

Patagonia Mountaineering

Course Description

Learn how to climb the peaks you always dreamed about in one of the world's most renowned mountain ranges. Challenge yourself among the steep, sweeping peaks of the Andes and develop as a leader in a harsh and stunning landscape. If you're seeking to learn the skills to pursue of lifetime of traveling in the mountains, then this is the course for you.

Features

- Duration: 34 days
- Route length: 65-100 miles (100-160 kilometers)
- Average group size: 13 students / 3 instructors
- Average age: 25 / minimum age: 18
- Average pack weight: 50-70 pounds
- Elevation range: up to around 10,000 feet (3,000 meters)
- Skills: mountain travel, leadership, technical climbing, glacier travel and heavy weather camping
- Opportunity for students to travel in small groups independent of instructors at the end of the course (based on instructor discretion)
- Notable wildlife: fox, puma, condor and guanaco

Overview

Within the immense stretch of remote, rugged mountains and massive ice fields of the Patagonian Andes, you'll embark on your expedition. You'll be surrounded by steep mountains, snow, ice, expansive rivers and dense coastal forests, and will learn all the skills you need to carry out remote expeditions in rugged mountain terrain.

The course begins with the basics of camping well in heavy weather and learning to travel with a heavy pack. Once you depart from the NOLS base, you will be self-sufficient until you leave the mountains. Your course may receive re-supplies from local *pobladores*, or *gauchos* (residents of the Patagonian backcountry), or you may receive no re-supplies, instead shuttling loads of supplies and gear.

You will travel from low-elevation brush to high-altitude glacier, where you'll begin to learn the necessities of glacier and mountain travel: route-finding, camping on glacier, rope handling, basic knots, and belaying, and possibly advancing to crampon use,

placing snow and ice protection, and crevasse rescue. Your judgement and experience will develop along with your technical skills. This course emphasizes developing and practicing skills rather than summiting peaks, though, depending on weather, there may be opportunities for peak ascents.

By the end of this course, you will have the mountaineering and leadership skills to pursue your goals and travel in any mountain environment.

Independent Student Group Travel

At the beginning of the course your instructors will travel with you to teach travel skills including navigation, leadership, risk assessment, and decision-making. As you develop competence, instructors will gradually give you more responsibilities. Once you gain proficiency and demonstrate competence to your instructors, you may travel in student-led groups without instructors for up to a day at a time—we call this independent student group travel.

Independent Student Group Expedition

After successful practice with independent student group travel and if your instructors think your group is ready, your course may culminate in a multi-day student-led expedition. Usually, for the Student Expeditions you will travel in a group of four to six students independently of instructors for two to six days (depending on location). This independent expedition caps off your NOLS experience and gives you a chance both to put into practice the skills you've learned and to appreciate the relationships you've formed with your expedition mates over the duration of your course.

Independent student group travel is carefully planned with your instructors and emergency plans are created for each group. Your instructors may be up to 24 hours away, but each group carries an electronic emergency communication device to alert the NOLS emergency response system in the event of an accident. Ultimately, on this course you will develop the competence to travel independently in the wilderness and with your family and friends.

Weather and Other Challenges

Weather

The weather in Patagonia is a mixture of wind, rain, snow, and sun. You might find yourself traveling in the hot sun or howling winds, snow and rain, sometimes for days at a time. Your instructors will help you learn how to live comfortably in the challenging

conditions you will encounter as you experience an exceptional place that few other people see.

Terrain

There are few maps of Patagonia and the region is large, meaning your course will be exploratory in nature. The challenge of exploring little-traveled terrain makes the expedition both difficult and rewarding.

Remoteness

During your course you may often be several days away from the nearest medical facility. All NOLS instructors maintain wilderness medicine certifications and are equipped with well-stocked first aid kits to provide care in the event of an emergency. Weather, terrain, and distance can impede communication and transportation efforts. In the event of an injury or illness, there is no guarantee that you can be evacuated immediately from the backcountry.

Group Dynamics

For some, living with a small group of people for an extended period of time can be more demanding than the course's physical challenges. You'll learn to work with different personality types and about the leadership skills it takes both to be a leader and a follower within your group, managing those dynamics.

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.