

Patagonia Horsepacking Expedition

Description

You're ready for a Patagonia adventure unlike any other—long days in the saddle, riding through the forest, mud-spattered boots, watching the rain fall with a rainbow that floods the Andes mountains. You dream of seeing patagonia on horseback and growing as a leader while you do. If you're not afraid to work hard, get dirty, and develop new leadership skills, learn from another culture then this is the expedition for you.

Features

- Duration: 14 days (1 day prep, 3 days at base camp to start learning, 9 days in the backcountry, 1 day to finish and graduate from course)
- Route length: 40–80 miles
- Average group size: 10 students, 3 instructors, and 19 horses
- Average age: 20 / minimum age: 18
- Elevation range: 1,000–3,000 feet
- Skills: horse care, handling, and riding in a wilderness setting
- Camping with a Leave No Trace emphasis
- 210-pound participant weight limit (this is a function of the horse's weight carrying ability.)

Overview

Your course begins at the NOLS PATAGONIA farm in Coyhaique, Chile, Getting to know the expedition support team, instructors, here we prepare equipment, food and other details before leaving for Puerto Ibañez (1,5 hrs of driving) where we will be for 3 days preparing for the expedition, here we will be learning basic skills such as catching your horses, grooming, saddling, riding, and packing and loading panniers. For the first few days, you'll sleep out in the ranch's campground to solidify your outdoor living skills. You'll learn to pitch your own tent and cook your breakfast and dinner on camp stoves. On the morning of the fifth day, you'll pack up and head for the trailhead.

Your route will vary from the Patagonian steppe of Aysen to the deciduous forests of lenga and ñire. We'll cross rivers, rice paddies, and small passes, enjoy spectacular views of Lake Chlenko, and cross fields where we can experience the authentic rural life of Patagonian gauchos.

This is a course where you can learn skills to minimize your impact during a horseback ride, while also learning techniques for traveling with horses in Patagonia, which

involves unique equipment for the geographical conditions of the territory and its climate. Learning to work with horses in Chilean Patagonia using local equipment will provide a significant cultural experience. The instructors will introduce the team's name in Spanish and English, and you'll learn knowledge that will enrich your experience in the Patagonian wilderness.

You'll also learn how to prepare meals suitable for a horseback riding expedition through the Patagonian mountains. You'll also enjoy drinking mate along the way.

With these opportunities comes hard work. Your days will begin early with tending to the horses, breaking down camp, and saddling and loading the animals. During the day, you'll typically travel between five and ten miles in a variety of terrain. You'll end the day with a routine that will become familiar: unloading, unsaddling, and caring for your horses and yourself. You will learn to pick camps with appropriate parameters and resources for horses and humans. You can expect early mornings, long days, and to do a healthy amount of heavy lifting. Even though you won't be carrying gear all day the way you might on a backpacking trip, you'll be surprised to find that your body will be sore from long days in the saddle and the nearly constant work of managing the horses you travel and camp with.

A foundational course goal is building an inclusive community with your peers. Learning the value of teamwork, you will tackle group challenges and achieve common goals. With the guidance of your instructors and plenty of daily practice with leadership and outdoor skills, by the end of this trip you'll have the experience necessary to visit the mountains on horseback long after the end of your expedition.

Weather and Other Challenges

Horse Management

Travel with horses can be tough. They are unpredictable and may kick, bite, or buck. You'll ride through rocky, wet, muddy, snow-covered ground, over fallen trees, and on trails that are not maintained. Horses can stumble and fall with you beneath them. There may also be times where you must get off and lead your horse due to the steepness of the terrain or, potentially, an injury to the horse. Horsepacking also includes lifting and carrying awkward, heavy loads, and managing horses around stock trucks, corrals, and horse trailers.

Horsepacking Skills

Horsepacking uniquely develops communication and awareness skills through relationships built between humans and horses. NOLS is not a "riding skills" school.

Backcountry travel is done at a walk to allow both horse and rider to negotiate hazards and obstacles appropriately. You will develop into a skilled horseperson, but will not be moving at faster gaits such as a trot, lope, or gallop on this course. Each student and instructor will be issued a helmet, to be worn at all times while riding in the backcountry.

Weather

The weather in Patagonia changes often and dramatically, meaning you may experience the extremes of winter and summer in the same day. Be ready for strong winds and heavy rain but also some calm and sunny days. Your instructors will help you learn how to live comfortably in the challenging conditions you will encounter.

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.

You would have the opportunities to visit local ranchers, or *pobladores*, to work on your Spanish language skills and learn more about rural *poblador* culture.

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.