

Pacific Northwest Backpacking

Travel and Logistics

Welcome to NOLS! We look forward to meeting you at the start of your course and hope the following information will help you get here with a minimum of difficulty and expense. Please read this entire document prior to booking any travel.

The Quick Run-Down

- You are responsible for booking a flight to Seattle, WA (Sea-Tac Airport) for the day before your course start date.
- From Sea-Tac Airport arrange transportation north to Mount Vernon, WA and spend the night at a hotel (either the Days Inn or Wingate (formerly Best Western Skagit Valley Inn)); you are responsible for these arrangements.
- NOLS will pick you up at 7:00 am on the start date of the course outside each hotel and drive you to our Pacific Northwest campus in Mount Vernon, WA.
- On the final day of the course NOLS will return students to the hotels in Mount Vernon by approximately 3:00 pm. You are responsible for your own lodging that night.
- Please wait to make travel arrangements until NOLS Admissions clears your health form.

Prepare to Travel to Your Course

(Further details following)

1. Submit your health form on your [Dashboard](#) as soon as possible. Once NOLS clears it, you can start booking travel.
2. Book your travel. We recommend that you make your travel plans as soon as possible after the Admission Office clears your health form.
3. Arrange ground transport
4. Arrange accommodation for after course
5. Complete and submit Travel and Logistics form on your [Dashboard](#)
6. Consider Tuition Protection coverage (see [Dashboard](#), highly recommended)

7. Check your medical insurance coverage will be adequate for your travels and expedition activities
8. **If you are traveling to NOLS from outside the United States:**
 - a. Check that your passport is valid for the appropriate dates
 - b. Arrange visa and/or parent letter if needed
 - c. Notify your bank/credit card company that you will be traveling internationally
 - d. Get cash in local currency
 - e. Prepare for important cultural considerations
 - f. Get inoculations as required
9. Minimizing risk of exposure to COVID-19 while traveling (follow CDC recommendations [here](#))
 - a. Practice physical distancing (6 feet) when possible.
 - b. Wear a mask when indoors or in close contact while out of doors
 - c. Wipe down surfaces with disinfecting wipes before touching
 - d. Practice meticulous hygiene with frequent handwashing and hand sanitizer use

Meeting Time and Location

On the day your course begins, we will meet students before breakfast at 7:00 a.m. at both of the following locations. Please meet in the parking lot outside the main door of the hotel. We'll stop at one hotel, and then stop at the next hotel (the two hotels are about one minute apart). From there, we'll drive to the NOLS PNW campus.

Days Inn

2009 Riverside Drive
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
360-424-4141 or 800-329-7466

Wingate by Wyndham Mount Vernon*

**recent name change - formerly Best Western Skagit Valley Inn*
2300 Market Place

Mount Vernon, WA 98273
360-428-5678

If you have any problems on arrival day please call us and/or email us at NOLS Pacific Northwest, telephone: 360-445-6657 or email: pacific_northwest@nols.edu. Email can be more reliable.

Note: Due to recent policy changes, the Wingate/Best Western and Days Inn do not accept hotel reservations for 16- and 17-year-olds traveling alone. If you are a 16- or 17-year-old traveling alone to your course and you require accommodation for the night prior to your course start date, please reach out to your Admissions Officer for more options.

Options for Ground Transportation to Mount Vernon:

Airport Shuttle Service:

Bellair Charters Airporter Shuttle (866-235-5247 or 360-380-8800/www.airporter.com) offers bus service from Seattle-Tacoma Airport (Sea-Tac) to Burlington (five minutes north of Mount Vernon). Reservations are required. **They run a limited number of shuttles each day, so it's very important to double-check that the bus schedule works with your flight itinerary before booking your flight.**

Once in Burlington, make your way to the hotel. Options include Quick Cabs (360-757-6222) or other local taxi companies. Reservations are recommended for taxis. Rideshares such as Uber and Lyft are sometimes available in Burlington, but they are not consistent.

Driving Directions

If you choose to drive, getting to the meeting location by car is easy. From Interstate-5, take the College Way exit (#227) for Mount Vernon. Head east on College Way to Riverside Drive (second set of lights). Turn left onto Riverside Drive, heading north. The Days Inn and Wingate (formerly Best Western Skagit Valley Inn) are both about ¼-½ mile down on left. We will meet you at your hotel. Please do not come directly to our campus since our staff will be involved with course preparations. If you wish to park your vehicle at NOLS Pacific Northwest while you are on your course, you may follow us there after we meet in Mount Vernon.

First Day and Last Day

The first day of the course is busy. All phone calls, letters, and personal matters must be attended to the evening before. Breakfast will be followed by a morning and afternoon of getting acquainted, checking personal gear, issuing NOLS equipment and food, and packing up to leave town.

NOLS courses travel in remote areas as self-sufficient expeditions for the duration of the course. On courses up to a month long, you will be in the field all but the first day for outfitting and the last day for de-issue.

Your group will be transported back to our campus the next to last day of the course for showers and dinner. The final day is spent on evaluations, cleaning and returning equipment, and enjoying an end-of-course banquet. Everything should be completed by 3:00 pm; the course will end by dropping students off in Mount Vernon at either the Days Inn or Wingate (formerly Best Western Skagit Valley Inn). Please make your own arrangements for lodging that night.

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Due to the unpredictable nature of wilderness travel, we recommend scheduling travel itineraries for no earlier than the day after your course ends. This allows for an extra window of time if courses are delayed getting out of the field due to weather, route conditions, or other unforeseen circumstances.

Student Mail

You will be able to send and receive mail on the first and last day of the course. Please have your family and friends include your COURSE CODE & START DATE (e.g. WSM

8/19/2021), along with your name and our mailing address. USPS mail, FedEx or UPS packages should be sent to:

Your Name and COURSE CODE + START DATE (e.g., WSM 8/19/21)
c/o NOLS Pacific Northwest
20950 Bulson Road
Mount Vernon, WA 98274

Telephone and Course Communication

Cell phones have good coverage at NOLS Pacific Northwest. There is no scheduled communication between the NOLS campus and courses in the field. You will be out of telephone contact for the duration of the expedition.

Storage of Luggage and Valuables, Student Parking

Extra baggage and vehicles may be stored at the Pacific Northwest base for the duration of your course. Valuables are stored in a locked cabinet. Cars will be parked in an unfenced parking lot and keys left with NOLS staff. Although due care will be taken, NOLS assumes no liability for baggage, valuables, or vehicles while stored at the NOLS campus or elsewhere. It may be possible for you to obtain personal insurance to cover such risks.

Behavior in Town

While in town, students are expected to behave responsibly at all times and to be sensitive to customs and traditions of the local people. Violation of law or conduct that could damage NOLS' reputation may result in expulsion from the course. There is no use of drugs, alcohol or tobacco allowed on campus or on your course. Possession or use may lead to expulsion.

Contacting NOLS

If you have questions concerning course content or travel logistics, or to submit enrollment forms and tuition payment, you can reach us by logging onto www.nols.edu at admissions@nols.edu or calling NOLS Headquarters in Lander, Wyoming at 800-710-NOLS. Our headquarters are open 8:00am and 5:00pm MT, Monday through Friday.