

NOLS Alumni 2017 Wind River Traverse

Equipment Guidelines

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 will help you make smart, prudent choices about the gear you bring on your trip.

When you arrive, your instructors will 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.

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 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 to Lander!

- **Second, rent key items from NOLS.**

When it comes to gear, each adventurer has his or her own needs, styles, and preferences. With guidance from your instructors, 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, rather than purchase, several "big ticket" items, like a 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 out gear so that 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

Total charges will vary depending on the amount of equipment you rent or purchase from us; the prices listed below will help you estimate your costs. At the end of your course you will be billed for any rental and purchase fees. **Please note: All rental prices on this list reflect a 4-week rental. Any gear that you rent from NOLS will be 25% of this amount, or a 1-week rental. Please note, rental and purchase prices may change slightly.**

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 Alumni at (800) 332-4280.

How to Use This List

Items under the **Required** heading are items that you **must** either bring yourself or rent or purchase from NOLS as available. Items under the **Optional** heading are not required, and you may bring them from home, buy, or rent from NOLS as available. If you see an **X** in the price column, that means that an item **IS NOT AVAILABLE** for rent or for purchase (as indicated).

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, both of which insulate when wet; merino wool products are increasingly popular. We avoid cotton, which is poor insulation when wet. It is common to need three insulating layers.			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Base layer (long underwear)	X	\$50-75	Mid-weight long underwear top, wool or synthetic (e.g. Patagonia Capilene series)
Middle layer (fleece jacket)	X	\$50-75	Fleece jacket (e.g. Patagonia Regulator series) or a wool sweater
Top layer (synthetic jacket)	\$40	\$175-250	A warm, synthetic-fill “puffy” jacket that fits over your base layers (e.g. Mountain Hardwear Compressor, Montbell Thermawrap, Patagonia Nano Puff).
Wind shirt/anorak	\$25	\$55	A lightweight, breathable, durable nylon wind shell, in either pullover or parka style
Rain jacket	X	\$120-150	A sturdy waterproof jacket with a hood. Both coated nylon and breathable fabrics are acceptable (e.g. Gore-Tex, Marmot Precip, Mountain Hardwear Dry.Q, Patagonia H2No)
T-shirt	X	\$35-50	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			

Continued from page 3: 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

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Base layer (long underwear)	X	\$45-60	Mid-weight synthetic or wool bottoms (e.g. Patagonia Capilene series). Cotton and cotton blends are not acceptable.
Middle layer (fleece pants)	X	\$50-75	Heavier-weight bottoms that fit comfortably over the base-layer bottoms
Wind pants/hiking pants	\$25	\$60	Nylon shell pants. These should fit comfortably over all lower-body 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. They are the most popular piece of equipment we've ever designed! Many students purchase their wind pants at the end of their course.
Nylon shorts	X	\$40-60	Loose-fitting nylon athletic or river shorts
Underwear and sports bra (2-3 pairs)	X	\$18-32	Briefs or boxers and sports bras must be synthetic; some students prefer to go without underwear and use nylon shorts with liners. Women's briefs in cotton will work.
Optional Items			
Rain pants	X	\$90-110	Although not required, some people like to use rain pants in conjunction with a rain jacket.
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	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Baseball cap or wide-brim sun hat	X	\$16	To protect ears and face from the sun; baseball hats available with NOLS logo
Wool or fleece hat	\$4	\$15-20	Thick enough to keep your head and ears warm on a chilly night

Mosquito head net	X	\$6	A light nylon head net
Gloves	X	\$17-55	Ragg wool or fleece

Optional Items

Mittens	X	\$12-17	Ragg wool or fleece
Mitten shells	X	\$50-65	Water-repellent nylon shells that fit over your mittens or gloves

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. Depending on the weather, you may need one or two pairs.

Packs and Bags

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
-----------	------	-----	-------

Required Items

Backpack	\$100	\$250	Our packs are large expedition models, with a volume of 80-110 liters, made by Deuter exclusively for NOLS. 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 90-110 liters.
Small stuff sack (2-3)	\$2	\$4	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	Rent	Buy	Notes
-----------	------	-----	-------

Required Items

Sleeping bag	\$60	\$350	Synthetic-fill bags (e.g. Quallofil, Hollofil, Polarguard, etc.) perform well in the variety of conditions we encounter on courses. A bag with approximately 3 pounds of fill, rated to 5° or 10°F.
Summit pack/compression sack	\$2	\$50	We rent a compression stuff sack for your sleeping bag which doubles as a summit pack for day hikes

Plastic trash bag (2-3)	X	\$1	2-3 heavy-duty lawn-and-garden bags (33 gallon) to help waterproof your sleeping bag and backpack
Sleeping pad	\$6	\$15-75	Used for padding and insulation between sleeping bag and ground. Foam pads, which we rent, should be closed-cell and at least 3/8-inch thick. Inflatable pads, which we sell but don't rent, are a welcome luxury in the backcountry; Therm-a-Rest and REI are reliable brands.
Sleeping pad stuff sack	\$4	\$8	A stuff sack to protect your foam or inflatable pad
Ground cloth	\$4	\$8	A waterproof nylon sheet to go between your sleeping pad and the ground
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.			
Footwear			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Boots	X	\$175-250	Sturdy leather heavy backpacking or light mountaineering boots with good ankle support

Continued from page 6.			for wilderness courses. Our boot stretching process helps expedite the break-in period of new boots.
Wool socks (4-5 pairs)	X	\$13-30	Mid- to heavyweight wool socks
Gaiters	X	\$50	Shin- or knee-high, durable. Lightweight trail-running gaiters are not recommended.
Camp shoes	X	X	Running, tennis, or cross-training athletic shoes, closed toe required

Optional Items

Liner socks (2-3 pairs)	X	\$6-8	Lightweight wool or synthetic “wicking” socks. You will need at least two pairs if you are using a liner sock/wool sock combination in your hiking boots. (Note: liner socks are mandatory if you are renting rock shoes for a climbing course.)
-------------------------	---	-------	--

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.

Miscellaneous Items

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Insulated mug or thermos	X	\$4-25	12- to 20-oz. insulated mug with a lid. Available with NOLS logo
Bowl	X	\$7	A plastic bowl with a screw- or snap-on lid is handy.
Spoon	X	\$1	Lexan spoons are light, durable, and popular.
Water bottle (1-2)	X	\$13-30	1–2 wide-mouth quart- or liter-size plastic bottles
Lip balm	X	\$3	Stick, cream, or tube-type moisturizing balm, SPF 15 or greater
Sunscreen (1-2)	X	\$5-20	A 3- to 6-oz. tube, SPF 30 or greater
Bandana (2-3)	X	\$2	A few of these are always handy.
Headlamp	X	\$29-60	Durable and lightweight. Bring spare batteries.

Disposable lighter (2)	X	\$2	For lighting your camp stove
Insect repellent (1-2)	X	\$5	Small bottles; no aerosol spray cans.
Toiletries and towel	X	X	Towel for showering after your course. Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, skin lotion, and tampons. Travel or trial sizes are enough.
Watch	X	\$20-65	A watch with an alarm is a nice feature.
Pen/pencil	X	X	For journaling and taking notes during classes
Notepad	X	\$10	A small, lightweight pad is fine.
Sunglasses	X	\$50-160	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 at an outdoor store. We sell Suncloud, Spokiz, and Optic Nerve.
Instant hand sanitizer (2)	X	\$2	Must have two 2-oz. bottles for keeping hands clean
Optional Items			
Binoculars	X	X	Small travel binoculars work well.
Balaclava	X	\$17	Balaclavas are full head-and-neck coverings that have an opening for the face.
Prescription glasses and contact lenses (2-3 pairs)	X	X	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	X	X	NOLS supplies Aquamira (chlorine dioxide) for backcountry water purification. However, if you are sensitive to iodine or chlorine, you may need to bring a water filter.
Vitamins	X	X	Not necessary, but a small quantity of multivitamins is popular among staff and students for this length of course.
Book or e-reader	X	X	A small paperback reading book or lightweight e-reader, such as a Kindle; bring a protective

Continued from page 8.			case. Tablet-style e-readers (e.g. Kindle Fire) are not acceptable.
Trekking poles	X	\$80	A sturdy telescoping pole for easy packing.
Camera	X	X	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.)
Camp chair	X	\$30-50	Crazy Creek–style, or a sleeping-pad adapter.
Hydration system	X	\$30-50	Very handy and popular. We carry CamelBak bladders.
Sunglasses retainer	X	\$5	Chums or Croakies for keeping track of your glasses or sunglasses. Available with NOLS logo
Pocketknife	X	\$20-45	One small knife is sufficient; simple folding knives are popular.
Our advice? Keep the toiletries, pocketknife, camera, optional items and other gear to small sizes. We work to keep our pack weight as low as possible. Saving every ounce is essential!			

Shared Group Equipment—NOLS will supply

Expedition members share both the use of and the responsibility for the group gear that NOLS issues. NOLS charges only for group equipment lost or damaged. Keep in mind that NOLS evaluates gear from a number of perspectives beyond those that an individual user might consider. Performance, durability and simplicity are all contributing factors towards our gear selection.

Tents and shelters
Trowel or shovel
Stoves, fuel bottles and fuel
Pots and pans
Maps and compasses
Bear-resistant food containers
Fishing gear
Equipment repair kits
Reference books, Binoculars
First aid kits

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: Power Matic series; TPS series; Power Light series; Matrix series; Energy series

Garmont: Dakota; Synchro Plus; Cypress, FC Eco 4.0

La Sportiva: Thunder II; Cascade

Lowa: Tahoe; Tibet; Banff; Pingora

Montrail: Feather Peak

Oboz: Wind River

Scarpa: Mustang; Barun; Nepal Pro; SL M3; Escape

Vasque: St Elias; Wasatch; Bitterroot; Summit; Sundowner; Clarion; Breeze; Taku

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