

NOLS Family Week - Alumni

NOLS Rocky Mountain - Lander, Wyoming

July 12 - 18, 2026



Features

- Seven days and six nights base camping in Sinks Canyon
- Kid friendly hikes and instruction in climbing, fishing, and canoeing
- Opportunities to learn about flora and fauna native to central Wyoming
- Opportunities for exceptional photography
- Base camping allows for more time spent exploring with light day packs
- Pre- and post-trip lodging provided by NOLS' Noble Hotel, included in tuition

Cost: \$1,995 Pre- and Post trip lodging included

Max group size: 12 Participants

Minimum Age: 7

2-4 NOLS Instructors

Trip Description

Come explore the natural beauty of Sinks Canyon and the surrounding area with your family in the first iteration of the NOLS Family Week. A short drive from Lander, Wyoming, and the founding place of NOLS, Sinks Canyon is the corridor to the Southern Wind River Mountains and a favored hub for outdoor enthusiasts, nature lovers, and Lander locals. With its impressive cliffs, beautiful Popo Agie river, aspen groves, and nearby lakes, the area offers a range of activities from rock climbing to fishing to canoeing and hiking. You will get to sample all these activities and more in this new and unique alumni trip tailored towards family adventure. We will have a car accessible base camp in order to simplify the camping experience and save time for more activities each day.

This adventure provides NOLS grads and their families with an opportunity to reconnect with NOLS in a beautiful, yet relaxed setting. Designed with families and kids in mind, we will take on moderate, short hikes to visit natural features like waterfalls and lakes, and half day forays to climb, canoe, and fish. Some days, we will stay close to camp, hiking on trails and visiting rock climbing spots just above our campground, while other days we may hop in NOLS vehicles to travel to some of the area's close attractions like the world class climbing destination, Wild Iris or visit outstanding hiking in Red Canyon. We have built flexibility into our schedule to adjust for group needs whether that means longer day hikes or additional activities in or close to camp in the evenings.

NOLS Instructors will introduce participants to local flora and fauna with emphasis on identification and also discuss the area's natural and human history, nature painting, and basic map and compass navigation. Instructors will also cover basic camping skills like LNT techniques, cooking, tent set up, and fire building.

The trip starts with an evening orientation at NOLS' historic Noble Hotel in the heart of Lander, Wyoming. You will spend some time getting to know your fellow Family Week participants as well as go over the proposed trip schedule and talk about gear.

The next day you will have a chance to rent or purchase gear from the NOLS Equipment room, pack food then head for Sinks Canyon. Over the next week, in the company of your instructors and other NOLS families, you will explore the area, learn new skills, and connect with a beautiful place. On the last day, we will head back to town to clean up and return borrowed gear. A celebratory dinner out in Lander will be the last evening event before folks head out the next day for home or more adventures elsewhere.

Trip Environment

Containing layers of sandstone, limestone, granite, and the unique “Sinks” for which the canyon is named, Sinks Canyon is a geologic marvel that has attracted the attention of scientists and outdoor enthusiasts alike. The state park, located at the lower entrance to the canyon, sees thousands of visitors yearly who come to both recreate and admire the canyon’s natural beauty. Home to elk, moose, mule deer, coyotes, rattlesnakes and close to one hundred species of birds, Sinks Canyon is the corridor to the Southern Wind River Mountains and a migration route for larger animals such as elk. The earliest known human activity in the canyon was around 9,000 years ago, and the canyon remains an important historic site for tribes native to the area who gathered berries and hunted game migrating through the canyon. The Popo Agie river which runs the length of the canyon is a Crow Indian word meaning “gurgling river.” The Popo Agie is fed by snowmelt and glacial runoff from the Wind River Mountains and offers excellent trout fishing. Wildflowers, cacti, and native shrubs and grasses populate the slopes that rise from the Popo Agie River. The weather this time of year consists of hot daytime temperatures with cooler temps in the morning and evening and the occasional afternoon thunderstorm.

While black bear sightings are rare in Sinks Canyon, we will take measures to properly secure our food in camp to keep it out of reach from both small and large critters. Mosquitoes can be tenacious this time of year especially early and late in the day.

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.

For this week you will have a consistent Instructor(s) who will be overseeing the week’s activities but also a star-studded cast of guest NOLS Instructors that rotate through for a half-day or more. These guest appearances will focus on the rotating activities and ensure that we are providing top-tier instruction on things like fly-fishing, rock climbing, and canoeing.

A Day in the Life

Days will begin with breakfast in the group kitchen. After cleaning up, we will review the day’s activities and meet any instructors that will be joining us for the day. We will then pack up lunches and other essentials and either take a short drive or depart directly from camp on foot to our day’s activity. Mornings might be spent learning to climb, fish, canoe, or hike before breaking for lunch and to admire the view. After lunch we will often change activities in order to make the most of the variety of

options at our disposal. After a full day, we will return to camp to cook dinner together before settling into some peaceful evening downtime or sitting around the campfire.

We will cook most meals on this trip as a group. Meal prep and clean up will be shared by everyone. Instructors will drive the show and offer instruction in cooking some of NOLS favorites like pizza, baking, or gado gado, but everyone is expected to contribute to the success of camp functions.

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.

Curriculum

This trip focuses on many traditional NOLS skills, competencies, and concepts, including LNT principles, climbing, hiking, canoeing, fishing and map reading. The instructors will provide information necessary for the group to comfortably camp, as well as optional topics as desired by participants. Depending on the group's desires, instructors are well versed in many NOLS topics such as natural history, local history, leadership, decision making, and team function, among other things. Classes or discussions can be tailored towards adult or youthful learners depending on interest levels in the group. Formal "classes" are few and mostly optional but informal discussions are plentiful.

Expectations of Participants

The family alumni trip atmosphere is more relaxed than a typical NOLS expedition. However, it's not a full-service vacation or guided experience. We ask everyone to participate, carry their load, and help out as needed. This week is designed to help youthful participants begin to develop self-reliance, self awareness, risk management, and sound decision making. While these words might not come naturally to all ages, the practices and concepts can be learned by anyone. Like all NOLS courses, this week emphasizes hands-on learning and the application of new skills in a variety of situations.

Families will need to complete and submit application materials for every attending family member, including a medical history form. These forms highlight the intersection of your trip's anticipated physical rigor and your current health and fitness status. Your forthright and timely completion and submission of the forms sets you and your trip up for success in the outdoors.

Electronics are fine to have on this trip as the recording of memories is an important activity, but we do ask that devices do not become a distraction from the outdoor experience or a method of isolation from the group.

Alcohol is not allowed on the trip for any participants. Our ability to control access to alcohol is limited within the camp setup so we believe it is simplest to not have it present.

Trip Itinerary

*Subject to change based on local conditions and group needs

July 11	<p>There will be an orientation meeting at 6:00 p.m. At the Noble Hotel in Lander, please arrive no later than this afternoon.</p> <p>You will be staying at NOLS' hotel this evening in hostel style rooms with a shared bathroom in the hallway and we provide all the bedding you need. We will ensure that families stay together.</p>
July 12	<p>Gear issue at the NOLS Rocky Mountain campus, camp Installation at Popo Agie Campground in Sinks Canyon, short hike to visit the "Sinks" of Sinks Canyon. We will cook our first dinner together in the campground.</p>
July 13	<p>Hike to a beginner friendly climbing area in Sinks canyon, run through an introduction to climbing and belaying. Return to camp for lunch followed by a short hike and a class on wildflower and native plant identification.</p>
July 14	<p>We will plan for an earlier start this day to beat the heat and get up to the Popo Agie Falls. After lunch, we will pack fishing rods and ourselves into NOLS vehicles for a short trip up to Worthern reservoir for a class on fishing.</p>
July 15	<p>Heading to a local alpine lake we'll combine fishing and canoeing for a full water day.</p>
July 16	<p>Wild Iris, a popular climbing area, will be our home for the day. Exploring new cliffs and keep working on our climbing and belaying skills. Our afternoon drive back to camp will take us through the Red Canyon where we will stop at an excellent fishing spot. If time allows, we will stop and view petroglyphs in the area as well.</p>
July 17	<p>Our final full day, we will challenge ourselves with a longer hike 5-6 miles through the pines above Sinks Canyon. Excellent picnic and swimming opportunities abound!</p>
July 18	<p>After a short morning hike or fishing you will pack up camp and return to Lander for deissue and clean up.</p>
July 19	<p>Families travel homeward. Please plan to depart this morning.</p>

Travel Logistics

Getting to Lander

By Plane:

The commercial airport nearest to Lander is Riverton (RIW). You can book a contiguous flight into Riverton on United's website. Flight schedules are always evolving and if the only one available is a late night arrival, we suggest arriving a day earlier to ensure you don't miss the start of the trip.

There is a shuttle service from the Riverton airport to Lander and the NOLS Hotel (Noble Hotel) offered by WRTA (<http://www.wrtabuslines.com>). The cost ranges from \$25–60, depending on the number of passengers, and a reservation is always required. If Share-A-Ride, WRTA are unavailable

or not your style, you can contact **BDS Taxi** (307-840-0954), which requests 24 hours advance notice or [Gator Creek Taxi](#) out of Riverton.

Jackson Hole (JAC), and Casper, Wyoming (CPR), as well as Salt Lake City, Utah (SLC), and Denver, CO (DEN) are all viable airports. You'll need to utilize a rental car for any of these airports.

By Car:

Lander is a 4.5-hour drive from Salt Lake, 2.5 hours from Casper or Jackson Hole, and 6 hours from Denver. Look up Lander on Google maps for detailed directions. It may be the most cost-effective to fly to one of these airports and then rent a car for the week.

Lodging (if you arrive early)

There are other lodging options in Lander including free camping at the City Park, camping for a fee in Sinks Canyon State Park, and other hotels and bed and breakfast inns. For additional lodging information, contact the Lander Chamber of Commerce at 800-433-0662 or visit their website at www.landerchamber.org. We recommend the following two hotels:

Pronghorn Lodge

150 E. Main Street
307-332-3940

Inn at Lander

260 Grand View Drive
307-332-284

If you choose to book your own lodging for the last night of the trip, NOLS will not refund any of the tuition and the expense will be yours.

If you are delayed:

If you have any problems on arrival day, please leave a message at 307.335.2265, the front desk at the NOLS Noble Hotel. Also, contact the NOLS Alumni office at alumni@nols.edu and (800) 332-4280.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is worth exploring in case unforeseen events cause you to change your plans or if NOLS has to cancel a trip for any reason. Check with your personal insurance carrier and credit card to understand what you already might have or check out cat70.com for a wide variety of options.

Carbon Footprint and Offset

Current estimates are that the Travel Industry accounts for ~8% of global emissions. This percentage includes everything from transportation to accommodation and shopping. NOLS recognizes that our business contributes to this problem but we do not have a comprehensive strategy at this point.

If you would like to offset part or all of the carbon emissions related to your Alumni trip, we recommend [South Pole](#). [Their calculator](#) can help easily calculate your footprint and choose a project to contribute to. [Here is a link to their calculator.](#)

Storage of Personal Belongings

Personal belongings and vehicles may be stored at the NOLS facility for the duration of your course. Although we assume no responsibility, due care will be taken to prevent theft or damage to your

stored items. Valuables may be checked into our safe. Parking is generally available on a NOLS lot for the duration of your course in an unfenced parking lot with little or no security.

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

Your tuition includes meals starting with breakfast on the first day through dinner on the last day, all group equipment, camping gear (tents, stoves, kitchens, etc.), safety equipment, instruction, permits, and transportation to and from your lodging.

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.

Things to do in Lander, WY

There are more things to do in Lander than we can possibly fit into this trip. If you are arriving early, here are some suggestions for things to do in the area.

- The Museum of the American West and the [Pioneer Museum](#)
- Visit the historic [South Pass City](#) and take a tour of a [retired gold mine](#)
- Hike or mountain bike at [Johnny Behind the Rocks](#) trail system.
- Take a day trip to Dubois, Wyoming and visit attractions like the [National Bighorn Sheep Center](#), [Dubois Badlands Hiking Trail](#), [Jade Lakes Hiking Trail](#), or the [National Museum of Military Vehicles](#)

Suggested Readings:

Kricher, John C. & Gordon Morrison. *Peterson Field Guides: Ecology of Western Forests*. Paperback: 554 pages.

Mathews, Daniel. *Rocky Mountain Natural History: Grand Teton to Jasper*. Paperback: 656 pages.

Equipment List - available for rent “yes” Not available for rent “X”

Gear provided by NOLS

Cooking Gear	Stoves, Fuel and Fuel Bottles	Repair Kits (Gear, Person, Food)	Fishing gear (poles, flies, etc...)
Reference Books	Maps & Compass	Tents or Shelters	Satellite/Cell phone

Upper Body Clothing

Equipment	Rent	Notes
Mid- Weight Top	X	(1-2) Mid-weight top, wool or synthetic
Insulating Top	Yes	Heavy weight fleece or mid-weight puffy layer
Wind shirt (optional)	Yes	A lightweight, breathable, durable nylon wind shell
Rain jacket	X	A light waterproof jacket with a hood.
T-shirt	X	(1-2) A lightweight synthetic or wool t-shirt
Sports Bra or Tank	X	(1-2) Synthetic or wool sports bra or a synthetic tank
Liner Gloves	X	Good for cool evenings.
Warm Hat	Yes	Synthetic or wool.
Sun hat	X	Baseball cap or full brim.

Lower Body Clothing

Mid- Weight bottom	X	Mid-weight bottom, wool or synthetic
Wind/ Hiking pants	Yes	Breathable nylon wind pants or hiking pant, roomy enough to fit over layers. We recommend renting NOLS windpants
Hiking shorts	X	Nylon, quick-dry shorts
Underwear	X	(2-3) Synthetic or wool are best.

Footwear

Equipment	Rent	Notes
Boots or Hiking Shoes	X	Boots or hiking shoes. Well tested before the trip
Camp Shoes	X	Something light and closed toe, crocs are great.

Socks	X	(2-3) ½ crew to crew length wool socks.
Other Personal Gear		
Medium backpack	Yes	Big enough to carry personal items (e.g., water, food, clothing layers) and group lunch supplies—40-55 Liters
Sleeping Bag	Yes	Synthetic or down bags with a temperature rating of around 20° F
Sleeping Pad	Yes (foam)	A ¾ or full-length closed-cell foam or inflatable pad to insulate and pad between under your sleeping bag.
Plastic Trash Bags	X	(1-2) Heavy-duty trash compactor bags (33-gallon) to help waterproof items. We sell them as singles so you don't need to buy a huge box.
Water Bottles	X	Bottles with a total capacity of at least 2 Liters.
Lip Balm	X	SPF 15 or greater.
Sunscreen	X	SPF 30 or greater.
Bug repellent	X	The bugs can be bad in the Winds!
Sunglasses w/ retainer	X	Good-quality sunglasses with 100-percent UV protection
Toiletries	X	Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, skin lotion, tampons, etc. (travel or trial sizes are enough), ear plugs and eye covers can be nice
Headlamp	X	Bring spare batteries.
Insulated Mug	X	12 to 20 oz. insulated mugs with lids.
Bowl	X	A lightweight bowl with a snap or screw-on lid.
Spoon	X	Lexan spoons are light, durable, and popular.
Lighter	X	Used for lighting your camp stove.
Swim suit	X	Multiple options to swim on this trip
Optional Items		
Trekking poles	X	Most participants enjoy hiking with 2 poles
Hydration system	X	Very handy and popular
Book or e-reader	X	Bring something fun to read
Camera	X	We would love to see your photos post-trip!
Casual clothes	X	Shirt/pants/skirt for dinner or hanging out around camp
Rain pants	X	Some folks enjoy having rain pants for wet days!
Watch	X	A watch with an alarm is a necessary item.
Camp Chair	X	Crazy Creek chair or something compact.
Coffee	X	We provide coffee for the trip, but if you want your own, instant is great.
Towel	X	If you would like to take a dip in the lakes or rivers