

TECHNICAL CANYONEERING IN UTAH

Alumni Trip

Location: Dirty Devil River, Utah

Dates: March 21 - 28, 2027

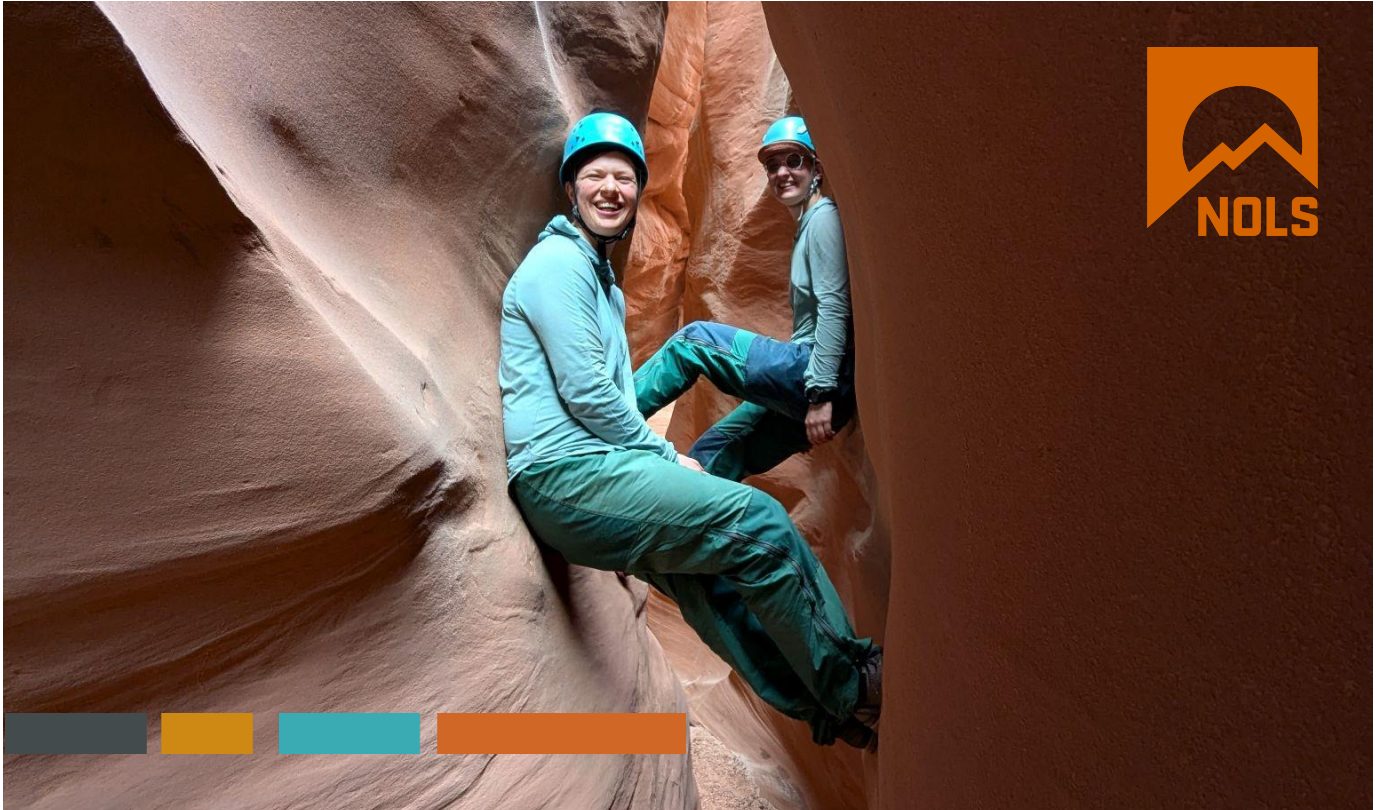


Photo by Jay Clark

Course Features

- Base camping paired with day excursions
- Seven days and six nights in the field
- Spectacular geology and canyon specific flora/fauna
- Technical travel using rappels, hand lines, scrambles, wading, and more
- 10 Participants, 2 NOLS instructors

Trip Description

This trip takes place in the desert environment of southeastern Utah's canyon country. You will spend the week scrambling around these canyons as you rappel, squeeze, crawl, and maybe swim through a variety of stunning canyons. Days will be physically challenging as you use your body hard but returning to a basecamp every day makes recovery comfortable and easy.

This trip will likely explore several side canyons of the Dirty Devil River system, although depending on local conditions this could change. The team will camp near several canyon "drops" and spend full days exploring. Nights in camp provide opportunities for socializing, honing backcountry cooking skills, practicing rope systems and relaxation.

A Day in the Life

Days start out with a group prepared breakfast followed by a refresher of the plan for the day. You will then either head out for a full day of exploring canyons or potentially stay around camp for the morning to learn rope systems before heading out.

You will be working hard throughout the day and it is important to remember that lunch starts when breakfast is over and ends at dinner. Snacking and eating informally throughout the entire day is more typical than an organized lunch time.

After a full day out, you will return to the basecamp and start thinking about dinner. Dinners will be prepared by the group and eating communally before enjoying an evening under the stars with your trip mates. Evenings will also include planning for the next day and creating some potential options for the group.

Trip Itinerary

Date	Brief description & mileage if applicable	Lodging
March 21	NOLS has made lodging reservations for you at the Clarion Inn, Grand Junction (included in your tuition). Trip orientation is at 7 p.m. meeting in the Lobby. Dinner is on your own tonight.	Clarion Inn, Grand Junction
March 22	Please eat breakfast and check out of your room, then meet in the lobby at 7 a.m. The drive from Grand Junction to the trailhead is about four hours. This evening will be our first night sleeping under the stars!	Tent camping

March 23-27	Hiking, camping, cooking, rappelling, and exploring this magical location.	Tent camping
March 28	Drive from final basecamp to Grand Junction for showers at the Clarion Inn and a final group dinner. Lodging and dinner this night is included.	Clarion Inn, Grand Junction
March 29	Onward travel	

Difficulty Scale

This trip is rated 4 out of 5 on our difficulty scale. Days are warm, but long days, steep terrain, loose footing, and sleeping on the ground increases this trip's challenge.



We use a difficulty scale to help participants evaluate if a trip is right for them. It considers probable weather conditions, physicality of activities, and food and accommodations. You don't need to be a honed athlete, but pre-trip work to improve your strength, flexibility and endurance, is highly encouraged to improve your enjoyment of the place.

Trip Environment

Weather is our biggest variable in the canyons but springtime is reliably mild, with highs reaching into the 80s F and temps typically not dropping below 30 F. Although rain, even snow, could be encountered, sunny bluebird days and starry nights are more the rule, not the exception.

Expect to walk on multiple types of terrain, from soft, sandy creek beds, to steep and rocky narrow passages, to smooth, flat, and/or vertical "slickrock." If sleeping out under the stars, outside of a shelter, is appealing, you will likely have the opportunity to fall asleep looking at the spectacular night sky in one of the areas in the lower-48 states least polluted by artificial light.

About Dirty Devil River, Utah

Exposed landforms, steep, vertical walls, slot canyons, deep pools, and massive rock piles will provide textbook illustrations of the region's geologic past and also create a classroom environment unparalleled in the world for canyoneering. Thickly vegetated riparian zones will present themselves as well when the narrow canyon passageways open into large, flat-bottomed washes. This terrain will not fail to amaze.

Although not a focus on this trip, the area holds a wealth of ancient human history, from Paleo-Indian, to Archaic and Anasazi and Fremont cultures. Alert eyes can spot the cliff dwellings and ancient granaries that abound as well as rock art sites left from these venerable and mysterious cultures.

Food on the Trip

There will be plenty of food provided on the trip for everyone. We are happy to ensure that folks who have reasonable dietary needs and/or preferences are well taken care of throughout the entire trip. Listing those needs on your registration paperwork is critical for our success here.

If you would like to bring your own snacks along, that is highly encouraged. We all have treats that we enjoy and bringing something special is a great way to keep motivation high and not have to rely on the group's schedule for your munchies.

Equipment List

Gear provided by NOLS			
Cooking Gear/ Spice Kits/water treatment	Water bladders (Dromedaries)	Stoves, Fuel, Fuel Bottles	All technical gear (ropes, helmets, harnesses, hardware, knee pads)
Reference Books	Maps & Compass	First Aid kits	Emergency Communication
Food	Tents or Shelters	Trowels	Equipment Repair Kits

Please note that this trip does not start at a NOLS outfitting facility. You will be contacted about four weeks before the trip to arrange for gear rentals as needed. NOLS will bring this gear to Grand Junction. Canyons can cause significant wear and tear on your clothing and equipment. Please be aware of this when selecting your gear.

Upper Body Clothing		
Equipment	Available to rent	Notes

Base layer (2)	No	Mid-weight wool or synthetic top
Mid layer (1)	No	Fleece or a wool sweater. Vests are a great addition also
Top layer	Yes	A warm, synthetic or down-fill “puffy” jacket that fits over your base layers
Wind jacket	Yes	A lightweight, nylon wind shell. Hooded wind jackets are recommended. Does not need to be waterproof. Canyons can cause a lot of wear and tear on clothing. We recommend renting a wind jacket or bringing something you don’t mind getting torn up.
Rain jacket	No	Bring a waterproof, breathable rain jacket. Both coated nylon and breathable fabrics such as Gore-Tex® are acceptable. Needs to fit over all your insulating layers
Hiking shirt	No	A lightweight cotton, synthetic or merino wool shirt. Collars add sun protection
Sports bras (1-2)	No	Should be silk, wool, or synthetic
Wool / fleece hat	No	A lightweight warm hat made of wool or fleece
Sun hat	No	A baseball hat, wide-brimmed sun hat, or visor
Light gloves	No	Wool or fleece
Lower Body Clothing		
Base layer (2)	No	Mid-weight bottoms of wool or synthetic
Hiking pants (1)	Yes	One pair of sturdy hiking pants, these will likely see a lot of abuse sliding down and scrambling over sandstone. Bring a pair that can stand up to abuse or rent a pair of NOLS windpants. Canyons can cause a lot of wear and tear on clothing. We recommend renting wind pants or bringing something you don’t mind getting torn up.
Hiking Shorts	No	Loose fitting, nylon or something similar

Underwear (2-4 pairs)	No	Wool or synthetic are best although some women prefer cotton briefs
Footwear		
Hiking/Approach shoes	No	Sturdy low top hiking shoes. Ideally approach shoes with sticky rubber.
Camp shoes	No	A comfortable pair of running shoes or crocs. Must be closed toe
Socks (3-4 pairs)	No	½ crew to crew length wool or synthetic socks.
Miscellaneous Items		
Sleeping bag	Yes (synthetic)	We recommend either synthetic or down bags. A bag with a 0°- 15° F temperature rating is required
Compression sack	Yes	Useful for traveling but not critical for this trip
Sleeping pad	Yes(foam)	A ¾-length closed cell foam or inflatable pad
Backpack	Yes	Sturdy and abrasion resistant day pack, 25-35 liters. We recommend buying a used pack that you don't mind getting damaged in the canyons.
Duffel bag	No	A medium to large duffel to store your stuff in while in camp
Leather gloves	No	Useful for rappels. Leather palms are important
Elbow pads	No	Very helpful when crawling or chimneying through the slots
Hiking poles	No	The kind that breakdown into a small size are best to easily put in your back.
Bowl	No	A lightweight bowl with a snap or screw on lid
Spoon	No	Lexan spoons are light, durable and popular
Water bottles	No	Bottles with total capacity of at least 2 liters. Plastic used Gatorade or Smart water bottles are very durable. Plastic Nalgene are good. We do not recommend bladders due to wear and tear in the canyons.

Lip balm (1-2)	No	SPF 15 or greater
Sunscreen	No	SPF 30 or greater
Bandannas (1-2)	No	A few of these are always handy
Sunglasses (1-2)	No	Good-quality sunglasses with 100-percent UV protection; lenses should be dark
Headlamp	No	Bring spare batteries
Lighter	No	Used for lighting your camp stove
Toiletries	No	Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, tampons, etc
Watch	No	A watch with an alarm is a necessary item
Notepad and Pencil/Pen	No	A small, lightweight pad is necessary for taking notes
Optional Items		
Hydration system	No	Very handy and popular
Insulated mug/thermos	No	12 to 20 oz. insulated mugs or a thermos
Sunglass retainers	No	Something for keeping track of your glasses or sunglasses
Pocket knife	No	One small, lightweight, knife is sufficient. Simple fixed blade knives clean the easiest.
Book or e-reader	No	Bring something fun to read
Camera	No	We would love to see your photos post-trip!
Camp chair	No	Crazy Creek chair or something compact
Prescription glasses and contact lenses (1-2 pairs)	No	Bring at least one spare pair of glasses or lenses. Contact lens wearers should also bring a pair of glasses as backup. Prescription sunglasses are a nice item to have.

Coffee	No	We provide coffee for the trip, but you are also welcome to bring your own if you prefer a specific type
Gaiters	No	Recommended. Short gaiters are the best option
Knee pads	No	Very helpful when crawling or chimneying through the slots. Volleyball type works well. We will provide these for you, but you can bring your own if you have a pair that you like.

Trip Logistics

Getting to Grand Junction

This trip starts and ends in Grand Junction, Colorado at the Clarion Inn. Grand Junction can be reached by air or road. Grand Junction Regional Airport is serviced by several airlines with daily, non-stop, flights from several hubs. As the major hub between Salt Lake City and Denver, Grand Junction is easily accessible from all directions and via AMTRAK and Greyhound Bus Lines.

Lodging

Clarion Inn

755 Horizon Drive
Grand Junction, CO 81506
970-243-6790

NOLS provides paired, same-gender hotel lodging on the first and last nights of the trip. Please let us know if you have a roommate request. The Clarion Inn has a free airport shuttle.

Once we arrive at our camp location we will spend some time getting the group installed for a week of base camping. Getting tents well set up, a kitchen organized and built, and determining hygiene facilities are all a part of this process as we will likely be in this camp for the duration of the trip. Maintaining the same camp allows us to bring a bit more creature comforts and also spend more time exploring canyons rather than moving camps.

In our base camp you will likely be sharing a tent with other group members throughout the trip; we are happy to put couples or families together, but privacy in a tent is unlikely.

Travel Insurance

We will confirm whether your trip is running approximately 60 days prior to the start date. We strongly recommend purchasing airline tickets that are refundable or changeable and consider

travel cancellation insurance in case unforeseen circumstances require you to adjust your plans, or if NOLS needs to cancel a trip for any reason.

We also encourage you to confirm any existing coverage with your personal insurance provider. Please consider purchasing additional travel medical insurance to help cover medical care or evacuation needs when traveling, whether domestically or internationally. Some examples are cat70.com or worldnomads.com for a wide variety of options. NOLS is not affiliated with any of these companies.

Storage of Personal Belongings

There have been no problems with stored gear left at the Clarion Inn. Nothing is 100 percent guaranteed and NOLS assumes no responsibility for your stored baggage.

NOLS Staff

Our staff are employees of NOLS and trained and certified accordingly. This means they maintain certifications in wilderness medicine and are trained to NOLS' high standards in risk management. They are senior staff at NOLS who have spent years working and teaching in backcountry environments all over the world. Additionally, our staff specialize in bringing together groups of strangers and building the group culture and camaraderie that makes NOLS trips great.

Expectations of Participants

The alumni trip atmosphere is more relaxed than a typical NOLS course; however, it is not a guided trip; we call it an educational, participatory vacation. Alumni trips are self-reliant adventures through remote areas where evacuation to modern medical facilities can take several days. Throughout the course, you will travel outdoors, help prepare some meals, and care for yourself.

Different from our standard expeditions, alumni trips do allow electronics and alcohol for those that are of legal age in the country of the trip. We believe that these luxuries can add to a course experience and local flavor. Excessive alcohol consumption is not a part of the culture of alumni trips.

Curriculum

This trip focuses on many traditional NOLS skills, including desert-specific Leave No Trace hiking and camping as well as map reading/navigation. The instructors will provide information necessary for the group to comfortably travel as well as optional topics as desired by participants. These could include natural history, local history, leadership, decision making, and

team function, among other things. Formal “classes” are few and mostly optional, but informal discussions are plentiful. Anticipate a required base level of group management and cohesion.

The technical components of this trip may include:

- Learning 4th and 5th class terrain management
- Building anchors for rappels, pack lowers, handlines, and other technical actions
- “Dropping” “slot” canyons employing scrambling, rappelling, wading, and teamwork
- Developing heightened risk management skills while negotiating canyon-specific hazards (steep terrain, loose rocks, exposed edges, and cold water swims)

Tipping

While tipping is common in the outdoor guiding culture, your NOLS Instructors are not driven to excellence by tips but rather a love for taking people outdoors. You are welcome to tip the instructors if you choose, and many instructors are honored by a [donation](#) in their name to the NOLS Annual Fund which supports scholarships for future NOLS students.

Trip Registration

The best way to register is through the trip information page on the [nols.edu](#) website. A non-refundable deposit secures your spot on the trip. Your enrollment is complete with receipt of your full tuition and your completed application forms; these are **due 60 days before the start of your trip**.

If any issues arise, please call the NOLS Alumni Department at (800) 332-4280.

All participants are required to submit registration materials, including a medical form. These forms highlight the intersection of your trip’s anticipated physical rigor and your current health and fitness status while also providing NOLS information about things like your dietary needs.

NOLS is not responsible for additional costs incurred by late arrivals or evacuations. Those expenses are the responsibility of trip participants and we recommend purchasing travel insurance to mitigate the impact of unforeseen circumstances.

Do not book travel greater than 60 days before the start of the trip unless you have confirmed with NOLS that the trip will run. On rare occasions, we do cancel trips due to low enrollment.

Cancellation and Transfer Policy

For your reference, here is the Alumni Trips [Cancellation and Transfer Policy](#). When enrolling on a trip, you will need to agree to this policy.