

# Patagonia Coastal Expedition

## Course Description

Challenge yourself to connect with the sea and the mountains and to meet your leadership goals on this expedition. You'll explore the fjords and rugged mountains of coastal Patagonia on foot and by kayak. You will form deep friendships and explore Chile's wild and pristine landscape. By the end of this expedition, you'll be ready to paddle and backpack on your own for many adventures to come.

### Features

- Duration: 31 days
- Skills: sea kayaking and backpacking
- Sea kayaking route length: 60-100 nautical miles
- Backpacking route length: Varies; it's typical to hike 2-6 miles for a day hike
- Average group size: 12 students / 3 instructors
- Average age: 21 / Minimum age: 18
- Average pack weight: 20 kilograms / 45 pounds
- Elevation range: sea level to 1,500 meters (5,000 feet)
- Watercraft used: single and double sea kayaks
- 250-pound participant weight limit (this is a function of the kayak's weight carrying capacity)
- Paddle through fjords of the Patagonian coast.
- Backpacking terrain: off-trail hiking, dense temperate rain forests, open mixed shrub and rock
- Possibility for non-technical peak ascents
- Opportunity for students to travel in small groups independent of instructors (based on instructor discretion)
- Notable wildlife: endemic species such as *huemul* (Andean deer), puma, and *pudú* (small deer), native birds and a range of marine life

### Overview

This course will interweave sea kayaking and backpacking as you explore Patagonia's remote coastline. You'll primarily travel by sea kayak, while taking advantage of opportunities to explore inland on foot as the kayak route allows.

Your expedition will begin at the NOLS campus, or *campo* (our working farm), just outside the town of Coyhaique, Chile, where you will organize the necessary gear and

the rations. Once you depart the NOLS base, your course will be self-sufficient until you return a month later.

Your course will begin with the basics, including camping skills, such as cooking and navigation, and developing a positive and supportive group culture. As you learn to kayak, you will develop the ocean travel skills needed to safely navigate Patagonia's fjords. Skills such as chart reading, self care, hazard assessment, and camp craft will transfer well into the mountains as you embark on exploratory backpacking routes that may lead to an unnamed peak, an island's unexplored interior, or a hidden pocket beach on the Pacific coast.

Although you'll have formal classes, most of your learning will be experiential and will take place as you practice your leadership skills through backcountry living. The skills you learn will vary depending on the particular route, weather conditions, and the evolution of your expedition team.

On this course, you'll be exploring a raw, remote and beautiful wilderness that few have ever seen. You'll learn about different ways of life—both the Patagonian culture and the NOLS expedition culture—and, in the process, learn a lot about yourself and your own culture. After experiencing expedition-style travel in Patagonia, you'll be prepared to live and travel in a wide variety of conditions, both environmental and cultural.

## Weather and Other Challenges

### Weather

The weather in Patagonia changes often and dramatically, meaning you may experience the extremes of winter and summer in the same day. The coast of Patagonia is home to magnificent temperate rainforest, while the prevailing winds sweep in off the Pacific Ocean—you can expect some wet and windy days. Your instructors will help you learn to live comfortably in any of the challenging conditions you will encounter as you experience this exceptional place.

### 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.*