of six percent of the total tuition. The plan helps to protect against tuition loss should you be unable to participate or complete your WME course due to an injury or illness to yourself or your immediate family. Additionally, this plan may help to pay for evacuation costs from the course location. The Tuition Protection Plan payment is non-refundable and not transferable.

NOLS strongly recommends the Tuition Protection Plan to safeguard your investment in tuition.

## Scholarships and Financial Aid

- NOLS Wilderness Medicine offers a limited amount of scholarship assistance for students in our WME courses. Scholarship aid is available to applicants who show great potential to excel as NOLS Wilderness Medicine students and who would be unable to attend without financial aid. The typical award ranges between \$500 and \$1,000. Students must pay a \$500 deposit and register for a WME course before their application will be considered. For more information, visit the [Scholarship section](#) of our webpage.
- AmeriCorps Education Awards and 529 College Savings Plans can be applied toward WME courses. For more information, visit the [AmeriCorps Awards and 529 Plans section](#) of our webpage. You should take this step *at least* 60 days prior to your course start date.
- If you currently receive federal financial aid and you are interested in applying it toward your WME course, please review this [information](#) and contact the Admissions Office at [wilderness\\_medicine@nols.edu](mailto:wilderness_medicine@nols.edu) or (866) 831-9001.

## For More Information

**Questions?** Contact NOLS Wilderness Medicine via phone 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. MST Monday–Friday at (866) 831-9001 or via email at [wilderness\\_medicine@nols.edu](mailto:wilderness_medicine@nols.edu).