

# WILDERNESS MEDICINE EXPEDITION

## *Equipment List*

### **Welcome to NOLS!**

Learning to choose the right equipment for your adventure is an essential part of the NOLS curriculum. We know that walking into an outdoor store can be a daunting experience, but preparing for your course need not feel overwhelming. This list is designed to help you make smart, prudent choices about the gear you bring on your trip.

When you arrive, your instructors will first look through all the equipment you've brought and help you decide what to take into the field. You'll then go into our Outfitting Department to rent or purchase any remaining items. The list below is comprehensive; however, the actual equipment needed for your course will vary depending on location, season, and instructor judgment. **For this reason, we do not recommend that you go out and purchase a lot of expensive, specialized gear for your course.**

Instead, here are some thoughts to guide you as you pack:

**First, use gear you already own!** You'll be comfortable in tried-and-true clothing. Bring more layers than you think you'll need; your instructors will help you choose your best options. If an item is deemed suitable for your particular course, you can take it into the field; if not, you can leave it in storage at the branch. If in doubt, bring it!

**Second, rent key items from NOLS.** When it comes to gear, every adventurer has his or her own needs, styles, and preferences. With guidance from your instructors during your course, you'll have the opportunity to hone your "perfect" system, and your notions about the smartest layers or ideal backpack may change in the field. Unless you're already a veteran backcountry traveler, we recommend that you rent several "big ticket" items: sleeping bag and foam pad, backpack, wind pants, wind shirt, and puffy jacket. While you are not obligated to rent gear from us, there are several reasons why we suggest it. Our rental gear is high quality, chosen and maintained specifically for the use it receives on courses. Rental prices are reasonable, and renting lets you try gear, so you can make informed decisions on future adventures. (After your course, you may purchase any of the items you rented, with the rental fee deducted from the price; this is a great way to begin building your personal gear closet.) Finally, even if your equipment is appropriate, it will receive a lot of hard use; students are often surprised at the amount of wear they put on their personal gear during a course.

**Third, purchase specific items from our Outfitting Department.** To make shopping simple, we offer basic kitchen utensils (mug, bowl with lid, spoon, 32-ounce water bottle), personal care items (lip balm, sunscreen, hand sanitizer, bug spray), and camping sundries (headlamp, batteries, lighter). We also carry a selection of clothing, including wool socks, ball caps, hats and gloves, rain jackets and pants, and base-layers. NOLS is a not-for-profit organization, and revenue from our Outfitting Department goes to serve the mission of the School.

**Fourth, visit your local outdoor store.** Most gear shops, from REI to mom-and-pop outfits, are familiar with NOLS and its courses. They can advise you on purchases—but be wary of being "upsold" items you don't really need! We encourage you to keep the tags on all equipment and clothing (and the receipt) so that you may return any unneeded items.

### **Equipment fees**

You should be prepared to pay for your equipment rental or purchases after your course by cash, check or credit card. Additional charges will be incurred for any equipment that is lost or damaged.

### **How to use this list**

Non-rental items on the list below are designated in one of two ways:

**Purchase only** | Indicates that an item is available at NOLS Rocky Mountain for purchase only.

**Not available** | Indicates that an item is not available at NOLS Rocky Mountain, either for rent or for purchase.

**Quality over quantity**

At NOLS, we fundamentally believe that you don't need to own a lot of expensive gear to live and travel comfortably in the backcountry. By purchasing high-quality items and learning to care for them, you're making a lifetime investment. Spend money on the few items that really matter, but don't get lured into splurging on the trendiest fabrics or unnecessary gadgets.

**Questions?**

If you have any questions or would like more information regarding the items on this list, please contact the NOLS Rocky Mountain Outfitting Department at (307) 332-1422.

### Upper Body Layers

We layer our clothing, combining different garments to achieve optimum insulation and protection from wind, rain, and snow. We use either synthetic or wool fibers, which insulate when wet; merino wool products, such as those offered by Icebreaker, SmartWool, and Ibex, are increasingly popular. We avoid cotton, which is poor insulation when wet. It is common to need three insulating layers.

Equipment	Rental price	Purchase price	Quantity	Comments	Checklist
Base layer (mid-weight synthetic)	Purchase only	\$50–75	1	Light- or mid-weight long-sleeve top, wool or synthetic	
Middle layer (fleece pullover)	Purchase only	\$50–75	1	Midweight pull-over or zip-up top, fleece or wool.	
Top layer (synthetic jacket)	\$12.50	\$165–250	1	A warm, synthetic or down “puffy” jacket that fits over your other layers and under your rain jacket. A hood is recommended.	
Wind shirt/anorak	\$6.25	\$55–100	1	A lightweight, breathable, durable nylon wind shell, in either pullover or zip-up style.	
Rain jacket	Purchase only	\$100–150	1	Durable, waterproof, non-insulated jacket with hood. Coated nylon or breathable fabrics (e.g., Gore-Tex, H2No, etc.) are acceptable. It is very important that your rain jacket fits well over all your base and mid-layers.	
T-shirt	Purchase only	\$25–50	1	A lightweight synthetic or wool t-shirt	

Our advice? Bring the sweaters, fleece jackets, and synthetic layers you think might work. We’ll advise you on the best combination for your trip, depending on the season and course area.

### Lower Body Layers

You will need 1–2 synthetic insulating layers (usually a base layer and, in early summer, a pair of fleece pants). All must fit comfortably over each other so that they can be worn at the same time. If you tend to get cold easily, add a middle layer of mid-weight bottoms to the base layer and fleece pants.

Equipment	Rental price	Purchase price	Quantity	Comments	Checklist
Base layer (mid-weight synthetic)	Purchase only	\$49–60	1 pair	Mid-weight synthetic or wool bottoms. Cotton and cotton blends are not acceptable.	
Middle layer (expedition-weight synthetic)	Purchase only	\$50–75	1 pair	Mid- or heavy-weight bottoms that fit comfortably over the base-layer bottoms. Fleece pants or insulated (puffy) pants are both acceptable.	

Wind pants	\$6.25	\$60	1 pair	Nylon or synthetic pants. These should fit comfortably over lower-body base layers. Side-zippers allow the pants to be put on over boots. Soft-shell fabrics are acceptable, but lightweight “running pants” are not durable enough. We recommend renting NOLS wind pants.
Rain pants	Purchase only	\$80–110	1 pair	<i>Optional.</i> Although not required, some people like to use rain pants in conjunction with a rain jacket.
Nylon shorts	Purchase only	\$40–60	1 pair	Loose-fitting nylon athletic or river shorts
Underwear and sports bra	Purchase only	\$20–35	2–3 pairs	Briefs or boxers may be cotton, synthetic, or silk. Sports bras should be synthetic or silk. Some students prefer to go without underwear and use nylon shorts with liners.

Our advice? Bring the synthetic base layers, rain gear, and exercise clothing you think might work. We’ll advise you on the best combination for your trip, depending on the season and course area.

#### Head, Neck, and Hand Layers

Equipment	Rental price	Purchase price	Quantity	Comments	Checklist
Baseball cap or wide-brim sun hat	Purchase only	\$16	1	To protect ears and face from the sun; available with NOLS logo	
Wool or fleece hat	\$1	\$16–35	1	A warm hat made of wool or fleece	
Gloves or Mittens	Purchase only	\$17–55	1 pair	Wool or fleece	

Our advice? As long as they’re not cotton, bring your gloves, mittens, and shells. We’ll check them and see if they’ll work.

#### Packs and Bags

Equipment	Rental price	Purchase price	Quantity	Comments	Checklist
Backpack	\$25	\$250	1	Our packs are large expedition models, with a volume of 80–110 liters. We recommend you rent one of these packs. If you bring an internal frame pack, your instructors will examine it to determine its suitability for your course and route. It must have a volume of 80–110 liters.	
Small stuff sack	\$1	\$4	2–3	Small nylon or mesh sacks for organizing items in your pack	

Our advice? An expedition backpack is a major purchase. If you don’t already own one, we think you should rent ours, gain some experience, then make an informed decision after your course.

Sleeping Bags and Pads					
Equipment	Rental price	Purchase price	Quantity	Comments	Checklist
Sleeping bag	\$15	\$220 - 350	1	A synthetic-fill mummy bag with approximately 3 pounds of fill, rated to 0° to 15°F. Down-filled bags are okay, but need to be carefully kept dry in the wilderness.	
Compression sack	\$4	\$55	1	Stuff sack that packs sleeping bag or clothing layers into a smaller size than a regular stuff sack would.	
Plastic trash bag	Purchase only	\$1	2-3	2-3 heavy-duty lawn-and-garden bags (33 gallon) to help waterproof your sleeping bag and backpack	
Sleeping pad	\$1.50	\$15-85	1	Used for padding and insulation between sleeping bag and ground. Foam pads must be closed-cell and at least 3/8 inches thick. Inflatable pads are typically warmer, but need to be treated with care.	
Our advice? A sleeping bag is another major purchase. If you don't already own one, we think you should rent ours, gain some experience, and then make an informed decision after your course.					

Miscellaneous Items					
Equipment	Rental price	Purchase price	Quantity	Comments	Checklist
<b>Eating utensils</b>					
Insulated mug	Purchase only	\$4-40	1	12 to 20-oz. insulated mug with a lid. Many students prefer having a 0.5L Nalgene water bottle as a mug.	
Bowl	Purchase only	\$7	1	Durable and able to handle hot liquids. A screw-on or snap-on lid is useful.	
Spoon	Purchase only	\$1	1	Light and durable. Should fit inside bowl.	
Water bottle	Purchase only	\$13-30	1-2	1-2 durable plastic bottles. Total capacity of 2 liters required.	
<b>Miscellaneous</b>					
Lip balm	Purchase only	\$3	1	Stick, cream, or tube-type moisturizing balm, SPF 15 or greater	
Sunscreen	Purchase only	\$5-10	1-2	A 3- to 6-oz. tube, SPF 30 or greater	
Bandana	Purchase only	\$2	2-3	A few of these are always handy.	
Headlamp	Purchase only	\$30-60	1	Durable and lightweight. Bring spare batteries.	

Disposable lighter	Purchase only	\$2	1	For lighting your camp stove	
Insect repellent	Purchase only	\$5–8	1	Small bottles; no aerosol spray cans.	
Toiletries and towel	Not available	Not available	1	<i>Must bring.</i> Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, skin lotion, and tampons. Travel or trial sizes are enough.	
Watch	Purchase only	\$20–65	1	Durable and waterproof, with an alarm feature.	
Notepad and pencil/pen	Purchase only	\$10	1	A small, lightweight notebook is fine.	
Sunglasses	Purchase only	\$50–100	1 pair	Good-quality sunglasses with 100-percent UV protection; lenses should be dark. If you wear prescription lenses and have limited vision without them, bring your own prescription sunglasses or look for a quality pair of clip-on polarized shades.	
Instant hand sanitizer	Purchase only	\$2	1	Must have 1 2-oz. bottle for keeping hands clean	
Our advice? Keep the toiletries, pocketknife and other gear to small sizes. We work to keep our pack weight as low as possible. Saving every ounce is essential!					

Footwear					
Equipment	Rental price	Purchase price	Quantity	Comments	Check List
Boots	Purchase only	\$175–250	1 pair	Durable hiking boots; all-leather or combination of leather and synthetic. Must have good support in the heel and ankle, and be sturdy enough to carry 40+ pounds of gear. Please break in new boots before your course in order to prevent blisters!	
Wool socks	Purchase only	\$13–30	4–5 pairs	Mid to heavyweight. A combination of both weights is recommended for hiking and sleeping.	
Gaiters	Purchase only	\$50	1 pair	Ankle, shin or knee-high gaiters made of durable material.	
Camp shoes	Purchase only	\$40-50	1 pair	Comfortable shoes to change into in camp. Must be closed-toe. Lightweight and quick-drying running shoes or Crocs work well.	
Our advice? Your boots will be a critical piece of gear. If they're not sturdy, don't provide enough support, or don't fit properly with wool socks, we won't let you use them. If you have any doubts about boots, feel free to give us a call.					

### Boot recommendations

NOLS has been outfitting students with boots for many years and our priorities have remained the same: we want you to have boots that provide adequate protection for your feet, are durable enough to withstand extended rugged wear, and provide reasonable comfort. Many boots available on the market do not meet these criteria, and a boot that is good for weekend day-hiking use may not be a good boot for your NOLS course.

Medium-weight, off-trail backpacking or light mountaineering boots work best. They provide good support for off-trail hiking with heavy packs, and usually require less break-in time than heavyweight mountaineering boots. Here are some features to look for:

- Constructed from full-grain, one-piece leather upper or a combination of nylon, Gore-Tex, and leather
- A sole that provides good traction, like Vibram® or other lugged sole
- 1/2- to 3/4-length shank or full poly mid-sole stiffener within the sole to provide foot support and protection
- Ankle support! Trail running shoes and below-the-ankle hiking boots are not acceptable.
- Comfortable fit with your preferred hiking socks. Boots that are too small commonly cause blisters.

The following list of acceptable boots is not exhaustive and is to be used for suggestions only. It is fine to substitute a similar boot for one of those listed here.

- **Asolo:** TPS series, Equalon, Shiraz, Fugitive, Stynger, Touchstone, Drifter, Finder, Valley
- **Garmont:** Dakota, Tower, Pordoi
- **Lowa:** Camino, Ranger, Trekker, Mauria
- **Oboz:** Wind River
- **Scarpa:** Kailash Trek
- **Vasque:** Clarion, Breeze

*Note that boot manufacturers often rename their product lines. Visit the manufacturer’s website or contact us if you have questions.*

Optional Items					
Equipment	Rental price	Purchase price	Quantity	Comments	Checklist
Prescription glasses and contact lenses	Not available	Not available	2–3 pairs	If you wear them, bring a spare pair of glasses or lenses. Contact-lens wearers should also bring a pair of glasses as backup. Prescription sunglasses are also nice to have in reserve.	
Water treatment	Not available	Not available	1	NOLS supplies Aquamira (chlorine dioxide) for backcountry water purification. However, if you are sensitive to chlorine, you may need to bring a water filter.	
Vitamins	Not available	Not available	1	Not necessary, but a small quantity of multi-vitamins is popular among staff and students for this length of course.	
Book or e-reader	Not available	Not available	1	A small paperback reading book or lightweight e-reader, such as a Kindle; bring a protective case. Tablet-style e-readers (e.g. Kindle Fire) are not acceptable.	
Trekking poles	Purchase only	\$80	1	Used to support weight while hiking. Should be sturdy and adjustable.	
Camera	Not available	Not available	1	GoPros and lightweight digital or 35mm cameras are acceptable; bring a protective case. Avoid elaborate lenses and heavy SLRs. (Please note: you may not bring your smartphone or tablet into the field to use as a digital camera.) Bring extra batteries.	
Camp chair	Purchase only	\$30–50	1	Crazy Creek–style, or a sleeping-pad adapter.	

Hydration system	Purchase only	\$30–50	1	Water bag with drinking tube that can fit in a backpack. If you bring a 2L hydration system, we recommend having a backup 1L bottle in case the bag is damaged.
Sunglasses retainer	Purchase only	\$5	1	Chums or Croakies for keeping track of your glasses or sunglasses.
Pocketknife	Purchase only	\$20–45	1	One small knife is sufficient; simple folding knives are popular.
Our advice? Keep the camera and other optional gear to small sizes. We work to keep our pack weight as low as possible, but our packs are heavy. Saving every ounce is essential!				

### Group equipment

The items listed below are provided by NOLS and shared among all expedition members. Group equipment is included as part of the course tuition; students may be charged for any lost or damaged group equipment.

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Tents and shelters             | Maps and compasses    |
| Camp stoves                    | Reference books       |
| Fuel and fuel bottles          | Binoculars            |
| Pots and pans                  | First-aid kits        |
| Bear-resistant food containers | Equipment repair kits |
| Trowels or shovels             | Fishing equipment     |