Canyons Adult Hiking
Course Description

Explore the canyons of Southern Utah on this course designed for adults. Prepare yourself for a week of breathtaking beauty, hard work, fun, and companionship. Learn the basics of backpacking in one of the United States' most stunning and unique wilderness areas, developing leadership skills and forming new friendships along the way.

Features

- Duration: 8 days
- Route length: 25-35 miles
- Average group size: 6-10 students / 2-3 instructors
- Average age: 39 / Minimum age: 18
- Average pack weight: 40-50 pounds
- Elevation range: 5,500-8,000 feet
- On and off-trail hiking
- Skills: outdoor and Leave No Trace travel and camping techniques, hazard evaluation, judgment and decision-making, reading topographic maps and route-finding

Overview

This expedition takes you through the unique canyon country of the Colorado Plateau in southeastern Utah. The course area is rich in human history that dates back thousands of years on the ancestral lands of the Hopi, Navajo, Ute Mountain Ute, Uintah Ouray Ute, and Zuni. You'll travel through sandstone canyons that form maze-like terrain with plenty of rewards and challenges. Some days you'll spend hiking through canyon bottoms or along mesa tops. Other days, you will be finding the winding path in or out of a canyon. Here, you will be among rabbitbrush, cottonwood, buffaloberry, desert trumpet, prickly pear cacti, and more.

This course was designed for you to develop and practice backcountry living and traveling skills in the company of a motivated group. You'll begin with the basics—camping, cooking, map reading, stove use, and Leave No Trace techniques—skills that are the foundation for going on backpacking trips of your own. This course will challenge you with some long hiking days and off-trail navigation, and there will also be time for backcountry baking, and getting to know your coursemates around a campfire. You will learn the basic NOLS leadership curriculum and have the opportunity to put leadership skills into practice and contribute to the success of your team.

Weather and Other Challenges

Weather
The Utah canyons are known to host extremes in temperature and weather conditions. **Students should expect anything from warm & dry temperatures, to snow, rain, wind and subfreezing temperatures**. Sometimes these weather changes occur in a matter of minutes, other times storms or cold temperatures can last for days. Subfreezing temperatures are common, especially at night. Please make sure you bring the appropriate gear from our equipment list to help you keep warm in these conditions. There may be times when you are cold, wet and tired, but you'll learn to manage these situations. You might even find yourself smiling while you do. In time, your own adaptation to varied conditions will help you understand and appreciate the remarkable flora and fauna that make the Southwest such a special environment.

Terrain
All areas in which you will travel are rugged, characterized by deeply incised canyons, steep slopes, rocky terrain, and sheer cliffs. Travel in the backcountry can at times be exclusively off-trail, requiring constant attention to route-finding. The rock can be loose and easily breakable and various species of cactus and other plants with sharp spines can be dense, occasionally adding to the challenge of hiking.

Wildlife
The canyons of Utah are home to rattlesnakes and other potentially harmful insects, reptiles, and mammals. An important part of the curriculum is learning to be aware of your surroundings and being able to identify these hazards in order to reduce the chance of injury.

Remoteness
For the duration of your course, you'll be many miles from the amenities of civilization. Telephones, ambulances, and hospitals may be days away. 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.

Water Scarcity
Water is the life-blood of the canyons. Your hiking routes are typically designed to go from one water source to another. These water sources are either streams, human-made "tanks," or naturally occurring potholes found deep in the clefts of rocks. Often water sources are many miles apart, and it may be necessary to carry a day's supply of water between camps.

Group dynamics
You will be living and working in a small and diverse community around the clock and in sometimes difficult conditions. This will require cooperation, patience, and humility. The success of the expedition is dependent on the ability of its members to support one another in trying circumstances. On all of our courses, we strive to foster a course culture free from racism, sexism, xenophobia, classism, homophobia, and transphobia, and in which these and other hallmarks of systematic oppression do not impact anyone's ability to learn and thrive in the outdoors. Working together towards a common vision can be one of the most rewarding and memorable aspects of any NOLS course.

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.