

Winter Outdoor Educator

Course Description

Take your passion for education and the outdoors to the winter environment. Alongside other eager educators, hone your teaching techniques and winter camping skills in an incredible mountain range. If you're looking for an experience to help you develop as an educator and outdoorsperson in the winter, then this is the course for you.

Features

- Duration: 21 days (5 days at NOLS Teton Valley, 16 days winter camping in the backcountry)
- Option to ski or snowboard (please contact us at teton_valley@nols.edu with your preference prior to the course)
- Route length: 20-30 miles
- Average daily elevation gain: 300-3,500 feet
- Average group size: 12 student / 3 instructors
- Average age: 26 / minimum age: 21
- Average pack weight: 20-35 pounds / sled weight: 50-65 pounds
- Elevation range 7,000-12,000 feet
- Skills: backcountry travel, winter camping, self care in a winter environment
- Emphasis on backcountry ski or splitboard techniques, avalanche assessment, and travel with sleds through forested mountain terrain
- Emphasis on facilitating and leading group discussions and classes
- Each student will present a class related to the winter environment
- Previous ski or snowboard experience, or recent lessons, highly recommended
- Certificates of Completion: NOLS Level I Avalanche Training, Leave No Trace Trainer

Overview

On this course, you'll enter the world of winter in the mountains. You'll learn about winter camping, touring in the backcountry, and practice teaching in the outdoors

This course is most appropriate for those with moderate to advanced ski or snowboard skills. We strongly suggest skiers and snowboarders who are unsure of their skills take a lesson or two and spend some time skiing or riding prior to the course.

You will spend the first few days of your course at the NOLS Teton Valley base reviewing your gear, preparing food, and practicing skiing or snowboarding skills at Grand Targhee Ski Resort, where you will take lessons with professional ski instructors. You'll also begin learning to assess avalanches, including snowpack development, route finding, hazard evaluation, and backcountry risk management procedures.

You'll then head into the Snake River Range or the southern Absaroka Range, areas known for dependable snow and excellent skiing. These mountains are magical places to explore and exhilarating areas to learn the intricacies of winter travel.

You'll start with the basics of winter camping, including building snug snow shelters—igloos, quinzhees or snow caves—cooking, and melting snow for water. You'll spend your days skiing or snowboarding, furthering your avalanche assessment skills, or learning about winter ecology. As educators, we expect all participants to offer coaching and feedback to their peers. If weather and snow conditions permit, you may climb a peak.

By the end of this course, you'll have the experience to start leading groups in the mountains in winter and to continue pursuing your own passion for outdoor education.

Weather and Other Challenges

Weather

Given the altitude and latitude of these mountain ranges, bitter cold and blizzard conditions can occur at any time. You should expect highly variable weather that can change quickly from sunshine to snow, and sometimes even rain.

Cold Injuries

Living in the winter environment is demanding and can be extremely challenging. You will be living in cold (possibly sub-zero) temperatures and constant care must be exercised to minimize the possibility of hypothermia, frostbite and non-freezing cold injury.

Terrain

In these mountains, avalanches occur and can bury unwary riders. Travel requires moving with a pack and pulling a sled to help transport group gear and rations. Through careful terrain choices we can minimize the chance of anyone being caught in an

avalanche. In the backcountry we are far from telephones and easy transportation; for this reason, our instruction emphasizes recognizing and managing hazards.

Learning Goals at NOLS

NOLS courses teach wilderness and leadership skills on expeditions and in classrooms. You will apply these skills to challenges in a supportive learning culture with high expectations. Your course will provide you with the opportunity for a positive, transformative experience intended to inspire you and empower you to act.

We craft NOLS courses so graduates will be able to assume leadership roles; live and travel in the outdoors; act with confidence and competence; respect and collaborate with others on expeditions, on teams and in communities; care for themselves and others; understand their strengths, habits, and areas for growth; function under difficult circumstances; make informed and thoughtful decisions; communicate effectively; connect with natural places; and appreciate living simply.

We believe positive, ethical leaders change the world. Join NOLS and become one of these leaders.