

STEP Leadership Expedition

Alaska Sea Kayaking

Equipment List

Welcome to NOLS! It's important to choose the right equipment for any outdoor adventure. This list is designed to help you make smart decisions about the gear you take on your course.

When you arrive, your instructors will look through the equipment you've brought and help you decide what to take into the field. You'll then go into our Outfitting Department to borrow, rent, or purchase any remaining items. We've made every effort to ensure that this equipment list is reflective of what you will need on your course, but your actual needs will vary depending on season and instructor judgment.

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. You can always leave items in storage at the branch.
- **Second, rent key items from NOLS.** We recommend that you rent, rather than purchase, several "big ticket" items, such as a sleeping bag and backpack. While you are not obligated to rent gear from us, there are several reasons why we suggest it. Our rental gear is high quality and chosen specifically for the heavy use it receives on courses. Rental prices are reasonable, so you can try out gear and make informed decisions on future adventures. After your course, you may purchase any of the items you rented; this is a great way to begin building your personal gear closet. Many instructors and students use NOLS rental gear rather than their own.
- **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, bug spray), and camping sundries (headlamp, batteries, lighter). NOLS is a not-for-profit organization, and revenue from our Outfitting Department goes to serve the mission of the school.

- **Fourth, visit a local outdoor store.** Most gear shops, from REI to mom-and-pop shops, are familiar with NOLS and its courses. We encourage you to keep the tags on all equipment and clothing, and the receipt at home, so that you may later return any items you don't use.

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. Used, consignment clothing and equipment stores can be a great place to find quality, lightly worn items as well.

Questions?

If you have any questions or would like more information regarding the items on this list, please contact your Admission Officer at arizona_fraser@nols.edu or 800.710.6657 ext 2216.

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.

All items with hyperlinks can be purchased at NOLS Alaska.

Upper Body Clothing			
You need at least three insulating layers, a windproof layer, a rain layer and a t-shirt. Make sure your layers fit comfortably over each other. If you get cold easily, we suggest that you take four insulating layers, or three layers plus a vest. You should have two lightweight insulating layers: one to wear on the water, and one to wear in camp.			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Base Layer	X	\$25-80	A lightweight synthetic or wool T-shirt or long sleeve layer. (1-2)

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Mid Layer	X	\$55-160	Lightweight fleece jacket that fits over your base layers.
Top Layer	\$40	\$250	A warm, synthetic-filled jacket that fits over your base layer and mid- layer.
Wind Shirt	\$20	\$80	Nylon wind shell, roomy enough to fit comfortably over your base and mid layer top. Excellent protection in dense bushes and from bugs.
Rain Jacket	\$40	\$150	Your rain jacket should be roomy enough to fit comfortably over all your layers. Ponchos are not acceptable. We rent Gore-Tex Pro Shell jackets.
Paddle Jacket with Hood	\$40	X	We rent a waterproof breathable pullover with hood. If you bring one it must be waterproof and have a hood.
Lower Body Clothing			
You need two to three lower-body insulating layers that fit comfortably over each other and underneath your wind or rain pants. You should have two lightweight insulating layers: one to wear on the water, and one to wear in camp.			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Base Layer Bottoms	X	\$35-65	A lightweight synthetic or wool is best.
Insulated Pants	\$30	\$60-200	Fleece or synthetic-filled pants can be a nice addition. Your instructors will share recommendations depending on route and time of year.
Rain Pants	\$40	X	We rent Gore-Tex Pro Shell rain pants.
Nylon Hiking Pants	\$20	\$80	Nylon hiking pants are recommended for protection from bugs and dense vegetation. We rent durable nylon shell pants.
Miscellaneous Clothing			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Sun Hat or Baseball Cap	X	\$12-40	Should be wide-brimmed to protect from sun.
Fleece or Wool Hat	\$8	\$15-40	Any fleece or wool hat that will fully cover your ears.

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Glove Liners	X	\$10-25	Lightweight gloves may be layered with heavier gloves for warmth or worn alone for sun protection.
Fleece or Wool Gloves	X	\$20	Durable gloves made from fleece, wool or polyester.
Underwear/ Bra	X	\$20-45	Undergarments made from merino wool or polyester wick moisture away from your skin and are highly recommended. (2-3 pairs underwear, 1 bra)
Neoprene Pogies or Paddling Gloves	\$10	\$45	We rent neoprene pogies.
Buff	X	\$20	Synthetic polyester fabric tube. Use it as a headband, neck gaiter, balaclava, cap, face mask, wristband, or scrunchy.
Rain Hat	\$10	\$55	Your sun hat might work fine for rain or vise-versa.
Footwear			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Rubber Boots	\$35	X	harp rocks and barnacles along the beaches, we recommend you rent this item from us. We rent XtraTuf brand 16" Non-insulated Boots.
Midweight Hiking Boots	X	X	Please read the Boot Selection Guide at the end of this list. We do NOT sell hiking boots. You will need to get them before traveling to Alaska.
Hiking Socks	X	\$15-25	Must be 75 to 100% wool, merino wool, or thick polyester. No wool/cotton blends.(3-4 pairs)
Camp Shoes	X	\$40	The ground around camp is often wet, soggy tundra. A lightweight, waterproof shoe is ideal.
Dry Pants and Shoes	\$65	X	Waist high dry pants will keep you warm and dry while in and out of the water. Our rental comes with rubber neoprene shoes.
Optional Items			
Gaiters	X	\$35-60	Full gaiters provide good leg protection while bushwhacking and traveling over snow on early

			season courses. However, they may not be necessary on all routes and some feel that long pants provide adequate protection.
Sleeping Gear			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Sleeping Bag	\$60	\$220	We stock synthetic-filled sleeping bags with a temperature rating of 0'-20' degrees F. Due to Alaska's extremely wet environment, down feather bags are not recommended.
Sleeping Pad	\$5	\$60-80	We rent closed-cell foam pads; however, we recommend and sell full length self-inflating sleeping pads. We do not rent self-inflating pads.
Sleeping Bag Compression Sack	\$8	\$28-35	A compression stuff sack makes your sleeping bag smaller to pack.
Packs and Bags			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Small Stuff Sacks	\$2	\$3-	Used to organize items in your pack. Lightweight dry sacks are convenient. Non-waterproof are fine too and they weigh less. (1-2)
Waterproof Bag Liners	X	\$0.75	3mm durable, sturdy, plastic trash compactor bags. We have a variety of sizes, and many students find it easier to purchase the size and quantity they need here.(2-3)
Large Equipment Bag	\$25	X	These nylon bags are made especially for NOLS paddling courses. (Example: Outdoor Products Deluxe Duffel 18x42)
Zip Duffel or Large Stuff Sack	\$7	X	Used to keep clothing and personal gear organized. Waterproof stuff sacks are convenient; non-waterproof are fine too and weigh less.
Miscellaneous Items			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			

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Bandana	X	\$3	For multiple uses. 1 is highly recommended for hygiene use.(1-2)
Lighter	X	\$2	Used to light stoves. (1-2)
Eating Gear	X	\$5-10	Tupperware type bowl , 1-2 pints, with a lid. Plastic or metal spoon/spork .
Eyeglass Retainer	X	\$6-10	Good brands are Chums and Croakies.
Mosquito Headnet	\$6	X	You can rent this if bugs will be a problem on your course.
Lip Balm	X	\$2	Stick or cream with sun protection.
Notebook and Pen/Pencil	X	\$6-12	A small spiral notebook is fine. Avoid hardcover. We sell a durable notebook with waterproof pages.
Prescription Glasses and Contact Lenses	X	X	If you wear prescription glasses or lenses, you should bring a spare set. Even if you wear contact lenses daily, plan to carry a pair of glasses into the field.
Sport Sunscreen	X	\$4-8	A tube or bottle of 2-4 oz. should be plenty. A sun protection factor of 30 or greater is necessary. A physical sunblock, such as zinc oxide, is strongly recommended for people who burn easily.
Sunglasses	X	\$25-100	Durable with 100% UV protection. If you wear prescription lenses, bring your own prescription sunglasses or look for a quality pair of clip-on shades. (Good brands: Julbo, Native, Optic Nerve, Smith)
Toilet Articles	X	\$2-4	Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb/brush, moisturizer, prescription meds, tampons. Sample sizes of 2 oz are preferable. No deodorant or excessive items. We have basic toiletries for sale if you forget something at home.
Watch	X	\$25-60	Bring a waterproof watch with an alarm even if you do not normally wear one.
Water Bottle or Water Bladder	X	\$12-25	Wide-mouth quart or liter size. A lightweight bladder system also works well.(1-2)
Optional Items			

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Camera	X	\$60	Bring a small, durable camera with plenty of extra batteries and memory cards. No phones are allowed.
Book or E-Book	X	\$10-40	You may bring an e-reader or a small book for pleasure reading. We have many books to choose from at NOLS!
Knife	X	\$15	A small pocket knife or multi-tool.
Headlamp or Flashlight	X	\$20	Good idea for August courses, unnecessary for June or July. Should be lightweight.
Umbrella	X	\$30-40	Nice for those really rainy days. We sell Montbell Trekking Umbrella and large golf umbrellas.
Thermos	X	\$30	Vacuum bottles are great. Be sure yours is stainless and not glass. We sell Stanley thermos with NOLS logo.
Camp Chair	X	\$25-50	A luxury item for sitting around camp and in classes. (Example: Crazy Creek Hex 2.0 Original Chair)

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
Compass
Trowel or Shovel
Stoves, Fuel Bottles and Fuel
Maps
Bear Spray
Fishing Gear
GPS
Repair Kits
Reference Books
Cooking Gear/Spice Kits
Soap and Hand Sanitizer
Insect Repellent

First Aid:

Our instructors carry adequate first aid kits. There is no need to bring your own.

Boot Selection Guide

We want you to have footwear that provides adequate protection for your feet, that is durable enough to withstand weeks of rugged wear and that provides reasonable comfort. Many boots and shoes available on the market do not meet these criteria.

Backpacking footwear is sturdy and durable, but there is a large range within this market. Be aware of the differences between the terms “boots” versus “shoes,” as well as “hiking,” “backpacking,” and “mountaineering.” “Shoes” and “hiking” tend to refer to more lightweight footwear, while “boots” and “backpacking” are more rugged. Either can be appropriate for you depending on your backpacking experience, ankle strength, and pack weight.

When considering footwear, remember that your course will travel mostly off-trail, and your feet will get wet. You could be in snow as well. You will cross rivers and boulder fields.

If you have little or no backpacking experience in this type of terrain, we recommend a more supportive “backpacking” boot.

- Examples: Asolo TPS Series, Garmont Rambler, Lowa Renegade Series.

If you are comfortable with your experience hiking with a heavy pack and footwear with less ankle support, it may be appropriate to use a midweight, mid-top hiking shoe.

- Examples: Keen Targhee Mid, Salomon X Ultra Mid.

Avoid footwear associated with the labels “mountaineering” (example: La Sportiva Trango), which is too rugged, and “day hiking” (example: Merrell Moab), which does not provide enough support.

With all of the footwear choices on the market, we highly recommend you visit your local sporting goods or footwear shop, use the following guidelines, and try on a selection of shoes or boots. Comfort is the most important feature. Remember to give yourself several weeks to properly break in your footwear before arriving in Alaska.

Some features to look for in hiking boots:

- A sole that provides good traction like Vibram or other lugged sole.
- Mid-top or high-top ankle coverage.

- Durable outer material, such as leather or thick nylon that will withstand hiking among sharp boulders and dense vegetation. Full mesh is not appropriate.
- A Gore-Tex liner is fine, but unnecessary. Your foot will get wet when the river comes in over the top of your boot. A Gore-Tex liner will also slow drying time once the boot is wet.
- A comfortable fit with your preferred hiking socks. Boots that are too small are a common cause of blisters. Please see the “How to prepare for your course” link on your course dashboard for more boot fitting information.