

Whitewater Canoeing Expedition

Equipment List

Welcome to NOLS!

Learning to choose the right equipment for your adventure is an essential part of the NOLS curriculum. We fundamentally believe you don't need to own a lot of expensive gear to live and travel comfortably in the outdoors. We recognize the process of getting ready for a course can be an intimidating experience, especially if you have never done anything like it before. This list is designed to help you make decisions about what gear you bring and hopefully help you feel confident about entering your course.

When you arrive, your instructors will first look through all the equipment you've brought and help you decide what to take into the field. You'll then go into our Outfitting Department to rent or purchase any remaining items. The list below is comprehensive; however, the actual equipment needed for your course will vary depending on location, season, and instructor judgment. For this reason, we do not recommend that you go out and purchase a lot of expensive, specialized gear for your course.

Here are some thoughts to guide you as you pack:

- **First, use gear you already own!** You'll be comfortable in tried-and-true clothing. Bring more layers than you think you'll need; your instructors will help you choose your best options. If an item is suitable for your particular course, you can take it into the field; if not, you can leave it in storage. If in doubt, bring it!
- **Second, rent key items from NOLS.** When it comes to gear, everyone has their own preferences. In the field, you'll have the opportunity to hone your preferred system. We recommend that you rent, rather than purchase, several "big ticket" items, such as a sleeping bag and backpack. While you are not obligated to rent gear from us, there are several reasons why we suggest it. Our rental gear is high quality and chosen specifically for the heavy use it receives on courses. Rental prices are reasonable (based on wear/tear and duration of use), so you can try out gear and make informed decisions on future adventures.
- **Third, purchase specific items from our Outfitting Department.** To make shopping simple, we offer basic camping essentials and personal care items. The items we sell in our Outfitting Department are tailored to what works well on our courses. Approximate price ranges for the items we sell are listed below - you can use these price ranges to help you decide whether to purchase items ahead of time.
- **Fourth, go shopping before your course.** A few options:
 - **REI or a local gear store**
 - **Pro:** Employees often have some sense of what you will need

- Con: Gear at these locations is often expensive
- **Target, Wal-Mart, and other department stores**
 - Pro: The active wear and camping sections can have inexpensive options
 - Con: Employees are unlikely to be able to offer suggestions
- **Thrift stores**
 - Pro: Likely the least expensive option
 - Con: Can take a lot of time to find what you need
- **Online**
 - Pro: Can find a wide variety of options
 - Con: The variety of options can be overwhelming to sort through

Equipment Fees

In addition to your course tuition, you will pay an equipment deposit. This deposit will be applied directly to the charges you incur for gear rentals, purchases, or any loss or damage to our equipment. Total charges will vary depending on the amount of equipment you rent or purchase from us; the prices listed below will help you estimate your costs. At the end of your course, you will be billed for any amount that exceeds the equipment deposit, or refunded any balance.

How to Use This List

Items under the **Required** heading are items that you **must** either bring yourself or rent or purchase from NOLS as available. Items under the **Optional** heading are not required, and you may bring them from home, buy, or rent from NOLS as available. If you see an **X** in the price column, that means that an item is not available for rent or for purchase as indicated.

Feedback?

NOLS is trying to update this list to be more welcoming and effective. If you are willing to provide some feedback to help our effort please take this [survey](#).

Questions?

Contact your Admission Officer if you have any questions or would like further information about the equipment list.

Upper Body Clothing

It is most important to think of “travel clothes” as those worn on the river that will get wet each day, and “camp clothes” as those that stay dry and are worn around camp and overnight. Especially for “camp clothes” on the river--cotton layers help keep you cool and comfortable (unlike other environments where cotton can be dangerous).

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Base layer (long underwear) (1-2)	X	\$21-40	Mid-weight long underwear top, wool or synthetic (e.g. polyester, Capilene 1 or 2). Hoods encouraged.
Middle layer (fleece jacket)	\$20	\$50-75	Fleece jacket (e.g. Polartec 100 or 200, Capilene 3 or 4), or a wool sweater. For use on the river in wet or windy conditions.
Rain Jacket	X	X	Durable, waterproof, non-insulated jacket with hood. Waterproof-breathable fabrics (e.g., Gore-Tex, H2No, etc.) are both acceptable. It is important that your rain jacket fits well over all your base and insulating layers
Long sleeved “sun-shirt”	X	\$60-70	Long sleeved cotton shirts are great for sun protection and to stay cool on the river, hoods encouraged
T-shirt (1-2)	X	\$15-19	Short sleeved cotton t-shirt. Summer courses only, June 1-August 30. Only for camp--long sleeves must be worn on the river for sun protection.
Sports bra (1-2)	X	X	Lightweight bras that offer adequate support. Synthetic or natural fibers that dry quickly are preferable.
Binder (1-2)	X	X	If you usually wear a binder or are planning to wear one during your NOLS course, make sure it allows you to breathe freely and doesn’t cause pain or limit athletic activity.

Optional Items

Insulated Jacket	X	X	If you get cold easily, it’s nice to have an extra dry layer for camp like a fleece or light puffy..
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Lower Body Clothing

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Base layer (long underwear)	X	\$30-40	Mid-weight synthetic or wool bottoms (e.g. Patagonia Capilene, Terramar Performance, Icebreaker Bodyfit Zone), primarily used for sun protection on the water.

Middle layer	\$20	X	Mid- or heavy-weight bottoms that fit comfortably over the base-layer bottoms for use in camp. Fleece pants or synthetic blend.
Nylon shorts	X	X	Quick-drying, loose-fitting nylon athletic or river shorts. Can double as swim shorts. See also “swimsuits” in the river section below.
Cotton pants	X	X	Cotton pants are great for keeping the bugs off and shielding the sun while in camp.
Underwear (2 pairs)	X	X	Clean underwear is essential for backcountry hygiene and you will likely have opportunities for laundry on your course. Synthetic or natural fibers (non-cotton) are great options.

Head, Neck, and Hand Layers

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Sun hat	X	\$15-45	Must be wide-brimmed. A baseball cap works fine.
Mosquito head net	X	\$6-8	Some type of netted hood to provide relief from bugs. Needed from June 1-August 30 only.
Wool or fleece hat	\$5	\$15-25	Should pull down enough to cover your ears.
Sun Gloves	X	\$25	Lightweight gloves for sun protection and bug protection are encouraged. Fingerless gloves (similar to biking or rowing gloves) are appropriate.
Optional Items			
Neck Gaiter/ Buff	X	\$22	Neck gaiters are synthetic pieces of multi-functional headwear (hat, bandana, neck warmer, etc.). Buff is a common brand.
Religious Headwear	X	X	Headwear associated with religious custom (Hijab, Pagri, Chunni, Yarmulke, etc.)
Hair Care Headwear	X	X	Wave cap, hair wrap, or bonnet whatever you are used to. Cotton, satin, or synthetics are all good.

Packs and Bags

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Stuff sacks (2-3)	\$3.75	\$6-9	These nylon bags are for organizing items in your dry-bag.
Large dry bag	\$28	\$90-120	3 cu. ft. dry bag of heavy-duty, waterproof material. Used to carry all personal clothing

Small dry bag	\$6	\$35	600 cu. in. dry bag made of heavy-duty waterproof material. Used to carry all personal items needed during the day
River Equipment			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
River shoes	\$9	X	A simple solid sneaker works best. There are “river specific shoes” at outdoor retailers--those are an option, but are really the same as an old pair of sneakers! (Keens or other river sandals are not acceptable--they do not provide enough foot coverage and protection.)
Swimsuits (1-2)	X	X	Most students prefer wearing nylon shorts. Some students like to wear Lycra swimsuits in the river; others prefer nylon shorts and a sports bra-type top.
Waterproof, breathable, long-sleeve top	\$13	X	A top layer; waterproof, breathable, insulating fabric (e.g. NRS Hydroskin) used in place of a 3mm wetsuit
Paddle jacket	\$15	X	A long-sleeve waterproof jacket with drawstring closure at the bottom and closures at the wrist and neck. To be worn over the hydroskin layers when kayaking or rafting
Optional Items			
Waterproof, breathable bottom	\$13	X	A bottom layer; waterproof, breathable, insulating fabric (e.g. NRS Hydroskin) used in place of a 3mm wetsuit
Splash pants	\$15	X	Nylon shell pants. These should fit comfortably over all lower-body layers. Lightweight “running pants” are not durable enough. We recommend renting NOLS splash pants.
Neoprene booties	\$9	X	River or diving booties that stay on the foot securely while swimming. Must have a hard sole capable of walking on rocks. These would be used primarily in a kayak, and brought in addition to the “river shoe” described above.
Our advice? Rental of whitewater-specific gear (PFD, helmet, etc.) is included in your tuition. Feel free to bring any personal whitewater gear you already have (e.g. paddling jacket, dry top, river booties, helmet, etc.) and your instructors will check it to make sure it is appropriate for your trip.			
Sleeping Gear			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			

Sleeping bag	\$40	\$220	Synthetic-fill bags (e.g. Thermolite, Thermal.Q, APEX, etc.) perform well in the variety of conditions we encounter on courses. A bag rated to 5°-15°F.
Sleeping pad	\$4.50	\$15-120	Used for padding and insulation between sleeping bag and ground. Foam pads (which we rent) should be closed-cell and have at least an R-Value of 2.0. Inflatable pads (which we don't rent) can provide more comfort, but are less durable.
Ground cloth	\$6	\$8	A waterproof nylon sheet to go between your sleeping pad and the ground.

Our advice? A sleeping bag is another major purchase. If you don't already own one, we think you should rent ours, gain some experience, and then make an informed decision after your course.

Footwear

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Wool socks	X	\$7-14	Socks must be ankle length and heavy rag type wool or wool/synthetic blend.
Camp shoes	X	X	Running, tennis, or cross-training shoes, in good condition, to wear around camp. Avoid expensive shoes.
Optional Items			
Sandals	X	X	Open-toed "river" or "mountain" sandals (e.g., Chacos) can be brought <i>in addition</i> to camp shoes.

Toiletries

Self-care in the outdoors is an essential component of any expedition. Whatever systems you use to take care of yourself in your daily life can often be modified to the appropriate size/quantity for your course. Any starred (*) item is something that we sell at NOLS.

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Lip balm	X	\$3-5	Stick, cream, or tube-type moisturizing balm, SPF 15 or greater. Products with zinc provide superior protection.
Sunscreen	X	\$5-10	At least 3-6 oz., SPF 30 or greater. Products with zinc provide superior protection.
Dental Care	X	\$3-6	Whatever your oral hygiene system is (toothpaste*, toothbrush*, floss*, retainer, etc.), you can likely adapt it to your course using trial or travel size versions.
Skin Care	X	\$7	You may want to consider lotion* (preferably unscented) or Vaseline in 3-5 oz travel-sized bottle, wash cloth-sized

			pack towel for backcountry bathing, and ointment for scrapes if you are prone to scarring.
Hair Care	X	X	You may want to consider a comb* or brush*, bands*, chopsticks, headwrap, ties, or whatever your system is.
Menstrual products	X	\$5-35	Required if you menstruate. Bring the products which work well for you, and bring slightly more supplies than you think you might need. This might mean tampons*, pads*, a menstrual cup*, or some combo thereof.
Personal Medications	X	X	Any prescriptions/supplements that are part of your system should be brought in sufficient quantities.
Our advice? Bring what you think will support your health on course, minimizing bulk and extra quantity where possible. Travel-size containers can be helpful in this process.			
Miscellaneous Items			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Bowl	X	\$8	A plastic bowl with a screw- or snap-on lid is handy.
Spoon	X	\$1	Lexan spoons are light and durable. We also sell plastic and titanium sporks
Water bottle (1-2)	X	\$13-30	Wide-mouth, hard sided Nalgene work well. We recommend that everyone have 2 liters of capacity.
Bandana (1-2)	X	\$3	Useful for a variety of purposes from wiping post-pee to sneezing, from a cooling neck tie to wiping your bowl.
Headlamp	X	\$30	Durable and lightweight. Bring spare batteries.
Batteries	X	\$1	AA/AAA are available for sale. We recommend 2 full sets for your headlamp.
Lighter	X	\$1.50	For lighting your camp stove
Watch	X	\$20-65	A watch with an alarm is a nice feature.
Pen/pencil	X	\$0.50	For journaling and taking notes during classes
Notepad	X	\$10	A small, lightweight pad is fine.
Sunglasses	X	\$25-50	Good-quality sunglasses with 100 percent UV protection; lenses should be dark. If you wear prescription lenses and have limited vision without them, bring your own prescription sunglasses or look for a quality pair of clip-on/overglasses with polarized lenses. We sell Suncloud, Spokiz, and Optic Nerve. Julbo, Smith, Native Eyewear, Oakley, and Bausch & Lomb are good brands. This item is absolutely required.

Prescription glasses and contact lenses	X	X	If you wear them, bring a spare pair of glasses or lenses. Contact-lens wearers should also bring a pair of glasses as backup.
Sunglasses retainer	X	\$8	Chums or Croakies for keeping track of your glasses or sunglasses. Available with NOLS logo
Optional Items			
Book or e-reader	X	X	A small paperback or lightweight e-reader; bring a protective case. Tablet-style e-readers (e.g. Kindle Fire) are not acceptable.
Camera	X	\$14	GoPros and lightweight digital or 35mm cameras are acceptable; bring a protective case. Avoid elaborate lenses and heavy SLRs. (Please note: you may not bring your smartphone or tablet into the field to use as a digital camera.)
Camp chair	X	\$60	Crazy Creek–style, or a Therm-A-Rest adapter.
Hydration system	X	X	An alternative hydration system to bottles, whether a Camelbak, Platypus, etc.
Beach Wrap or large sarong	X	X	This can provide privacy when changing lower body layers in open spaces.
Stand-to-pee device	X	X	If you plan to use a stand-to-pee device on your NOLS course, make sure it is one you have practiced with and are confident it works well for you.
Locking Carabiner	x	\$10.95	For attaching loose gear (water bottles, day pack) to the watercraft. Does not have to be climbing-certified, but must be locking.
Pocketknife	X	X	One small knife is sufficient; simple folding knives are popular.
Small hand towel	X	\$20	Useful while on the river
Nose plugs	X	\$10	A handy piece of river gear. Highly recommended for Raft/Kayak courses.
Our advice? Bring things you already know you like, and nothing expensive that would be seriously damaged if it got wet.			

Shared Group Equipment—NOLS will supply

The items listed below are provided by NOLS and shared among all expedition members. Group equipment is included as part of the course tuition; students may be charged for any lost or damaged group equipment.

Tents and shelters
Stoves, fuel bottles and fuel

Pots and pans
Maps and compasses
Bear-resistant food containers
Equipment repair kits
Reference books
First aid kits
Flotation
Paddles
Helmets
PFDs